



# Amazon Basin

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Casa Morey (p475)
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- » La Casa Fitzcarraldo (p475)
- » Ceiba Tops (p485)
- » Manu Paradise Lodge (p456)

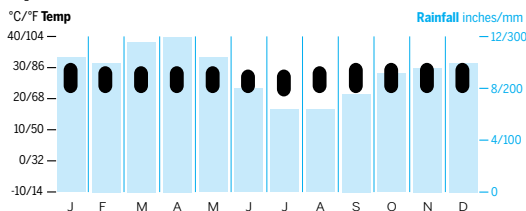
## Why Go?

The best-protected tract of the world's most biodiverse forest, the strange, sweltering, seductive country-within-a-country that is Peru's Amazon Basin, is changing. Its sheer vastness and impenetrability has long protected its indigenous communities and diverse wildlife from external eyes. Tribes still exist here that have never had contact with outside civilization. More plant types flourish in one rainforest hectare than in any European country, and fauna is so fantastic it defies the most imaginative western sci-fi comic.

But as the 21st century slowly dawns on this enticing expanse of arboreal wilderness, exploitation of the rainforest's abundant natural resources threatens to irreversibly damage it. The lush Peruvian Amazon offers phenomenal wildlife-spotting, forays into untamed forest from the jungle's best selection of lodges and raucous city life. But it also begs for protection. Remember that as, forging through it by rough road and raging river, you'll feel like the explorers who first brought international attention to this region.

## When to Go

### Iquitos



**Jan** Rising temperatures and water levels; a perfect time to visit the waterfalls near La Merced-

**Apr & May** Rains subside, heralding courtship season for many birds

**Jun** The rainy season ends: cue the jungle's best parties, like debauched San Juan in Iquitos

## Need to Know

Allow plenty of time for your Amazon adventure: erratic weather causes delays, in forms such as landslides, broken boats and cancelled flights. Even on a good day, road and river transport is prone to overcrowding and severe hold-ups.

### SELVÁMANOS

The jungle's new music festival, *Selvámanos* (p462) near Oxapampa, has a spectacular national park setting worth the trip out alone. Add to that a line-up from electronica to cumbia to reggae and a cultural festival that runs simultaneously and you have another can't-miss date in your Peruvian fiesta diary each June.

## Jungle Checklist

If this is your first jungle voyage, you'll find things far more relaxing than the movies make out. The jungle, you'll see, has largely been packaged to protect delicate tourists. With lodge facilities and the below kit list, you should be ready for most eventualities.

- » Two pairs of shoes, one for jungle traipsing, one for camp.
- » Spare clothes – in this humidity clothes get wet quickly; take a spare towel, too.
- » Binoculars and a zoom lens camera, for wildlife in close-up.
- » Flashlight for night walks.
- » Mosquito repellent with DEET – bugs are everywhere.
- » Sunblock and sunglasses – despite that foliage, you'll often be in direct sun.
- » First-aid kit for basics such as bites, stings or diarrhea.
- » Plastic bags to waterproof gear and pack nonbiodegradable litter to take back with you.
- » Lightweight rainproof jacket.
- » Sleeping bag, mat or hammock if sleeping outside.
- » Books – cell phones rarely work and neither do TVs; electricity is limited to several hours daily.

For tips on viewing wildlife, see p524.

## MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

- » Puerto Maldonado (South Amazon): connected by road, river and air.
- » La Merced/San Ramon: connected by road.
- » Pucallpa (Central Amazon): connected by road, river and air.
- » Iquitos (Northern Amazon): connected by river and air.

## Fast Facts

- » Elevation: 0-1800m
- » Percentage of country covered: 60%
- » Main City: Iquitos
- » Major Industries: tourism, coffee, agriculture, fishing, cocaine processing
- » Yearly Rainfall: 3000-3500mm

## Resources

One of the best independent resources is in one of the South American Explorer offices ([www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org)) in Lima or Cuzco; otherwise see lodge websites like [www.manuexpeditions.com](http://www.manuexpeditions.com) (Manu) or [www.inkaterra.com](http://www.inkaterra.com) (southern Amazon).

## Must-try Foods

- » *Juane*: Steamed rice with rice or chicken, wrapped in a jungle leaf
- » Ceviche: The Amazon version, with freshwater fish
- » *Parrilladas de la selva*: Jungle barbecue, with meat marinated in Brazil-nut sauce