

Title:

Amazing Amazon Expedition

Word Count:

716

Summary:

The mighty Amazon River basin is a world of mystery and beauty waiting to be explored. The Amazon's ecosystem is rich beyond compare with such variety of wildlife, flora and fauna, that scientists are unable to classify it all. The lush rainforests are virtually the world's largest living botanical garden.

Keywords:

Article Body:

We set out with a group of 38 singles and as usual they were initially timid but quickly bonded in friendship. On arrival in Lima we check into a lovely hotel located in trendy Miraflores district. There was a guided city tour, leisure time to explore and a delicious dinner of sea bass ceviche at a restaurant built on an ocean pier.

Next day we flew Lan to Iquitos where we were greeted by 3 top guides who remain with us for our 6 days in the jungle. They are truly pro's on flora, fauna and having fun! All transport is by boat. 90 miles down river we arrive to Explonapo Lodge in the heart of Amazonia. No plumbing or electricity, feels like an episode out of "Survivor." Rustic to the extreme yet therein lies the unique charm. I fell in love with the resident "pets". There was Adrian the toucan who would poke his long beak into the dining room door for a treat, along with several tame parrots and scarlet macaws. Charlie was a Capybara that looked like a mutant 100lb. guinea pig. When I'd scratch under his chin he'd close his eyes and make cooing sounds.

The pitch black nights were spooky with a symphony of wild noises. Our rooms were connected with a privacy wall and an open thatched roof. Like a giant slumber party, we all shouted "goodnight Johnboy" from our mosquito netted beds. Suddenly Sharon screamed and the guys run to her room. She found a giant lizard tucked in with her in her bed. At 3am I head to the latrine with flashlight in hand. Inside a bat flutters near my head as I repeatedly whisper "bat's are good."

Enough roughing it. We board our boats for "luxury in the Amazon" at Ceiba

Tops. With air conditioning, tropical gardens and a pool, it feels like the Ritz to us. I take the world's longest shower as others enjoy Pisco Sours by the pool. We all gain weight with fresh food throughout that is both delicious and plentiful.

On daily boat tours we saw giant water lilies, sloths, countless birds and the elusive pink dolphins. We fished by cane poles for piranha to fry up for dinner. We visited a family with a pet anaconda snake. My brave clients drape it around themselves for a photo op. We delivered medical supplies to a remote clinic serving the poor river people. Here a tooth extraction costs \$2 if they can afford it.

There were many highlights! We hiked the world's longest canopy walk 100' high in the trees. We visited Monkey Island, a research station for 8 species that room free. For one photo I held 3 at a time. There was a lecture by two resident shamans who taught us about medicinal plants and then blessed us individually as they removed our bad spirits. At the Yagua Indian Village we traded our western goods for masks and blowguns (several of these were later were confiscated by TSA.)

The best part of the trip for me was a surprise visit to a rural school. Inside were 50+ children barefoot and wide-eyed who never see tourists. Tears filled my eyes as they sang their national anthem to us. We sang our anthem to them and deposited a ton of school supplies to the two teachers. It was a glorious sight.

Back to Lima, we all scatter to shop the Indian markets. The dollar is so strong here that several in the group bought another suitcase to fill. I did my Xmas shopping in May. Our fabulous dinner was at a restaurant set in pre-Incan ruins. We toast each other goodbye with many hugs as I remiss a journey well done. This group was so prefect I'd like to clone them all for future AFS trips. I couldn't hand pick better travelers for this adventure.

I have always loved the land of Peru. I am now designing a unique future trip to include Machu Piccu, boating Lake Titicaca, visits to natives on floating reed islands and crossing to La Paz Bolivia. For the moment, I have tired of Europe. There is a spirit of humility found in the hearts of these people that I am unable to adequately describe here. Nor can my photos justly convey Peru. It truly must be experienced.