

# Family Rainforest Expedition in Peru



## Highlights

Take the family for a 5-day educational rainforest expedition in Peru. Staying in an eco lodge in the heart of the Tambopata National Reserve, this trip has been put together specifically with children in mind. Hike through the jungle, spot caiman in the river and learn about how the fruits of the forest are used in every facet of local people's lives.

The Tambopata National Reserve, part of the Tambopata-Candamo Reserve, is an incredibly rich and diverse rainforest reserve that is (relatively) easily accessed from Lima. The Tambopata Reserve plays hosts to an astounding variety of mammals, butterflies and bird species and features the world's largest known clay lick - where hundreds of exotic parrots and macaws congregate in a sight that has to be seen to be believed. Refugio Amazonas is a 200 hectare sustainable community owned lodge & reserve sat within the national park.

During your stay you'll really get a taste of the rainforest directly, as well as learning about it through nightly talks given by the lodge staff. You'll search for caiman by flashlight along the riverbank at night, and take a night hike to listen to the amazing nocturnal forest sounds. You'll get to view the unbroken forest stretching for miles from the high canopy tower, and learn how to use native plants to tattoo your skin (temporarily)! The children will go on exciting and informative hikes into the nearby forest where they will learn about ecology through games and puzzles. And, of course, you'll be able to relax in the midst of this lush and vibrant world in the comfortable surroundings of the lodge itself.

## Is it for me?

Refugio Amazonas is aimed at educating adults and young people about the rainforest. This is for families looking for a holiday with an element of learning as well as exploration. It offers a structured, educational itinerary deep within a rainforest of outstanding natural beauty. The activities offered are specifically tailored to fit the needs of families with young children.

Be aware that in the rainforest there are insects, wild animals and changeable weather patterns. Make sure you are vaccinated against any jungle diseases and that you are medically prepared for your trip - antimalarials are normally advised. Remember you will need waterproof clothing and good footwear. This trip is for people who respect the rainforest and will behave accordingly (leaving no rubbish, adhering to trails and listening to the safety advice of your guides).

## Accommodation

You'll be staying at Refugio Amazonas, a 32-bedroom eco lodge directly adjacent to Tambopata National Reserve. The lodge has a bar, lounge and dining area. The rooms are seven by four metres, with mahogany floors and palm-frond roofs with one wall open to the jungle (mosquitos are not a problem near the lodge) to allow both ventilation and a feeling of symbiosis with the forest itself. All rooms have private bathrooms. Note that there is no electricity in the lodge. Light is provided by kerosene lamps and candles, so bring good flashlights.

The food consists of self-service three-course cooked meals, with a balance of Peruvian and international dishes.

Prices from

**461** GBP (5 days) per person

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Specific dietary requirements are gladly catered for. Unlimited sterile drinking water, coffee and tea are provided as well as fruit juice with meals.

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrival and Reception

Upon arrival from Lima or Cusco, you'll be welcomed at the airport and driven to the Puerto Maldonado headquarters where you'll leave your heavier items and pack lightly for the next few days, then you'll be transferred to the Tambopata Port. From there you will take a boat ride to Refugio Amazonas, past the Community of Infierno.

(Packed Lunch)

Upon arrival, the lodge manager will welcome you and brief you with important navigation and security tips.

(Dinner)

You'll then head out to the river's edge at night, scanning the shores with headlamps and flashlights to catch the reflections from caiman eyes.

### Day 2: Trails and Tattoos

(Breakfast)

Kids aged 6-12 hike with a guide through a challenging (but short) trail where they follow maps, solve riddles and find clues that will lead them to Ania's "gifts". The trail teaches kids how people live in the rainforest and leave a valuable message from ANIA, an environmental education NGO.

(Lunch)

Five minutes from the lodge is Don Manuel's farm, where you'll prepare a paste from the fruit of huito and achiote to draw dark blue and red tattoos on yourselves. They last several days.

(Dinner)

You will have the option of hiking out at night, when most of the mammals are active but difficult to see. Easier to find are frogs with shapes and sounds as bizarre as their natural histories.

### Day 3: Ant City and Brazil nuts

(Breakfast)

Another trail designed by ANIA. Features include Ant City, the search for the lost Brazil Nut, a shihuahuaco tree to climb and a visit to "Anias home" near lake Condenado.

(Lunch)

Another visit to Don Manuel's farm, to discover some of the uses of his many different plants.

(Dinner)

Video presentations are available every night at the interpretation center. Topics include the Tambopata National Reserve and the macaw project.

### Day 4: Clay Lick

A fifteen minute boat ride and sixty minute walk from the lodge is a clay lick used both by parrots and parakeets. From a hide you will see parrots and parakeets descend on most clear days to ingest the clay on a bank.

(Breakfast)

Twenty minutes walk away is a peccary (wild pig) clay lick. Chances of spotting them are around 15%, but well worth the short hike. Other wildlife also shows up including deer, guan and parakeets.

(Lunch)

A thirty minute walk leads to the 25 metre high canopy tower, built on high ground to give unsurpassed views of primary forest extending out towards the Tambopata National Reserve.

(Dinner)

Nightly lectures prepared by the staff of Refugio Amazonas cover conservation threats, opportunities and projects in the Tambopata National Reserve.

### Day 5: Farewell

(Breakfast)

You'll retrace your river and road journey back to Puerto Maldonado office and the airport. Depending on airline schedules, this may require dawn departures.

## Details

### Getting there

Flying to Peru...

Fly to Lima or Cusco and take an internal flight from there to Puerto Maldonado Airport (PEM).

Joining instructions...

You will be picked up from Puerto Maldonado Airport (PEM) and driven, first to the provider's Puerto Maldonado headquarters, and then on to Tambopata River Port. You will then be transferred by boat to Tambopata Reserve.

All boats are 20 ft long, roofed canoes with 55 hp outboard motors. They have scheduled arrivals and departures from each port. These schedules are programmed daily so that they fit seamlessly with airport arrivals and departures. There is no need to worry about whether your plane fits the boat schedule; this is arranged for you and the boats will wait for up to two hours.

### Price includes

All meals, accommodation, river transportation, and transfer from and to Puerto Maldonado airport.

Price is per person based on 2 or 3 people sharing.

Single supplement fee: \$180.

## When is best

The lowland rain forests of the Tambopata Reserve lie far enough south of the Equator to provide a cooler, drier winter season between May and October. The general weather conditions are warm and humid. The average daytime high is between 78° and 93° F (24° and 31° C) and the average nighttime low is between 66° and 78° F (20° and 24° C). Nevertheless between May and September, cold fronts from Argentina can sweep into southwestern Amazonia and push daytime highs down to 50° F (9° C) and the nighttime lows to 43° F (5° C).

During the rainy months of November through April, always be prepared for heavy rain that can continue for hours or days. Around 80% of the annual average 3000 mm rainfall occurs during this season.

## Available

Jan—Dec

## Typical Duration

5 days

## Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

## Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

## Travellers should bring

Recommended kit list Good binoculars; Camera gear; Tight-weave, light colored, long cotton pants; Long sleeved, tight-weave, light colored cotton shirts; Ankle-high hiking boots and sneakers; Flashlight with batteries; Sunblock lotion; Sunglasses; Broad-brimmed hat; Rain suit or poncho; Insect repellent; Small denomination bills; Small daypack.

## Reviews (1)

### Reviews of this experience

“ Getting to Refugio Amazonas from the airport at Puerto Maldonado involved a slow, bumpy hourlong bus ride to a sweltering jungle outpost aptly named Infierno, where we transferred into 55-foot-long motor boats that resembled hollowed-out bananas. The 2 1/2-hour ride upriver instantly oriented us to our new environment. Sixto pointed excitedly to a black caiman, an endangered reptile that resembles an alligator, sunning itself on the riverbank. We drew in for a closer look, which prompted the fierce reptile to eye us warily and slither into the water, its eyes still trained on us like periscopes. Moments later, we were distracted by the primordial shriek of a scarlet macaw. Perched on a clay outcropping were two of the storybook birds with their coats of crimson, gold, and green. Our normally skeptical teenager took in nature's technicolor with disbelief. "Can you believe where we are?" she said

Our boat finally pulled ashore at a set of wooden steps that rose up from the river. We had been hiking for 10 minutes when the lush green forest suddenly parted to reveal what looked like an enormous ship's prow cutting through the vegetation. This was Refugio Amazonas, a giant open-sided structure with a thatched roof and spacious two-story common area that included a bar, dining room, and hammock lounge. Our rooms had three bamboo-lined walls and beds draped with gauzy mosquito nets. The fourth wall was open to the rain forest. The bathrooms had running water and cold showers. Candles and kerosene lanterns provided our only light (the dining room has several hours of electricity each night where you can recharge camera batteries). We fell asleep that night to a thrilling cacophony made by howler monkeys, macaws, parrots, and crickets.

The next morning, while Jasper (7) was helping to save the forest, (along a special children's rain forest trail created with help from a Peruvian nonprofit organization, ANIA, which aims to teach children about natural and cultural resources of the rain forest) Ariel (15) was out with another group climbing a 75-foot tree with ropes and a harness. Another day featured kayaking and fishing on the Tambopata, hiking a remote clay lick to observe macaws and parrots, and following Sixto as he showed us how he used rain forest plants as medicines. "I don't go to a pharmacy," he said, motioning to the dense growth around us. "I have all the medicine I need right here." He won over Ariel by curing her nagging stomachache with a potent tea he brewed from a forest vine.

On our last morning, we climbed an 80-foot canopy tower to bird-watch with Sixto and take in the sunrise. Jasper and Ariel were glued to their binoculars as they took in the bird's-eye vantage point. Mist rose over the green carpet beneath us, and we peered into the tops of giant kapok trees. We spotted more birds in an hour than I had ever seen, including a toucan, tanager, parrots, macaws, and parakeets, to name a few. A full-throated symphony of birdsong rang out around us. (David Goodman, writing for the Boston Globe, August 2007) ”

Boston-Globe

reviewing Family Rainforest Expedition in Peru