



TRAVELING THE ANCIENT AMAZONS WITH THE AUTHOR

Machu Picchu, Lima and the Amazon Itinerary

Day 1 Leaving Your Home in USA, Europe or Australia

Depart this evening on an overnight flight to Iquitos, Peru.

Day 2 Iquitos, the jungle city

When we arrive to Iquitos, your hotel will be waiting for you. After lunch we'll explore the city. Much of the architecture we see is a 19th-century vestige of the era when European commercial barons held sway over life and culture here. And while Iquitos has seen many fortunes rise and fall, its isolation has remained constant: Still today its access is by air or river only.

Now days, Iquitos is the principal city of the Peruvian Amazon and is the capital of Loreto Region, located in the extreme North Eastern part of Peru, near the borders with Brazil and Colombia. Its population is closing the 1,000,000 inhabitants, making it one of the three largest cities on the entire length of the Amazon, along with Manaus and Belen in Brazil.

Iquitos is also a typical colorful tropical Amazonian city characterized by its friendly, outgoing inhabitants and vibrant street life. It has all the basic facilities of a major city, with an international airport, excellent hotels and restaurants of all categories. There is a wide variety of restaurants with both international and regional cuisine to serve the most discriminating visitor.

In the area of nightlife, no city can beat Iquitos, where bars, discotheques and big fiesta halls abound and where the people of Iquitos are known for needing no special occasion or motive for a celebration.

Day 2 Heading to the Jungle Ecolodge

Starting our Jungle Adventure, we'll take a boat trip on the Amazon, the world's largest river. During the trip, you will see the magnificence of the Amazon, the exuberance of the jungle and the picturesque villages appearing on the shores with their particular color and joy. Besides, we'll be in the look-out to spot the legendary, unforgettable, Pink Dolphin.

Arrival and accommodation in the Amazonas ecolodge located about 40 miles from Iquitos. The native-style lodge built with natural materials is upon high ground, surrounded by trees, plants and flowers, where birds and butterflies roam.

Refreshing "welcome drink" made with regional fruit (cocona, camu camu, copoazu, other) and brief instructions about the sustained conservation standards that must be observed in the lodge and its surroundings in order to make your tour best enjoyable.

Short canoe ride in the afternoon to "Nuevo Peru" where a Yagua community has established. You will get acquainted with their customs, see their unique apparel made of palm fibers and even try their "pucuna" or blowgun.

Lunch at the lodge where gastronomy is based upon the ample use of natural and fresh products from the river and the local farmlands.

Guided ethnic botanic walk in the afternoon. You will be able to identify species of the Amazon plant kingdom (Cat's Claw, Sour Cane, Copaiba, Aguaje and even Ayahuasca, the hallucinogen vine).

Visit the local "shaman" who will explain about the marvelous healing properties and use of some of these plants and roots.

Tour the Santa María del Ojeal farmlands where you will visit the sugar cane squeeze, the fruit orchard, the fish culture pond; see the Amazon breed cattle and artisanal dugout canoe fishing performed on the river by locals.

Visit a typical village on the shores of the Amazon, see the homes, schools, churches, shops and interact with its people. Visit the community's sustained development projects and the Wildlife Rescue Center that are being made possible with ecotourism support.

Observe the beautiful sunset on the Amazon River.

Evening canoe ride or walk to discover the awesome world of night insects, cicadas, spiders, praying mantis, etc. Listen to the owls, camas and others night creatures.

Tales and legends from the rich Amazon myths told by the local guides after dinner and/or a short pleasant musical performance

Day 3 Flora and Fauna Circuit from Ecolodge

Delicious breakfast at the Amazonas ecolodge

After breakfast we will motorboat to the opposite side of the Amazon River. During the trip you might spot river dolphins, main characters of fantastic tales and legends of the Amazon Myths. See typical riverside landscape plantations.

Walk on tropical rainforest trail and boat or canoe on the Yanayacu River to the Tambo Yanayacu Lodge located in the "Kingdom of the Giant Trees". Watch the rich avian fauna of the area.

See the diverse medicinal plants, epiphyte plants (bromeliads) growing high on the trees, and giant flora like the "lupuna" or ceiba tree species over 150-feet high.

Search for primates and sloths that blends with the forest canopy. Lunch at a Tambo ecolodge in Yanayacu (38 Miles NE of Iquitos).

Trek to oxbow lake in the afternoon where it is possible to find the Horned Screamer (*Anhima cornuta*), eye-catching bird species that feeds on aquatic flora.

Evening walk or canoe ride. Dinner at the Tambo close to Yanayacu.

Day 4 Piranha Fishing and Night Alligator spotting

This morning we'll hike to Yagua Cocha (lagoon). It's a long walk following the jungle trail used by the people that live in this area to reach one of the largest and most beautiful lakes. Here you can also spot the Hoatzin or "shansho" bird (*Opisthocomus hoatzin*.) Then, we'll practice native-style fishing onboard a dugout canoe. If we get lucky, the locals will prepare what you have fished, but just in case, we will bring along "Box lunches."

Return to the Tambo in Yanayacu and be part of the reforestation program activity Plant-a-Tree in an area near the lodge. Visit a typical farmers' village or if you prefer, swim on a paradisiacal creek.

After dinner, in the middle of the night, we'll go alligator hunting, a safe and unforgettable lifetime experience at the Amazon rainforest.

Day 5 Shamanic Experiences and return to Iquitos

Early in the morning, and just like they had done it for the last few centuries, a Master Shaman prepares the "cleansing bath" using fragrant tropical plants to bring perfect harmony to participants and mother earth. The cleansing takes place in an appointed place on the Sinchicuy River before breakfast time. You will have plenty of time to speak and get the inside on what's a

myth and what's real for them. After an early lunch, we'll ride dugout canoes to visit, after a short hike, a development of sustained economy projects in the Nuevo Peru Community or if you prefer you can enjoy the lodge and rest. Early in the afternoon, we will start our return to Iquitos where a delicious dinner and a warm bath are waiting for you.

Day 6 Belem Market & Quistococha Zoo

After an Amazonian breakfast, we'll visit The Belen Market a great, huge, third world outdoor "super" market that covers 20 blocks or more. Everything that can be bought or sold, is bought and sold there. The Belen Market is not a tourist trap, it is real life, with much of real life's beauty and ugliness, aromas and odors, laughter and anger, barkers shouting out their wares, musicians playing, cooks cooking, babies nursing, parrots squawking, and all combined, create an excellent reason for tourists that are interested to learn about real life in Iquitos. Come to Belen to witness the commerce of exotic fruits, fish, rainforest natural medicines and other wild products. These mind-blowing "streets" are known as the Venice of Peru. Here life carries on with the river. There are not only homes, but also floating schools, stores, churches and bars that can be explored by boat, all in all an amazing photographic opportunity

"After lunch, we have scheduled a visit to the Quistococha Zoo Guided visit to the park's zoo where you will see some species of the vast Amazon rainforest fauna including tapirs, giant river otters, caimans, anacondas, ocelots, jaguars as well as different kinds of primates. You will also see the "pacha" (Arapaima giga), the world's largest fresh water species.

Additionally, we'll visit the beautiful Quistococha Lake and its white-sand beach. If you wish you can sunbathe or swim.

There is also a small museum in this place, an aquarium, a restaurant, souvenirs and pedal-boat rental shops. At the end of the tour; you will be delighted for the rare pics opportunities that this place brings to your camera. "

Day 7 Pilpintuwasi Butterfly Farm & Yaguas and Bora's Tribes

A devoted woman with energy that seems to never run dry started the place almost 20 years ago. Besides breeding the beautiful Amazonian butterflies Pilpintuwasi takes care of animal orphans saved from a horrible faith. The animals that now live at Pilpintuwasi are either confiscated by the Eco-police or are saved by people who found them in poor condition. Pilpintuwasi is a warm place with great interests in the well-being of all living creatures, but it's the farm's exotic animals that steal the show. Raised as orphans and protected within the property are several mischievous monkeys, a tapir, an anteater and Pedro Bello, a majestic

jaguar and many more. Most of the animals live free to roam around the Butterfly Farm, except for the jaguar who lives in a large cage with trees and a pool.

After lunch we we'll visit two interesting and authentic tribes of real Amazon Indigenous. The Yaguas and Boras provide an opportunity for you to watch how natives have lived in the jungle for hundreds of years. The Boras perform traditional dances, the Yagua give lessons in shooting the blow gun. Both tribes sell handicrafts made from jungle extracted products and this is a great opportunity to bring with you back-home some authentic souvenirs.

Day 8 Leaving the Jungle to Discover Modern Lima

We will take an early flight from Iquitos to arrive at the airport in Lima early in the morning and transfer to your hotel for a delicious Peruvian lunch.

After lunch, we meet to discuss the discoveries for the Lima Tour. In the afternoon, we explore Lima together. Founded by the conquistadors in 1535, Lima became Spain's largest and wealthiest city in the New World. The city has a proud history, including the founding, in the middle of the 16th century, of one of the first universities in South America, the Universidad de San Marcos. Today, Lima's historic city center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We begin with a guided visit to Lima's Larco Museum, which specializes in treasures from ancient Peru. The Larco is home to one of the world's most outstanding collections of pre-Columbian gold and silver, as well as a fascinating collection of erotic archaeological artifacts. Then, to get acquainted better, we enjoy a "Welcome to Peru" Dinner.

Day 9 Lima Colonial Late flight to Cuzco

Right after breakfast we start discovering Lima's Colonial streets and architecture, evidence of the city's Spanish heritage, including the iconic San Francisco Church. The historic heart of Lima will transport you to another era. Lima Cathedral containing Pizarro's tomb and the Church of San Francisco, with its elaborate Baroque architecture, musty catacombs, and piles of skulls. Nearby we'll explore the neighborhood of Miraflores. This upscale neighborhood skirting the sea is also great for shopping. Another seaside enclave, known as Barranco, has become Lima's version of New York's Greenwich Village, for its lively bars and coffee houses. After a late lunch we'll head out to the airport for our afternoon flight to Cuzco.

Day 10 The City of Cuzco

Upon arrival to Cuzco airport, we transfer to your hotel for rest and acclimation.

Five hundred years ago, Cuzco thrived as the capital of the sprawling Inca Empire, a status it held for more than two centuries. At its peak, it was a sophisticated metropolis with paved

streets, water systems, and no poverty. Its temples, filled with gold and silver, were pillaged when Pizarro and his conquistadors invaded the city in 1538. But many splendors still remain, as we will see during our exploration.

After lunch, our local guide will start to acquaint us with Cuzco's dramatic and colorful history. Then we'll take a walking tour to explore the Qoricancha Sun Temple, the city's most important ceremonial structure during the Incan era. Historical records of the time note that its walls were once covered with sheets of gold studded with emeralds and turquoise; when the sunlight streamed through the windows, the reflection off the precious metals was blinding. We'll also visit the Plaza de Armas, the historic central square of the city. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Day 11 Train to Machu Picchu • Visit Machu Picchu Ancient Ruins

Today we wake up quite early and spend the morning on a spectacular bus and train trip into the gorge of the Urubamba River. We first ascend the valley slopes above Cuzco. Then we crest a pass and descend alongside a frothing river in the narrow gorge of the Urubamba. The station for Machu Picchu is at a bit over 6,500 feet, well below the altitude of Cuzco. We'll have a boxed lunch while we're riding the train.

Most travelers visit Machu Picchu on a day trip, which makes for a hectic pace and only limited time at this unique archaeological wonder. We can take a closer look, and have a more relaxed pace, during our overnight visit to Machu Picchu. The train brings us to the town of Aguas Calientes, from which we then drive to the ruins. This drive takes about a half an hour, as we must follow a zigzag route up a steep hill. (The return trip by bus takes the same amount of time; or if you prefer, you can walk downhill and along the valley floor for about an hour.) When the day-trippers leave the ruins to catch the last train of the day, we remain longer and enjoy an uncrowded experience.

You'll have a complete and compelling look at the fabled "Lost City of the Incas," which was discovered in 1911 by Yale archaeologist (and later, U.S. Senator) Hiram Bingham. Subsequent discoveries (such as Bingham's later unearthing of the Inca Trail and the 1941 discovery of nearby Huayna Picchu) suggest that Machu Picchu was not simply a "lost city" but part of a whole lost "region." More than 172 tombs have been excavated, and in 2002 Peruvian archaeologists uncovered the first complete burial site, unearthing a woman's skeleton, bronze pins, and a clay pot. Here we can explore sites like the Ritual Baths, the Palace of the Princess, the Main Fountain, and the Temple of the Sun as we contemplate the achievements of a most fascinating and mysterious civilization. We return to the Cusco for a delicious dinner.

Day 12 Cusco Colonial and Return to Lima

After a delicious Andino breakfast, we will take a walking tour of Cuzco. The traditional walking tour takes visitors past some of the most famous areas of Cusco, including the barrio of San Blas, the 12 sided stone, the Qorikancha, Palacio de Justicia and Plaza de Armas.

The city of Cusco is steeped in history and its development through time is shown perfectly along the route. The impressive Qorikancha shows 3 clear periods of use, whilst also demonstrating changing attitudes to historical conservation in Peru. The structure shows pre-Inca, Inca and colonial Spanish architecture, as each successive civilization sought to consolidate their power over the others by symbolically building on top of one of their most important religious structures.

Due to the lack of written records, there is relatively little that is certain about the great Incan empire that once stretched from Northern Argentina to Southern Colombia. This walk aims to give a basic introduction to the capital city of this great empire.

Late in the afternoon return back to Lima to connect with your international flight back home.

Day 13 Flight Back to the States

Every good thing must come to an end and today we flight back to the States.

Day 14 Safely back back home!