

THE AMAZON RIVER

Take the trip of a lifetime along the Amazon River - the largest river in the world - as it winds its way through six countries and thousands of kilometres of breathtaking tropical rainforest.

IQUITOS

2 IQUITOS is the largest city in the world that you can't drive to.

RIVER SOURCE

The mighty Amazon starts life as a tiny trickle high up in the Peruvian Andes.

MATSÉS PEOPLE

The MATSÉS PEOPLE have lived deep in the jungle for thousands of years.

PILPINTUWASI

The ant-eater lives at the butterfly farm.

PILPINTUWASI BUTTERFLY FARM

GIANT WATERLILIES...

...are big enough for you to sit on.

THESE ARE HUGE!

6 TRIBUTARIES

The Amazon River is fed by many smaller rivers along its journey to the sea. How many can you see?

ISLA DE LOS MICOS

You won't be alone for a moment on MONKEY ISLAND!

8 AÇAÍ PALM

Because they're so juicy, the people of the Amazon call the berries of the AÇAÍ PALM 'the fruit that cries.'

7

Sorry! No motor vehicles allowed to enter PUERTO NARIÑO.

11 BIENVENIDOS AMACAYACU

The AMACAYACU NATIONAL PARK is mostly under water from October to June. Stay in the boat, please!

10 LETICIA

LETICIA is the Amazon's frontier port where Colombia, Peru and Brazil meet.

14 RUBBER TAPPING

This 40-metre (130-ft) tall RUBBER TREE may be 100 years old.

13 PINK RIVER DOLPHIN

The natives of the Amazon once thought the PINK RIVER DOLPHIN had magical powers.

12 GIANT MONKEY FROG

What's a Frog doing in a tree? It's a GIANT MONKEY FROG!

17 PIRANHAS

Yikes! Keep your fingers out of the water!

16 DISCUS FISH

Look at those beautiful fish swimming beside the boat!

19 SCARLET MACAW

The beautiful SCARLET MACAW is sometimes called a flying rainbow.

18 JAGUAR

'JAGUAR' means 'he who kills with one leap.'

15 GREEN ANACONDA

The huge GREEN ANACONDA spends most of its time hidden in the water.

21 ANGELFISH

The ANGELFISH got its name from the shape of its fins, which look like an angel's wings.

23 MAMIRAUÁ RESERVE

When staying in this guest room in the MAMIRAUÁ RESERVE, we're right in the heart of the rainforest.

20 GOLIATH BIRD-EATING SPIDER

Don't worry, this GOLIATH BIRD-EATING SPIDER looks scary, but it doesn't want you for dinner.

24 BLACK SQUIRREL MONKEY

This tiny BLACK SQUIRREL MONKEY is no longer than your foot!

26 AMAZONIAN MANATEE

Early explorers from Europe thought the AMAZONIAN MANATEE might be a mermaid!

28 COARI

We've popped up the River Solimões to COARI.

30

This whipper is a famous BRAZIL NUT TREE.

27 ANAVILHANAS ARCHIPELAGO

We've taken a daytrip up the Rio Negro (Black River) to the amazing ANAVILHANAS ARCHIPELAGO.

29 RIVER STINGRAY

If you go for a paddle, don't tread on a RIVER STINGRAY!

25 CARDINAL TETRA

A Roman Catholic cardinal wears red - so does the CARDINAL TETRA fish.

31

This whopper is a famous BRAZIL NUT TREE.

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31. DESSANA TRIBE ON RIVER NEGRO

There are some 250,000 indigenous peoples in the Amazon rainforest. The peaceful and good-looking Dessana, divided between some 60 communities, are one of the best known.

The Dessana belong to a group known as the Tucano. They all have one unusual and very special custom: no husband may marry a wife who speaks the same language as him. As a result, Tucano men and women speak at least three or four languages, and their settlements are a buzzing kaleidoscope of chatter.

32. ELECTRIC EEL

Keep your eyes out for these slimy fellows. The Amazon's electric eels are swimming stun guns. They have two sets of muscles that act like the poles of a battery. In defence or attack, they send a massive 860 volts zapping between these muscles. This is enough to stun any fish or animal, including us!

The so-called 'eel' is actually a stretched-out, scale-less fish that needs to come to the surface every ten minutes or so to breathe. Weighing 22kg (50lb), it makes a hearty meal. But take care: it can still deliver an electric shock eight hours after death.

33. IRACEMA FALLS

The Iracema Falls are not only beautiful, they're safe to swim in too. There's nothing quite like a cool natural shower after a hot and sweaty trip through the jungle.

There are no waterfalls on the Amazon itself, but dozens on its 1,100 tributary rivers. New ones are still being found. The Yumbilla Falls (Peru), one of the five largest in the world, were only discovered in 2007. The water falls over 895m (2,936ft) – more than three times the height of Paris' Eiffel Tower.

34. THE MEETING OF THE WATERS

Like two kids meeting for the first time at a new school, the Rio Solimões and the Rio Negro take a while to become friends. The scientific properties of the two rivers (temperature, speed and composition) are so different that they flow side-by-side for 6km (3.7mi). The Solimões, is a cool stream, (22°C / 71.6°F) that flows at 6kph (3.7mph). The tea-coloured Negro is much warmer (28°C / 82.4°F) and potters along at a leisurely 2kph (1.24mph).

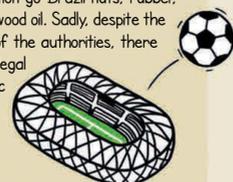
They are eventually churned into each other by the river's twists and turns in a spectacular meeting of the waters 10km (6mi) outside Manaus (35).

35. MANAUS

Manaus started out as a Portuguese fort deep in the jungle. In the 19th century, when industry developed a thirst for rubber, the trees from the surrounding plantations produced 90% of the world's rubber. Manaus became the wealthiest city in South America, known as the Paris of the Tropics. The city's grand cathedral and opera house remind us of those days of gold and glitter when millionaire rubber barons sent their laundry to be washed in Europe!

And today? Manaus is the capital of Brazil's Amazonas State. Though 1,400km (900mi) from the Atlantic, it is a port for ocean-going ships and a centre of industry – most of Brazil's TVs are made here. In 2014 it became famous as a football city when it hosted World Cup matches.

For travellers like us, the city is best known as the gateway to the Amazon rainforest. Each year hundreds of thousands of tourists pour in by boat and plane before setting off into the steamy jungle. In the opposite direction go Brazil nuts, rubber, jute and rosewood oil. Sadly, despite the best efforts of the authorities, there is also an illegal trade in exotic fish, animals, plants and timber.



36. HARPY EAGLE

The huge harpy eagle is what scientists call an apex predator – in the natural world it has no enemies. It soars above the canopy of the jungle or perches on a branch looking out for prey. When it sees something tasty, it swoops down, grabs it in its ferocious talons and carries it off for dinner.

A harpy can lift a monkey or sloth (its favourite meal) weighing as much as itself – that's up to 9kg (20lb), the same as 320 doughnuts!

37. SATERÉ-MAWÉ TRIBE

The Sateré-Mawé are a tough people. Hunting in the jungle is a dangerous and often painful experience, and no man is allowed to join in until he has passed the famous Sateré-Mawé tribe test.

Hundreds of vicious but unconscious bullet ants are sewn onto the inside of a pair of large gloves, with their stings pointing inwards. When the ants have woken up, a would-be hunter boy, aged as young as 12, puts the gloves on. To show his bravery and courage, he must not give any indication of the pain he is suffering.

The ants sting him for about 10 minutes while the tribe dances and sings. When the gloves are removed, the boy's hands and parts of his arm are paralyzed and he shakes uncontrollably.

Only when he has survived this ordeal 20 times is the boy thought to be a man – and ready to go hunting.

38. ARAPAIMA

The size of a small whale (or a very large man), the arapaima lives mainly off fish. Though it can breathe under water, it prefers the fresh air up above, and has even been known to grab a passing bird when popping its head above the surface.

Because it rarely dives deep, the arapaima is an easy target for hunters with harpoons. This has led to a tragic decline in its numbers – in some parts of the rainforest it is already extinct.

39. KAPOK TREE

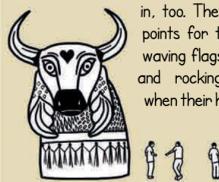
The kapok tree sticks out of the rainforest's canopy like a basketball player in a school photo. Its great height (61m / 200ft, more than the width of a field hockey pitch) is supported on a 3-m (10-ft) wide trunk that at the bottom looks as if it's made out of pastry. Its folds are home to dozens of plants and small creatures.

Kapoks are also found in Africa. Why? Scientists believe the fruit fell into the Amazon and was washed down to the sea. It then floated across Atlantic to an African shore, where it took root.

40. BOI BUMBÁ

Boi Bumbá festivals take place throughout the Amazon region, but the one in the city of Parintins on Tupinambara Island is the biggest and, locals say, the best. Two teams compete to tell the legend of Catrina, her husband Chico and an ox that was killed and brought back to life by magic.

The three-day open-air festival presents six different performances, each a thrilling mix of dance, song, drama, floats, puppets and parades. The crowd joins in, too. They try to earn points for their team by waving flags and candles, and rocking and rolling when their heroes appear.



41. RIVER CRUISES

The extraordinary Amazon is a magnet for tourists from all over the world. Every year, thousands come to sail the river and explore the vast jungle through which it flows. They stay in special lodges, trek through the forest on foot and paddle silently up backwaters in canoes, a bit like we're doing.

No visit is complete without a few days spent chugging along the river in a three-deck River Cruiser. Passengers experience the sights, sounds and scents of the rainforest – and if they're lucky they'll see a pink river dolphin.

42. HOATZINS

The hoatzin is one of the weirdest birds you will ever see in the Amazon – or anywhere else for that matter. It's one-of-a-kind, has a real stink about it, and is the only survivor of a bird species that appeared around the time dinosaurs were dying out.

Four unusual things about a hoatzin:

- It allows food to ferment (go rotten) in the top of its gut before digesting it. That's why it stinks.
- Its chicks have claws at the end of their wings.
- It makes a terrible racket – croaking, hissing, grunting and groaning according to its mood and what it's doing.
- Its wing muscles are so feeble it can't take off after eating a large meal.

43. HAMMOCK

Hammocks were invented by the people of the Caribbean and first brought back to Europe by the explorer Christopher Columbus. They returned to the New World (North and South America) with the Portuguese, who found them ideal beds for a rainforest.

A hammock is cool (good on board a stuffy boat) and keeps the sleeper safe from nasty creepy-crawly-slimy things that live at ground level (not needed on a boat, we hope!).



44. ALTER DO CHÃO

It's best to visit Alter Do Chão during the dry season, August-February. In fact, it might be the only time to visit: during the wet season the village can disappear completely under water!

As the crystal green waters of the Rio Tapajós subside in the dry season, the village and its sandy beaches emerge bright and clear: the Tapajós is the only river in the Amazon network whose waters are clear.

45. SANTAREM

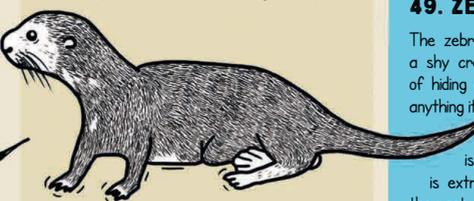
Like Manaus, 725km (450mi) upstream, Santarem is a great base for exploring the Amazon. The city was founded 350 years ago in the territory of the native Tapajó people. For a long time the city, the river and the people all shared the same name.

Santarem, like other towns along the Amazon, enjoyed a boom when South American rubber was sent all over the world. Nowadays it still trades in rubber and other forest goods, but products like oil and aluminium earn the town more money.

46. GIANT OTTER

A 1.8-m (6-ft) giant river otter needs 3-4kg (6-9lb) of food per day to keep its tummy full. Because it can't always catch enough fish, it tops up with anything tasty that comes along, including birds and snakes.

Giant otters build dens on the river bank, and defend them fiercely if threatened. Like us, they live in family groups. They work together on hunting trips, too. Sadly, these sleek swimmers have been over-hunted for their meat and fur, and there are only a few thousand still living in the wild.



47. MONTE ALEGRE

The views from Monte Alegre over the Amazon Valley are breathtaking. But take a 4x4 trip 10km (6.2mi) west of the town and you will find a very different but equally astonishing sight.

In front of us stands the mouth of the Pedra Pintada Cavern, as big as a mansion. And long ago that is exactly what it was. The cave was the spacious home of some of the earliest human beings to live in South America. They've left us their tools and their brightly coloured artwork on the cave walls.

48. MONTE ALEGRE CAVE PAINTINGS

The rock inside and around the Monte Alegre Caves is decorated with eerie handprints and strange pictures of people and animals. These images are fascinating and very important. To understand why, we need a bit of a history lesson.

The first human beings to reach North America crossed from Asia perhaps 14,000 years ago. We used to think they then migrated south very slowly, taking many thousands of years to reach South America.

But the images and tools from the Monte Alegre Caves are more than 12,000 years old. This suggests that the first Americans arrived here much more quickly than we thought, making these ancient markings a vital clue to understanding early human history in this part of the world.



49. ZEBRA CATFISH

The zebra catfish (aka zebra pleco) is a shy creature that usually comes out of hiding only at night. It will eat almost anything it finds.

Unfortunately, because it is so beautiful, the zebra catfish is extremely popular in aquariums. In the past, large numbers of the fish were caught in nets and exported from Brazil. As this threatened to make the species extinct, the export of zebra catfish was banned.

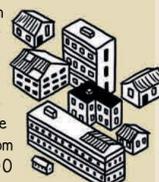
But the poor fish is still not safe. The new threat is the construction of the Belo Monte Dam (55) across the River Xingu. When it opens, the dam will change the flow of the river and could destroy the habitat of the rare and lovely zebra pleco.



50. ALTAMIRA

The wealthy city of Altamira stands at the point where the clear green waters of the Xingu River flow into the great dark swirl of the Amazon. To the north the vast emerald valley of the Amazon stretches as far as the eye can see. To the south the land rises into the Brazilian Highlands.

When the Brazilian government decided to build an enormous dam across the Xingu, it brought thousands of people and new job opportunities to Altamira. The population shot up from 100,000 to 140,000 in just two years.



51. TRANSAMAZÔNICA HIGHWAY

Back in the 1970s, when we didn't really understand how important the Amazon rainforest is for the world, officials decided to open it up. They wanted hundreds of thousands of settlers to go and live there.

A road was needed to take people into the forest. And so the idea of the Transamazônica Highway (or Trans-Amazonian Highway) was born.

The plan was to build a 5,200 km (3,321 mile) paved highway across Brazil, right through the rainforest. Settlers were given money and land beside the road, and told to clear the forest for agriculture. Disaster! Here's why:

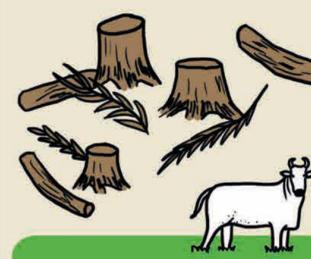
- The project was vastly more expensive than planned
- Much of the road was never paved
- Rain is continually washing away stretches of the highway; other parts are knee-deep in mud
- Builders, loggers and settlers have destroyed vast areas of unique rainforest.



52. LOGGING

The Amazon rainforest may be very special and very beautiful – but it is also very valuable. Wood from its great trees sells for a lot of money. One cubic metre (35 cu ft) of mahogany, for example, can fetch \$2,500 (£1,752).

An estimated 30 million cubic metres (1,059,440,000 cu ft) of hardwood logs are dragged out of the Amazon each year. That's enough to fill 30 giant sports stadiums or 12,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools. The Brazilian government has passed laws to prevent logging. But it's very hard to stop, and Greenpeace reckons 80% of Amazon logging is illegal.



53. GRAZING LAND

The Amazon rainforest has been called the 'Lungs of the Planet' because it produces around 20% of the world's oxygen. Its trees and plants also store an estimated 80 to 120 billion tonnes of carbon. If they were burned, turning the carbon into carbon dioxide, global warming would soar out of control.

The answer seems simple: don't destroy any more rainforest. But we must not forget that the seven billion human beings on the planet need food, and people living in and around the Amazon need to earn a living. As a result, the Amazon rainforest has been cleared at a rate of 500,000 km² (200,000 sq mi) a year.

Trees are cut down and sold or burned. The cleared land is then used for grazing cattle or planted with crops such as soybean. Environmental campaigners demand that Amazon deforestation (clearing the rainforest) stop immediately.

54. MACAPÁ

Macapá's position at the mouth of the Amazon's north channel is a mixed blessing. It is the most important city in the district but cut off from the rest of Brazil by the wide river. The city's name means 'where you can find lots of bacabas'. A bacaba is the local palm tree whose fruit is used for making unusual ice cream.

Macapá used to belong to the Portuguese, who started to build the star-shaped fort of São José de Macapá in 1764. It took 18 years to finish because the slave workers kept running away into the forest. We can hardly blame them.

55. BELO MONTE DAM

The purpose of the gigantic Belo Monte Dam is to use the waters of the River Xingu to generate electricity – clean electricity, produced without burning fossil fuels such as oil or coal. Brazil produces 80% of its electricity in this manner.

The dam has many supporters, but a lot of opponents too. They say the dam will ruin the Xingu, and the people and wildlife that depend on it. Areas below the dam will run dry, and those above will flood. The dam is still under construction, and it's one of the most controversial building projects in Brazil.

56. SOUTH AMERICAN TAPIR

The South American tapir looks like the strange cousin of a pig and an anteater! However, it's not related to either. Its closest relatives are other creatures with hooves, such as horses and rhinoceroses.

Although tapirs are land animals, they love swimming. But danger lurks in the murky water: there's not much a crocodile or an anaconda likes more for supper than a tasty tapir!

The tapir has an even more deadly enemy: man. Hunting and the destruction of their environment has made these gentle vegetarians an endangered species.

57. FRESH WATER

The Amazon enters the sea in a delta up to 240km (150mi) wide. This river system has many mouths that between them spew out more water than the world's next eight largest rivers combined.

As the fresh water from the river is lighter than the salty seawater it stays on the surface for miles, travelling far out to sea. When still 400km (250mi) from the shore, sailors approaching South America are surprised to find themselves sailing through fresh water.

58. MARAJÓ

Marajó Island is as big as Switzerland. It was formed over centuries by the soil, rocks and dirt brought downriver by the Amazon, and during the rainy season large areas of it are under water.

When the river and the moon are full, something extraordinary happens along the shores of Marajó. The advancing tide clashes with the river to make a rushing wave (called a 'bore') twice the height of a man. It can speed inland for half an hour – a surfer's dream. They call it the *pororoca*, which means 'roar' in the local Indian language.



59. CAPYBARA

Fully grown capybaras are at least as big as a human teenager. This makes them the world's largest rodent (gnawing animals like rats, mice, squirrels, and guinea pigs). They live in herds, sometimes 100-strong, on the banks of the Amazon and its tributaries.

By and large, the capybara is a rather pleasant animal. It's friendly and makes all kinds of funny noises, including purring, clicking, squeaking and barking. It does, however, have one less attractive habit – it eats its own dung! Delicious.

60. BELÉM

Travelling around Belém is rather like being in a timewarp. One minute we're in the 21st century, with skyscrapers and sleek shops. The next, we're in the colonial old town – full of streets lined with mango trees, elegant mansions and ancient churches.

Belém means Bethlehem, the place where Christians believe Jesus was born. Not surprisingly, religion plays an important part in city life. The Santuário de Nazaré church is at the heart of Brazil's largest religious festival. Known as *Círio de Nazaré*, it attracts over a million Christians every October.



61. CRUISE SHIPS

Each year some 2 million tourists visit the Amazon rainforest. Some stay on their cruise ship or riverboat. The more adventurous visitors explore by canoe or on foot. Very, very few do what we have done, and travel right down the river from its source to the sea.

Are tourists good for the Amazon? Yes and no. Their planes, cars, boats and hotels bring pollution, use up natural resources and disturb the delicate balance of the eco-system. Yet, when they have seen the unique wonders of the place – as we have done – we hope they will return home determined to help preserve one of our world's greatest treasures.

