

Orchids of Auyán Tepui & Angel Falls

Venezuela

A journey to explore the unique wildlife and landscapes of Auyán Tepui, and canoe trip to Angel Falls, the tallest waterfall on the planet

Note: this expedition is identical to the “Lost World of Mount Roraima” trip that we run, but is led by field botanist, Dr. Alastair Robinson, and has a focus on orchids throughout (see following pages).

At 979 m tall, **Angel Falls** is nearly a vertical kilometre high. Twice the height of the Empire State building and fifteen times the height of Niagara Falls, this spectacular waterfall is the tallest in the world. Angel Falls plunges over the sides of the massive **Auyán Tepui**, falling into dense jungle below. Auyán Tepui is the largest plateau in the Gran Sabana, and much of its summit remains largely unexplored to this day. It is home to vast “rain desert” landscapes of exposed stone, in which oases of concentrated plants, animals and birds abound, many of which occur nowhere else on earth, not even on other tepuis nearby.

This **16 day expedition** begins with an ascent of the spectacular Auyán Tepui, retracing the route pioneered by explorer Jimmie Angel (namesake of Angel Falls). After reaching the summit of Auyán Tepui, we spend three days exploring the plateau’s top with the goal of reaching the lip of Angel Falls (dependent upon group speed and interests). Along the way, we explore the mountain’s amazing diversity of orchids, carnivorous plants, bromeliads, airplants, cloud forests, insects, amphibians, birds and mammals. We then descend and transfer by light aircraft to begin a canoe trip to the base of Angel Falls, and finally, we enjoy a scenic flyover of the colossal waterfall and some of the world’s most spectacular terrain.

This expedition offers **outstanding opportunities** to photograph orchids, birdlife, mammals, insects, bromeliads, a plethora of carnivorous plants and some of the world’s most spectacular scenery.

Optional pre- or post-expedition add-ons that can be arranged include a Scenic Flyover of the Eastern Tepuis in light aircraft (1 day extra) and/or a Tour of the Gran Sabana in 4x4 vehicles (1 day extra)!

COST: £2,500 per person for **16 days / 15 nights** (all inclusive from start point to end point).

START POINT: Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, Caracas, Venezuela.

END POINT: Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, Caracas, Venezuela.

EXPEDITION LEADER: Dr. Alastair Robinson (experienced field botanist).

DATES: Subject to demand, two expeditions will run in **2014:** August 7th - August 18th **and** September 3rd - September 18th.

Email sales@redfernnaturalhistory.com for more information and to make bookings.



ORCHIDS OF AUYÁN TEPUI

The vast summit of Auyán Tepui, and the surrounding cloudforests of the plateau walls remain little explored by botanists. Well over one hundred orchid species have been identified from the plateau massif to date, including many of the most spectacular terrestrial and epiphytic orchids of Venezuela. As many of the orchids of Auyán Tepui occur nowhere else in the world, and because the landscape is very different from Mount Roraima, we recommend undertaking this expedition in conjunction with Roraima to experience the beauty of the tepuis.

The following species are highlights among the long list species which are most likely to be encountered:

<i>Acineta alticola</i>	<i>Maxillaria alpestris</i>
<i>Cattleya lawrenceana</i>	<i>Maxillaria aurea</i>
<i>Hexisea bidentata</i> (epiphyte)	<i>Maxillaria auyantepuiensis</i>
<i>Elleanthus norae</i>	<i>Maxillaria mapirensis</i>
<i>Encyclia auyantepuiensis</i>	<i>Maxillaria meridensis</i>
<i>Epidendrum nocturnum</i> (below summit)	<i>Maxillaria quelchii</i>
<i>Epidendrum elongatum</i>	<i>Mendocella (Zygopetalum) jorisiana</i>
<i>Epidendrum imthurnii</i>	<i>Mendocella burkei</i>
<i>Epidendrum saxatile</i>	<i>Octomeria flaviflora</i>
<i>Epidendrum secundum</i>	<i>Octomeria nana</i>
<i>Epidendrum tumuchumaciense</i>	<i>Ocotmeria parviflora</i>
<i>Epidendrum ulei</i>	<i>Oncidium nigratum</i>
<i>Epidendrum violascens</i>	<i>Oncidium warmingii</i>
<i>Epidendrum ramosum</i>	<i>Pinelianthe alticola</i>
<i>Epidendrum repens</i>	<i>Pleurothallis floribunda</i>
<i>Eriopsis biloba</i>	<i>Pleurothallis imraei</i>
<i>Galeottia burkei</i>	<i>Pleurothallis tepuiensis</i>
<i>Habenaria roraimensis</i>	<i>Prescottia carnosa</i>
<i>Habenaria caldensis</i>	<i>Prescottia stachyodes</i>
<i>Habenaria ernestii</i>	<i>Prosthechea tigrina</i>
<i>Habenaria lehmanniana</i>	<i>Restrepiopsis tubulosa</i>
<i>Habenaria monorrhiza</i>	<i>Scaphyglottis grandiflora</i>
<i>Habenaria nilssonii</i>	<i>Sobralia spec.</i>
<i>Habenaria parviflora</i>	<i>Stelis obovata</i>
<i>Houlletia odoratissima</i>	<i>Stelis schomburgkii</i>
<i>Houlletia roraimensis</i>	<i>Trichosalpinx spp.</i>
<i>Lepanthes exilis</i>	<i>Vargasiella venezuelana</i>
<i>Masdevallia picturata</i>	<i>Zygosepalum angustilabium</i>



Selected orchids of Auyán Tepui

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ORCHIDS OF ANGEL FALLS & AUYÁN TEPUI ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet in Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport, meet expedition leader, transfer to Hotel Catimar. Expedition brief over dinner in hotel restaurant. Money exchange service. Overnight in hotel.

Day 2: Early transfer to catch connecting flight to Puerto Ordaz. Transfer to van to travel to Ciudad Bolívar (approx 1 hour drive). Lunch along the way. Dinner and overnight in Posada (guesthouse hotel).

Day 3: Early start, breakfast in the Posada followed by a 1.5 hour flight over Auyán Tepui in private charter light aircraft landing at Uruyén (a remote native Pemón Amerindian village). Lunch and refreshments in Uruyén, then organise equipment, porters and guides. Overnight in hammocks with mosquito nets.

Day 4: Early start, breakfast, then we begin the ascent of Auyán Tepui, trekking through the lowlands to Guayaraca campsite (14 km, approx. 6-7 hours walking). We pass through lowland savannah, look out for giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) and the black and yellow poison arrow frog *Dendrobates leucomelas*. Lunch along the way. Dinner in Guayaraca campsite. Overnight in tents. Near Guayaraca campsite there are extensive stands of the carnivorous bromeliad *Catopsis berteroniana*.

Day 5: Early start, breakfast at campsite. Hike from Guayaraca campsite to El Penon campsite within cave below the towering cliffs of Auyán Tepui amongst lush cloudforest (4 km, approx. 6-8 hours uphill walking). Lunch at Danto rock (half way). Dinner at El Penon campsite. Overnight in tents.

Day 6: Early start after breakfast at El Penon campsite, then we climb up a ledge in the enormous cliffs to the summit of Auyán Tepui, reaching the mountain top (2 km, approx. 6 hours steep uphill walking, but we take regular breaks). We camp at El Libertador, a flat area near the cliffs of Auyán Tepui surrounded by a plethora of orchids (*Eriopsis*, *Zygosepalum* and countless other genera), bromeliads, carnivorous plants (many *Drosera*, *Genlisea*, *Utricularia* and the spectacular carnivorous pitcher plants *Heliamphora minor* var. *minor* and *Brocchinia reducta*). Lunch and dinner at El Libertador. Overnight in tents.

Days 7-9: We trek from El Libertador to El Oso campsite, a large cave lined with sand (6 km, approx. 4 hours relatively flat walking). Depending upon the interests and speed of the group, we can trek to the top of Angel Falls, to see the enormous cascade falling from the side of Auyán Tepui, and explore the unique landscapes, plants, animals, insects and reptiles of the plateau. Highlights include searching for the bizarre and recently named pitcher plant *Heliamphora minor* var. *pilosa*, bonsai-like *Vellozia* plants, ancient hard-leaved ferns, vast, rain-desert landscapes, orchid festooned *Bonnetia* cloudforests and epic scenery. Each night breakfast, lunch along the way and dinner at camp. We overnight in tents in caves.

Day 10: Early start after breakfast at El Oso campsite, then begin the descent from the summit of Auyán Tepui, reaching El Penon campsite (8 km, approx. 7 hours of walking). Lunch at La Paloma (half way). Dinner at El Penon. Overnight in tents.

Day 11: Breakfast at El Penon camp, then a descent to Uruyén (18 km, approx. 7 hours downhill and flat walking). Lunch at Guayaraca campsite. Dinner in Uruyén. Overnight in hammocks with mosquito nets.

Day 12: Early start after breakfast in Uruyén, then a flight over Auyán Tepui in private charter light aircraft landing at the Pemón Amerindian village of Canaima (30 mins flight). Transfer to motorised, Pemón dugout canoes (curiaras) and travel upstream to Angel Falls camp (4 hrs in the canoes). Angel Falls camp is on the bank of the river opposite the mighty Angel Falls. We watch the sun set on the tallest waterfall on the planet. Dinner at Angel Falls camp. Overnight in hammocks with mosquito nets.

Day 13: We breakfast in Angel Falls camp, and then cross the river in the canoes and then hike 1 km to the base of Angel Falls to photograph the gigantic cascade and to bathe in the cascading waters of Angel Falls. We have lunch at a scenic look out point, and then return to Angel Falls camp. Dinner at Angel Falls camp. Overnight in hammocks with mosquito nets.

Day 14: After breakfast, we return by motorised canoe to Canaima. After lunch in Canaima, we explore Canaima lagoon with a walk to Sapo Falls and, depending on water levels, either a walk behind the thundering curtain of water of Sapo Falls or Hacha Falls. Dinner and overnight in a posada in Canaima.

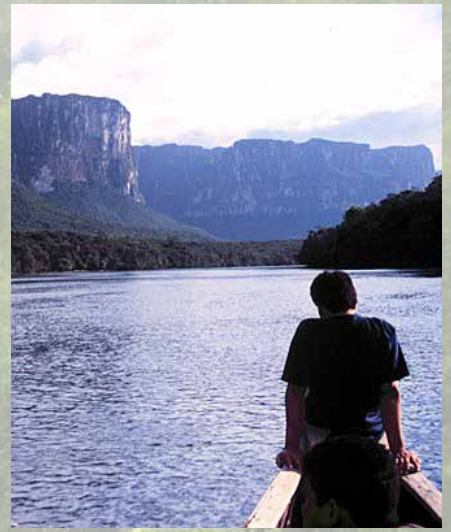
Day 15: Late breakfast, then scenic flyover Auyán Tepui and Angel Falls in light aircraft (weather dependent) to Puerto Ordaz. After lunch, we catch flights to Caracas. Overnight and dine at Hotel Catimar.

Day 16: Breakfast, then transfer from Hotel Catimar to Simón Bolívar Maiquetía International Airport for departing flights.



Highlights of the **Orchids of Angel Falls & Auyán Tepui Expedition**

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