



Brazilian High Altitude Cerrado

Biodiversity in the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park

The Cerrado is the second largest eco-region in Brazil, a tropical savanna formed mainly by grasses, displays a great complexity of local eco-systems. Its biodiversity is considered one of the richest savannas of the world, possessing between 8 and 10 thousand species of vascular plants. The Cerrado trees display sinuous and crooked forms, due to the presence or absence of water and nutrients. The leaves, in general, are deciduous, shedding during the dry season, to prevent the plants loss of water. The leaves are characterized also by their furry, waxy and rough textures.

In the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, a protected area which preserves an important parcel of high altitude Cerrado, more than 1400 species of plants have been identified. There are 139 different grass species, 69 quaresmeira tree species and numerous bromeliads and orchids, many of which are newly discovered. The most common hardwood tree species found in the gallery forests along streams and rivers are Pau d'Arco Roxo (*Tabebuia ipe*), Copahiba (*Copaifera grandifolia*), a Aroeira (*Astronium urundeuva*) e a Tamanqueira (*Stryphnodendron* sp). One also encounters Jerivá (*Arecastrum romanzaffianum*), a Viuvinha (*Jacaranda brasiliana*) and, in the loser áreas, Buritis (*Mauritia* sp) and Babaçu (*Orbignya martiana*) palms. Farther from the riverside gallery forests, in wooded Cerrado areas there are Pau Terra Vermelho (*Qualea multifolia*), Lixeira (*Curatella americana*), Murici rói rói (*Byrsonima cocalsifolia*), field Casheu (*Anacardium* sp) and Mandioqueiras (*Quaiba* spp).

There are many endemic species, those that only occur in the Chapada dos Veadeiros region. This is due to the high altitude Cerrado savannah, with unique ecosystems such as sandy highland field Cerrado with surface rocks (above 900 meters elevation), where there is an abundance of Canela de Ema e Candombá (*Velosiácea* species). Other species (such as bromeliads, orchids, filodendros and antúrios) concentrate in the cracks and crevices of rocks, or even on the surface of the rocks, in the absence of soil. In the rock fields one frequently encounters unique rustic arnica, mandiocão and veludo. There are estimated to be well over 50 rare endemic species, and numerous under threat or already extinct in most other Cerrado regions.

Location and Characteristics:

The Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park is located in the Brazilian central highlands (Planalto Central), in the North-East on the Goiás state, approximately 200km north of Brasília.

The climate is sub-tropical continental, with rains between October and March, and mostly dry during the other months of the year.

Average temperature: 22 degrees centigrade.
Yearly rainfall averages 1,500mm to 1,750mm.

Degree of Difficulty:

Moderate to difficult. To be able to observe the flora of the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, one must be ready to walk trails which vary from 10km to 12km per day. Although the trails are mostly in gently undulating terrain, walking is a little difficult due to irregularities such as depressions, gullies and sharp stones.

Activities:

Walks normally last between six and eight hours, with pauses to observe, photograph, rest and for bathing at the waterfalls. Normally departure is after breakfast, and return from 15:00 hours on.

Accommodation:

The Portal da Chapada hotel, located at a attractive waterfall 8km from the town center, has good infrastructure. Chalés with rustic finish, with TV and Frigo-bar. There is also a restaurant, snack-bar, camping area, game saloon, sauna and waterfall. There is an interpretive ecological trail in the gallery forest, with many tree species identified.

Guides / Transport:

The guides which accompany the group are certified by IBAMA (Federal Environmental agency responsible for the National Park) and registered with the local guide organizations. There are some English-speaking guides with botanical background.

Botanical Trail ***Suggested Programme***

Day 1

Arrival
Transfer to Chapada dos Veadeiros
Check-in at the hotel
Rest for the night

Day 2

Vale da Lua (Valley of the Moon)

09:00h – Leave the hotel – ride 36 km and walk 2 km (there and back), passing first through a fertile mesofítica forest and arriving at the curious Vale da Lua rock formations and the São Miguel river.
16:30 – Return to the hotel

Characteristic Vegetation:

Mesofítica forest, typical of fertile soil which antecedes a large rock formation at the bottom of the valley, through which flows the São Miguel river. On nearing the rock area, the vegetation changes from Mesofítica forest to shrub and grass land.

Day 3

Chapada dos Veadeiros Nacional Park

09:00 – Leave the hotel – drive 36 km and walk a total of 10 km of trail (there and back),
15:00 –Return to the Hotel
17:00 – Lunch at the São Jorge village.

Characteristic Vegetation:

This trail alternates between grass and shrub (campo sujo o campo limpo) and typical woody Cerrado (cerrado sensu strictu) on sandy soil with surface rock formations. There are also gallery forests along the streams and rivers, with humid fields around the gullies.

Day 4

Chapada dos Veadeiros Nacional Park

09:00 – leave the hotel – drive 28 km to the National Park entrance and walk a total of 10 km of trail (there and back),
16:00 – return to the hotel
17:30h – Lunch in Alto Paraíso

Characteristic Vegetation:

This trail alternates between grass fields and shrub (campo sujo o campo limpo) and typical woody Cerrado (cerrado sensu strictu) on sandy soil with surface rock formations. There are also Gallery forests along the streams and rivers, with humid fields around the gullies.

Day 5

Portal da Chapada

09:00 – Leave the hotel – drive 8 km and walk about 3 km in typical Cerrado, humid field and gallery forest
.15:00 – lunch at Portal da Chapada
- Return to Brasília

Characteristic Vegetation:

In this location, practically all the Cerrado eco-systems can be observed: gallery forests, shrub fields, humid fields and surface rock Cerrado.

Locations / Stages:

The program includes transfer in/out from the airport (or hotel) in Brasília, lodging in Alto Paraíso with breakfast and lunch (dinner may be included upon request), tours with local transport, guides, entrance fees and snack kits for the trails.

Program:

The tours are daytime, with departures to the trails after breakfast, and return up to 17:00. The length of time of the tours depends on the group. The trails are chosen with the objective of observing the largest varieties of species possible.

Eventual Alterations:

The original programming may be altered due to:

- Requests from the group.
- Climate and environmental conditions, safety conditions, in the case of flooding rivers, trail closing, wild fire (common in the dry season) – with substitution for an equivalent trail, without with out extra costs to the group.
- Request from the agency for improving or personalizing the routs.

Pre-requisites:

Sufficient physical fitness for moderate to difficult trails, ability to cover rocky or steep trails.

There are no restrooms or snack shops on the trails. The participants must be willing to carry a small pack with water, snack kit, and personal equipment.

Recommended equipment and clothing:

Light cloths for trekking (pants and T-shirts), two pairs of tennis shoes (or hiking boots) with socks, swimming clothes, jacket for night-time, rain coat, hat, 15 liter backpack, water canteen, sun-block UV protection (a priority), insect repellent (for eventual use), personal medication, and photographic equipment.

Additional information:

- Communication – sometimes difficult. At some areas on the trails there is no cell phone reception.
- Drinking water – We recommend using bottled water or chlorine pills for purifying the water.
- Medical care (vaccines) – Although there are no endemic diseases in the region, it is recommended to take vaccinations directed for tourists.
- Options – We recommend that you bring with you enough photographic film or the necessary accessories to download digital cameras (cables and media).

Package includes:

- 5 day / 4 night program:
- transfer in/out and local transfers,
- room and board (5 days)
- tours with bi-lingual guides
- Entrance fees and trail snack kits



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