



Sandoval Lake Lodge (4D / 3N)

Sandoval Lake is one of the most beautiful lakes in Peru; a great body of water protected in the Tambopata National Reserve. It is home of a family of Giant Otters in danger of extinction, but we do have an excellent chance to see them during our stay. The banks of the lake are populated by jungle and flooded Mauritia Palm forests, which are home to monkeys from six different species, as well as with a huge variety of colorful birds.

This visit to the Tambopata National Reserve allows us to look in Sandoval Lake and the surrounding area where we will see a wealth of wildlife in the reserve and learn about the Amazon rainforest. Our program includes walks through the forest trails by day, night, and through boat excursions around the margins of this extraordinarily beautiful lake.

Itinerary

Day 1: Puerto Maldonado to Sandoval Lake. Our staff will welcome you at the airport in Puerto Maldonado and drive you through the city to the boat dock on the Tambopata River. Here we board a motorized canoe and head towards the nearby confluence of the mighty Madre de Dios River, the source of the Amazon tributary. Just 30 minutes down river is landing at the port that will lead to Sandoval Lake.

We walk a trail of 3 Km (2 mi), stopping to watch birds and butterflies, up to a narrow canal boats. From there, we navigate the flooded forest of palm trees that leads to the open waters of this peaceful lake. Our crew will row the boats across to the lodge (motors are prohibited on the lake). Under the surface of the lake we may see the huge Paiche (an Amazonian fish that can weigh up to 100Kg/220lbs). Or you may hear strange and unsettling screams and see heads peering from the lake surface, which will mark our first encounter with *Pteronura brasiliensis*, the Giant Otter of the Amazon.

After a brief rest, we start again by boat to explore the entire eastern end of the lake, following the sound of hundreds of Blue-and-Yellow and Red-Breasted Macaws as they return to the palm forest for the night. Our view from the boat often allows close and extensive encounters with birds and mammals. In Sandoval Lake the Capuchin Monkey, in particular, has nearly lost its fear of humans.

We return to the lodge at dusk for dinner. Afterwards we take the boat again, in search of caimans, which are now extremely rare in the Amazon, but are still common in this

protected lake. They grow up to 4m long, and dispute their share of fishing with the otters. On clear nights we go by boat farther into the lake for a view of the vast southern sky, unobstructed, with its magnificent views of constellations and the Milky Way. **(Box Lunch, D)**

Day 2: Sandoval Lake. Just before dawn we will be on the lake for what is often a spectacular sunrise; and hope for an encounter with the Giant Otters that roam the lake in a close-knit family, very active at this time of day. At this time most of the birds that inhabit the lake are also very active. There will be time and tranquility to observe the birds fishing; while they stalk and capture prey. We will also have close-up views of the primitive Shansho (*Ophistocumys hoazin*) eating leaves.

After enjoying a late breakfast, we'll walk the trail through the cool understory of the impressive primary rainforest that surrounds the lake. We will see the great Chestnut trees that abound here.

After lunch we rest for an hour and then explore the west side of the lake where we will have chances to observe different species of monkey; including the most common Capuchin Monkey.

Before dinner there is a video presentation on the Peruvian Jungle and after dinner we will have the opportunity to spot caimans in the lake. **(B/L/D)**

Day 3: Sandoval Lake. This can be a very relaxed or very active day according to your desires. If you are one of the many visitors who love this lake and its unique environment or if you'd like to get a closer meeting with the Giant Otters, we can make another early start in the day.

We return to the lodge for breakfast and afterwards take a break and enjoy the panoramic view from a high point in the lake before leaving to walk through a special circuit which will investigate and learn the use of dozens of medicinal Amazonian plants. We will see the Pamicho, the plant that provides the material for thatched roofs of our houses; the ginger candle for anti-inflammatory medicine, and the Cinchona tree, whose bark has saved millions from the agony of malaria. This path includes the wild jungle and a small botanical garden dedicated to the cultivation of some native species.

After lunch we take a break and prepare for a walk through the quietest and most secluded part of the forest on the north shore of the lake.

In the evening we have one last opportunity to seek the Black Caiman along the lake shore, or go for a short walk for your last night in the woods. **(B/L/D)**

Day 4: Sandoval Lake to Puerto Maldonado. After breakfast we make a final paddle through palm swamps on the west end of the lake. On the clearer mornings a glorious sunrise and its reflection can be seen in the lake. We return to the Madre de Dios River and head towards Puerto Maldonado and from there on to the airport. **(B)**

Please note that itineraries may vary slightly to maximize wildlife viewing, depending on the reports of our local researchers and experienced naturalist guides.