

## NORTH AMAZON ORCHID EXPEDITION GUAINÍA, COLOMBIA



*“Nothing compares with the beauty of the Atabapo River” - Humboldt, 1802*

The Department of Guainía, Colombia occupies a unique location in South America. Lying at the northern edge of the Amazon biome, the region comprises a diverse mosaic of ecosystems in the transition towards the savannahs of the Orinoco watershed. This area was explored by Alexander von Humboldt in 1802, and, when he mapped the star-like radiation of tributaries of the mid-Orinoco River, he named it the ‘Southern River Star’. Guainía is known locally as the ‘Land of Many Waters’, and is now an internationally recognized Ramsar wetland protected area.

Guainía is also a paradise for orchid enthusiasts. The well-preserved forests contain a spectacular array of warm-growing epiphytic orchid species, such as *Aganisia cyanae*, *Cattleya violaceae*, *Caularthron bicornutum*, *Stanhopea candida* and *Scuticaria steelei*. Terrestrial species include species of *Catasetum*, *Sobralia* and *Epidendrum*. All these orchids are hard to see in cultivation, let alone *in situ*.

During this tour, we will explore the rivers and flooded forests to observe orchids in their natural habitat. Members of the Puinave and Curripaco indigenous communities will lead us through their territories to see these forest treasures, sharing with us the orchid gardens they are cultivating, as well as their traditional cultural practices, and sacred places. Opportunities for bird and other wildlife watching are also plentiful. The tour will be expertly led by Hugo Mateus of North Amazon Travel, drawing on his decades of experience working with the local communities in Guainía to conserve the biological and cultural diversity of the region.



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NORTH AMAZON TRAVEL Y HBC. RNT.50427

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## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1

You will arrive by plane from Bogotá to Inírida, the small and welcoming capital of Guainía. After lunch you will tour nearby savannahs where you can see the unique 'Inírida Flower' - the species *Guacamaya superba* & *Schoenocephalum teretifolium* (Rapateaceae).

### DAY 2

Starting early, we will travel up the Inírida River. *Cattleya violacea* is a common sight along the forested riverbanks, and the pink river dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*) is frequently seen. The majestic Mavecure tepuis will slowly come into view over our 2 hour trip, as we arrive at the Puinave indigenous community, Remanso, nestled at the foot of the highest tepui. We will visit the community orchid garden, and take a walk around the tepuis, where we may see species of *Cyrtopodium*, *Catsetum* and *Prosthechea*. We will be hosted for this night in the community.

### DAY 3

We will make an early ascent of the Mavecure Tepui. On this trek we will see *Epidendrum*, *Sobralia*, and *Polystachya* as well as Pleurothalidinae. From the summit you can enjoy the spectacular view of the two further tepui peaks, and of the Inírida River snaking through the forest to the horizon. After lunch, we will boat through the breathtaking river canyon between the Mavecure tepuis, and then return to Inírida.

### DAY 4

In the community of Caranacoa we will take large canoes to explore a network of waterways where we may see genera such as *Brassavola*, *Caularthrum*, *Eriopsis*, and *Galeandra*. This outing also offers fabulous opportunities for bird watching. In the afternoon we will visit the community orchid garden, and trek to see a magnificent population of *Catsetum x roseo-album*.

### DAY 5

Returning to Caranacoa, in small canoes we will enter the awe-inspiring flooded forest. Species to be seen here include *Aganisia cyanae*, *Batemannia colleyi* as well as multiple *Maxillaria* and miniature species. If time allows we may continue on foot to visit a sacred indigenous site. Once again, we will have fabulous opportunities for bird watching.



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**DAY 6**

Heading downriver we will reach the mighty Orinoco, and the Southern River Star. We will navigate into a smaller tributary to see orchids, birds, and dolphins at close quarters. *Cattleya violacea*, *Prosthechea fragrans*, and *Catasetum pileatum* are just some of the species we may see. Returning up river we will continue into the Atabapo River, to stay the night in the Curripaco community of Chaquita.

**DAY 7**

In Chaquita we will again explore a flooded forest in canoe to see a spectacular population of *Scuticaria steelei*. Before our return to Inírida, there will be time to visit the community orchid garden, and bathe in the pristine tannin-laden river.

**DAY 8**

After breakfast, you will have time to explore a number of handicraft stores before your flight back to Bogotá.

**THE COST OF THIS TOUR INCLUDES:**

**Medical Travel Insurance in Guainía.** All transport costs initiating and terminating in Bogotá Airport T2: Return air ticket Bogotá—Inírida with Satena. In Inírida, airport transfers and transfers hotel to river port. All river transport, with the necessary safety and first aid precautions. **Accommodation for seven nights:** Five nights in the hotel 'Cabaña Guaniana' in Inírida in en-suite rooms. Two nights will be spent in the indigenous communities. **Food:** Three meals a day plus snacks, including lunch on day of arrival, and breakfast on day of departure. Drinking water provided at all times, and all food and drinks prepared with treated water. **Local expert guides.** Fee to the local communities for allowing us to enter their territories. **NOT INCLUDED: Tips, alcoholic drinks.**

**COST PER PERSON: COP\$3,600,000 (USD\$1,150),** for a minimum number of 10 people. For fewer than 10 people the cost per person will be adjusted.

**PAYMENT:** Payment of 50% is required 60 days prior to the start date. With full payment 5 days before the tour. **PAYMENT IS MADE TO:** Cuenta Bancolombia ahorros Hugo Alonso Mateus Díaz CC. 13952726, Nro. 763840915-19

At North Amazon Travel & HBC, we are pioneers in ethnic and nature tourism in Guainía and neighbouring regions. All our activities are undertaken in an equitable and responsible manner together with the indigenous and campesino communities in the region. We partner with local communities in building sustainable development plans for livelihood improvement, ensuring that community members receive a fair income from tourism activities in their territories. With a mutually respectful relationship, the communities are willing to share their biodiversity, history and culture with visitors.

We also collaborate with participatory biodiversity research, including a guide to the orchids of Guainía, and the description of a new endemic species, *Vanilla denshikoira*. In 2018, we organized the first international forum for Scientific Tourism in the Northern Amazon, with wide participation from communities and researchers.

**Our mission is threefold: responsibility to our tourist visitors, to the communities that we work with, and to the biodiversity of our unique region.**

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