

Venezuela

Angel Falls and Ghost Cave expedition



Experience the diversity of little known Venezuela in this epic month-long expedition as we travel to some of the most remote regions of the country. We embark on a breath taking 11 day trek & 3 days in canoes, as we journey to the edge of the explored world. We'll visit the awe-inspiring Angel Falls and trek to the Cave of Ghosts - a truly spectacular cave hidden deep in the jungle that was only discovered in the last decade. Our journey continues as we spend time in a working ranch followed by a 4 day community project culminating in some well-earned R & R on the Caribbean Coast. Warning: this expedition is for adventurous



Recommended itinerary:

Culture shock rating:



Physical rating:



Days 1-3: Arrive Caracas transfer to Colonia Tovar. Upon arrival at Caracas we will be met and transferred to the cloud forest town of Colonia Tovar. Over the next two days we will be harvesting, preparing and packaging the food that we will need whilst trekking. With the help of our guide we will be taught how to harvest the right vegetables and prepare them so they are made into dehydrated food. The process takes a while but when we are on the trek enjoying our dinner that we prepared ourselves, the taste will be very rewarding.

Day 4: Drive from Colonia Tovar to Ciudad Bolivar. Followed by a tour of this historical city.

Day 5: Fly and trek to Uruyen Canyon. This morning we split into small groups and take the 5 seater light aircraft to Uruyen. During the flight it will be possible to see the back waters of the Guri Dam and the open cast mine of Cerro Bolivar, one of the world's richest iron ore deposits. As we fly over the Paragua River, the bare plains change to tropical jungle. We may spot macaws flying in pairs before our first sight of the Table Mountains. As the plane follows the course of the Carrao River, we can hopefully catch sight of the beautiful waterfalls plunging into Canaima Lagoon. The walls of Auyantepui loom up ahead and as we get closer we see the castle like towers and crevices of this ancient structure. We soon land in the valley of Kamarata, home to our hosts, the Kamaracoto Indians of the Pemón tribe. Uruyen is a village built of typical Indian huts called Churutas where we will sleep. The village is nestled right in front of the mighty Auyantepui. This afternoon we will take an exhilarating day hike to Uruyen Canyon, hiking across savannah, jungle and, finally, swimming across the river to access the canyon.

Day 6: Trek to Guarayaca. With the aid of the porters and guides, we cross rivers and enter a beautiful jungle ringed savannah at the foothills of Auyantepui. From here we begin the hike up a very, very steep hill to our beautiful campsite at Guarayaca. Located next to a brook surrounded by trees, our guides prepare a delicious meal whilst we listen to stories of Indian legends and past exploits.

Day 7: Guarayaca To El Peñon. We have an early start as we begin one of the longest days of the trip and reach an altitude of 1500 metres. The trail takes us across marshland, which is home to at least two species of insectivorous plants. We have a well-deserved lunch stop on a small plain before continuing on with the hike uphill. We are now on the mountain's upper talus slope and will soon arrive at our second night's campsite, El Peñon, one of the oldest rocks on the planet at over two thousand million years old. Once again there is a cascading mountain stream nearby where we can have an invigorating swim.

Day 8: Ascent to El Libertador. Today is the steepest day of the hike, with a steep muddy trail leading us up to the very base of the sheer cliff. There are five fixed ropes, which we use to aid our ascent. The dizzying views across the plain far below and echoes of every sound we make add to the adventure as we go through a maze like area of underground chambers and emerge onto the incredible summit of Auyantepui.

Day 9: Summit Nature Hikes. Today we take a couple of short nature hikes and enjoy seeing orchids, bromeliads, and all kinds of wonderful plant life. There is also time for swimming and soaking up the atmosphere of this ancient 'Lost World'.

Day 10: Descend to El Peñon. Once we are ready, we make the descent to El Peñon by following the same route we used to ascend.

Day 11- 14: A three day trek from Penon to Cueva del Fantasma. On day 14, we spend the morning exploring the stunning Cueva del Fantasma, a cave so large that two helicopters can fly into it and land next to the waterfall (see if you can spot them on the image below - top right). Along the way keep an eye out for the unique and unspoilt flora and fauna that thrive in this remote area located in one of the most biologically rich and geologically ancient parts of the world.

Days 15 – 17: Cueva del Fantasma – Uruyen. Over the next few days we trek back to Uruyen.

Day 18: Angel Falls Canoe Trip. After breakfast we head to the Akanan River to start our exciting canoe trip to Angel Falls. This is a unique and exciting experience as we take our time to enjoy the natural beauty surrounding us. The trip should take about 6 hours to reach the camp at Iwana, on the banks of the Akanan River, surrounded by jungle and the 'Tepuis'.

Day 19: Dugout canoe trip to Arenal. We ride the curiara (dugout canoe) for the first part of the morning before continuing on foot along the savannah. Along the way we have the chance to see Amauray tepuy and Auyantepui from a different perspective. We then meet the canoes again and continue along the river to our camp for the night at Arenal.

Day 20: To Angel Falls base camp and white water canoeing! Today we leave the Carrao River and enter the Devils canyon. The trees crowd into the river and the master Kamaracoto boatmen will leave you breathless and applauding as they negotiate what look like impossible rock barriers in the foaming current. We finally arrive at Ratoncito Island at the base of the falls where we will camp. We take a stroll to Laime's lookout, where the world's highest waterfall looms directly above - a truly unforgettable and awesome sight. Conditions permitting we can take a swim in a pool at the base of the falls.

Day 21: Angel Falls to Canaima followed by flying to Ciudad Bolivar. This morning we set off downstream from Ratoncito and then hurtle down to the Carrao River. We then transfer to the village of Canaima where we will board our plane to Ciudad Bolivar and overnight in a 3 star hotel with a swimming pool. A (very) well-deserved hot shower awaits us. The evening is free time for us to explore and/or enjoy the luxury of a hotel!

Day 22: Flight to Caracas, flight to Barinas, transfer to Canafistola Ranch. At the crack of dawn we catch the flight to Caracas and change to the Cessna charter flight to Barinas. Here we will transfer by road to the game ranch. Depending on traffic we will be arriving into the ranch just before dusk so will be able to see incredible scenes of roosting birdlife and may even spot the nocturnal wildlife beginning to stir, such as the giant anteater and, very rarely, one of the big cats.

Day 23: Canafistola Ranch Safari. This morning we will have a combined four wheel drive and river boat safari to explore the area. Here we can expect to see anacondas, caiman, dolphin, giant otter, giant anteater, capybara, piranhas, jabiru storks, fish eagles, mata mata turtle (*Chelus fimbriatus*), and many others.

Days 24 – 27: Community project work. We transfer to the area of Modulos, home to amazing wildlife and a community school that caters for students from pre-school to sixth grade. We will support the school by working on a project that will be decided closer to the time of departure.

Day 28: Barinas to Caracas to Chichirivichi de la Costa. We say farewell to the community in Modulos and transfer to Barinas where we board the commercial plane to Caracas. On arrival in Caracas we are met and transferred by private vehicle to Chichirivichi de la Costa, with its pristine Caribbean coastline. This afternoon is free to enjoy this stunning area and relax on the beach.

Day 29: Caribbean Coast at Chichirivichi. Today is free to enjoy this coastal paradise. We can snorkel or swim or simply relax. The perfect way to end an amazing adventure.

Days 30/31: Transfer to Caracas and depart for the UK, arriving on day 31.

Important information: This is an extremely demanding expedition - the toughest in our portfolio. You should be prepared for long periods with very basic facilities and tough, physical trekking in testing jungle conditions. It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes or natural events, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some changes.



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