



Barba Azul Nature Reserve

Asociación Armonía

Asociación Armonía is the leading non-profit bird conservation NGO of Bolivia, whose mission is to protect the most threatened Avifauna through education, improved livelihood, scientific research and reserve creation.

Armonía works on multiple conservation programs all over Bolivia that combines environmental protection with improved livelihood. Through land protection, more than 11,681 ha of Endangered ecosystems with their interdependent animal and plant life have been safeguarded. Check out the Armonía website for further information on our projects: www.armoniabolivia.org

Barba Azul Nature Reserve

One of Armonía's main project is the Barba Azul Nature Reserve, the only private reserve protecting the Endangered Beni savanna ecosystem. This hyper-seasonal savanna eco-region, combined with raised forest islands, is characterized by 8 months of flooding followed by a severe dry period. It is the habitat of the endemic and Critically Endangered Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*). Between 400 and 450 individuals are left in the wild, of which up to 155 forage at Barba Azul, making this reserve population the stronghold for the species. Not only is it important for the macaws, but Barba Azul also provides refuge for many other threatened birds, mammals and plants.



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Barba
Azul

Highlights of Barba Azul

During the dry season from March until the end of October, Blue-throated Macaws can be seen in high numbers at Barba Azul Nature Reserve. Groups between 30 and 70 can regularly be seen mixed with the more common and abundant Blue-and-yellow Macaw. Mixed flocks of hundreds of Macaws can be observed flying to their roosting sites in the late afternoon.

The reserve is home to 354 bird species (Ebird.org/hotspot/L1133586), with the record of 179 birds seen in a single day (September). The tall grasses of the reserve protect rare savanna species, like the Cock-tailed Tyrant, Sharp-tailed Tyrant and Black-masked Finch, as well as abundant populations of the Near Threatened Orinoco Goose, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Greater Rhea.

The reserve is also a safe haven for Jaguars, Pumas, Maned Wolves, Ocelots, Giant Anteaters and Black Howler Monkeys to name just a few of the impressive mammal species that are found here. Mornings at Barba Azul are usually highlighted with the incredible wake-up calls from the Black Howler Monkeys, making it a true wild experience.

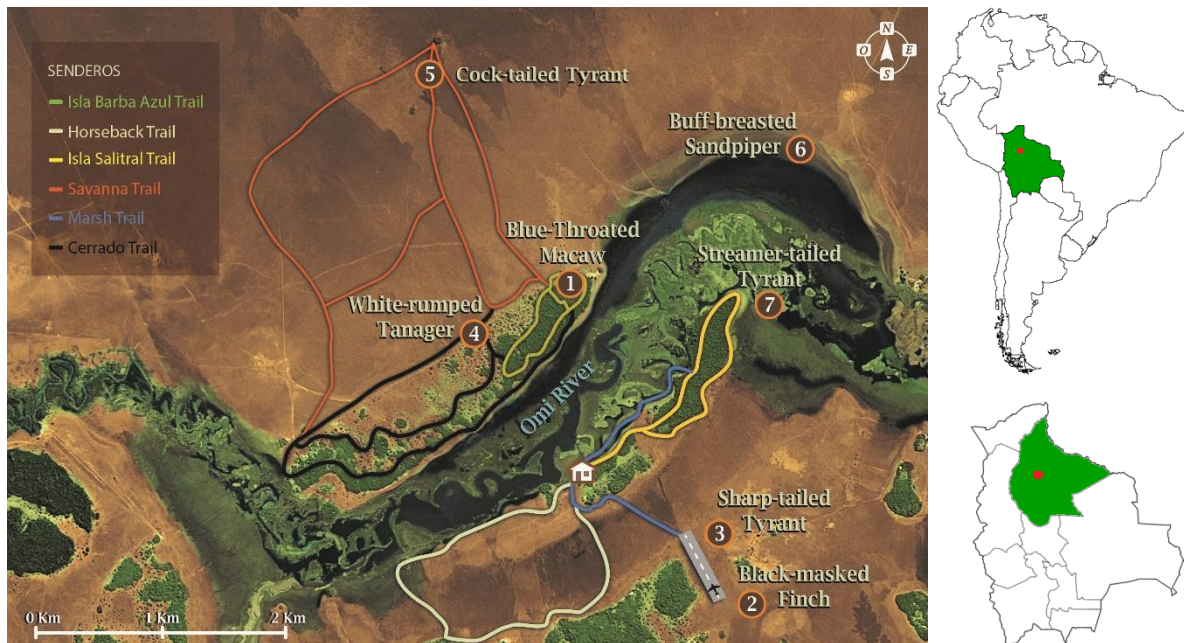




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Location

Barba Azul Nature Reserve is located in the heart of the Beni Department in Bolivia and encompasses 11,000 ha (27,180 acres). Barba Azul sustains a large variety of savanna, cerrado, gallery forest, palm forest island, marsh and river habitat. Each habitat type has extensive trail systems to explore the local biodiversity.



Weather conditions

The wet season is from November until May (flooding can continue until July). During this period the savanna habitat will be flooded and you can expect rain at least once every two days. This is also part of the southern summer and day temperatures can reach 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit). The dry season is from May until November with average day temperatures 28-30 Celsius (82-86 Fahrenheit), but during this period 2-3 day cold fronts can reach the reserve unpredictably, bringing the temperature down to 12-18 Celsius.



Activities

Birdwatching

Barba Azul is home to 354 confirmed bird species of which many can easily be spotted and photographed. Early morning birding is advised as forest, savanna and cerrado birds are mainly active in the morning. Water and marsh birds can be observed throughout the day.



Boat trips

Water and marsh wildlife is best observed from the water. Barba Azul Nature Reserve has a 5-person boat with a silent outboard motor to enjoy the amazing wildlife from the water.



Horseback riding

The extensive savanna and cerrado habitat can also be explored on horseback. Three beautiful and tame horses will ensure an amazing Beni outdoor experience. (please check for availability)



Walking Trails

We have a system of easily accessible trails, however, we recommend the company of a guide that will assist you to reach the most beautiful locations of the reserve to ensure the full wildlife experience that Barba Azul has to offer. Professional English-speaking bird guides have to be arranged separately.



Accommodation

Rustic Cabins

Barba Azul has 4 rustic cabins with two comfortable beds and a private bathroom overlooking the stunning Omi river with a high abundance of marsh and water birds. Enjoy the natural wake-up call from Black Howler Monkeys in the morning. Exceptionally, groups of up to 16 people could be received depending on the availability, please contact our staff for more information.



Dining Facility

Breakfast, lunch and dinner is served in the dining facility at any hour of preference. In coordination with the field house manager early morning breakfast can be arranged. Hammocks are available to relax after a long day of hiking and wildlife watching.



Barba Azul Biological Station

The Biological station has the capacity of 8 people in 4 shared bedrooms with 2 shared bathrooms. The Biological station is used by visiting researchers who study the Barba Azul ecosystem, though can be used by tourists when arriving in large groups.





Package for visiting Barba Azul Nature Reserve

The package for visiting Barba Azul Nature Reserve is 600 USD per person for a 3 night/4 day stay. Additional nights are 200 USD per person per night. Visitors that are keen on photography are advised to stay 4 nights to fully enjoy and explore the wide variety of wildlife at Barba Azul.

The package includes lodging, three meals a day, boat rides over the river Omi and horseback riding (depending on availability). These prices don't include transportation to and from the reserve, tour guide and alcoholic beverages.

Local transportation to and from Barba Azul Nature Reserve

Barba Azul Nature Reserve is best reached by air. Local transportation to and from the reserve has to be arranged with local air charters from Trinidad or Santa Ana de Yacuma.

Flights from Trinidad range around US\$1,750 return flight for five people (500 kg max weight).

You can also fly from Santa Ana de Yacuma in other local less regulated less-expensive flights, but we do not recommend them. Please speak with our staff for more information on these flights.

Also, Armonia charters flights to the reserve on occasion where we could sell a few seats on the plane. Again speak to our tourism staff to see if this might be possible to coordinate a shared flight.

During the dry season you can reach Barba Azul from Santa Ana de Yacuma by car (4X4) and takes approximately 6-8 hours one way trip costing around 900 USD ,round trip.

Flying through the Beni savanna gives you a unique perspective of this beautiful habitat. Keep an eye out for the pre-Colombian agricultural fields that shape this landscape.





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For your information

Barba Azul has an amazing variety of wildlife year-round where every season is unique. Check E-bird for seasonal bird diversity (Ebird.org/hotspot/L1133586). From March to September is the best time of the year to see extreme large numbers of Blue-throated Macaws with peaks of over 150 individuals. As the Macaw breed outside the protected boundaries of the reserve from November to February, they become difficult to spot as only few individuals stick around.

Be aware

You will be in a hot tropical climate where you can expect many bugs and critters like mosquitos, ticks, spiders and chiggers. This is to warn you as some people can react strongly and even be allergic to insect bites. There are no tick vector diseases in Beni like lymes disease. Make sure you bring repellent and anti-histamines to be prepared for sudden and unexpected physical reactions. It is also advisable to wear long trousers and long sleeves to prevent extensive bites. Rubber boots (or insecticed sprayed socks) can prevent most problems with ticks and chiggers.

Hiking in savanna and cerrado habitat can be difficult as there is little shade to protect you from the sun. Make sure you come well prepared with sunscreen, wide brimmed hat and other measures to protect you from the heat.

Contact details

Reservations have to be made through the main Asociación Armonía office in Santa Cruz through e-mail or phone.

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