



Venezuela is a Latin country with a Caribbean beat and a strong indigenous presence. Jagged, snow-capped Andean mountains shelter quaint Spanish colonial towns, while the indian communities of the Orinoco basin maintain their simple lifestyle. Special attractions include the 'Lost World' of flat-topped tablelands where waterfalls plunge over towering vertical cliffs, the extensive savannah grassland of the *llanos*, with its teeming wildlife, and some lovely Caribbean beaches. Venezuela is a growing adventure activity destination with horse-riding, mountain-biking and canoeing opportunities. There's a comprehensive road network, or you can travel using the frequent short domestic flights.

Venezuela at a glance



1

THE ANDES

This is the most northerly outcrop of the Andean range, with many snowy peaks. There is a variety of scenery from rainforest on the lower slopes up to the highland moors (*páramo*). Situated on a river terrace, Mérida is a good base for visits to the area.



2

THE LLANOS PRAIRIES

Lying between the virgin jungle of the Orinoco Delta and the Andes in the west is an area of rich grasslands, cattle-raising territory which is a haven for wildlife. There are a series of comfortable lodges, or *hatos*, where you can base yourself for a relaxing stay.



3

CARIBBEAN COAST

The heavily indented coastline harbours a number of beautiful palm-fringed beaches. On the sandy coral reef archipelago of Los Roques there are facilities for water-based activities.



5

THE TABLELANDS OF THE GRAN SABANA

Angel Falls can be viewed from the air or from a boat at the foot. It plunges 979m over the lip of one of the table-topped mountains that dominate the grasslands of the Venezuelan veldt (the Gran Sabana).



Essentials

Climate

Over half the country enjoys a temperate mountain climate. The coasts are hot and humid. The northwest is arid desert. Most rain falls in summer. Rainy season May–November.

Festivals

Carnival 12–16 February 2010;
Semana Santa/Easter 28 March–04 April 2010;
Dancing devils of Yare/Corpus Christi, 03 June 2010.

Travelling from UK

Time difference (GMT) -6hrs
Travel time 11½hrs



4

THE ORINOCO DELTA

The network of waterways of the Orinoco Delta is home to the Warao indians. Visit this remote area from Tucupita or one of a number of remote lodges.



Highlights of Venezuela

15 days, 13 nights

Caracas 1 night, Canaima 2n, Orinoco Delta 2n, Mérida 3n, Andean countryside hotel 1n, *hato* (cattle ranch) 3n, Caracas 1n.

Day 1 Fly to the capital, **Caracas**.

Day 2 Fly to **Canaima National Park** for a 2 night stay.

Day 3 The climax of a visit here is the view of the **Angel Falls** (optional excursion).

Day 4 Fly to **Puerto Ordaz** and travel by road and boat to a basic lodge in the **Orinoco Delta** (p65).

Day 5 Excursions offered include river trips, visits to indian villages, bird-watching and piranha fishing.

Day 6 Fly from Maturín via Caracas to el Vigía airport and drive to **Mérida**, Andean university town.

Day 7 Visit the quaint colonial Andean village of **Jají** and continue to the coffee plantation at Hacienda La Victoria, with its small museum.

Day 8 At leisure. There are plenty of outdoor activities: trekking, horse-riding, mountain-biking and paragliding are all available locally.

Day 9 Drive to **Hotel Los Frailes**, a converted 17th century monastery in the high *páramo* moorlands, spending the day visiting several Andean villages and the glacier lake of Mucubajén en route.

Day 10 Drive south to the *llanos*—the floodplains of the Orinoco. Accommodation is on a working cattle ranch, **Hato El Cedral**.

Days 11&12 Guided excursions by jeep or boat through the *llanos*.

Day 13 Drive to Barinas airport and fly to **Caracas**.

Day 14 Fly to the UK, arriving **day 15**.

Prices from £2,203pp based on two sharing, excluding transatlantic flights.

→ Regular departures from the UK



HOW ABOUT?

» A beach wind-down on the Caribbean islands of **Los Roques, Paria Peninsula** (p64) or at **Coro** (p64).

Gran Sabana and the coast

The ancient sheer-walled *tepuys* of the **Gran Sabana** are known as the 'Lost World' with a nod to Arthur Conan Doyle's adventure story. Here, the **Angel Falls**, plunging over a vertical cliff in a single veil of spray, is the centre of attraction. Even some of the towns have a frontier feel: prospectors gather in hope of riches from the vast mineral-rich veins of rock. But for the visitor it is the horizon-bending landscape of sun-swept grasslands, waterfalls and black lagoons fringed with pink sands which supplies the treasure.

Arrive at **Canaima** by air, and spend the night in a simple lodge. You can either fly over the Falls by light aircraft (in good weather) or travel upstream by dugout motorised canoe to the foot of the cataract from where it's an hour's walk through rainforest to the viewpoint. After a night spent in hammocks, return to Canaima.

Follow your adventure with a few days on the **Caribbean coast**. West of Caracas, the capital, there are pretty colonial towns, such as **Coro** (stay at **Granja el Ojito**), and beaches lapped by deep-turquoise waters. East of the capital, the beautiful **Paria peninsula** is virtually undiscovered by tourism, its secret coves accessible by boat. If you'd prefer an island stay, **Los Roques**—42 sun-bleached sandy cayes and over 300 islets embraced by a coral reef—beckon snorkellers, divers and those looking just to swing in a hammock. There are a number of small and homely guesthouses on Gran Roque.



DOMINIC HAMILTON



CONCORD VERDE

imagine...

LOST WORLD PLATEAU TREK

*Budding Indiana Jones? The trek up **Roraima** is considered one of the most compelling on the continent. It's remote: camping under a star-brilliant sky is the only option. Hike across rolling grasslands, fording streams, aided by ropes as the savannah rises steadily towards the base of the table-top. Climb through rainforest gripping the mountain walls, picking your way through luxuriant flora, sheltering from waterfalls above. Explore the surface of the plateau, an otherworldly land of huge rocks, water and endemic wildlife.*



Hato Piñero is truly a small piece of paradise and, if heaven is not as good, God please let me ascend to Hato Piñero... with my partner and my dogs.

AW, County Cork



HATO PIÑERO

Wildlife Venezuela—the Orinoco and Los Llanos

South of the **River Orinoco**, half of the territory of Venezuela consists of barely populated wilderness: the river's immense delta (now a **Unesco World Biosphere Reserve**) where indigenous tribes live simply on the banks of the spider's web of dark, sluggish waterways; and the blanket of grassland prairies (*llanos*), with vast cattle ranches patrolled by cowboys on horseback.

Accommodation at lodges deep in the delta wilderness consists of simple wooden cabins with basic facilities, constructed in harmony with the environment and the riverside dwellers' pace and style of life. At **Mis Palafitos**, **Bujana** or **Orinoco Delta Lodge** the guides offer walking excursions and activities including canoe trips, bird-watching and piranha-fishing—it's an authentic jungle experience.



CONCORD VERDE

Visits to **Los Llanos** are most popularly centred around a stay on a *hato*, or working ranch—the seasonally flooded open savannahs are used for cattle pasture. However, they are *de facto* nature reserves.

The ranches at **Hato El Cedral** and **Hato Piñero** have many different types of wildlife habitat, and the list of mammals and reptiles spotted includes rarities—jaguars, giant otters, and tapirs—and the more common capybaras, caimans and howler monkeys. Some 200 species of birds have been identified. The only planned activities are observation of the flora and fauna, by boat, horseback, truck or on foot.

Below Drifting down the Orinoco River.



JOHANNES WELLMERS

Orinoco discovery

10 days, 8 nights

Caracas 1 night, lodge in Orinoco Delta 3n, Paria Peninsula 3n, Caracas 1n.

Day 1 Fly to **Caracas**, arriving same evening, transfer to hotel in Macuto on the Caribbean coast.
Day 2 Travel by air, road and boat to reach your lodge in the **Orinoco Delta**.
Days 3&4 Savour the simple life of the jungle from your hammock and on guided excursions.
Day 5 Travel to the rustic **Posada Playa de Uva** on the **Paria Peninsula**, with private beach and pool.
Day 6 By private boat to Playa Medina, one of the peninsula's most exquisite beaches.
Day 7 Excursion inland to visit a cacao plantation at Bukaré and the thermal springs at **Agua Sana**.
Day 8 Afternoon return to Caracas.
Day 9 Fly to the UK, arriving **day 10**.

Prices from £1,172pp based on two sharing, excluding transatlantic flights.

✈ Regular departures from the UK



Los Llanos safari and beach wind-down

10 days, 8 nights

Caracas 1 night, *hato* (ranch) in Los Llanos 3n, Los Roques islands 3n, Caracas 1n.

Day 1 Fly to **Caracas**, arriving same evening, transfer to hotel in Macuto on the Caribbean coast.
Day 2 By air and road or by road only to **Hato El Cedral** in **Los Llanos**. Accommodation is in rustic-style ranch-house or cabins. A visit combines experiencing 'llanero' cowboy culture at close quarters with some of Latin America's most rewarding wildlife viewing.
Days 3&4 Guided excursions into the countryside.
Day 5 Return to Caracas and fly to **Gran Roque** in the Los Roques archipelago.
Days 6&7 Based at a barefoot family-run posada, you'll have the opportunity to swing in a hammock in mango-tree shaded gardens, explore the sun-drenched beaches and other islands, or participate in water sports such as snorkelling.
Day 8 Return to Caracas.
Day 9 Fly to the UK, arriving **day 10**.

Prices from £1,246pp based on two sharing, excluding transatlantic flights.

✈ Regular departures from the UK