

Lost World of Mount Roraima

Venezuela

An expedition to see Mount Roraima's amazing "lost world" of unique plants and animals, and some of the most spectacular and unearthly landscapes in South America

Mount Roraima is South America's lost world - a gigantic tableland (locally called a tepui) encircled on all sides by vertical cliffs up to 700 m tall. Towering over the surrounding savannahs and rainforest like an immense fortress above the clouds, Roraima's summit has been isolated for millions of years; it directly inspired Arthur Conan Doyle's story, *The Lost World*. In reality, the mountain truly is home to one of the most striking assemblages of unique animals and plants found anywhere on earth, and many so-called "living fossil" relicts.

Spectacular carnivorous plants (*Heliamphora* pitcher plants, *Drosera* sundews, *Utricularia* bladderworts, *Brocchinia* bromeliads and *Genlisea* corkscrew plants) abound, along with an astounding diversity of orchids, non-carnivorous bromeliads, spectacular airplants and bonsai-like cloud forest. Unique insects (including a primitive weta), endemic reptiles and numerous migratory birds and raptors live within Roraima's lunar landscape of wind-carved stone pinnacles and rock towers. During the ascent, we pass some of the most spectacular scenery in all of South America.

This expedition offers **outstanding opportunities** to photograph birdlife, mammals, insects, orchids, bromeliads, a plethora of carnivorous plants and some of the world's most spectacular scenery.

Optional pre- or post-expedition add-ons that can be arranged include a Scenic Flyover of the Eastern Tepuis in light aircraft (1 day extra) and/or a Scenic Flyover of Angel Falls in light aircraft (1 day extra)!

COST: £2,500 per person for **12 days / 11 nights** (all inclusive from start point to end point).

START POINT: Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, Caracas, Venezuela.

END POINT: Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, Caracas, Venezuela.

EXPEDITION LEADER: Emilio Pérez (experienced tepui mountaineer and expedition leader).

DATES: Subject to demand, two expeditions will run in **2014:** August 20th – September 1st and September 21st - October 2nd.

Email sales@redfernnaturalhistory.com for more information and to make bookings.

LOST WORLD OF MOUNT RORAIMA ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet in Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, meet expedition leader, transfer to Hotel Catimar. Expedition brief over dinner in hotel restaurant. Money exchange service. Overnight in hotel.

Day 2: Early transfer to catch connecting flight to Puerto Ordaz. Transfer to van to travel to Santa Elena (8 hour journey through the Gran Sabana, stopping at viewpoints). Lunch and snacks en route. Dinner in restaurant in Santa Elena. Overnight in Posada (guesthouse hotel).

Day 3: Early breakfast then transfer into 4x4 vehicles for tour of the Gran Sabana. Sites to visit include Jasper Creek (waterfall made of semi-precious red gemstone), Agua Fría Falls, Yuruaní curtain falls, view point for the Eastern Tepuis chain and visits to local Pemón Amerindian villages. Lunch in San Francisco (Pemón village). Offroad journey (1.5 hour) to overnight in huts with beds at Paraitepui de Roraima (charming Pemón village). During the journey we look out for giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*).

Day 4: Sunrise views of Mount Roraima and the Eastern Tepuis chain on the horizon. Breakfast, then organise equipment, porters and guides, and registration at the National Park office. Hike from Paraitepui de Roraima to Kukenán River campsite (12 km, approx 6 hours, relatively flat walking). Pass across open savannah, with patches of rainforest. Dinner at campsite by beautiful river. Overnight in tents.

Day 5: Views of the immense cliffs of Mount Roraima. Early start after breakfast at campsite, followed by a hike from Kukenán River campsite to Base Camp, situated in mossy cloud forest filled with orchids, below the towering, sheer, vertical cliffs of Roraima (9 km, approx 6 hours of steady uphill walking). Lunch along the way. Dinner at campsite. Overnight in tents.

Day 6: After breakfast we hike from Base Camp to the summit of Roraima (2.5 km, approx 4-6 hours of steep, uphill walking). This is the hardest trekking day, but we take our time with frequent rests). Explore the summit area (spectacular rock formations, unique plant life and extraordinary animals), and trek to "Hotels" (Roraima's caves). Lunch along the trek. Dinner at campsite. Overnight in tents inside the caves.

Day 7: After a campside breakfast in the caves, we explore the summit of Mount Roraima. Our guides lead us to the Valley of the Crystals, labyrinths of towering stone pinnacles, Lake Gladys, the Prow, Triple Point (the three way border of Venezuela, Guyana and Brazil) and the Oilbird Ravine (home to rare echolocating oilbird *Steatornis caripensis*). The summit is the habitat for a plethora of orchids (*Epidendrum*, *Octomeria*, *Habenaria* and countless other genera), bromeliads (giant *Brocchinia*), airplants (*Tillandsia*), carnivorous plants (many *Drosera*, *Genlisea*, *Utricularia* and the spectacular carnivorous pitcher plants *Heliamphora nutans* and *Brocchinia reducta*), unique butterflies, and a black and yellow spotted lizard called *Riolama*. We can walk to see the little-seen *H. glabra* and *H. glabra x nutans*. A trek to La Ventana to catch breathtaking views of Kukenán Tepui bathed by the sunset is strongly recommended. Dinner at campsite. Lunch along the way. Dinner at camp and overnight in tents inside caves.

Day 8: Early start to walk to La Ventana to see spectacular sunrise views of Mount Roraima and Kukenán Tepui. Return to camp for breakfast, then the exploration of El Carro view point to see the whole plateau, the Jacuzzis (crystal lined pools), the pit, the valley of a thousand columns, spectacular rock formations, and any sites from yesterday that we did not have time to visit. Lunch along the trek. We watch for the elusive South American coati (*Nasua nasua*). Campside dinner and overnight in tents inside caves. Another chance to see the sunset at La Ventana. Lunch along the trek. Dinner at campsite in caves.

Day 9: Early start after breakfast at campsite followed by descent hike from Roraima's summit to Tók River campsite (11.5 km, approximately 8 hours of downhill walking). Lunch at Base Camp campsite. Dinner at campsite. Overnight in tents.

Day 10: Early start after breakfast at campsite follow by hike from Tók River campsite to Paraitepui de Roraima (12 km, approximately 6 hours of relatively flat walking). Lunch in San Francisco de Yuruaní. Transfer into 4x4s at Paraitepui to return to Santa Elena, dinner at restaurant, overnight in Posada.

Day 11: Early start. Breakfast in Santa Elena, then van transfer to Puerto Ordaz (approximately 8 hours). Lunch along the way. Catch connecting flights from Puerto Ordaz to Caracas. Overnight at Hotel Catimar and dinner in hotel restaurant.

Day 12: Breakfast, then transfer from Hotel Catimar to Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport for departing flights.



Highlights of the **Lost World of Mount Roraima Expedition**
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