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Trip Notes

THE LOST WORLD & ANGEL FALLS

Trip code: TAV
Country: Venezuela
Amended: December 2008
Edition No: TF - 2 - 2009
Valid from: 01 Jan 2009 - 31 Dec 2009

Changes from 1st edition: Minor amendment to baggage allowance information regarding flights to Canaima.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A 6-day camping trek to the top of Roraima, the highest of Venezuela's *Tepuys*, or tabletop mountains.
- See the point where the borders of Venezuela, Guayana and Brazil meet.
- Hike to the base of the Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfall, and an optional overflight to see them from a completely different angle.
- Sleep in the traditional Pemón Indian way as we spend two nights in hammocks.
- Walk behind a curtain of water at the Salto Sapo falls.
- A great variety of ecosystems, from dense jungle to sweeping grasslands and incredible and unusual scenery.

SUMMARY

Venezuela has a great variety of natural highlights, and its borders encompass virtually every ecosystem present in South America, from the high snow-capped Andes in the west to the thick rainforest of the southeast. This trip concentrates on the unique scenery of Canaima National Park and the Grand Savannah, a region of virtually untouched wilderness the size of Belgium close to the border with Brazil and Guyana.

Known as El Dorado, the golden land, it is a highland savannah which covers some of the most spectacular untouched wilderness in the world, criss-crossed by rivers, rapids and waterfalls, carpeted in the lower regions by dense jungles which give way to dry highland plains, dotted with massive table-mountains known locally as *tepuys*. Much of the exotic flora of the region is still unclassified, and the seemingly endless list of fauna includes jaguar, tapir, sloths, puma and giant anteaters, as well as astounding array of tropical birds like the Guyanese cock-of-the-rock, red and blue macaws, and several hummingbird species.

The biggest tepuy is Auyan Tepuy, whose name means "Devil's Mountain" in the local Pemón language. Many waterfalls originate on its summit, and from the northern cliffs plunge the Angel Falls which, at 975m, are the highest falls in the world. The highest and most famous of the tepuys is Roraima – our ascent of the mountain is one of the major highlights of the trip, and the views from the top simply unmissable. The weird and otherworldly environment of this region is believed to be the inspiration for Conan Doyle's Lost World.

To view pictures of this trip, please visit www.exodus.co.uk/holidays/tav/images

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment.

Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company. Exodus trips are designed to allow a high degree of economic benefit to the local communities; we buy local produce, eat local food and use local services, thus ensuring that as much money as possible is retained within the local economies and the host communities. With our responsible tourism policy we are continually reassessing our holidays, trying at all times to ensure that they are socially, economically and environmentally sound.

Awards for our work on Responsible Tourism

2006. British Travel Awards: Environmentally Responsible Tourism Company.

2004. Responsible Travel Awards: Best Tour Operator.

2002. BA Tourism for Tomorrow Awards: Highly Commended.

For full details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:

www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel



JOINING THE TRIP

For those starting in London

Duration: 15 days. Depart London Sun, return Sun.

Group flight details

We use the scheduled services of Iberia via Madrid. Current flight timings are given below; these were correct at the time of printing but they cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

| Depart | Time | Arrive | Time |
|-----------------|------|--------------------|-------|
| London Heathrow | 0725 | Madrid | 1045 |
| Madrid | 1210 | Caracas | 1550 |
| Caracas | 1710 | Madrid | 0735+ |
| Madrid | 0845 | London Heathrow T2 | 1005 |

+ Indicates arrival the following day.

Regional Flights

Exodus can arrange flights from the majority of the UK's regional airports to connect with the group flights from London. It may also be possible to fly to the destination either direct or via alternative hubs from some regional airports. If you are arriving on different flights to those above, please see the **Airport Transfers** section below.

Please contact our sales team or your agent for help with regional flight requirements.

For those joining the tour in Caracas

Duration: 14 days. Start Sun (day 1 of itinerary), end Sat (day 14 of itinerary).



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Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

Clients travelling on land only arrangements will be asked to make their own way to the start point (see above), details of how to reach the start point are given in the Final Joining Instructions. If you require airport transfers, please see **Airport Transfers** section below.

Airport Transfers

Transfers are arranged to coincide with the arrival time of the group flight. If you arrive before the group flight, you may (by prior arrangement only) be able to join the group transfer. If you do not take this transfer, you must make your own way to the joining point.

If you would like us to organise a private transfer for you, the cost is £20 (single travellers) or £10 per person (2-3 travellers) and is payable before departure. Please ensure that you provide us with all relevant information at least 2 weeks before departure. Please note that the cost of an official taxi is likely to be between US\$30 and US\$50 (depending on the hotel used), should you decide to make your way independently.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Please note the group flight from London is a daytime flight departing on Day 1 of the itinerary.

The entries in **bold** at the end of each day indicates the type of accommodation normally used (see accommodation section overleaf for key to codes) and meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner).

Day 1 Start Caracas Those on group flights will arrive in Caracas this evening and be transferred to our overnight hotel. Those on land-only arrangements should arrive at the hotel during the day. **SH**

Day 2 To the Grand Savannah We have an early flight to Puerto Ordaz and after a short city tour (time permitting) we drive for around 8 hours to the Grand Savannah. Our accommodation for the night is in a simple guesthouse at Rápidos de Kamoirán. **BH**

Day 3 Aponguao Falls and San Francisco de Yuruani Today we drive to the 100m high Aponguao Falls, one of the most attractive waterfalls in Venezuela, before continuing to the small Indian village of San Francisco de Yuruani. The 15-minute walk to the falls takes us through some lovely scenery. We also visit two smaller falls before arriving in San Francisco where we spend the night in a simple *posada*. **BH (Meals included L,D)**

Day 4 Hike to Río Tek This morning we set off by 4x4 vehicle along the dirt road to the Pemón Indian village of Parai Tepui, the start point for the Roraima trek. The first day's hike (around 12km) is a relatively straightforward 5-hour walk which takes us across gentle hills and open grasslands to our campsite near the banks of the Río Tek (altitude: 1050m). **FC (B,L,D)**

(Please note: Any excess baggage can be left in the 4x4 and taken to Santa Elena to be collected on day 9).

Day 5 Roraima Base Camp Today we walk to the Roraima base camp, crossing plains and hills, with Roraima always visible. In the early afternoon we arrive at the base camp (altitude: 1800m), right in front of the steep wall of Roraima. The 10km hike takes around 6 hours and involves fording two rivers, the Tek and the wider Río Kukenan – we will normally wade across, but if water levels in either river are high, it may be necessary to use a line to assist with the crossing. **FC (B,L,D)**

Day 6 Roraima ascent Today is probably the most challenging part of the trek as we ascend steadily from the base camp to the plateau on top of Roraima - we climb about 1000m today to an altitude of 2800m. The hike generally takes around 5 hours, and we pass under a waterfall which tumbles from the top of the mountain. The waters of the tepuys nourish many of Venezuela's major rivers, such as the Orinoco and the Esequibo, as well as the Amazonian tributaries. There is plenty of vegetation including a spectacular variety of mosses, cacti and orchids. We may also see unusual species such as the tiny Oreophrynella toad, which can only be found on the tepuys and is known for its distinctive black colour. Lunch is served at the summit so we can take a well-earned rest. We usually camp either in a large cave or under a rock ledge which offers protection from the strong winds and low night time temperatures which are common on the plateau. **FC (B,L,D)**

Day 7 Explore Roraima Today we have a full day to explore the sparse volcanic top of the tepuy. Since it is largely flat, the walking today is not too challenging. The exact routes that we take will be heavily dependent on weather conditions, but one of the highlights is the "Kukenan Window", a precipice which offers spectacular views of the eastern face of the neighbouring Kukenan Tepuy and the broad expanse of the jungles of Guyana. Thousands of years of rain have weathered the rocks of Roraima into interesting formations, and there are several sinkholes lined with quartz (locally known as "crystal jacuzzis") and valleys across the top of the mountain. We will spend another night in our summit camp after the day's explorations. **FC (B,L,D)**

Day 8 Descent to Tek River Today it's time to say good-bye to the ancient world as we return to the Tek River on our longest trekking day. The first part of the 8-hour walk is moderately challenging due to the steepness of the descent and the fact that there are loose rocks close to the summit, so caution is advised as we set off. We reach the base camp in time for lunch, and then continue across the Kukenan and Tek Rivers to camp at the same place as on day 4. **FC (B,L,D)**

Day 9 To Santa Elena de Uairén After breakfast, we walk back to Parai Tepuy (about 4 hours), where we will be picked up by a 4x4 vehicle for the drive to Santa Elena de Uairén. A stop will be made at the most beautiful waterfall in this area, the Quebrada de Jaspe. The striking flamelike orange and red colours of the falls are the result of the water polishing the jasper rocks in the stream bed. From the falls we continue to Santa Elena where we spend the night in a pleasant lodge just outside the town. There will be a chance to do some laundry in Santa Elena, as well as take a well-deserved shower. **SH (B,L,D)**

Day 10 To Canaima This morning we transfer to the airport (possibly with a short diversion to the Brazilian border) for our flight in small Cessnas to Canaima (only 10 kg luggage allowance). Subject to weather conditions, the plane can also fly over the magnificent Angel Falls as an optional excursion (see **Optional excursions** section below for further details). On arrival we will transfer to our lodge, and then in the afternoon we will have a walking excursion to Salto Sapó. These stunning waterfalls are quite broad, and it is possible to cross from one side to the other following a path behind the falls – definitely an unusual experience. **SH (B,D)**

Day 11 Angel Falls boat trip After breakfast we start at about 9am for our boat trip to the Angel Falls. We are taken along the Carrao and the Churun rivers, passing Pozo de Felicidad ("Well of happiness"), Isla Orquídea ("Orchid Island"), Cañon del Diablo ("Devil's Canyon") and Wey Tepuy. We pass close by the impressive Auyan Tepuy whose steep walls tower over the river. Finally we arrive at Isla Ratón where we will have lunch. Afterwards we hike for about 50 minutes through tropical rainforest until we get to the lookout point directly opposite the Angel Falls, which we can admire in its full height if weather permits. At almost 1000m it is the highest waterfall in the world. Its waters form a natural pool at its base, which makes it an ideal place to have a swim. We walk back to the camp close to Isla Ratón for dinner and spend the night in hammocks in front of the island. **FC (B,L,D)**

*Please note: In the dry season (January – May) it is not always possible to get to the Angel Falls by boat. In that case we take an excursion to Orchid Island to explore, and swim in the river, returning by boat to Canaima. **SH (B,L,D)***

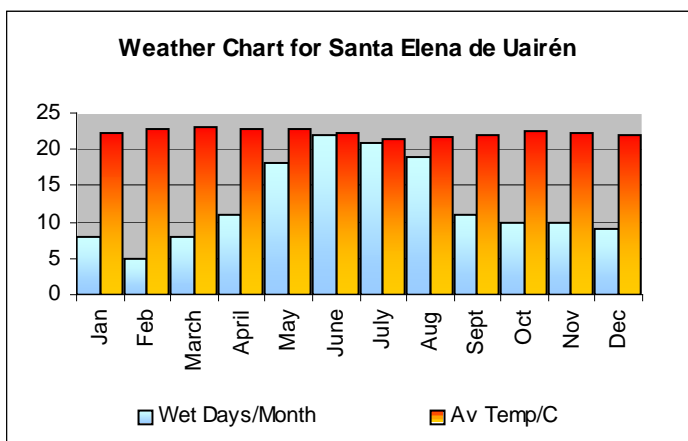
Day 12 Return to Canaima After breakfast and a last look at the falls and Auyan Tepuy we return to Canaima following the same route as yesterday, passing through beautiful savannah landscapes. We arrive in Canaima at around midday, and the rest of the afternoon can be spent relaxing or bathing in the Canaima Lagoon. **SH (B,L,D)**

Day 13 To Ciudad Bolívar In the morning there is still time to explore the small village of Canaima and buy some of the traditional Indian handicrafts. Around midday we fly in a Cessna to Ciudad Bolívar (10kg luggage allowance) where the rest of the day is at leisure to discover the colonial city centre. **CH (B)**

Day 14 End Caracas This morning we drive for an hour to Puerto Ordaz to join our flight to Caracas, where the trip ends. Those on group flights will continue their journey back to London.

The group return flight to London is an overnight flight arriving home on day 15.

WEATHER



Venezuela is a tropical country, and you should be prepared mainly for very hot weather and some tropical downpours. For the majority of the trip it will generally be very humid, with a likelihood of rain at any time of the year. As we ascend Roraima, it will get steadily cooler, with an average night time temperature of around 15C at the base camp and around 5C at the summit, although during the day it is still hot and humid. Conditions remain constant during the June to December wet season, and although temperatures do not change dramatically year round there is less rain between January and May. Water levels in the Angel Falls and the surrounding rivers can be low in the dry season, and it is therefore not always possible to reach the falls by boat at this time of year.

IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

There are difficult sections on the ascent and descent of Roraima where there are exposed sections in which your hands are needed to help you up, confident footwork is essential. This trek can be operated any time during the year and it is much more difficult during the wet season.

As mentioned above, it can be hot, humid and wet in this area of Venezuela, and although the climb is not technically difficult, these conditions can make the going quite challenging in places.

We travel to a remote part of Venezuela on this trip, and except for Ciudad Bolívar, most towns have limited facilities. You should be prepared to stay in reasonably basic accommodation, and also to spend a night in hammocks close to the Angel Falls.

Please Note: The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between these Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes are the correct version and supersede the brochure. Abnormal conditions or other events beyond our control can prevail at any time, particularly in remote or off the beaten track destinations, therefore all holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit.

For holders of British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, US and most EU passports, a visa is not required if arriving by air - a 90-day tourist card will be issued on arrival at Caracas airport. However, if you are travelling overland, a visa is required and must be obtained in advance from the nearest Venezuelan Embassy or Consulate.

Visa regulations can and do change without notice and if you are not a British passport holder please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

For UK residents, Exodus recommends the visa agency Travcour for obtaining your visas. They can be contacted on 020 7223 5295 or www.travcour.com

Vaccinations and Health

There are no statutory requirements, but vaccination against Yellow Fever is strongly recommended, and it is wise to have protection against Diphtheria, Hepatitis A & B, Polio, TB, Tetanus and Typhoid.

Some of this trip takes place in a malarial area, and you should take malarial prophylactic throughout the trip and after your return.

Please consult your doctor or vaccination centre for up-to-date information.

Insurance

It is a condition of joining this trip that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks.

Local Time is GMT -4.5 hrs

Group, Staff and Support

The trip is led by a local English-speaking leader.

Minimum group size is 5, maximum 15.

The minimum age of clients on this trip is 16 years. Please note that children aged 16 or 17 years of age must be accompanied by (and share accommodation with) a parent or legal guardian.

ACCOMMODATION, FOOD & TRANSPORT

Accommodation

We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions below are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

CH Comfortable Hotel, Lodge or Gite – twin rooms with en suite facilities, reliable electricity and water supply, good service and some added amenities.

SH Standard Hotel, Lodge or Gite – no-frills hotel, usually with twin rooms and en suite facilities. Service and amenities are generally adequate.

BH Basic Hotel, Lodge or Gite, Mountain Hut, Village House – Can be communal, often consisting of just a bed and shared facilities. Bed linen not normally provided. Running water, toilets and electricity may be inconsistent or non-existent. Cleanliness is not always assured.

FC Full-service Camping – two person tents sometimes in a private or public campsite that contains a communal ablutions block and other amenities and sometimes in a wild camp with toilet tents and mess tent or dining equipment provided. All camp chores are done for you from erecting / dismantling of your tent, to cooking & washing up.

In Caracas and in some other sections of the trip we use some simple posadas (guesthouses), these are privately owned pensions or bed and breakfast-style lodgings that are very common in Venezuela. They are usually family-run and often better value for money than hotels.

During the Roraima trek, there are no organised campsites, and so we will use wild camps throughout. Porters will carry all communal gear, including tents, food and cooking gear, and this is included in the cost of the holiday. Extra porters can be hired locally to carry any personal gear - please see the **Extra Expenses** section below for further details.

The camp at the Angel Falls is fairly basic, with a communal hammock tent, although there are toilets. Food is prepared by the local staff, and blankets are provided since it can get quite cool at night.

Blankets are provided in the hammock camps, but we recommend taking your sleeping bag or at least a decent sleeping bag liner since it can get cold at night.

Single Accommodation

Single rooms and tents are provided free when required by the balance of the sexes. If you specifically want a single room in the hotels you can request one, but we cannot guarantee that it will be available; if required, singles must be booked and paid for in advance. Please let us know as early as you can if you would like a single room: for this trip the single supplement cost is £80 (this includes all hotel nights and usually a single tent subject to availability, but not the night in hammocks).

Food

In the itinerary we state which meals are included on which day.

As we will be camping and staying in simple accommodation for much of the trip, the choice of food is necessarily quite limited. Many meals served in the posadas will be from set menus rather than a la carte.

Vegetarians can be catered for on the trip, but you should note that in much of Latin America meat is simply replaced with additional vegetables rather than with a specially prepared vegetarian dish.

Please advise us at the time of booking if you have any special dietary requirements.

Transport

For transfers and local sightseeing we use minibuses, 4-wheel drives and small trucks or buses, depending on group size and area. In the Canaima area for river expedition we use motorized curiaras, (Indian canoes). The flights to and from Canaima on days 10 and 13 are by small Cessna aircraft.

MONEY MATTERS

Exodus and Local Payments

There is no local payment on this holiday. As of 1st January 2008, Exodus no longer use 'local payments' to cover part of the cost of the holiday. While some of the headline prices seem higher, we have not added any extra costs into the total price, apart from the local payment and any standard annual fluctuation in price.

If you are comparing prices with other operators, please check the total price paid, as we believe that Exodus offers the best balance between value for money and operational quality.

Currency Information

The local currency in Venezuela is the Bolívar Fuerte (VEF). In October 2008, the exchange rate was £1=3.52 VEF and US\$1=2.15 VEF.

If you are taking foreign currency, you should take US Dollars, as Sterling and other currencies can be extremely difficult to change. You can exchange Dollars at Caracas airport, as well as at major banks and bureaux de change. We do not recommend changing money on the black market.

Some banks in major towns will also buy US Dollars in exchange for Bolivares or issue a cash advance against credit cards. Traveller's cheques are difficult to exchange and not recommended.

ATM availability

Although there are ATMs in main towns, it can be difficult to find one which will issue cash for foreign-issued credit or debit cards. You should check with your bank before travel for up-to-date information on whether or not your card will be accepted. Please note that ATM rates of exchange tend to be much less favourable than for cash transactions.

Credit card acceptance

Mastercard and Visa are widely accepted for transactions in most towns and all major cities. However, you should note that they are unlikely to be accepted in small shops or in cheap restaurants, so you should always carry sufficient local currency for small purchases and meals.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money

Drinks and similar incidentals are fairly inexpensive in Venezuela.

An international departure tax of US\$51 is payable from Caracas (although this is generally included in the trip cost for clients booked with Iberia flights from the UK). This is payable in local currency or US dollars. For domestic flights the airport taxes are as follows: Caracas US\$8, Santa Elena US\$2, Puerto Ordaz US\$6.

If you decide to hire a porter for the Roraima trek the normal cost is approximately US\$250 per porter. Most trekkers share one porter between two. Porters are subject to availability and will carry a maximum of 12kg. The leader will assist with the hiring of extra porters but each client will pay his or her porter directly. The extra porters described here are for personal gear only, such as the sleeping bag, clothes, books etc. If you decide not to hire a porter then each client will carry their own personal gear in their rucksack (minimum 50 litre capacity).

To cover the cost of meals not included in the trip price, you should budget in the region of US\$2 for snack meals, US\$5-10 for lunch, and US\$10-15 for a very good evening meal, although it possible to eat for much less than this. These costs exclude alcoholic drinks. We estimate the additional meal costs for this trip to be in the region of US\$150 per person.

Drinks and similar incidentals are fairly inexpensive in Venezuela, with bottled water or soft drinks costing around US\$1, and beer also around US\$1. Venezuela produces excellent rum, which costs about the same as beer. Wine is slightly more expensive at US\$2-3 for a glass.

Optional excursions (approximate, depending on group sizes)

The optional overflight of the Angel Falls on Day 10 will cost approximately \$50-\$80 (booked and paid for locally) depending upon availability. Please note that there must be a minimum of 3 clients for this flight to operate, and will only operate if weather conditions permit. The plane used for the flight to Canaima will divert from its usual course for this overflight.

Tipping (leader and local staff)

Although entirely at your discretion, it is customary to show appreciation to the guide, drivers and cooks by giving a tip at the end of the tour. We would normally recommend a tip of US\$3 per day for the leader/guide, and a combined tip of the same amount for the other trip staff.

WHAT TO TAKE

Essential Equipment and Clothing

This should be read in conjunction with our 'What to Pack' section in the General Information booklet (sent on booking).

In addition to your "normal" daily clothes, you will need the following essential items:

3 seasons sleeping bag, sleeping mat or Thermarest, warm jacket or fleece, leather or lightweight walking boots, hat and gloves, waterproof jacket and over trousers, sunglasses, 2 x 1 litre water bottles, sandals (for river crossings). Since there is light backpacking on Roraima you will need to bring a rucksack of minimum 50 litres capacity. This must be big enough to carry your personal kit during the trek, including sleeping bag. You must carry this bag yourself unless you wish to hire a porter (see above). An additional day sack is useful. If you do decide to hire a porter you will also need a daysack to carry during the day as you will not get access to your rucksack until the evening.

We also recommend: Long-sleeved shirts and trousers against sun and insects; sunscreen and insect repellent; swim suit, towel; flashlight or head torch.

Baggage and baggage allowance

Although most international flights will permit you to carry 20kg or 23kg, there are very strict baggage restrictions on some domestic flights within Venezuela. **For the Cessna flights on days 10 and 13, the baggage allowance is 10kg per person.**

For this reason, we strongly recommend that you try to pack lightly and do not take more than 10kg with you for the duration of the trip, since getting baggage from Santa Elena de Uairén to Ciudad Bolívar can be very expensive. If a car is hired to take your bags from Santa Elena, this will cost US\$300-US\$350, and while the cost can be shared between any group members who require it (the vehicle can take up to 15 bags), if you are the only person wishing to transfer luggage you will be liable for the entire cost. If there is a spare seat on the Cessna, then it may be possible to purchase an extra ticket which will allow an additional 80kg to be carried, but this will cost US\$200 per flight, and since Canaima can only be reached by air it will mean a total cost of US\$400 for the two flights. Again, if you are the only trip member wishing to take additional baggage, you would be liable for the entire cost.

If you live in the UK or Eire we provide an Exodus kitbag to store your spare luggage in whilst on the trek. Please note that if you book close to the departure date we cannot guarantee that your kitbag will arrive before your trip starts. If this is the case please use a suitable alternative. Unfortunately it is not possible for us to supply kitbags for those who book from outside of the UK or Eire.

Reading List

Venezuela

Thomas Kohnstamm (Lonely Planet)

Birds of Venezuela

Steven Hilty (Princeton University Press)

A comprehensive and detailed guide to all 1381 bird species which inhabit Venezuela – includes colour plates and range maps.

Quest for the Lost World

Brian Blessed (Boxtree)

A humorous and fascinating account by the outspoken actor of his journey to Roraima.

The Lost World

Arthur Conan Doyle (Penguin Classics)

A classic adventure yarn inspired by the landscapes of Canaima and the Grand Savannah, but with a few more dinosaurs than we encounter on this trip.

Map(s)**Mount Roraima**

(Last Refuge)

A detailed selection of maps, diagrams and notes on geography, geology, flora and fauna.

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HOW TO BOOK

- 1. Check availability** Go online at www.exodus.co.uk to check availability, or contact us by phone (0845 330 6008) or email (sales@exodus.co.uk)
- 2. Secure your place** You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between 3 and 7 days.
- 3. Complete your Booking Form** You have the choice of completing the booking form at the back of one of our brochures or online.

Book with confidence Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO). This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.