

NORTH-EAST BRAZIL HIGHLIGHTS: ITINERARY - 17 – 26 NOVEMBER 2023

November 17th (Day 1): Arrival in Vitoria da Conquista and travel to Boa Nova.

Our tour begins in Vitoria da Conquista (IATA airport code: VDC), a dusty blue-collar city in central Bahia state. There are at least four daily direct flights to Vitoria da Conquista from São Paulo. From Vitoria da Conquista we drive about two hours to the small town of Boa Nova, where we should arrive in time for a first afternoon birding walk and introduction to the birds of North-east Brazil. *Night in Boa Nova.*

November 18th (Day 2): Boa Nova

Boa Nova is considered one of the best birding areas in north-east Brazil. The concentration of rare, endemic and endangered bird species here is remarkable. We have a full day and another morning to cover the main habitats around Boa Nova, where we will spend time birding remnant patches of humid Atlantic rainforest, looking for Bahia Tyrannulet, Fork-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant, Bahia Spinetail, Rio de Janeiro Antbird, Striated Softtail, and Buff-throated Purple-tufted Tyrant. An odd habitat known locally as *mata-de-cipó* (vine forest) is home to the unique Slender Antbird and Narrow-billed Antwren. A long list of more widespread Atlantic forest endemics comprise a strong supporting cast, and amongst them we should expect to find Least Pygmy-Owl, Violet-capped Woodnymph, Spot-backed and Tufted Antshrikes, Spot-breasted Antwren, Ferruginous Antbird, Black-billed Scythebill, Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, Pin-tailed Manakin and Brazilian Tanager. *Night in Boa Nova.*

November 19th (Day 3): Boa Nova and travel to Chapada Diamantina.

We have another morning in Boa Nova before we depart on the long drive (ca. 6 hours) to the Chapada Diamantina, a spectacular range of mostly flat-topped mountains in a convergence zone between the caatinga, cerrado, and Atlantic forest biomes. If we arrive in time, we may do some late afternoon birding in the rocky, brushy cerrado habitat near the town of Mucugê, where we can look for the endemic Sincora Antwren. We spend the night in a family-run hotel on a cobblestoned street in the scenic colonial town of Mucugê. *Night in Mucugê.*

November 20th (Day 4): Chapada Diamantina

Today we shall focus our efforts on several areas of remnant cerrado savannas on the western flank of the Chapada Diamantina, looking for cerrado specialties not expected elsewhere on this itinerary, including the likes of Horned Sungem, Collared Crescentchest, Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant, White-eared Puffbird, White-rumped Tanager, and others. Nearby dry forests host a number of birds endemic to the arid caatinga habitat that dominates a large portion of north-eastern Brazil, including White-browed Antpitta, Great Xenops, Cactus Parakeet and Silvery-cheeked Antshrike. We shall make a special effort to search for the micro-endemic Diamantina Tapaculo in dense riverine thickets along the southwestern edge of Chapada Diamantina. *Night in Mucugê.*

November 21st (Day 5): Chapada Diamantina.

We have a full day to explore the northern reaches of the Chapada Diamantina. There is no doubt that the star bird in the region is the amazing Hooded Visorbearer, a spectacular hummingbird with an evocative name that lives in a breathtakingly scenic area. In the same area as the visorbearer we will look for Pale-throated Serra-Finch and Gray-backed Tachuri, and elsewhere in the region we'll be searching for São Francisco Sparrow, Broad-tipped Hermit, Great Xenops, Fulvous-crowned Scrub-Tyrant, and Caatinga Antwren. If we haven't already seen it, we shall search for the Sincorá Antwren, a recently described endemic known only from Chapada Diamantina. *Night in Palmeiras or Lençóis.*

November 22nd (Day 6): Travel to Canudos.

Today is mostly a travel day. We depart in the morning to undertake the long drive (ca. 9 hours) north into the remote, arid interior of the state of Bahia. We shall make a few stops for coffee breaks, lunch, and roadside birding (the endemic Pectoral Antwren being a target). In the afternoon we arrive to the tiny town of Canudos, where we stay in a simple hotel. *Night in Canudos.*

November 23rd (Day 7): Lear's Macaws in the Canudos Biological Station.

We'll leave our lodgings well before dawn this morning, heading for the Canudos Biological Station and making the drive over rough tracks to reach the roosting area of the endangered Lear's Macaws. We want to be in position overlooking the roost cliffs before the break of day. Watching a significant percentage of the world population of these spectacular indigo-blue macaws as they begin their day, set in jaw-dropping contrast to the red sandstone cliffs they call home, is a true privilege and the highlight of a trip to North-east Brazil for most visitors. After drinking in the macaw spectacle and doing a bit more birding around Canudos, we continue northbound once again, with another long drive to southern Ceará state, haunt of the Araripe Manakin. *Night in Crato.*

November 24th (Day 8): Araripe Manakin and Chapada do Araripe.

An early start this morning will see us birding in the excellent dry caatinga forest and scrub on the Chapada do Araripe, looking for specialties of the caatinga environments such as Stripe-backed Antbird, Spotted Piculet, White-browed Antpitta, Red-shouldered Spinetail, Gray-headed Spinetail, White-naped Jay, and Great Xenops, along with more widespread birds with a predilection for dry forests, including Black-bellied Antwren, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, Tropical Gnatcatcher and Gray-eyed Greenlet. After the morning heats up, we head for the southeastern flank of the Chapada do Araripe plateau, where a relative abundance of natural springs is the reason for the existence of pockets of humid gallery forest in an area where dry, drought-resistant habitats is the norm. These humid forests are home to one of the world's rarest, most spectacular birds, the Araripe Manakin. Surprisingly, the existence of this unique species was only discovered in 1996, a fact made even harder to believe when one takes a look at the busy amusement park where we go to look for the birds! The manakin is undoubtedly one of the top highlights of North-east Brazil, and it has recently become the face of conservation locally as a figurehead for preservation of the precious springs and the watershed they supply.

The rest of the day is spent driving to Guaramiranga in the Serra do Baturité hills about five hours away to the north. *Night in Guaramiranga.*

November 25th (Day 9): Serra do Baturité.

The humid forests in the hills of the Serra do Baturité are home to an interesting group of endemics and other specialties, including Buff-breasted Tody-Tyrant, Ceará Gnateater, Ochraceous Piculet, Gould's Toucanet, Gray-headed Spinetail, White-browed Guan and Short-tailed Antthrush. Some of these can be found on the forested grounds of our hotel. The star bird in the area is the Critically Endangered endemic Gray-breasted Parakeet, a beautiful parakeet in the *Pyrrhura* genus with a tiny range across several "sky islands", upland enclaves of humid forest found at a couple of sites in central and northern Ceará state in North-east Brazil. *Night in Guaramiranga.*

November 26th (Day 10): Serra do Baturité and travel to Fortaleza.

There should be time for some morning birding before we depart for the city of Fortaleza, where the tour ends in the early afternoon. *End of tour.*