

DETAILED ITINERARY: AMAZON VOYAGE

Saturday, May 17th

Departure - Indianapolis / Miami / Lima

Our expedition begins as we depart from the Indianapolis International Airport. In Miami we are met and assisted in preparation for our evening departure on American Airlines. Dinner is served aboard our nonstop jet service to Lima, Peru. We are met on arrival, clear immigration and customs, and transfer to our hotel for the night.

Sunday, May 18th

Lima / Iquitos / Amazon River

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for a short flight over the spectacular Andes Mountains to Iquitos. Upon arrival we go directly to our vessel, our home for the coming week. We cast off soon afterward and begin our journey into the greatest wilderness on earth. Tonight, as we cruise up the Amazon, the stars present an incredible spectacle of northern and southern constellations, visible because of our nearness to the equator..

Monday, May 19th

Amazon River / Rio Ucayali

We awake this morning on the mighty Amazon, and we are amazed at the ever-changing panorama of jungle life. Small villages occasionally dot the shoreline, and channels weaving through island mazes provide close-up views of a variety of marsh birds. This morning we arrive at the junction of the Río Marañón and Río Ucayali. We turn up the left fork, the Ucayali. An outstanding feature of this river is the large population of both gray and pink Amazon River dolphins, often seen cavorting near the boat and along the shoreline. We take our first excursion in search of giant water lilies and return to the boat for lunch. As dusk approaches, we watch fishing bats as they begin their night's foraging.

Tuesday, May 20th

Rio Ucayali / Requena

This morning we take an excursion down a tributary of the Ucayali. Our guides help us search for primates, sloths and birds. We return to the boat and continue upriver, heading for the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve. The largest wetland reserve in the world, it provides the opportunity to view a variety of primates. A night excursion adds the chance to view caimans, capybaras, common potoos, frogs and other wildlife.

Wednesday, May 21st

Pacaya / Samiria National Reserve

After an early breakfast, we board excursion boats (which allow greater access to the vast wetlands of the reserve) and spend the day exploring this flooded realm. Our outing begins at an optimal time for wildlife observation. We can expect to see numerous wading birds, such as white-necked and black-capped herons, wattled jacanas and sunbit-terns. Parrots are quite common, and we may observe the most conspicuous member of this family, endangered scarlet macaws, often seen flying in pairs or small family groups. Along the river channel we hear leaves rustle high in the trees as monkeys forage for food. Midmorning we stop at higher ground to take a leisurely hike through a varzea (seasonally flooded forest). Surprisingly open, due to being periodically inundated with water, this type of forest is likely to reveal three-toed soths in the upper canopy and a proliferation of butterflies including the spectacular brilliant-blue morpho. We enjoy a picnic lunch at a ranger station before heading back to our vessel, where we have the opportunity to observe even more wildlife as we explore the river channels. This afternoon we depart for the Tapiche River.

Thursday, May 22nd**Río Tapiche / Río Marañón**

This morning our vessel enters the Río Tapiche for a short distance. Today we may swim in the river, paddle a dugout canoe, and visit a river village. The villagers here sell small handmade crafts, if you are interested. After a full morning, we return to the ship and continue down the Ucayali toward the Río Marañón.

Friday, May 23rd**Río Marañón / San Regis**

Today we enter the Terra Firma. Large trees festooned with epiphytes, palms, woody vines and a vaulted canopy create the shadowed mystery of tropical rainforest. Our trail winds through the forest arriving at a canopy walkway where we explore the world above the forest floor. We return to the ship for lunch and continue toward Iquitos. An excursion on a black-water river provides one last chance to enjoy the beauty of tropical rainforest.

Saturday, May 24th**Iquitos / Lima**

After breakfast we take a guided tour of Iquitos before our flight to Lima. Upon arrival we take a tour of the colonial center of Lima as well as the contemporary section of the city. The National Capital and Plaza de Armas are some highlights. Then we transfer to one of Lima's finest restaurants, and enjoy a dinner of authentic Peruvian cuisine.

Sunday, May 25th**Depart Lima / Miami / Indianapolis**

This morning we arrive in Miami and clear customs, then continue on a flight to Indianapolis. Soon we will be home, where the tranquility of life on the river will be replaced with our daily routines. The memory of the Amazon rainforest, however, will stay with us forever.

Please Note: Your itinerary may vary based on wildlife sightings, water levels and navigability. This itinerary serves as an example of a typical experience. The order of events, tributary streams visited and villages visited intentionally vary to reduce impact on any one area. Each departure is a unique and exceptional experience. Order of land activities may vary based on domestic air schedules.

Accommodations

Our classically styled Amazon riverboats are the perfect way to travel in comfort through the world's largest and most diverse rainforest. Measuring approximately 91 feet in length and 24 feet in width, these intimate vessels are staffed by a skillful, conscientious and personable crew. All cabins are air-conditioned, with private baths and hot water showers. On-board dining features delicious local and international cuisine prepared each day from the freshest vegetables, fruit, fish and local produce. Through a circular bank of floor-to-ceiling windows in the dining parlor, the backdrop to every meal is an ever-changing vista of exotic beauty framed by opal, equatorial skies. An open-air top deck offers incredible wildlife viewing by day and unforgettable stargazing by night.

Machu Picchu Extension

Please Note: Saturday, May 24 of the expedition becomes day 1 of the extension. The actual extended trip length is five days. Hotels and order of itinerary are subject to change.

Saturday, May 24th**Iquitos / Lima**

Following dinner we transfer to our hotel for the night.

Sunday, May 25th**Lima / Cusco / Urubamba Valley**

Our early morning flight takes us from Lima to Cusco, a picturesque town of red-tile-roofed buildings nestled in a high valley 11,000 feet above sea level. We meet our guide and travel by bus to the historic Urubamba Valley, where we make a memorable stop at the colorful Chincheros Indian market. Afterward, we have lunch at a local restaurant and continue on to our hotel, where we arrive mid-afternoon. After settling in, we visit the remote Willoq community, virtually unchanged in its social structure, dress and language from pre-Inca times. We then make our way to the archaeological wonder of Ollantaytambo, where ancient temples and fortresses were constructed to protect the Sacred Valley. We arrive back at our hotel for dinner.

Monday, May 26th**Urubamba / Machu Picchu**

After an early breakfast, we depart the Ollanta Railway Station for our train ride to Machu Picchu. We arrive mid-morning and proceed directly to the ruins. Known as the "Lost City of the Inca," Machu Picchu's existence was virtually forgotten until its rediscovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911. Our guide points out the significance of the various stone structures and discusses the mysteries surrounding this archaeological wonder. Late this afternoon we transfer to our hotel, the beautiful Machu Picchu Pueblo, for dinner.

Tuesday, May 27th**Machu Picchu / Cusco**

This morning, we rise early and may choose to make a dawn visit to Machu Picchu or go in search of the spectacular Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. We may also have an opportunity to visit the Orchid Trail on the hotel grounds. We return to the hotel for a delicious buffet lunch. This afternoon we return to Cusco where we enjoy dinner at our hotel.

Wednesday, May 28th**Cusco / Sacsayhuaman**

After breakfast we set out by bus to ascend the mountains surrounding Cusco. Here, the Inca constructed Sacsayhuaman, a truly amazing fortress of massive stones, zigzagging along the side of a mountain. We have a city tour of Cusco and enjoy a free afternoon before our farewell dinner at a local restaurant. We return to the Libertador Hotel to overnight.

Thursday, May 29th**Cusco / Lima**

We return to the airport for our morning flight to Lima, where we are met and escorted to our hotel. This afternoon we visit the famous Museum of the Nation. Lunch and dinner are on our own. Late this evening, travelers bound for Dallas are transferred to the airport for an overnight flight.

Friday, May 30th**Depart Lima / Miami / Indianapolis**

This morning we transfer to the airport for our return flight to Miami, then on to Indianapolis. We once again fly over the grand mountainscape of the Andes, this time with clear impressions and wonderful memories of the "Heart of the Inca Empire."

Please Note: All meals included except lunch and dinner on Thursday, May 29 of extension.