

## The Bio Trip Manu - From the Andes to the Jungle

**Depart Colorado – Puerto Maldonado – Cusco by commercial airplane**

**Duration 6D/5N Fixed Departure - SATURDAY**

This journey combines a spectacular descent through mountainous cloud forest from Andes to Amazon, with lodge visits in the cloud forest and along the wild Alto Madre de Dios River, culminating in a lowland rainforest experience amidst the comfortable yet wildlife-rich surroundings of the famous Manu Wildlife Center. Our overland route crosses an extraordinary range of life zones from highlands to lowlands, taking us through an array of ecosystems found nowhere else on the planet in such close proximity. We see high altitude farming valleys and traverse stark highland puna, plunge through layers of grassland, elfin forest, layers of lush, ever-changing cloud forest, and then lowland tropical valleys where farmers cultivate coca and exotic fruits.

All the way we traverse the habitat of innumerable bird species. Then our journey winds its way by river through lowland rainforest, pausing for a rewarding visit to an upriver lodge, and then downriver to the Amazon's finest rainforest lodge, Manu Wildlife Center. Tapirs are nightly visitors to the lodge's mud wallow, and each morning the nearby Macaw clay lick project teems with macaws. The network trails, tower for forest canopy viewing and two adjacent pristine lakes round out the perfect rainforest experience. After a journey by boat and van we will return to Cusco or Lima aboard in a commercial flight from Puerto Maldonado.

**Day 1: Cusco to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge.** Our overland journey begins at 3,400m/11,150 ft, with an early departure from the highland city of Cusco. Today's destination is the lush cloud forest region where the Andes fall away to the Amazon basin. This is a day of scenic drama and striking contrasts. We first visit a mountain wetland habitat teeming with migrant and local waterfowl, before crossing two mountain ranges between the Cusco valley and the Paucartambo valley, to a maximum altitude of 3,900m/12,790ft.

Finally, we follow a sinuous ribbon of highway on its plunge through an extraordinary world of forested cliffs, waterfalls and gorges. We take leisurely stops to see mountain villages, a hilltop necropolis of chullpas (pre-Inca burial chambers), and the abrupt ridge top of Ajanaco, which marks the final high point where the Andes begin their swoop into the Amazon basin. In clear weather we will see a breathtaking panorama of cloud forest and mountain giving way to the lowland rainforest plains far below us.

After a lunch near here we descend through the startling and rapid environmental transformations characteristic of the tropical Andes, passing from grassland and stunted trees through elfin forest, until we wind through a lush and magical world of overhanging trees, giant ferns, monster begonias, countless orchids and bromeliads, and a diverse and teeming birdlife. We make frequent spontaneous stops, perhaps spotting a brilliantly feathered quetzal, a trogon, or the wild turkey-like Guan. We reach the comfortable Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge in the late afternoon, the best hour to visit the nearby viewing platform for the display ground, or "lek". This is usually the highlight of a long, full day, a chance to see Peru's dazzling national bird, the Cock-of-the-Rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) in full, raucous courting display. (Box Lunch/D).

**Day 2: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge to Amazonia Lodge or Pantiacolla Lodge.** Rising early, we could scout for birds, and perhaps Brown Capuchin or Woolly monkeys along the nearby road. Or we can take a secluded nature walk on a short trail loop to the river and back. After breakfast we continue our drive, as mountains give way to low rolling hills and farmland. At Patria we visit a plantation of coca grown legitimately for the Peruvian coca leaf market.

At midday we reach Atalaya, a tiny port where the Piñipiñi River meets the Alto Madre de Dios. Now the lowland rainforest part of our journey begins. Rivers are the highways of the rainforest, and henceforth we will travel in large, comfortable dugout canoes shaded by canopy roofs and driven by powerful outboard motors. During normal river conditions we arrive at our lodge in time for exploration and wildlife viewing – which may include toucans, kingfishers, a rare endemic hummingbird and a multitude of butterflies -- along one of its many forest trails. (B/Box Lunch/D)

**Day 3: Amazonia Lodge or Pantiacolla Lodge to Manu Wildlife Center.** There is time for another short morning hike on the lodge trails before leaving early for Manu Wildlife Center. As we follow the broad, rushing course of the Alto Madre de Dios River past the last foothills of the Andes, our ever-changing route offers sightings of new birds -- terns, cormorants, White-winged Swallows, and flocks of nighthawks flushed from their daytime lairs by the sound of our engine. Splashes of brilliant yellow, pink and red foliage dot the forest-clad slopes around us, and the breeze is laden with the heady perfumes of the tropical forest. We pass the mouth of the Manu River, the gateway to the Manu National Park. We pause during our journey to stretch our legs and visit Boca Manu, the village a short way downriver.

After a boat journey of approximately 6 hours, we arrive at Manu Wildlife Center, one of the world's top ten wildlife lodges. After a reception and orientation, we move into our private bungalow and rest to escape the midday heat. Later, we make our first acquaintance with the lowland rainforest, learning about the plants and forest ecology as we explore some of the 30 miles of trails that surround the lodge. We have an excellent chance of encountering some of the 12 species of monkeys, including the Spider Monkey and Emperor Tamarin, which inhabit the surrounding forest. (B/Box Lunch/D)

**Day 4: Manu Wildlife Center: the Macaw Clay lick project, Canopy Tower & Tapir Clay lick.** . Another early start (inevitable on wildlife expeditions), after a delicious breakfast we walk through the forest for some minutes, where we find the Macaw Lick project. The hide provided with individual chairs and a convenient place for cameras and binoculars to a distance of 15 meters. In groups of two and three the scarlet Macaws come flapping in, landing in the treetops as they eye the main stage below.

After this we continue walking and exploring on the network of trails surrounding the lodge then we return to the lodge for lunch.

Later, we continue to explore and discover the rainforest, its lore and plant life, on the network of trails surrounding the lodge, arriving in the late afternoon at our 34m/112ft. Canopy Tower. On its platform we witness the frantic rush-hour activity of twilight in the rainforest canopy, before night closes in.

Then we set off along the "collpa trail", which will take us to the lodge's famous Tapir Clay lick. Here at the most active tapir lick known in the entire Amazon, our research has identified from 8-12 individual 600-pound Tapirs who come to this lick to eat clay from under the tree roots around the edge. This unlikely snack absorbs and neutralizes toxins in the vegetarian diet of the Tapir, the largest land animal of Latin America. The lick features a roomy, elevated observation platform 5m/17ft above the forest

floor. The platform is equipped with freshly made up mattresses with pillows. Each mattress is covered by a roomy mosquito net. The 10-m-long, elevated walkway to the platform is covered with sound-absorbing padding to prevent our footsteps from making noise.

This Tapir experience is unique and exciting because these normally very shy creatures are visible up close, and flash photography is not just permitted, but encouraged. The hard part for modern city dwellers is to remain still and silent anywhere from 30 minutes to two or more hours. Many prefer to nap until the first Tapir arrives, at which point your guide gently awakens you to watch the Tapir 10-20m/33-66ft) away below the platform. Most people feel that the wait is well worth it in order to have such a high probability of observing the rare and elusive Tapir in its rainforest home. (B/L/D)

**Day 5: Manu Wildlife Center: Hike to an Oxbow Lake and the Wildlife Trails.** We set off early for an old oxbow lake. As we circle the lake on our catamaran we might encounter the resident Giant Otter family on a fishing expedition, or troops of monkeys crashing noisily through the trees. Wattle Jacanas and dainty Sun Grebes paddle across the water, supple-necked Anhingas air-dry their wide, black wings, and perhaps an Osprey scans for fish from a high branch. Among the bushes near the waterline, Hoatzins, which look like rust-colored, punk chickens, announce their presence with distinctive, bizarre wheezing and grunts. Woodpeckers, tanagers, macaws, toucans and parakeets all finally come swooping in to trees surrounding the lake. Many of them roost around the lake for the night.

After lunch at the lodge our guide is available to lead us on freewheeling expeditions in search of further wildlife encounters, or we may take one of the lodge's many trails on private and personal excursions to commune with the spirits of the rainforest. This evening, from the late afternoon until after Dinner, we offer an opportunity to search for caiman and other nocturnal life along the riverbank by boat (If the level of river allows it) (B/L/D)

**Day 6: Manu Wildlife Center to Cusco or Lima – Departure day.** We leave our lodge very early on the two-hour and a half return boat trip downstream to the Colorado Village. Depending upon the time we must be in Puerto Maldonado, the breakfast will be served at the lodge or on the boat, of course this is a perfect time to take advantage of valuable early morning wildlife activity along the river, in addition this journey allows us to see several lowland native settlements and gold miners digging and panning gold along the banks of the Madre de Dios River. We will stop in the far-west type gold-mining town of Colorado to start our overland journey to Puerto Carlos for 45 minutes, then you will cross the Inambari River for 10 minutes' boat trip to Santa Rosa, finally a van or bus will drive us in approximately two-hours and a half to the airport in Puerto Maldonado City, here you fly by a commercial airplane to Cusco or Lima, with this assistance your jungle adventure ends... (B)

**Important notes:**

- Please note that the program may vary slightly so as to maximize your wildlife sightings, depending on the reports of our researchers and experienced naturalist guides based at the lodge.
- There is an additional service to visit Tambo Blanquillo Macaw clay lick with an extra cost, if you are interested in this service, please inform us previous your trip to do the arrangements.
- We strongly recommend read your PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION.