



MARGARITA TOURS, INC.

We Are Professional Amazon Jungle Outfitters & Operators

TRAVEL INFORMATION FOR VISITS TO THE PERUVIAN AMAZON: 2009

GENERAL INFORMATION

Each of our Amazon expeditions differs in its details, but all trips share many things in common. This information is provided to help you in planning and packing for your expedition. For customized trips, some details may not apply. If you have any questions, contact us at any time.

Important Notes:

- 1) **Expedition size:** Most of our expeditions are limited in size with an average of 7-10 passengers (maximum of 12, or very rarely 14). Because many clients do return to the Amazon one or more times on the same type of expedition, some trips fill rapidly. To ensure space and for lower airfares, reserve early!
- 2) **Prices** quoted for trips are for the in-country (i.e., from Iquitos, Peru) ground/river portion of travel only, and **do not include domestic or international airfares** unless noted. Prices are based on double occupancy of hotel rooms.
- 3) **Air Travel:** Due to the continually changing airline market, internet sales, use of frequent flyer miles, and competitive pricing, Margarita Tours does not include airfare in expedition pricing. Expedition participants are welcome to make their own flight arrangements, or, we can recommend an agent to arrange air travel for you. We receive no commission or other consideration from agents. There are no direct international flights to Iquitos, and all travel to Iquitos is via Lima, Peru. Many airlines make daily flights from North America, Europe, and South America to Lima. Several flights daily connect Lima with Iquitos. As fares and availability continually change, it is important to book air travel early. Before purchasing flights, contact us to verify dates and expedition status. Once purchased, send us your flight information so we know when to meet you at the airport!
- 4) **Travel Insurance:** Margarita Tours does not sell travel insurance. **We strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance** for all trips, and many companies sell travel insurance at competitive rates (a brief internet search will turn up many options). If you have travel insurance, you are protected in the event that you have to cancel your trip due to personal or business reasons, if airlines are overbooked, your luggage is lost or damaged, or a connection missed. Protect your investment in your expedition, and travel with peace of mind.

Margarita Tours takes pride in offering a variety of unique travel experiences focusing on the astounding natural and human resources of the Peruvian Amazon. If you like traveling with small groups of people who want to “do” things, our trips might be just right for you! We are always happy to give references.

What's included in all trips (unless specified otherwise):

- Airport reception upon arrival in Iquitos; assistance with baggage, transfers and check-in for departure from Iquitos. Transfer to/from airport to hotel/port in Iquitos.
- One or two nights hotel accommodation in Iquitos as noted in the detailed trip itinerary, luggage handling.
- All river transportation during your expedition. Type of boat used will vary depending on the expedition. All accommodations during the expedition (either land- or riverboat-based), with bedding and linens.
- All meals during the expedition with the possible exception of one or two meals in Iquitos as noted in the detailed trip itinerary. Picnic lunches and snacks while on excursions and exploration forays are all included.
- Guide services, boat crew services, excursions, and lectures (as applicable).

The Following are NOT included in Expedition Pricing:

- Domestic and international airfare from your hometown to Iquitos, Peru.
- Any hotel accommodations or additional transportation while traveling to/from Iquitos, Peru (e.g. in Lima), extra nights accommodation in Iquitos.
- Expenses for emergency medical care, evacuation or hospitalization
- Fees for passports and other travel documents.
- Tips to guides, crew, alcoholic beverages and carbonated drinks (sodas).
- Prescription medicines, insect-repellent, personal toiletry items, etc.
- One or two meals in Iquitos as noted in the detailed trip itinerary.
- Peruvian airport departure taxes, including domestic departure taxes of US \$6.05 and \$3.71 (for flights departing Lima and Iquitos airports, respectively), and international departure taxes of US \$30.25 per passenger (as of the time of this writing).
- Any necessary Peruvian and/or US/Home Country permits for exportation/importation of plant material, insect cases, tropical fish, or other restricted items. Costs and procedures for permits change regularly; it may take months to acquire permits for some items, and we may not be able to assist you with some kinds of permits.

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Travel Insurance:

As a small company, we do not offer travel insurance, however we very strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your airline tickets, and your equipment through the purchase of traveler's insurance. In case your Homeowners and Medical policies do not cover you abroad, we suggest you purchase special travel coverage through a company such as Travel/Safe or American Express. Protect yourself and your investment, and travel with peace of mind.

Money Exchange:

Money exchange is easily done in Iquitos. US dollars are widely accepted in cities in Peru, and most stores/hotels will change dollars into Nuevo Sols (the Peruvian currency) at the official rate. There is no black market for dollars in Peru. For a standard one-week expedition, US \$200-300 should be more than sufficient to cover the cost of souvenirs, bar tab, tips, and other incidental expenses. If you need to obtain any permits, budget accordingly, and don't forget airport departure taxes and any duty-free purchases that you may wish to make. Credit cards are only accepted at some stores, restaurants and hotels. Cash machines (ATM's) are widely available in Iquitos and other large cities, and both US dollars and Peruvian Nuevo Sols can be withdrawn. Cash advances from credit cards can be made at some banks. **Travelers Checks are not accepted except at some banks, and should not be brought. US bills should be unworn and free of tears, and major blemishes, or they may not be accepted. Vendors will reject bills with even very small rips!**

Travel Documents and Legal Considerations:

Entering Peru is simple and without any difficulties. Citizens of the Americas (except Cuba), Australia, New Zealand, and the EEC are required only to have a valid passport. Citizens of other countries should contact the nearest Peruvian embassy/consulate for requirements. Firearms and ammunition are forbidden for import, or to carry or convey to another person. Drug offenses are severely punished in Peru and luggage is searched and sniffed by drug dogs upon arrival and departure. US citizens can download the necessary forms for applying for, or for renewing a passport, from the National Passport Information System over the internet at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Environmental Regulations and Wildlife Laws:

Most Peruvian wildlife is protected by law, and is not legal to purchase or sell. Peruvian and international regulations and laws also prohibit the international transportation of items made in whole or in part from protected wildlife. Likewise, it is illegal to transport live animals or plants without the necessary corresponding permits – these can be difficult and expensive to obtain, and Margarita Tours cannot assist you with such permits. Transport of animals, plants, or animal parts without the necessary permits may subject you to travel delays, fines, or criminal prosecution. It is your responsibility to be aware of relevant laws and regulations, and to abide by Peruvian and international laws for the protection of flora and fauna.

Communications:

Once in Iquitos, you can easily phone or e-mail internationally. Many cybercafés are open, computer time is less than \$1 per hour, and connection and download times are reasonable – internet phone connection is available in many cybercafés and is the cheapest way of phoning internationally. To phone the US or Europe by regular phone, purchase a phone card in Iquitos. Phone cards and calling cards from outside of Peru do not work well. To have someone call you back from a pay phone (it is cheaper if the call originates from outside of Peru), put a 5 solis coin in the pay phone. First dial the country code (001 if you are calling the USA), then the area code and phone number. When your party picks up on the other end, you have enough time to say “Hi”, and give them the pay phone or hotel phone number to call you back. To call Iquitos from the USA, first dial 011-51-65, then the 6-digit local phone number. The “51” is the Peru country code, “65” is the city code for Iquitos. There is limited phone service in Amazon areas outside of Iquitos, and no email access! Local cell phone numbers have 9-digits. You may be able to use your US or European cell phone in Peru if you have a chip installed. Contact your provider for information.

Electricity, Outlets, & Battery and Camera Charging:

Electrical current in Peru is 220V. On our riverboats, both 110V (US & Canada standard current) and 220V current is available for recharging batteries and cameras. Outlets are clearly marked with the current they provide – be sure to double check before plugging in any items. At the Madre Selva Biological Station, both 110V and 220V outlets are available in some of the buildings. If you want to recharge batteries/cameras in Iquitos or Lima, you may need to bring a voltage adaptor. For charging batteries elsewhere (Iquitos, Lima), bring a 110/220 voltage adapter, these are available at low cost from most hardware stores. Most camera and battery charge units already have built in adaptors – check on the back, and if it says 100V-240V, then you can plug it in to any outlet without worrying about the voltage. Most electrical outlets in Peru accept either two flat, or two round prongs. Three-prong outlets are absent or rare. You may wish to bring a plug adaptor with you.

Health Requirements:

No vaccinations or preventative treatments are required of travelers between the US and Peru, and you do not need to show an immunization card at the airport. We do strongly recommend physical and dental check-ups for your continued good health. We carry basic safety and emergency equipment on our expeditions, and we are equipped to provide emergency first-aid in case of illness and injury. Specialized medical attention may be difficult to secure, however, and it will not be available on the remote rivers where we travel. We do have emergency evacuation plans in case of need. Although no inoculations are required, tetanus, yellow fever and hepatitis are recommended, and all travelers should consult with their physician regarding malaria prophylaxis and other health matters. For malaria prophylaxis we recommend malarone or doxycycline. We strongly discourage travelers from taking larium – this medication produces psychotic side effects in many people. Be sure to bring sufficient amounts of any prescription medications, and other basic first-aid materials (anti-histamine cream, antacid, anti-diarrheals, nausea medication (if you are prone to air- or sea-sickness), topical antibiotic cream, etc.). **Expenses for emergency medical care, evacuation or hospitalization are not covered by trip fees, and shall not be considered the responsibility of Margarita Tours or its operators. Check with your health insurer to verify that you will be covered while in Peru.**

The tropical sun is intense and it is very easy to burn or become dehydrated. Appropriate clothing and headwear and high SPF sunblock are a necessity. You should also take a water bottle with you at all times (and drink from it!).

A wealth of web-based health information about travel to tropical countries is available. Good sites to check are the **Travel Health Information Service** <http://www.travelhealth.com>, as well as the **Center for Disease Control** site <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> and the **Medical College of Wisconsin International Travelers Clinic** <http://www.intmed.mcw.edu/travel.html>. Happy surfing!

Climate:

The Iquitos area, less than 3 ½ degrees south of the Equator, is characterized by strong tropical sun and a warm humid climate. The dominant vegetation is rain forest. Temperature varies from the mid- to high 80's during the day, night-time temperatures can drop some 10 degrees or even more in the summer (dry season) months of July-September. Rain normally occurs during the afternoon or night, and humidity levels are high. The ‘dry’ season corresponds to the northern summer, and is the coolest time of year, with occasional cold fronts in July-August (temperatures in the 60’s F). The

climate in Lima can be humid and cold, and it is advisable to bring a sweater or light jacket for use in Lima or on flights. This may also come in handy if you are in the Amazon during a cold front. During the dry season, several days may pass without rain, but normally there will be some rain several times during a week. The 'rainy' season corresponds to the northern winter. During the rainy season, temperatures are higher, the nights warmer, and rain can be expected on a daily basis, though all-day rains are infrequent.

What to Bring: A Generalized Packing List

- Personal toiletry articles, shampoo, disposable razors, etc.
- Prescription medicines – sufficient to last the trip plus a few days.
- Malaria prophylaxis – for this to be effective, you will need to begin taking the treatment prior to your trip, and continue treatment for a short period following your trip, consult your physician. **Avoid Lariam** – this malaria prophylaxis produces unpleasant psychotic effects in many people. Malarone or Doxycycline are preferable.
- Other medications such as Tylenol/Aspirin or similar, antihistamine lotion (for insect bites), antibiotic ointment (Neosporin or similar), Pepto-Bismol or other similar medication for upset stomach, diarrhea, or nausea (in case of motion sickness on moving boats). High SPF sunscreen (at least 15 SPF).
- Insect repellent (Muskol, Jungle Juice, etc. - high DEET content). Citronella and other 'natural' insect repellents are largely ineffective in the Amazon. Sulfur powder is effective against chiggers – these may be encountered around villages, but are not present at our camps or in the forest itself. New repellents containing picaridin are a good alternative to ones containing DEET. If your repellent does contain DEET, be aware that this chemical melts plastic and can severely damage cameras, binoculars, lens coatings, plastic tents and ponchos, etc. It is also toxic to amphibians. Apply it only outside and away from gear and don't handle animals if you have it on your hands.
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs (NOTE: D and AA sizes are the only batteries commonly available in Peru. Super efficient LED flashlights are excellent for general use - one set of batteries can last the trip.
- Tennis shoes or other canvas-topped shoes which dry quickly, with rubber soles. These should be broken in already; you don't want to get blisters on your Amazon trip! These are for wearing in town, on board your boat, or on the plane home. An old pair that you don't plan on taking home can be useful for wading in water (for fishermen), or for slogging through mud on forest trails.
- Hiking boots, jungle boots, or gum-rubber boots. Again, be sure these are well broken in! Be aware that if you are hiking on jungle trails, visiting villages, and having a real Amazon experience, your footwear will get wet and muddy. Gum-rubber boots (farmer boots, wellies, etc.), are popular with experienced jungle travelers, they are cheap, easy to put on and take off (no muddy laces), dry quickly, easy to clean, and provide excellent protection against snakes, insects and thorns, to say nothing of mud. They also have excellent tread for walking on slippery trails. Whatever you select, be sure that your footwear is comfortable and broken in.
- Binoculars. Invest in a good pair of lightweight binoculars that are water resistant, if not waterproof. Your travel experience will be enhanced if you have the ability to examine birds, treetop flowers, dolphins, monkeys, and miscellaneous happenings along the route up close! Besides, you are traveling to the Amazon to see nature, aren't you? Why cheat yourself!
- Camera equipment. Once again, don't stiff yourself. You will kick yourself if you don't have a good quality camera (that you know how to use...). Don't forget extra batteries or a battery charger! A bag of silica gel to dry out damp equipment may be a good idea. See 'specialized equipment' below for additional suggestions.
- Hat with wide brim or bill (essential for the tropical sun, useful also for rain).
- Fannypack or small backpack, weather proof.
- A **battery operated portable fan** can make sleeping in a tent or mosquito net much more comfortable. Foldable models are readily available at sporting goods stores, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, etc.
- Light poncho or rain jacket (essential for small boats).
- Lightweight shorts and pants (avoid jeans which take a long time to dry and become heavy when wet).
- Lightweight shirts, both long/short sleeves.
- Swimwear – swimming in the Amazon and its tributaries is very refreshing, and piranhas are NOT an issue!
- Underwear and socks – cotton is best for keeping you dry and comfortable. Wool socks are great for padding your feet if you bring gum-rubber boots.
- Lightweight jacket or windbreaker – in the dry season (northern summer), it can feel quite cool at night.
- Polarized sunglasses – great for river travel, the glare off the surface of the water can be intense.

- Trade items: popular items include D-cell batteries (in their original packaging – proves that they are ‘fresh’), flashlights, T-shirts (smaller sizes!), children’s and women’s clothing, women’s makeup, sheets, towels, candy, ceramic busts of Elvis (OK, that’s just a joke, but you never know!), knives, scissors, toys, fish hooks and fishing line, bottles of aspirin, baseball caps, etc. Use your imagination – if you bring clothing, remember that most Peruvians are smaller than the average ‘gringo’ – small sizes are better! Don’t bring ratty stuff that you yourself wouldn’t wear!
- Books in Spanish and various school and basic medical supplies make great donations to the poorly equipped schools of some of the remote villages that we visit.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

Camera and Photography Equipment:

The Amazon is a photographer’s paradise. We recommend a variety of film speeds for the jungle environment (for those of you who haven’t gone digital yet!). Lighting conditions within the forest itself (where 400 speed film is best, unless you are using a tripod and/or flash) are very different from those on the open rivers (where 64 or 100 speed film is fine). Video cameras can get excellent footage even in low light situations. Carry re-sealable plastic bags on excursions to protect equipment from rain and moisture. Packs of silica gel are suggested for drying camera gear overnight (be sure to have an airtight container in which to put camera equipment and silica gel.

If you are shooting film, bring plenty - it is unavailable in Iquitos. Machines for screening checked luggage at airports can severely damage film - put all your film in your hand luggage. Regular speed film (64 to 400 ASA) is not supposed to be affected by the machines used to check hand luggage, but ask to have film checked by hand. Having film in a clear zip-lock bag and out of the individual canisters will speed up the inspection process.

Nighttime is one of the best times for photography in the Amazon, particularly if you are interested in insects and other invertebrates, frogs, reptiles, and the like. Many animals are most active and most easily approached at night. Of course, a flash is essential for night photography! A tripod is recommended for natural light photos of plants, insects, other animals (that sit still), and scenery (particularly within the forest itself). Serious photographers will want a variety of lenses.

Fishing Equipment:

Tropical fish collectors and sport fishermen will want to bring additional equipment. Fishing rods and dip nets can be transported easily, especially if they break down and can be packed inside a PVC tube for airline handling. Sport fishermen may want to bring an assortment of hooks, weights, bobbers, fishing line, etc. Simple hooks can be purchased in Iquitos. Tropical fish collectors will need all sorts of fun stuff! A 48-quart (standard size) cooler/thermos is excellent for temporarily holding fish, and can be packed with personal gear for flights. Bait bucket (for temporary holding of captures while collecting), various sizes of dip nets (small aquarium nets to large sturdy dip nets for sampling in brushy areas (be sure the mesh size isn’t too big, or most of the small tetras will slip right through), plastic fish bags (plenty), rubber bands, sense of humor, fish medicines, battery operated air-pump, fish medicines, etc. We have small seines, and a 40’ seine.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Persons with dietary or medical needs (vegetarian diet, diabetes, low-sodium diet, hypersensitivity, etc.), or with physical disabilities should notify Margarita Tours well ahead of time so that all possible arrangements can be made to accommodate your needs. We may not be able to make last-minute arrangements once you are in Peru. *Leave expensive and non-essential items (jewelry, nice watches, etc.) at home.*