Amazon River Cruise
Aboard La Estrella Amazonica
March 17 – 26, 2017
With Pre- & Post-Cruise Machu Picchu Extensions, Mar. 11 – 17 or Mar. 26 – Apr. 1

Beyond the inland port of Iquitos, the Amazon landscape changes dramatically from bustling frontier town to encompassing wilderness. Travel past the reaches of civilization on International Expeditions’ riverboat, La Estrella Amazonica, deep into the heart of the great Amazon rainforest. More than 1,300 species of birds, 40,000 plant species, two species of river dolphins, and an abundance of primates are found in this lush, ever-changing realm known simply as “The Amazon.”

While outsiders rarely visit the riverbank villages, our guests, under the guidance of naturalists who were born and reared in similar villages, are greeted like family while we visit local schools and a revered Shaman.

Immerse yourself in the living labyrinth of forests, wildlife, and people along the river. La Estrella Amazonica offers unrivaled comfort while allowing us to responsibly travel further into the ever-smaller waterways and remote corners of the Upper Amazon Basin.

Tour Highlights

- Experience the nature and culture of the Amazon with expert naturalists who ensure you learn about the Amazon’s plants, wildlife, people, and history
• Find birds and mammals here so difficult to see in less-pristine areas, from macaws to piping-guans, large woodpeckers, fabulous raptors, and more
• Explore the fascinating relationship between the river and the Ribereños people who live along the banks
• Immerse yourself in an atmosphere that pulsates with life
• Be greeted like family at local villages where you learn about their schools, medicinal plants, and traditional ceremonies
• Cruise in luxury aboard La Estrella Amazonica, built specifically for wildlife and bird observation, and enjoy air conditioned rooms, private balconies, a fitness room, and large observation deck
• Opt for a spectacular seven-day extension to Machu Picchu

Tour Summary

10-Day / 9-Night Amazon Cruise with local experts and Tour Host Woody Wheeler
Starting at $4948 – $5348 based on cabin, from Lima
Machu Picchu Extension $3498 DBL / $4488 SGL
Airport is Jorge Chavez International (LIM)

Itinerary

Fri., Mar. 17 Arrivals in Lima
Welcome to Peru! Today you arrive in Lima where you transfer to the Swissôtel for the night. Meals today are at leisure, giving you ample time to explore Peru’s bustling and colorful coastal capital. If you arrive early in the day and have an interest, we can recommend some excellent birding spots throughout the city.

Accommodations at the Swissôtel

Sat., Mar. 18 Lima / Iquitos / La Estrella Amazonica / Amazon River
This morning we embark as a group from our Lima hotel, travelling by air to Iquitos, over the Andes. We land in the largest city in the world that is inaccessible by road — you can only reach Iquitos by air or by boat ... incredible!

Today we visit the Manatee Rescue Center, where biologists and volunteers care for rescued endangered Amazonian Manatee. We learn about their efforts to help these endearing mammals and see how they are cared for and prepared for reintroduction. We then make a stop at a small museum dedicated to the history of the local tribes.

Then it’s off to the boat, our home for the next eight days. Tonight we enjoy dinner, stargazing, and storytelling with our local guides as we cruise on the
Amazon River toward the convergence of the Marañón and Ucayali Rivers. *(B,L,D)*

**Sun., Mar. 19  Confluence of the Amazon River / Río Ucayali**

This is the first morning we awake on the river, and the sights and sounds are incredible. We keep our eyes and ears open for flocks of parakeets and macaws departing their roosts, intermingling with migrant Fork-tailed Flycatcher as they make their way into the day. The frenetic buzz of jungle life is all around us as we cruise past small villages and river channels that weave through the jungle, allowing us close views of the Amazon’s fantastic bird life, including Oriole Blackbird, Green Ibis, Yellow-headed Caracara, Black-capped Donacobis, and White-headed Marsh-tyrant to name just a few.

We detour into the Río Ucayali and keep our eyes peeled for both Gray and Pink Amazon River Dolphins. As the Ucayali and Marañón Rivers converge to create the beginning of the Amazon, we embark on excursion boats into the smaller waterways to get up-close with the local habitat and its denizens — Queen Victoria lily pads, palms, and cecropias, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Scarlet-crowned Barbet, Green Iguana, monkeys, and sloths … the list goes on!

This evening we watch the sun go down from our balconies or the observation deck, while ever-present Fishing Bat put on a show in the subtle twilight at day’s end. *(B,L,D)*

**Mon., Mar. 20  Río Ucayali / Pacaya-Samiria Reserve**

This morning we enjoy a quite breakfast along the black-water Sapote Creek. We then embark on our excursion boats to discover a small tributary of the Ucayali, where we are sure to watch for primates like Red Howler and Squirrel Monkeys, sloths, and plentiful birds, including Black Nunbird, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Russet-backed Oropendola, Greater Kiskadee, and even Ladder-tailed Nightjar.

Our adventure continues upriver to the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in all of Peru. The reserve is over 8,000 square miles and is the known home of 450 bird species, 102 species of mammals, over 130 species of reptiles and amphibians, and countless plants — as you can imagine, the scientific research here is never ending!
Our afternoon excursion into the reserve offers us the chance to see 13 species of primates, including Monk Saki, Red Howler, Saddle-backed Tamarin, and Squirrel Monkey. We also cruise Caro Lake, connected to the river by a tiny stream. Here we hope to find noisy flocks of Greater Ani following monkeys in search of insects rustled up by the primates’ foraging.

This evening we embark on a nighttime boat excursion for a chance to spot Caiman, Capybara, Common Potoo, frogs, and other nocturnal wildlife, and if we’re lucky, the opening of Victoria water lily. Imagine the night’s sounds and the bright stars overhead as we gently cruise through the dark jungle. (B,L,D)

**Tues., Mar. 21   Rio Pacaya / Pacaya-Samiria Reserve**

We enjoy another day in the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve, exploring in the seasonally-high waters and always keeping our eyes peeled for waders like the stunning Capped Heron, Wattled Jacana, and plentiful egrets, five species of kingfisher (a challenge to spot all five!), and the fascinating Horned Screamer.

We travel deep into the igapó (seasonally flooded forest) today, taking in the sites of a strikingly different flora to what we have seen along the main river. We have the chance to get out of our boats and explore on a walk through the forest.

We refuel for our afternoon discoveries with a delightful lunch, then set off with our expert naturalists in search of colorful bird and wildlife like Scarlet Macaw, Hoatzin, Black-collared Hawk, and Red Howler Monkey. (B,L,D)

**Wed., Mar. 22   Pacaya-Samiria Reserve**

We take the day to explore even deeper into the heart of the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve. As we depart on our excursion boats and cruise into a maze of narrow waterways, we look for birds like the endearing Canary-winged Parakeet and vibrant Blue-and-gold and Scarlet Macaws — it’s incredible to see these stunning birds in the wild. Primates like chatty Squirrel Monkey are quite common.
We check in at a remote ranger station and then have the chance to enjoy a refreshing dip in the water — a treat for the adventurous among us! As we slowly make our way back to the riverboat, we wind through the twisted waterways, enjoying the sights and sounds of the jungle around us.

Lunch is alfresco, giving us a chance to add to our species list even as we dine, then we tuck into our cabins for a bit of downtime before our afternoon adventures. *(B,L,D)*

**Thurs., Mar. 23  Río Ucayali / Pacaya-Samiria Reserve**

We head back downriver this morning and have the opportunity to visit a riverside village. Here we learn about the history and day-to-day lives of the Ribereño people. Our guides, who also grew up along the river, offer us insight into this fascinating culture. What a fantastic opportunity to walk along the village gardens, learn about medicinal plants, hear traditional stories, visit a school, and even join in on a game of soccer (in the past, we've also joined in on a rousing version of the Hokey Pokey with the children!).

Imagine the faces of the children as they see their own image displayed on the backs of digital cameras — truly, this is two worlds colliding. If we are fortunate, we enjoy a ceremonial blessing with a revered village shaman. We also try to arrange our village excursion to time with a visit to a water treatment plant funded by International Expeditions, our host company. The clean drinking water from these plants has a tremendous impact on the health of these secluded villages.

Back aboard the riverboat, we take advantage of the open-air top deck, with a traditional Peruvian cooking class and an educational talk. Tonight we again embark on a night cruise to explore the nocturnal sights and sounds on this ever changing river. *(B,L,D)*

**Fri., Mar. 24  Amazon River**

We rise early for a birdwatching excursion along the Yarapa River — perhaps the Red Howlers in the area serve as our alarm clock. We enjoy the sights and sounds of flocks of birds leaving their roosts, keeping our binoculars and cameras at the ready.

After breakfast we can try our hand at piranha fishing in Ubos Lake. These fish — Red-breasted, White, and Black — are quite common in the slow-moving
waters here, and with luck we manage to catch our dinner!

This evening we enjoy a final farewell dinner aboard La Estrella Amazonica, recapping a splendid trip, doing a final rundown of our species list, and saying “see you next time” to new friends. (B,L,D)

Sat., Mar. 25  Iquitos / Lima / Departures

This morning we disembark our lovely houseboat in Iquitos and fly back to Lima for lunch. We have dayrooms booked in which we can stash our bags, take a siesta, or generally freshen up before international flights home, which typically depart after midnight. (B,L)

Sun., Mar. 26  Departures

Most international flights depart after midnight, so technically your departure is today, Sunday. However, please book your flight carefully — often your check in is late, late in the evening the night before. If you have questions or concerns about booking the correct days, please let us know and we will happily help you figure out your flight times.

Cost of the Journey

PLAN AHEAD!
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance.

OFFSET YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT
Show us the receipt and we’ll take 50% - up to $50.00 - of your carbon offset fee off your final payment.

COST OF THE JOURNEY
The cost of the main tour is that of our cruise company, International Expeditions, and range from $4948 – $5348 DBL occupancy, based on cabin size and deck placement / $7422 - $7622 SGL, from Lima, Peru. It includes your first night in Lima, 7 nights aboard La Estrella Amazonica, and a dayroom on the last day in Lima, all meals during the voyage including wine with dinner, all excursions with professional guides, and miscellaneous program expenses.

With at least eight travelers, a host from Naturalist Journeys will be on hand to make your stay most memorable, and to provide a detailed Trip Report and Species List for the voyage. Naturalist Journeys prepares in-depth pre-departure information and provides registration services. We also prepare pre- and post-tours in Ecuador to complement the cruise experience.

Not included is the round-trip flight to Lima. The internal flight from Lima to Iquitos is currently $399, and will be booked for
you and added to your invoice. The tour cost does not include items of a personal nature such as: telephone charges, optional activities, or beverages from the bar other than wine with dinner.

We recommend a gratuity for local guides and the ship crew, which is left to the discretion of each participant and guidelines will be provided.

**COST OF THE EXTENSION**
Cost of the Machu Picchu extension (may be booked before or after your cruise), is $3498 DBL / $4488 SGL.

**TRAVEL INFORMATION**
For the cruise, plan to arrive Friday, March 17 at your leisure. Overnight is at the Swissôtel, where we will assemble as a group the following morning for our transfer to the airport/flight to Iquitos. Departures are typically after midnight, so technically on March 26, however you will probably check in at the airport late at night on March 25, and if your flight is just before midnight, it is March 25. Please let us know if you need guidance booking this departure. It can be confusing and we wouldn’t want there to be a mix up. The arrival for the extension will be determined by whether you do this before or after your cruise.

*Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.*

Photo Credits: Hoatzin, Greg Smith (GS); Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Peg Abbott (PA); Guide Woody Wheeler, Naturalist Journeys stock; Red Howler Monkeys, Howard Topoff (HT); *La Estrella Amazonica*, International Expeditions; Capped Heron, PA; Three-toed Sloth, HT; Boat excursion, PA; Monk Saki, PA; Horned Screamer, PA; Oriole Blackbird, PA; Yellow-rumped Cacique, PA; Yellow-headed Caracara, PA; Chestnut-eared Aracari, PA; Relaxing on Deck, PA; Ladder-tailed Nightjar, PA; Masked Cardinal, PA; Common Spider Monkey, GS
2017 MACHU PICCHU EXTENSION

Please note that this extension may be set up before, or after your cruise. We work with a local company, and they will set it up for a minimum of two persons. We chose a trip that features time in Machu Picchu and also other key ruins in the area, with time in Cusco, a stunning Andean city.

If others on the cruise also sign on for the same dates, you will travel as a group. If you travel as two individuals, you are still on a guided group tour as described.

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Machu Picchu & Cusco

Dwarfed by mighty peaks covered in a perpetual mantle of snow and the massive stone walls of ancient forts and temples, our Sacred Valley and "lost city" of Machu Picchu tour offers a rare glimpse into the soul of the Andes. International Expeditions Machu Picchu travel is your opportunity to explore ancient cities and be enveloped in a vibrant, lost culture that still lives in our imaginations.
From the sheer sides of the Andes to sacred valleys, your Machu Picchu tour encompasses a historic area still shrouded in mystery, a place where modern man can experience the essence of life and a history stretching across the centuries.

**Guided Machu Picchu Travel & Private Exploration**

Drawing on three decades of travel to Peru, International Expeditions has built an itinerary anchored by both guided and private Machu Picchu and Cusco tours. Absorb the history and mystery still surrounding this ruined citadel, with time to wander the ruins privately or hike to the Sun Gate.

**See More than the Lost City**

During your Machu Picchu and Cusco tour, you will visit many Inca sites scattered throughout the Sacred Valley, including Ollantaytambo, Sacsayhuaman and the Korincha Sun Temple. This comprehensive look at Inca and Spanish archaeology is enhanced by knowledgeable Machu Picchu travel guides.

**Experience Andean Culture**

Along with time to absorb the unique tapestry of life in the Sacred Valley and Cusco, travel to bustling Indian markets - social centers where locals gather to buy and sell food and handicrafts; visit a local family for a private weaving demonstration; and even sample traditional Peruvian fare.

**ITINERARY**

**Day 9 (assuming post cruise) • Saturday**

**Iquitos / Lima**

Late this afternoon, we fly from Iquitos to Lima, and overnight at the Costa del Sol or the hotel at the airport, a simple walk across the street and very nice. Note all from the cruise will be on this flight, some return to USA on night flights. (B,L)

**Day 10 • Sunday**

**Lima / Cusco / Urubamba Valley**

Fly to Cusco — the heart of the Inca Empire. Drive into the historic Urubamba Valley, stopping in Chinchero to browse and shop for Andean handicrafts and alpaca sweaters. Visit the Urubamba Market and spend tonight at the Aranwa Hotel. Today is a cultural day, but may be crafted more towards natural history depending on the group’s interests. (B,L,D)
Day 11 • Monday

Machu Picchu

Board the train to Machu Picchu, where we spend the afternoon exploring the ruins with our guide. Our home for the next two nights is the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. Inca Wren is a specialty species found at the ruins, and all around the hotel you will find the birding to be good. There are Torrent Ducks in the rushing stream below, and numerous hummingbirds at the feeders. The lodge has a birding walk early each morning, and a guide that can be hired for outings. (B,L,D)

Day 12 • Tuesday

Machu Picchu

Today is yours to explore Machu Picchu or simply relax! Wake up early and hike to the Sun Gate or enjoy some early morning birding in the abundant gardens surrounding our hotel, home to 16 species of hummingbirds. An excellent birding area is easily accessed at the spot you get on the bus that takes you to the ruins, instead walk on the local train tracks pathway where Andean Cock-of the Rock and mixed flocks can be found. Locals use this route walking in to work from a nearby village, vegetation is fascinating as well. (B,L,D)

Day 13 • Wednesday

Ollantaytambo / Sacsayhuamán / Cusco

Catch the morning train back to the Sacred Valley. Explore the mighty archaeological wonder of Ollantaytambo, where ancient temples and fortresses were built to protect the Sacred Valley. After a Paso Fino horse show at Wayra Ranch, continue across the valley toward Cusco. We stop at Sacsayhuamán — a huge fortress of massive stones which zigzags across the side of the mountain. Spend tonight at the Aranwa Hotel. (B,L,D)
Day 14 • Thursday

Cusco

Stroll the streets of Cusco, exploring the Koricancha — also known as Santo Domingo, Santa Catalina Convent and the Cathedral. After lunch, the afternoon is free to explore on your own before a farewell dinner featuring Andean fare. Return to the Aranwa Hotel for the night. Cusco for many is a real highlight, a lovely city with markets. There is a lake about a half hour out of town that can provide excellent birding — it may be possible to arrange an outing here for additional cost. (B,L,D)

Day 15 • Friday

Cusco / Lima / En Route

After breakfast, fly back across the Andes to Lima. Enjoy a superb lunch of local delicacies before an afternoon at leisure. Dayrooms are available at the Swissôtel. Transfer to the airport this evening for flights home. (B,L)

Day 16 • Saturday

Arrive Home

Connect with your flight home. (Meals Aloft)