



# Venezuela

Venezuela is a country of amazing natural beauty from the snow capped peaks of the Andes to wildlife-rich savannahs where table-topped mountains rise vertically from the plains to an abundance of breathtaking waterfalls including the famous Angel Falls. Tourism is still in its infancy and hotels are generally simple and rustic.

## At a glance

- One of the most stunning countries in Latin America
- Superb wildlife observation in Los Llanos
- Dry season - November until May - although country can be visited all year round - most regions are between 28-30 °C. Wet season is the best time to see waterfalls at their best. Try and avoid August, December and Easter when places are crowded with travellers from other countries within Latin America
- Excellent variety of landscapes - Andes mountain range, savannah plains, jungle, desert, Caribbean coastline and beaches
- Angel Falls - the highest waterfall in the world (979 m). Canaima National Park - sixth largest national park in the world
- There are no hotels in Angel Falls. Access is by boat (May-January only) 70 km downriver from Canaima lagoon in wooden dugouts with benches and outboard motor. Overflights of Angel Falls can also be arranged although it is often difficult to get a clear view from the air
- Apart from Margarita island, tourism is still in its infancy. Accommodation is in short supply - simple and rustic posadas and ranches
- When travelling overland into Venezuela a visa is required

## → Getting there

There is a good choice of flights from London Heathrow / Gatwick to Caracas via Europe (Frankfurt, Madrid or Lisbon) - with Lufthansa, Iberia or TAP respectively. Regional departures also available upon request.

Prices from **£2,814** per person for a 10 night itinerary.

## Combinations

Venezuela boasts a variety of landscapes, wildlife and relaxation options and is therefore ideal for a 15-20 day trip. However, for those looking for an extended itinerary Venezuela can be conveniently combined with **Northern Brazil**.

See pages 243-245 for suggested itineraries and prices. See our honest guidelines regarding our holidays to Venezuela on page 242.





## Caracas

A vibrant, cultured and cosmopolitan city, Caracas is located in a valley 900m high up in the Avila mountains yet only 30km from Venezuela's Caribbean coast, resulting in a warm spring climate all year round.

Caracas is a modern city built with oil wealth, so although there are some interesting colonial remains, such as the house where Simón Bolívar was born, the city's major tourist attractions lie in its outstanding museums, galleries, restaurants, nightclubs and live music venues.

It is also a shopper's paradise where designer clothes can be bought at a fraction of their European or American prices. Like most big cities, Caracas also has areas where tourists can be at risk so visitors should follow the advice of our local representatives and hotel staff.

The Venezuelan Government runs a number of programmes to improve access to education, healthcare and other social benefits in deprived communities and those who would like to discover more about these programmes can do so via visits arranged with local cooperatives.



### Embassy Suites

Caracas **BB**

This centrally located hotel is approximately a 1 hour transfer from Caracas international airport (depending on traffic conditions). The hotel has 225 rooms all with air-conditioning, telephone, safe deposit box, TV and mini-bar. Each room has a separate lounge area. There is also a restaurant, bar, small swimming pool, jacuzzi and gym. Excellent value for money.



### Ole Caribe

Nr Airport **BB**

This hotel is conveniently located just 20 minutes from the international airport - ideal for those arriving late in the evening and flying out early the next day. There are 126 spacious rooms all offering air conditioning, TV, safe deposit box, mini-bar and telephone. There is a restaurant, bar, swimming pool, tennis court, jacuzzi, sauna and treatment rooms.



## Orinoco Delta

This is one of the largest deltas in the world, covering an area of over 30,000 sq km (roughly the size of the Netherlands). It is located in the north-east of Venezuela - a vast labyrinth of islands, wild forests, mangrove swamps and channels. The forests include a variety of palms which have provided the staple food for the delta's inhabitants, the Warao Indians, as well as material for their homes, tools and wine-making.

They have been preserved as an ethnic group largely due to the difficulties of travelling and living in the delta. The Warao are skilled craftspeople renowned for their baskets, animal figures and canoes – they live mostly off fishing. They live in traditional huts called 'palafitos' which are open-sided buildings of wood and palm-thatch roofs raised up on stilts on riverbanks.

The climate of the delta is hot and humid, with an average temperature of approximately 27°C throughout the year, although nights can be chilly. The driest

period is from January to March. The water is normally at its lowest in March and highest from August to September when many parts of the delta are flooded. The best time to see the wildlife is in the dry season. In the rainy season, boat travel is easier, but the wildlife disperses and is more difficult to see. Wildlife in the area includes macaws, toucans, monkeys, giant river otter and caiman.

Please note the lodges in this area are very basic (no hot water) and we recommend a stay of 3 nights.



### Orinoco Delta Lodge

Orinoco Delta  including excursions

The lodge is built in typical Warao style in a beautiful and tranquil setting on the banks of Cano Guamal on the delta of the Orinoco river. It has 40 simple rooms with wooden walls and palm roofing. They are equipped with private bathroom (no hot water) and mosquito nets on the door and windows. Some of the rooms are built on stilts over the water. There is electricity in the cabins provided by generator (from sunset until approximately 11 pm). All rooms are connected to the hotel by elevated wooden walkways and suspension bridges which are lined with kerosene lights at night.

The attractive gardens have been landscaped with jungle plants. A large Warao Indian style 'churuata' (hut) is home to the restaurant and bar area.

Access to the lodge is only by boat – Maturin and Puerto Ordaz airports serve as the main gateways (flights from Caracas). Excursions into the jungle such as bird watching, piranha fishing and a visit to the local Indian communities are included.

### Useful Notes

The delta of the Orinoco River is the second largest in South America after the delta of the Amazon River



## Choroni, Mochima National Park and Paria Peninsula

The coast stretches for over 2,000 km from Lake Maracaibo in the west (where oil was first discovered in 1914) to the Paria Peninsula in the east, the tip of which is only a few miles from the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

About four hours west of Caracas, the lively colonial town of Choroni nestles between Henri-Pittier National Park and some palm-fringed beaches. The tiny and sleepy 385-year-old town of Choroni is charming, with just a few narrow streets lined with fine pastel painted houses.

Just beyond Choroni is the fishing village of Puerto Colombia, which was once at the heart of the chocolate-growing region and has now become hip with backpackers. Henri-Pittier is particularly ideal for birdwatchers, with 578 species of birds recorded, representing 43% of all those found in Venezuela.

Further west, you can see the giant dunes at Coro or explore the Morrocoy National Marine Park.

To the east of Caracas is the Mochima National Park made up of a series of small, mostly uninhabited islands with white sandy beaches. This is an ideal place for fishing and snorkelling. It is possible to see whales at the end of January and during the month of February.

The Paria Peninsula is a lush, green landscape of small hills, farms and hamlets. On the northern coast, there are a number of lovely beaches fringed by coconut palms.



### Posada Caribana

Nr Paria Peninsula [FB](#)

Situated on the main boulevard of Avenida Bermudez, in close proximity to Playa Medina beach on the Paria Peninsula. A beautifully restored colonial building, it has 11 simple but comfortable en suite rooms arranged around an interior courtyard.

There is also a small library, comfortable seating areas, restaurant and bar area. The lodge can also arrange excursions to the surrounding area (payable locally).



### Posada Casa de las Garcia

Choroni [BB](#)

Located in a quiet district, this charming, restored colonial house was originally part of a cocoa-producing hacienda. The property boasts a lovely, flower-filled courtyard, gardens and antique furniture throughout.

There are 8 rooms with en suite bathroom and ceiling fans. Breakfast is served in the gardens and a candle-lit dinner in the courtyard can be pre-booked upon request. The property is a 15 minute walk from the fishing village of Puerto Colombia and its large beach. Boat trips can also be taken from here.



### Villa Majagual

Mochima National Park [FB](#)

This enchanting property is located on the private Peninsula, Majagual in the Mochima National Park. The hotel has 12 rustic en suite rooms (in 6 bungalows) with ceiling fans, screened windows and porch area. The dining and social areas are in a split level building, the upper deck of which is with hammocks and a bar with stunning views of the islands.

Meals using local ingredients are served on the terrace. From the sun deck area which extends out over the water, it is possible to snorkel. There is also a pool. A small beach can be found on the peninsula and other remote beaches are accessible by boat. This lodge is ideal for honeymooners and those looking for a peaceful stay. Minimum stay is 2 nights.



Coro



## Morrocoy National Park, Coro and Paraguaná Peninsula

The National Park of Morrocoy encompasses a strip of mainland, and an offshore area dotted with islands, islets and cays. The islands feature white-sand beaches surrounded by coral reefs. The water is so shallow in parts that it is possible to walk between some of the islands! The area is ideal for snorkelling. Adjoining the park is the Cuare Wildlife Sanctuary, created to protect the abundance of marine birdlife – including frigate birds, brown boobies, pelicans, flamingos and herons. We recommend that you avoid the area over the Christmas and New Year period as it is very overcrowded.

Coro is a compact and pleasant city, ideal for leisurely strolls around the cobbled streets. There are many beautiful buildings and shaded plazas. It also has a cultured feel to it, which is primarily due to the presence of a large university.

Coro features some of the best colonial architecture in the whole country and it is also host to some interesting museums. The cathedral in Plaza Bolívar is one of the two oldest churches in Venezuela (the other is on Margarita island). In 1993, Coro was included on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

The spectacular desert landscape of Médanos (sand dunes up to 30m high) lie a few kilometres to the north of Coro. It was designated a national park in 1974. The Médanos serve as a gateway to the windswept Paraguaná peninsula, while to the south are the easily accessible tropical forests of Sierra de San Luis mountains.

Paraguaná is Venezuela's largest peninsula, originally an island, the constant wind and waves have gradually created a sandbar linking it to the mainland. The climate is generally dry with a period of light rain extending from October to December. The beaches on Paraguaná don't compare with those of Morrocoy or Henri Pittier. Like most other beaches in Venezuela they are quiet on weekdays and crowded on weekends.

Sierra de San Luis boasts charming towns, verdant mountains, forests, waterfalls, caves and 'simas' deep vertical holes in the ground. There is a good choice of walking paths and birdwatching opportunities.

A suggested itinerary for the Caribbean coast would be to commence in Choroni (3 nights) before proceeding to Morrocoy (2 nights) and finish in Coro (2 nights). The airport at Coro is a convenient walking distance from the city centre with daily flights to Caracas (one hour flight).



### Posada La Ardilena

Morrocoy National Park **BB**

La Ardileña is a lovely colonial house located in the heart of the Morrocoy National Park.

Breakfast and dinner is served on the terrace overlooking the mangroves which are an important nesting ground for frigate birds, flamingos and crested herons.

There are 7 homely rooms equipped with air-conditioning, fans, mosquito nets and en suite bathrooms (hot water). The property has two private jetties - boat transfers to nearby islands are included.

### Granja El Ojito

Near Coro **BB**

This simple property, is located on a coconut plantation overlooking the Caribbean sea. Accommodation is in a row of 10 white-washed bungalows with hammocks on individual terraces. They all boast a sea view and are equipped with air-conditioning, TV and telephone. Other facilities include a tennis court, beach volleyball court, a jogging trail in the gardens and a swimming pool. Approximately 100 metres through the plantation, is the attractive beach of Bahía de Tocópero. The restaurant serves regional and international cuisine. It is approximately a 40 minute drive to Coro.



## The Venezuelan Andes

The capital of the state of Merida stands on an alluvial terrace between two rivers, guarded by the dramatic backdrop of the Andes. The heart of the Venezuelan Andes is the 276,446 hectare Sierra Nevada National Park which covers a vast area south of Merida. The beautiful landscape is defined by deep, narrow valleys and glacial lakes.

Merida has become one of the main resorts in the country for adventure sports and outdoor activities including trekking, mountain biking, horse-riding and paragliding. The city is inexpensive, has a lively buzz and offers good restaurants which makes it a very pleasant place to pass a few days.

Other places of interest include the Cathedral, Archbishop's Palace and Government Palace.

Generally, Merida enjoys a pleasant and mild climate although it can be somewhat unpredictable!

At the time of going to press the cable car in Merida remains closed with no official start date for the new construction. Merida airport has been closed on a permanent basis. The alternative airport is El Vigia which is approximately a 1 hour transfer from Merida.





### Casa Sol Posada

Merida **BB**

This colonial style property is brimming with character and style. It is owned and managed by charming hosts Jose and Renate Troconis. Casa Sol is the result of their vision to create a comfortable and good quality establishment in the centre of Merida.

There are 16 attractive en suite, rooms (some with balcony) which include safe deposit box. Breakfast can either be taken in the dining room or in the rear garden. There are telephones available in the corridors and free internet access in reception.

There is no restaurant. However, there are plenty of places within easy walking distance. Please note, that due to its central location, noise from local buses and residential houses can sometimes be an issue. Highly Recommended.



### Hotel Los Frailes

Nr Lake Mucubaji (2 hrs from Merida) **BB**

This former 17th century monastery is ideal as an unusual stopover point en route from Merida to Los Llanos. The hotel is situated on the edge of an Andean valley at 3,000 metres, surrounded by cobalt-blue lakes and scenic countryside, offering a number of interesting walking trails.

The 44 rooms are basic, with small en suite bathrooms. Heaters are also provided. The restaurant serves an international menu and there is an English style pub. Horse-riding is available in the high season. It is approximately 6 1/2 hours by car from Hotel Los Frailes to reach Hato Cedral in Los Llanos.

Although somewhat lacking in ambience, it is perfectly adequate for an overnight stay.



### Hosteria La Sevillana & Spa

Pedregosa valley, Nr Merida **BB**

This hotel is located in the Pedregosa valley at the end of a winding mountain road. It takes approximately 35 minutes to arrive here from the centre of Merida.

There are 12, colonial style en suite rooms positioned around a central courtyard. Each room is equipped with coffee making facilities, security box and ironing board. Heaters are also provided as the evenings can be chilly.

There is an attractive, open style kitchen/restaurant where breakfast and dinner is served. Lunch is only available at weekends. All guests eat together at one large table. There is also a small spa, including jacuzzi, steam room and treatments (payable locally). Ideal for a peaceful stay and for those who want to enjoy the walking trails in the immediate area.



## Los Llanos

The vast, low-lying savannah plains of Los Llanos are among Venezuela's best places to spot wildlife and provide a unique, off-the-beaten-track, safari experience. A visit to Llanos is perfect for anyone interested in seeing animals in their natural habitat.

The hot and atmospheric flat grasslands ensure that the animals are relatively easy to spot and observe. You stand a good chance of seeing capybara, spectacled caiman, monkeys, giant anteaters, armadillo, anaconda, piranhas, ocelot, river dolphins and even the elusive jaguar. This region is one of the most important bird reserves, with approximately 360 species, accounting for 25% of all the bird species found in Venezuela.

Water birds and wading birds dominate and the list includes ibis, herons, cormorants, egrets, jacanas, gallinules and darters. Los Llanos is inhabited by the 'llaneros', Venezuelan 'cowboys', who are independent, tough and hospitable people and have raised cattle here on horseback for a dozen generations.

The climate is extreme in both rainy (winter) and dry (summer) seasons, resulting in either floods or droughts. The rainy season lasts from May to November, with frequent and intense rains. The boat trips are more extensive when most of the land is half-flooded, turning the whole area into a giant inland sea. As a result, animals are spread out so you have to look harder, the humidity is higher and the mosquitoes are more in evidence. In the dry season, most of the animals flock to the scarce watering holes which makes them easier to track.

Access to Hato El Cedral ranch is either from Barinas airport (fly from Caracas) and then 3 1/2 hour transfer by road or alternatively by a long drive from the Andes. It is approximately 6 1/2 hours by car from Hotel Los Frailes to reach Hato Cedral. Hato Pinero ranch is accessible by road from Caracas (5 1/2 hours). Both lodges have their own grass landing airstrip (prices upon request).





Capybara family (see Useful Notes below)



Jabiru stork (1.5m tall)



### Hato Pinero

Llano Alto (upper plain) 

One of the best-known ranches in the upper plain, Hato Pinero has been converted into a privately owned, nature reserve and Biological Research Station. It has a somewhat different spectrum of wildlife from that of Hato Cedral in the lower plains. The topography of this 80,000 ha ranch is more diverse and forests and mountain feature here. The wet season comes later (in late May or early June) and ends earlier (in September).

Although capybaras and caimans are in smaller quantities here, there is a large variety of other animals including ocelots, monkeys, anteaters, agoutis, foxes, tapirs and iguanas. This lodge is particularly ideal for Bird-watchers. The ranch-house itself is charming, with stone floors and furniture and beams made from local wood. There are 13 rustic rooms with private bathrooms (no hot water). There is also a dining and sitting room.



### Hato El Cedral

Llano Bajo (lower plain) 

The ranch covers 50,000 ha and has around 15,000 cattle. More than 300 bird species have been recorded, as well as 20,000 capybaras and numerous other species. The 25 simple but comfortable rooms are all equipped with private bathrooms, hot water and air-conditioning. There is also a small pool and buffet-style restaurant. In the evenings, entertainment in the form of wildlife presentations or local 'llanero' music is often provided.

There is no shop at the lodge or within the immediate area, so all supplies such as phone cards, sun cream etc should be taken with you.



Excursion truck at Hato El Cedral

### Useful Notes

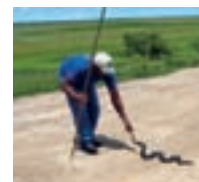
#### Staying on a 'Hato'

Most of Los Llanos is divided into large cattle ranches know as 'Hatos' and many of them are the size of small European countries! A number of them have turned to tourism with organized excursions to show guests the local wildlife. They have taken a serious approach introducing measures to protect wildlife within their ranches and installing biological research stations. The ranches are rustic with simple furnishings.

We have selected two hatos which we consider to offer the best possible experience. Excursions are included and conducted in open-sided trucks and boats (depending on season). There is one trip in the morning and another in the afternoon. Stays are on a full board basis (everyone eats together including guides). Electricity can sometimes be a problem in the area.

#### The Anaconda

The Anaconda is the largest snake on earth. The picture below is of a baby anaconda but, when an adult, its average length is 4 - 5 metres. Specimens as long as 12 metres have been found!



#### The Capybara

The Capybara is the world's largest rodent, with a face like a guinea pig and a coat like a bear. It is aquatic and seeks solace in water at the first hint of danger and is where it prefers to breed. They live in large groups along the riverbanks and are very vocal, often emitting a series of squeaks and grunts.



## The Gran Sabana

Canaima National Park covers 3,000,000 hectares making it one of the six largest National Parks in the world. It protects a part of the Guayana region, better known as the Gran Sabana and Canaima lagoon.

Vast, wild and beautiful, the Gran Sabana is one of the country's most unusual and surreal regions. It is characterized by over 100 large, distinctive table-top mountains (tepuy - a Pemon Indian word for mountain) and countless waterfalls.

Geographically, the striking tepuy are the remnants of a thick layer of Precambrian sediment laid down some two billion years ago when South America, Africa and Australia were joined together. Warping of the continental plates created fractures, which eventually, left behind only the

most resistant rock islands - present day tepuis. Roraima is the most famous 'tepuy' and provided the inspiration for Arthur Conan Doyle's novel, 'The Lost World'.

The landscape is essentially savannah, with clusters of trees, palms and bromeliads. The region is sparsely populated, comprising mainly of indigenous Pemon people who live in scattered villages and hamlets. The only town in the region is Santa Elena, which is close to the Brazilian border.



Gold-digging at Las Claritas



Ya-Koo Lodge



### Gran Sabana Itinerary

FB 4 NIGHTS

In order to avoid the long 450 km drive (8 1/2 hours by car) from either Ciudad Bolivar or Puerto Ordaz in the north to the Gran Sabana in the south, we recommend staying overnight in a hotel in Ciudad Bolivar, flying down to Santa Elena and then commencing the trip from there.

The trip will be made up of small groups with an English speaking guide/driver – all meals included (excluding alcoholic drinks). Transportation will be in a 4 x 4 Toyota Land Cruiser (air conditioned with roof rack for luggage) (maximum 7 persons plus driver/guide). Soft drinks and water are also provided during the day. Please advise, at the

time of the booking, if you have any special dietary requirements such as vegetarian etc. All the accommodation in this region is very basic and simple - exact accommodation will be confirmed at the time of booking.

The guide and group will eat all meals together. The itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions. There are a number of good roads in the area, but the trip will also involve a number of unpaved roads.

See page 244 for full detailed itinerary.

### Lodge/Guesthouse options

(exact accommodation to be confirmed at the time of booking)

- Hotel InterContinental Guayana (Puerto Ordaz) 205 rooms with air-conditioning, 8 minutes from the airport. Swimming pool and water sports (payable locally). Restaurant, bar and Casino
- Posada Angostura - Colonial house with character in the centre of Ciudad Bolivar. 7 rooms over 2 floors with private bathrooms, fan and air-conditioning.
- Chivatón guesthouse - Small guesthouse run by an Indian family. Basic rooms with ensuite bathroom. No hot water
- Kavanayen - Simple en suite rooms. No restaurant (eat at local restaurant Guadalupe).
- Ya-koo lodge - 16 rooms with private bathroom and small shared terrace area. Nestled in the hills behind Santa Elena. Restaurant/bar area. Hummingbirds evident in the gardens.
- Villa Salvaje (Santa Elena) - 4 comfortable rooms with private bathroom. Small pool. Restaurant.
- Gran Sabana Hotel (Santa Elena). Contemporary 4 star hotel with swimming pool. 56 comfortable en suite rooms with air conditioning and TV. (This hotel will be at a supplement).



## Canaima lagoon

One of the most popular destinations in Venezuela, is Canaima, a beautiful tannin-coloured lagoon with six stunning waterfalls created by the river Carrao which tumbles dramatically into the lagoon below.

Canaima is a blend of indigenous villages, tourist lodges and small shops selling basic supplies.

The lagoon has dangerous undercurrents and is therefore not suitable for swimming. Canaima is more commercial than other parts of the country and therefore the service is not so personal.

The resort mainly serves as a base for the following excursions; boat trips to Angel Falls 1 day (12 hour trip) or 3 day trips, visits to Saltos de Sapo and Sapito (where you can walk behind the waterfalls at certain time of the year) and Kavac Canyon and waterfall.

Please note that upon arriving in Canaima, you will be required to pay the National Park entrance fee (approximately \$16 pp)



Boat trip to Angel Falls (wet season only)



### Waku Lodge

Canaima lagoon 

The Waku lodge is situated on the Canaima lagoon, just a short 5 minute truck ride from Canaima airstrip. It enjoys wonderful views of the waterfalls 'El Hacha' and 'Golondrina'. Each of the 20, comfortable, en suite rooms have fans and their own patio/terrace area with hammocks, table and chairs.

There are comfortable seating areas and sun loungers scattered around the lovely gardens which are attractively lit by candles in the evenings. The buffet-style restaurant serves local dishes with a friendly service. Monkeys and scarlet macaws are in evidence around the grounds. Although expensive, compared with other lodges in the country, this lodge comes highly recommended.



Angel Falls

### Excursions in Canaima

Excursions from Canaima lagoon have to be booked locally. Due to the popularity of the area, excursions are expensive (approximately \$357 pp) and are subject to minimum numbers and climatic conditions. The boat trips to Angel Falls are in wooden dugouts (with outboard motor and benches).

These are quite an adventure (70 km downriver from Canaima) involving negotiating rapids (you may need to jump out and help push the boat off the rocks!) and mild uphill trekking through forested areas. The three day trip is exactly the same, more relaxing and involves sleeping overnight in hammocks. In the dry season, the level of water can be quite faint - just a thin ribbon of water, fading into mist halfway down its 979 m drop. In the rainy season, the falls are frequently covered by clouds.

These trips may not be suitable for everyone - please speak to a member of our team for first-hand experience.

The boat trips run from May to January, depending on the level of water in the Rio Churun.

Overflights of Angel Falls can also be arranged from the local airstrip in Canaima - although in the rainy season, it is sometimes difficult to see anything from the air.

#### Useful Notes

##### Jimmy Angel

The Falls were named after American bush pilot Jimmy Angel, who was one of the true South American explorers. He first reported their existence in 1935 when he piloted his single-engined Cessna up a narrow canyon.





## Los Roques

Los Roques is an archipelago comprised of 41 pristine and unspoilt cayos (cays or reef-formed islands) surrounding a huge lagoon. The islands are protected by over 19 km of coral reef populated with schools of exotic fish.

Sea turtles visit the most remote beaches to lay their eggs. The waters are a clear, deep turquoise and the beaches of dazzling white sands. Los Roques was declared a Marine National Park in 1972 - there is an entrance fee of \$26 pp. The days are sunny and hot and the nights are cool all year round.

Gran Roque is the only inhabited island in the archipelago. It is just a fishing village with three sandy lanes and an airstrip. Most buildings are white-washed with brightly coloured doors.

There are no high-rise hotels, cars or nightclubs. A perfect place to relax and unwind for a few days.

All the activities are water-based; swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, windsurfing, kite-surfing, sailing, fly/bone fishing or beachcombing and relaxing in the sun.

Natural shade is almost non-existent and the sun is relentless, so we recommend regular use of total sun block, a hat, sunglasses and sun umbrellas (provided by the posadas). Both our properties are just a short walk from the airstrip at Gran Roque.

Los Roques is located 85 miles off Venezuela's north coast (30 minute flight from Caracas). All posadas include daily transfers to the closest islands (for the duration of your stay).





### Villa Caracol

Gran Roque Island **FB**

This charming posada has been renovated to an exceptionally high standard.

It has a stylish design, wooden beams and plenty of natural sunlight in the interior. There are 5 rooms, all with private bath, ceiling fans, mini-bar and telephone. There is a small but chic dining area for breakfast and dinner. It is the sister hotel of the nearby Posada Caracol.

Daily boat transfers to nearby islands and a lunch box are included.

The property only accept children aged 6 and above.

There is a minimum stay policy of 6 nights during August and Christmas/New Year period and early booking is advisable.



### Posada Caracol

Gran Roque Island **FB**

This pretty blue and white Caribbean style property is ideally situated on the beach of Gran Roque. It is owned by the affable Fabio Barberi - originally from Italy. Fabio visited Los Roques on holiday and he loved it so much he decided to stay and open a posada!

There are four small but stylish en suite rooms which are fitted with a fan and telephone. There is a small roof terrace with good sea views. Breakfast and dinner is served on the attractive patio area whilst lunch is on the beach. Daily boat transfers to nearby islands are included. Highly recommended.

There is a minimum stay policy of 6 nights during August and Christmas/New year period and early booking is advisable.



### Posada La Cigala

Gran Roque Island **FB**

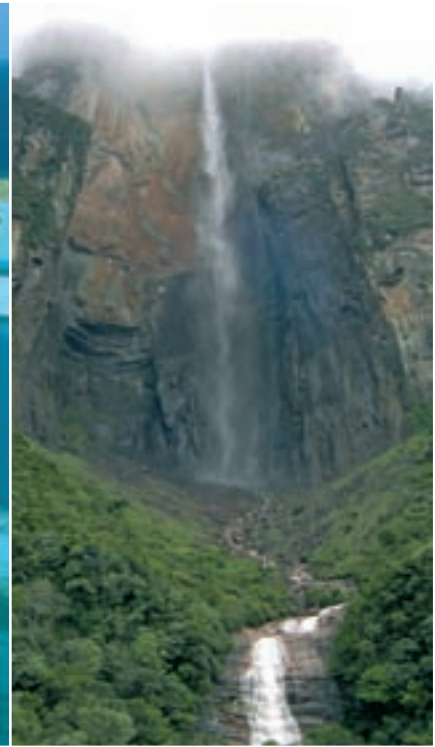
This lovely posada is owned and run by a charming couple Enrique and Liana. They have been living on Los Roques for 16 years and are very passionate and extremely knowledgeable about the islands and the water-based activities on offer. The property is positioned on the main sandy street at the entrance to the town. The location provides great sunsets from the roof veranda.

The 9 attractive en suite rooms are all equipped with fans. The showers have cold water only - all you need and very refreshing in the heat! The restaurant, which is situated in the interior open courtyard where two coconut trees grow, serves delicious food (Italian with ingredients of the Caribbean) combined with an attentive and friendly service. All non- alcoholic beverages and daily boat transfers to nearby islands are included. A very special place. The lodge normally closes in October for 2 weeks for essential maintenance.

There is a minimum stay policy of 6 nights during August and Christmas/New year period and early booking is advisable.



Orinoco crocodile (Los Llanos)



## Venezuela - A Few Facts

We honestly believe that Venezuela offers an amazing experience for independent travellers looking for a variety of landscapes and wildlife. However, the production of oil has overshadowed other sectors of the economy including tourism. Apart from charter packages to Margarita island, tourism in the country is still in its infancy and therefore we would like to stress that it may not suit everyone.



6 Seater Cessna - very common in Venezuela

Even other countries within Latin America are considerably more developed and professional in terms of general standards.

It should be noted that English is not widely spoken around the country. A basic grasp of Spanish will be appreciated by the locals but you can still enjoy the country without it. It is vital to approach the country with some humour and patience - do not expect things to run like clockwork! However, we have appointed an excellent local company



on the ground which will always do its best to ensure your holiday is enjoyable and address any issues that may arise.

You should dress down, not wear expensive jewellery or watches, or carry large amounts of cash. If you have a digital camera or video camcorder, please be discrete. One of these items may represent 6 months wages for a local. The shanty town districts on the outskirts of Caracas are definitely no go areas. If you want to skip the crowds and high prices, we recommend you avoid the month of August, Christmas, Carnival periods and Easter.

### Accommodation

Good lodges are in short supply and service can sometimes be slow and indifferent. Generally, properties are very rustic and simple - although there are some notable exceptions such as Waku lodge in Canaima.

In a number of places, we have selected 'posadas' - small, charming family run guesthouses. These offer a more personal service than the hotels which tend to focus on weddings and large parties. Please note that some of the properties do not have hot water. Where there is a good choice of restaurants nearby, we will book your stay on bed and breakfast - otherwise, we include meals where appropriate. A number of the lodges do not have English speaking staff.

### Getting around

Driving can be unpredictable and there is an absence of road signage. Therefore, we have decided to not offer self-drive itineraries as an option at the present time. Instead, our holidays are based on private transfers and internal flights.

Travelling around the country requires considerable patience as internal flights are often chaotic and delayed and roads in more remote parts are in a poor condition. A number of the internal flights are on 6 seater Cessna aircraft where you may end up as co-pilot! If you are nervous of flying, please ask us for further details. Airport terminal screens can not be relied upon as they are often incorrect. Listen carefully to airport staff who wander around the terminal (near the gate) casually calling the name of the flight - keep asking if the flight is ready to depart! Seats are not allocated on internal flights.



### Please note

Flights within Venezuela are relatively expensive. Approximately \$179 per person per flight (£120). However, due to the vast distances and absence of a good road network, flights are largely unavoidable. Road checks conducted by the National Guard are very common throughout the whole country. Please carry your passport at all times otherwise you may incur a minimum \$100 fine.



Chivatón - Simple guesthouse in Gran Sabana

### Internal flights - baggage allowance

Internal airlines in Venezuela only allow a maximum of 10 kg per person. They will charge approximately \$2 for each extra kilo above 10 kg (some airlines will charge more). It is possible to leave excess luggage with our local ground agent in Caracas. However, please note we will not accept any liability for the contents of the suitcase. Soft rucksacks/bags should be used for internal flights so these can be manipulated into small plane holds. The small charter flights to/from Santa Elena and Canaima will only accept a maximum of 10 kg per person. Large, hard backed cases will not be accepted by the domestic airlines.

### Excursions

Care should be taken when booking excursions locally - a number of operators do not operate within professional guidelines and also charge high prices. We recommend that you ask around locally or contact our local agent in Caracas for guidance.



## Suggested Itineraries

Please find a selection of itineraries which can be adjusted to suit individual requirements. These itineraries are aimed at individual travellers (based on 2 sharing) - not Group Departures. For group quotations or single supplements please contact us.

Due to space restrictions, it is not possible for us to feature all the regions/lodges in the country. However, we can often incorporate other areas with the assistance of our local agent. Accommodation at all hotels is on a bed and breakfast basis (unless otherwise stated) based on 2 persons sharing a

double/twin room. All pre-booked excursions include an English speaking guide. Some transfers and excursions will be on a shared, small group basis - this ensures that prices are kept as competitive as possible. Any road transfer times stated are approximate and subject to traffic, road and weather conditions.

**Prices include** international flights from London Heathrow with Lufthansa (via Frankfurt).

**Please note** that we are able to quote for land only arrangements but these have to be for a minimum of 7 nights' accommodation.



### Venezuelan Adventure

27 NIGHTS

Transfers, excursions and internal flights included (as specified)  
 Price - see price panel (page 245)  
 This itinerary is perfect for those looking for a comprehensive itinerary and the opportunity to explore the country at leisure.

- Caracas 4 nights BB
- Paria Peninsula 3 nights FB
- Mochima National Park 3 nights FB
- Merida 3 nights BB, Nr Lake Mucubaji 1 night HB
- Los Llanos 3 nights FB
- Gran Sabana package 4 nights FB
- Canaima 2 nights FB
- Los Roques 4 nights FB.

**Day 1** Private transfer from Caracas airport to Embassy Suites (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 2** After breakfast, half-day private guided tour of Caracas. Return to Embassy Suites for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 3-5** Private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Cumana. Transfer from airport to Posada Caribana for a 3 night stay (full board).  
**Day 6-8** Private transfer to Mochima. Stay at Villa Majagual for 3 nights (full board).  
**Day 9-11** Private transfer to Barcelona airport for flight to Caracas. Connect with flight to El Vigia. Private transfer to Hosteria La Sevillana for a 3 night stay (bed and breakfast).

**Day 12** After breakfast, private transfer to Hotel Los Frailes for overnight stay (half-board).  
**Day 13-15** Early private transfer to Hato El Cedral for 3 night stay (full board with excursions included).  
**Day 16** Group transfer to Barinas airport for flight to Caracas. Private transfer from airport to Ole Caribe hotel for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 17** Private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Puerto Ordaz. Transfer from airport to hotel in Ciudad Bolivar (dinner included)  
**Day 18-20** Gran Sabana package (full board including excursions) - see separate detailed itinerary.  
**Day 21-22** Transfer to Santa Elena for flight to Canaima. Group transfer to Waku Lodge for a 2 night stay (full board).  
**Day 23** Group transfer to Canaima airstrip for flight to Puerto Ordaz, connect with flight to Caracas. Private transfer to Ole Caribe hotel for overnight stay (bed and breakfast)  
**Day 24-27** Private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Los Roques, met at Gran Roque airstrip by representative from La Cigala posada for a 4 night stay (full board).  
**Day 28** Transfer to airstrip on Gran Roque (Los Roques) for flight to Caracas. Met by representative in order to provide assistance for connection with return international flight.

### Highlights of Venezuela

16 NIGHTS

Transfers, excursions and internal flights included (as specified)  
 Price - see price panel (page 245)  
 This itinerary incorporates all the main regions and attractions in Venezuela

- Caracas 2 nights BB
- Gran Sabana package 4 nights FB
- Merida 3 nights BB
- Nr Lake Mucubaji 1 night HB
- Los Llanos 3 nights FB
- Los Roques 3 nights FB

**Day 1** On arrival in Caracas, private transfer to Embassy Suites for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 2** After breakfast, private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Puerto Ordaz. Upon arrival, group transfer to hotel in Ciudad Bolivar (dinner included). See separate Gran Sabana itinerary for full details.  
**Day 3-5** Gran Sabana package (full board with excursions included).  
**Day 6** Group transfer to Santa Elena for

flight to Puerto Ordaz, connect with flight to Caracas. Upon arrival private transfer to Embassy Suites hotel for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 7-9** Private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to El Vigia. Private transfer from airport to Casa Sol Posada for a 3 night stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 10** After breakfast, private guided excursion of Lake Mucubaji and other places of interest en route to Hotel Los Frailes for overnight stay (half-board).  
**Day 11-13** Early private transfer to Hato El Cedral (full board and excursions included)  
**Day 14-16** Group transfer to Barinas airport for flight to Caracas. Met upon arrival, connect with flight to Los Roques. Met at Gran Roque airstrip by representative from La Cigala posada (full board) for a short walk to the lodge to start your 3 night stay.  
**Day 17** Walk to Gran Roques airstrip (assistance with baggage). Flight to Caracas - met by representative, assistance with return international flight connection.





Alternative Venezuela

15 NIGHTS

Transfers, excursions and internal flights included (as specified)  
 Price - see price panel (page 245)  
 This itinerary is designed to show a different perspective to the country whilst still covering the main areas.

- Caracas 2 nights BB
- Choroni 3 nights BB
- Los Llanos 3 nights FB
- Puerto Ordaz 1 night BB
- Canaima 3 nights FB
- Los Roques 3 nights FB

**Day 1** On arrival in Caracas, private transfer to Embassy Suites for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 2** After breakfast, half-day private guided tour of Caracas. Overnight at Embassy Suites (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 3-5** After breakfast, private transfer to lodge in Choroni. 3 nights at Posada Casa de las Garcia (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 6-8** Private transfer to Los Llanos. 3 nights at Hato Pinero (full board and excursions included).  
**Day 9** Group transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Puerto Ordaz. Transfer from airport to Hotel InterContinental Guayana for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 10-12** Private transfer to Puerto Ordaz airport for flight to Canaima. Group transfer from airstrip to Waku Lodge for a 3 night stay (full board).  
**Day 13** Group transfer to Canaima airstrip for flight to Puerto Ordaz, connect with flight to Caracas. Connect with flight to Los Roques - met at airstrip by representative from La Cigala posada for a 3 night stay (full board)  
**Day 16** Short walk to airstrip on Gran Roque (Los Roques) for flight to Caracas. Met by representative to provide airport assistance and connect with international flight.



Essential Venezuela

10 NIGHTS

Transfers, excursions and internal flights included (as specified)  
 Price - see price panel (page 245)  
 This itinerary is perfect for those who are short of time or perhaps are looking to combine Venezuela with other neighbouring countries such as Brazil.

- Caracas 2 nights BB
- Merida 2 nights BB
- Nr Lake Mucubaji 1 night HB
- Los Llanos 3 nights FB
- Canaima 2 nights FB

**Day 1** Private transfer from Caracas airport to Embassy Suites hotel for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 2-3** After breakfast, private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to El Vigia. Private transfer from airport to Casa Sol Posada for a 2 night stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 4** Private transfer from Merida to Hotel Los Frailes (half-board).  
**Day 5-7** Early private transfer to Hato El Cedral (full board inc. excursions) for a 3 night stay.  
**Day 8** Group transfer to Barinas airport for flight to Caracas. Private transfer to Ole Caribe hotel for overnight stay (bed and breakfast).  
**Day 9-10** Private transfer to Caracas airport for flight to Puerto Ordaz, connect with flight to Canaima. Group transfer from airstrip to Waku Lodge for a 2 night stay (full board).  
**Day 11** Group transfer to Canaima airstrip for flight to Caracas, met by representative for assistance with international connection.



Gran Sabana Itinerary

FB 4 NIGHTS

**Day 1** Fly to Puerto Ordaz or Ciudad Bolivar from Caracas (depending on flight availability). Met at airport and transfer to Ciudad Bolivar. Guided half-day visit (English speaking guide) of the historic heart of the city. Dinner and overnight in Ciudad Bolivar - Posada Angostura or alternative hotel (subject to availability).  
**Day 2** After breakfast, transfer to Ciudad Bolivar airport and fly to Santa Elena (possible two stops en route - 5 seater Cessna aircraft) in the south of the region. Met at airport by our local representative and transferred to the Gran Sabana. Lunch. In the afternoon, drive through the region and visit Quebrada de Jaspe waterfall where a river cuts through striated cliffs and pieces of jasper glitter on the banks. Travel onwards to Santa Elena de Uairen, a frontier town established by Capuchin monks. Arrival at camp - Ya-koo lodge or alternative lodge (subject to availability). Dinner and overnight  
**Day 3** After breakfast, depart for Salto Arapena Meru, a beautiful waterfall. Proceed to a viewpoint boasting wonderful views of the Gran Sabana, with a subsequent visit to Quebrada Pacheco falls. There are a number of pools above the falls where you can take to the cool water. This will then be followed by a stop at Salto Kama Meru waterfalls which are 55 m high free-falling falls. Lunch at a local restaurant followed by an off-road drive through the region enjoying the beautiful landscapes en route. The final visit of the day will be to Balneario Soruape, which has a natural whirlpool and an opportunity to have another swim. Dinner and overnight at Chivatón or Kavanayen guesthouse (subject to availability).  
**Day 4** After breakfast, visit the friendly Pemon village of Iboribo. Travel by boat on a Curiaara (local canoe) to the 110m high Chinak Meru (Aponwao) falls whilst appreciating the countryside en route. Continue by foot to Pozo Escondido, an attractive small lagoon in secluded woods, where you can enjoy a swim at leisure. Return to Iboribo for lunch. In the afternoon, en route to Santa Elena, stop at a small waterfall Kawi Meru and also a viewpoint which is an ideal spot to hopefully admire Roraima and the surrounding scenery. Proceed to Rapidos de Kamoiran, some rapids which are at the end of a short trail. Continue to the Pemon village of San Francisco de Yuruani, time to see the village and buy souvenirs made by locals. Arrival at camp - Ya-koo lodge or alternative lodge (subject to availability). Dinner and overnight.  
**Day 5** Transfer to Santa Elena airport for onward flight to Canaima lagoon or Puerto Ordaz/Ciudad Bolivar and a connecting flight to Caracas.

Approx. internal flight durations

Caracas - P.Ordaz	1 hr
S. Elena - Canaima	1 hr 20 mins
Canaima - P. Ordaz	1 hr 20 mins
C. Bolivia - S. Elena	2 hrs 30 mins
Caracas - Barinas	1 hr 5 mins
Caracas - Los Roques	30 mins



# Venezuela - A Few Guidelines

## Currency

In early 2008 Venezuela added a new currency called the Bolivar Fuerte in addition to the Venezuelan Bolivares. We recommend that you take USD \$ cash and change \$100 at frequent intervals during your stay. Travellers cheques are not widely accepted with the exception of the main banks in Caracas. Credit cards are accepted at shops and hotels - however, the exchange rate will be poor and there will normally be a charge made by your bank. Exchange rates change frequently but at the time of going to press approximately 4.30 BSF Bolivar Fuerte = 1 USD and 4300 Bs Venezuelan Bolivares = 1USD. The annual rate of inflation is between 12-16%.

## Visas

If arriving by air, travellers with British passports can enter the country for up to 90 days on a tourist card (supplied for you to complete on the outbound flight). You should have a valid return ticket with you. You must not overstay the 90 days as you may be arrested and fined when departing. Please ensure that your passport has 6 months to run. Your passport should be carried around with you at all times as it may be required at the numerous road check points. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is stamped in and out when you cross frontiers. The absence of entry and exit stamps can cause serious difficulties. Do not lose your entry card or the carbon copy of your tourist card, as this has to be surrendered when leaving the country. Please note when travelling

overland into Venezuela a visa is required (regardless of your nationality) and your passport must be valid for 1 year. A yellow fever vaccination certificate is also required.

## Language

The official language is Spanish. English is not widely spoken outside Caracas. Some knowledge of German and Italian can also help.

## Vaccinations / Health

Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio, and Hepatitis 'A' vaccinations are advisable, as well as a course of anti-malaria tablets. Reduce mosquito bites by the use of a good skin repellent with ideally 50% Deet content. We also recommend use of a sun block to protect your skin against the strong tropical sun. In places such as Los Roques, a total 100% sun block is advisable as the sun is very intensive. The heat and humidity of the tropics make you sweat profusely and can also make you feel lethargic - to avoid cramps and heat exhaustion it is important to maintain a high fluid intake and ensure your food is well salted. Please ensure you use bottled water rather than using tap water (avoid ice in your drinks). You should always check with your doctor for the latest health requirements no later than four weeks before your departure. Altitude sickness may be a problem in the Andes and Canaima National Park so please take the following precautions: upon arrival rest and acclimatise to the altitude. When climbing hills walk slowly. Drink extra fluids and eat light meals.

## Food & Drink

The varied culture is reflected in the cuisine combining Indian, European and African touches. The local dishes are pabellon (a dish consisting of black beans, rice, meat and fried plantain), cachapas (a round thin bread made of ground maize), trout and the traditional arepas (Indian bread made of maize). On the coast, you will find fish soup, crayfish, small oysters and prawns. The cost of a typical 3 course meal per person ranges from \$26 in the Andes to \$39 Bs in Caracas (excluding wine/beer). Polar beer is good and readily available. Imported wine tends to be very expensive.

## Hotel Gradings

There is no official class or star system for accommodation. The accommodation is generally rustic and simple - all rooms have private facilities but in some lodges only cold water is available. Breakfasts usually comprise of toast, eggs, cold meats, cheese, orange juice and coffee.

## Weather / When to Go

Venezuela is a year-round destination. Most regions enjoy good weather for large parts of the year. Although it varies slightly area by area, the dry season runs roughly from November to May which is a better period for hiking and other outdoor activities. However, the falls are inaccessible by boat during this period. The wet season normally provides plenty of sunshine as well as regular tropical downpours and landscapes are fresh and lush and waterfalls are at their most

spectacular. Temperatures are fairly constant all year round with most regions between 28-30 °C August, December, January, Easter and Carnival periods are considered the high season months when the resorts are at their busiest and the prices are higher.

## Time

Venezuela is 5 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

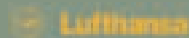
## Recommended Reading

Venezuela guides published by Footprint and Lonely Planet provide useful tips and insight into the country.

## Flight Details

We offer a choice of three services to Venezuela. Many of the airlines offer departures from regional airports at no extra cost. As an independent operator, we are not tied to any particular carrier and we are more than happy to give our honest opinion (from personal experience) of their respective services. We always endeavour to offer the carrier offering the best value for money at any given time of year.

Prices in the price panel are based on economy, scheduled flights with Lufthansa (via Frankfurt) from London. Lufthansa offer an excellent network of regional departures including Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Glasgow.



Daily	Daily
D Heathrow 06.20	D Caracas 17.30
A Frankfurt 08.55	A Frankfurt 09.55*
D Frankfurt 10.15	D Frankfurt 12.50
A Caracas 15.25	A Heathrow 13.25

\*following day  
Economy seat pitch  
Frankfurt - Caracas 32 inches

D = Departure time  
A = Arrival time



Daily	Daily
D Heathrow 06.20	D Caracas 18.55
A Madrid 09.40	A Madrid 09.00*
D Madrid 12.55	D Madrid 13.15
A Caracas 16.50	A Heathrow 14.35

\*following day  
Economy seat pitch  
Madrid - Caracas 32 inches



4 times per week	Daily
D Heathrow 19.50	D Caracas 22.50
A Lisbon 22.30	A Lisbon 11.35*
D Lisbon 16.30	D Lisbon 14.35
A Caracas 20.55	A Heathrow 17.25

\*following day  
Economy seat pitch  
Lisbon - Caracas 30 inches

The above details were correct at the time of going to press. However, all timings and routings are subject to change and will be confirmed at the time of booking. UK airport departure tax has been included in all prices.

## Prices for suggested itineraries

Holiday prices are in £'s per person for duration stated based on two persons sharing a twin/double room PLEASE NOTE AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS FINALISED AIRLINE AND GROUND PRICES WERE NOT AVAILABLE. THEREFORE, THE PRICES BELOW ARE A GUIDELINE ONLY. PLEASE CONTACT US FOR AN EXACT QUOTE. DURING EASTER AND CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR PERIODS SPECIAL SEASONAL RATES AND MINIMUM NUMBER OF NIGHTS MAY APPLY.

Departure Date determines price.  
See suggested itineraries for full details. See pages 243-244

ITINERARY	Number of Nights	Departure Dates 01/01/10 - 14/07/10 01/09/10 - 14/12/10 Guideline price	Departure Dates 15/12/11 - 31/12/11 15/07/11 - 31/08/11 Guideline price
<b>Venezuelan Adventure</b> - Caracas, Paria Peninsula, Mochima NP, Merida, Los Llanos, Gran Sabana package, Canaima & Los Roques	27 nights	£5,478	£5,722
<b>Highlights of Venezuela</b> - Caracas, Gran Sabana, Merida, Los Llanos & Los Roques	16 nights	£3,978	£4,198
<b>Alternative Venezuela</b> - Caracas, Choroní, Los Llanos, Puerto Ordaz, Canaima & Los Roques	15 nights	£3,643	£3,871
<b>Essential Venezuela</b> - Caracas, Merida, Los Llanos & Canaima	10 nights	£2,814	£2,932

## Price includes

- Economy scheduled flights from London Heathrow with Lufthansa (via Frankfurt) including UK airport departure tax and fuel surcharges
- Accommodation, internal flights, transfers, excursions and meals as outlined in the various itineraries

## Not included

- Personal Travel Insurance (see page 246)
- Airport taxes for internal flights
- Park entrance fees (where not specified on the itinerary)
- Supplement for other airlines and airports
- Tips

## NOTES

- Lufthansa offer an excellent network of regional departures including Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Glasgow
- Single supplements are available on request

## IMPORTANT NOTE

Payment by credit or charge card will incur a 1.5 % processing charge. This charge may rise if the credit card companies increase their charges.

Any change from the 1.5 % will be advised at the time of booking.