

5. THE CENTRAL WEST REGION

The Central West region comprises the inland states of Goias, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, and the Federal District of Brasilia - 18,86% of Brazil's total area. The Central West region's main features are:

- * The three hydro graphic basins of the Araguaia, Parana and Paraguay Rivers.
- * The Pantanal Marshlands, a 130.000 sq km flooding plain, one of the largest ecological reserves on the planet, a magic scenery of greens and flowers, flocks of colorful birds, rare animal species such as peccaries, jaguars, lynxes, wild boars and others, besides the most varied types of water life like Cayman alligators, piranhas and uncountable fish species.
- * The Amazon Jungle in its North part.
- * The Cerrado scrubland with twisted trees and profusion of colours dominating the rest of the region.
- * The Central Brazilian Plateau, a vast plain land with elevations flat on the top, called Chapadas.
- * The Chapada dos Guimaraes Plateau, a huge rock wall, featuring canyons, magnificent rock formations and waterfalls.
- * Brasilia, the futuristic capital do Brazil, the largest and most interesting of the world's planned city. Very small towns, except for Brasilia and some four middle size ones.
- * Huge cattle ranches, Indian Reservations. Very scarce population, basically a mixture of whites and Indians, leading a very frontier-like life.
- * Simple and savoury cuisine, based on freshwater fish, meat, rice, manioc flour and beans.
- * Very rich craftsmanship featuring Indian art crafts and leather effects.
- * Flooding in the Pantanal is from December to March (fishing season), drier is from May to November (high season for animal spotting and photo safaris, but fishing forbidden).
- * Comfortable farm hotels in the Pantanal, good hotels in the main cities and sophisticated hotels in Brasilia. Wonderful tourist possibilities in the Pantanal, as wildlife spotting, bird watching, photo safaris and fishing.

The main cities are Cuiaba, Brasilia and Campo Grande, which are also the gateways to the region, linked to the main Brazilian cities by regular flights. Due to the long distances and to the poor road conditions in the Pantanal Marshlands, it is not recommendable to travel to the region by land.

5.1. CUIABA



Capital of the State of Mato Grosso, with a population of 550.562 inhabitants (2009 census), Cuiaba lies between the Amazon Forest on the North and the flooding plain scrubland on the South, being the natural Southern gateway to the jungle and the Northern gateway to the Pantanal Marshlands. Cuiaba also hosts the Geodesic Centre of South America. Today it's a very important staging point for thousands of pioneers who come from the South looking for land in the newly created states of Acre and Rondonia in the western Amazon. The city itself is surrounded by farmlands that produce soybeans, rice, corn and fruits. But the most important economical feature is the cattle ranches that have been expanding largely in the area. Tourism has also been lately a development factor. Since the Pantanal got more known as an outstanding tourist destination, people from all over the world head to Cuiaba, the natural gateway to the Northern part of the Marshlands.

Cuiaba - Excursions

Half Day City Tour of Cuiabá (approx. 3 hours)

During the half day city tour of Cuiabá, you will be visiting Cuiaba's main tourist points such as the Artefact House, the Fish Market, the Guarana House, the Indian Museum and the Sao Benedito Chapel.

5.2. BRASILIA



Capital of Brazil, with a population of 2.606.885 inhabitants, (2009 census), Brasilia lies in Goias State, on the Central Brazilian Plateau. Called the “Capital of Hope”, its construction represented the supreme example of the modern movement in Brazilian’s 1960’s architecture and is considered as one of the 20th century’s most important milestones in architecture and city planning, declared by UNESCO as one of Mankind’s Cultural Landmarks. Brasilia’s master plan has a shape of an airplane. The body of the airplane is called Eixo

Monumental (Monumental Axis). The “fuselage” holds the Square of the Three Powers, with the National Congress, the Presidential Planalto Palace and the Palace of Justice. The other public buildings are lined along the Eixo Monumental. The two wings, North and South, house the residential blocks, lined along the Eixo Rodoviario (Road Axis). Commercial areas are located in the two axis’ intersection. There are also parks and the large manmade Lake Paranoa.

Brasilia - Excursions

City Tour of Brasilia (approx. 3 hours, daily)

This excursion covers most of Brasilia’s highlights, passing by the little church of Our Lady of Fatima, the residential blocks, Dom Bosco Sanctuary, TV and Radio Tower*, Military Sector with Army’s headquarters, JK Memorial, National Cathedral, Ministries Esplanade, Itamaraty Palace, Square of the Three Powers, Pantheon of Democracy, Lucio Costa’s Cultural Space, Palace of the Dawn (President’s official residence), South Embassies Sector (Nations’ Avenue), JK Bridge.

JK Memorial and Lucio Costa’s Cultural Space are closed on Mondays. Entrance fee not included.

City Tour of Brasilia with lunch (approx. 4 hours, daily)

This excursion covers most of Brasilia’s highlights, passing by the little church of Our Lady of Fatima, the residential blocks, Dom Bosco Sanctuary, TV and Radio Tower*, Military Sector with Army’s headquarters, JK Memorial, National Cathedral, Ministries Esplanade, Itamaraty Palace, Square of the Three Powers, Pantheon of Democracy, Lucio Costa’s Cultural Space, Palace of the Dawn (President’s official residence), South Embassies Sector (Nations’ Avenue), JK Bridge. Lunch is included in a barbecue restaurant.

Beverages are not included.

JK Memorial and Lucio Costa’s Cultural Space are closed on Mondays. Entrance fee not included.

Cultural City Tour of Brasilia (approx. 3 hours, except Monday)

This excursion includes visits to the Central Bank Museum, the Federal Saving Bank Museum, Good Will Temple, Indian Art Museum, JK Memorial and the University of Brasilia.

Visits before 14:00h.

5.3. CAMPO GRANDE



Capital of Mato Grosso do Sul State with 755.107 inhabitants (2009 census), Campo Grande is a young city with a distinct wild-west atmosphere and also a gateway to the Pantanal wilderness. Campo Grande is a busy metropolis, a market centre for the huge cattle raising farmland around. It is a mixture of skyscrapers and cowboy supply shops, of modern city and frontier-like town.

Campo Grande - Excursions

Half Day City Tour of Campo Grande (approx. 3 hours)

Visit to the Dom Bosco Indian's Museum, Federal University Campus, the Three Powers Park, the Indian's free market. Proceed along downtown to visit Artisan's handwork house, ecological sites and regional good stores, "Pensão Pimentel" and the city's gardens. Lunch and entrance fee not included.