



MANATEE  
AMAZON EXPLORER

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Explorer's **Guide**



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# Welcome on Board

On behalf of all the crew on board the M/V Manatee Amazon Explorer, we want to thank you for coming to Ecuador to visit us. It is also a pleasure to introduce to you one of the most amazing locations in the world, the Ecuadorian Amazon Basin.

In this handbook you can find useful information about the ship, itinerary and some history. Be sure to use the map and the animal checklist!

We invite you to explore with us this fabulous region together with one of the most qualified and enthusiastic crew.

Have an excellent adventure!

## *Manatee Amazon Explorer Crew*



# The Vessel

Although expedition cruising by its very nature is characterized as adventurous, the safety of our staff and passengers is of paramount importance to us. The Manatee Amazon Explorer is fully equipped and maintained in order to handle the most challenging conditions and circumstances, and is manned by experienced and conscientious expedition staff and crew. The canoes used for daily shore landings are rugged and versatile and are operated responsibly by experienced personnel.

Onboard you will be fully briefed on all pertinent safety issues and concerns, as well as our environmental policy; passengers also receive appropriate and detailed briefings before each landing.

The Manatee Amazon Explorer is equipped with a small fleet of motorized canoes. The canoes provide unlimited mobility and allow for the exploration of the most remote areas and inaccessible shores.



# Deck Plans



Deck 1



Deck 3



Deck 2



Deck 4

# Fact Sheet

BUILT	Refurbished in 2017
PORT OF EMBARKATION	Coca - Ecuador
VESSEL'S REGISTRATY	Guayaquil - Ecuador
TYPE OF VESSEL	River Expedition Vessel
LENGTH	37 meters
BEAM	8.50 meters
DRAFT	0.75 meters
GROSS TONNAGE	214 tons
CRUISING SPEED	12 knots
ELECTRICITY	110 v. (220 v. special outlet in the enginesroom)
ENGINES	Cummins x 2 / 350 HP
GENERATORS	Cummins x 2 / 75 KVA
WATER	1000 - liter water treatment plant
SAFETY	GPS tracking by the Ecuadorian Navy, Radio communication with separate battery pack, satellite phone, life jackets, flares and signals, fire extinguishers, sprinklers and smoke detectors in each cabin, automatic defibrillator on board.
LAUNCH BOATS	Two fiberglass ecologic canoes equipped with four-stroke low emission engines; constant radio communications with the main vessel. Total Capacity 30 passengers
CREW	10, including a cruise manager, paramedic, English-speaking naturalist guides, 4 native guides, Captain,concierge and crew members.
ACCOMMODATION	10 standard suites (2 triples) and 4 deluxe suites all with air conditioning system
SUITES FEATURES	Full sized beds, bathroom with shower, toilet, sink, cabinet, and a basket of toiletries, bathrobes. Hot water available 24-hours.
SOCIAL AREAS	Bar-Lounge / Conference room Indoor. Dining Room. Outside Lounge with "al fresco" dining facilities. Sundeck with lazy chairs. Boutique

## Do's & Dont's

For a better management of our water, we kindly ask you to use your cabin towels several times, before you ask new ones. Whenever you are ready for the towels to be replaced, please place the used ones on the floor.

On the restrooms area you will find a small bin for disposing garbage, including toilet paper. Please use this device and refrain from flushing toilet paper down the toilet, which could cause a severe clogging of our drainage system.

Please do not use any kind of open flame device nor smoke in your cabin. These could be the cause of a FIRE. Smoking is allowed only on designated areas on the boat. Please do not smoke in the forest or near wildlife.

We offer laundry service. Please contact our concierge for more information.

During your stay we will provide you with rain ponchos and rubber boots; please take good care of them.

In the event of an emergency you will hear seven short and one long blast. If you do so, please proceed to your cabin, take your lifejacket and wear it together with shoes and a sweater or jacket and proceed immediately to the lowest deck, where appropriate instructions will be given by our staff.

During hikes don't talk loudly. Near wildlife whisper or communicate with hands.

Do not throw or drop anything along the trails, even biodegradable food.

Do not play radios or electronic devices that make foreign sounds in protected areas.

Don't laugh or make fun of other cultures mannerisms, keep cultural encounters simple.

Do not wear perfume or perfumed sprays as the sweet scent attracts unpleasant flying insects.

Keep hands off anything that may resemble a field project: net box, screen, enclosure, etc.

# On Board Facilities & Special Services

- Electricity
- Fresh Water
- First Aid Kit
- Air Conditioning
- Boutique
- Communications

## Library

- Bar / Lounge
- Dining Room
- TV Room
- Al Fresco Lounge
- Sun deck
- Private Bathrooms
- Lounge Spots
- Special Food (If you require vegetarian meals or dislike some sort of ingredient please report this information to our concierge)
- Wifi
- Laundry Service





## A Day on Board

Our daily canoe and land excursions will be in the morning and evening, when the wildlife is at its liveliest.

During the hottest hours of midday, our expedition staff will entertain and captivate us with enthralling lectures on everything from the history and culture of the region, to the Amazon's bird, animal and plant life or maybe you just wish to relax in our social areas, or take in the beautiful atmosphere of our surroundings from the sundeck.

In the evenings we may enjoy night walks and canoe excursions, more lectures and interesting presentations, slide shows from our expert naturalists, barbecue dinners out on deck and of course, happy hour.



## Time & Schedules

In the Amazon Rainforest, activity is determined by weather conditions, flexibility in our schedules and optional activities will always be planned for you.

All the different excursions and activities are going start early in the morning and late in the afternoon, because that is the time when there's more activity in the forest, for this reason the suggested basic schedule will be as follows:

(This information is subject to change)

# Time & Shedules

## Morning:

- 6:00 Wake up call.
- 6:30 Breakfast.
- 7:30 Disembark, morning excursion.
- 12:00 Return on board.
- 12:30 Lunch.

## Afternoon:

- 13:30 Optional lectures.
- 16:30 Disembark, afternoon visit.
- 20:00 Dinner.
- 21:00 Briefing for next day activities.
- 21:30 Optional movie or video presentation.

Note: If we consider that the area to visit is too important just for a half day visit, a box lunch can be arranged, that way we can enjoy for more hours our visit to the forest.

## Activities

- Swimming
- Kayakin
- Bird Watching
- Rainforest Trekking
- Canoe Excursions
- Cooking Lessons
- Community Visits
- Observation Tower
- Day and Night Hikes
- Briefings and Lectures by Naturalists
- Handicraft Demonstration
- Lounge Spots
- BBQ



# Protected Areas

## **Yasuní National Park:**

Founded in 1979, and situated in the middle-eastern part of the Ecuadorian Amazon basin, specifically, in the provinces of Orellana and Pastaza between the Napo and Curaray rivers. This conservation area is the largest within continental Ecuador, as it consists of an area close to 980,000 ha. (2,450,000 acres). It is for this very reason that the Yasuní National Park was chosen as the center of the biosphere reserve.

The most important rivers in Yasuní National park are the Coconaco, Nashiño and the Tiputini. Yasuní contains an incredible biodiversity of flora and fauna. There are close to 173 mammal species, 567 bird species, 83 reptile species, 97 amphibian species and 249 fish species. This place is considered as one of the most biodiverse places on earth.

## **Cuyabeno Natural Reserve:**

It was created in 1979 and has an area of 655.781 ha. (1,639,452 acres). This reservation occupies the northeastern corner of the Ecuadorian Amazon region, between the San Miguel and the Aguarico rivers. Cuyabeno is one of The best places for ecoadventure activities, as it has impressive blackwater Lake and river systems.

The most important rivers within the conservation area are Cuyabeno, Lagarto and Sabalo. The Grande, Cangueno, Lagartococha, Delfincocha, Redondococha and Zancudococha lakes are among the most beautiful tropical draining lagoons of the Aguaricoriver.

The Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve is known to protect 493 bird species, 100 mammal species, 247 fish species and 52 reptile species.



# Protected Areas

## **Limoncocha Biological Reserve:**

This small reserve with an area of only 4613 ha. (11398 acres) of humid tropical forest is found to the north of the Yasuní National Park, in a regulated zone of the reserve biosphere.

In the decade of the 1980's, this was known as one of the best places to witness birds in all of South America. In 1972 Pearson reported 464 bird species. This spectacular number, together with the existence of Limoncocha, encouraged the Ecuadorian environmental protection ministry to create the reserve in 1985.

The lagoon with its river origins, has been isolated from the flow of the river for the last 800 years. The Limoncocha lagoon is home to a healthy population of black alligators and local fish populations. The Limoncocha Biological Reserve has 3 alligator species, 30 fish species, and more than 20 mammal species.

## **Pañacocha Protected Forest:**

The protected rainforest was established in 1994 and consists of close to 56,000 ha. (140,000 acres) of primary forest that includes a network of water pathways and lakes such as Pañacocha and Pihuali.

The Protected Rainforest, situated in a regulatory zone of the reserve, is home to 9 species of primates, 500 species of birds and more than 100 fish species. Pañacocha is located in the wide space between the Yasuní National Park and the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, and provides an important corridor of wildlife between these two large protected areas.



# Pre Columbian Cultures

The Napo river basin is not only a place for biological endemism and a wealth of different species, but also a center of cultural diversity. The Napo phase is fundamentally represented by the presence of the Omagua culture in the Ecuadorian territory.

The Omagua peoples originated in the Tupi-Guaranies that arrived at the Amazonian plain in the 1st century (Marajo Island in Brazil). This culture was identified for the first time in the 5th century, (Itacoatiara – Brazil) given the presence of different colors (black, red and white) on the ceramics made by its people.

The polychrome tradition extended gradually to the West from the central Amazon region (Gran Aparia) in Ecuador during the 5th and 10th Centuries.



At the beginning of the 11th century, the Omaguas were living on the banks of the Napo, Aguarico, Coca, Tiputini and Yasuni rivers.

The Omaguas exploited the resources in the Varzea forests better than any other group. Their homes were located in flood areas close to the riversides and lagoons. Each homestead consisted of 30 - 40 houses occupied by very extensive family clans (700 people).

Fishing was most likely the main activity, followed by hunting and gathering, depending on the time of year, of alligator and turtle eggs. The Omaguas created one of the most advanced breeding systems of those times, in order to insure food supply in times of adversity.

Cassava (*Manihotesculenta*) and Corn (*Zea mays*) were the main agricultural products cultivated and cultivated by the Omagua. They took advantage of the relative fertility of the riverside lands, which is the product of the sediment deposits left by the whitewater rivers during times of flooding.

# Pre Columbian Cultures

The rotation of crops, combined with the production of multi-crop farming, evidenced the highly developed production techniques of these people.

It is also believed that the Omagua people cultivated cotton, tobacco and pineapples. During flood periods, these forest dwellers collected products such as Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*), chontaduro plant (*Bactris gasipaes*), peanuts and honey produced by stingless bees (*Meliponidae*).

Many food items were also stored in times of scarcity. The discovery of ceramic pieces in the high riverside of the Napo River and its tributaries has allowed us to understand the sophisticated and intricate burial ritual practices of the Omagua people.

The use of anthropomorphic funerary urns decorated with naturally derived pigments such as red, black and white, was common practice within the Tupi-Guarani group.

These people believed that bones held the human soul, and for this reason the Omaguas buried the bones of the dead in the funerary urns together with their personal possessions. The disappearance of the Omagua began the moment that the European conquistadors arrived at the Amazonian plain. For a long time the dominance held by the Omaguas in the Amazonian riversides and some of their tributaries, became a disadvantage when they were faced with the reality of the ambitious foreigners.

Rivers such as the Napo turned into portals that lead not only to contact with these new people but also to contracting diseases, exploitation and the extinction of many Amazonian cultures such as the Omagua.



# Natural History

## The Tropical Rain Forest:

Once known as jungle, a word that comes from the Hindi word Jangal, which means "thick impenetrable forest and bushes around villages". It was Alexander the Great who brought the knowledge of tropical forest into Europe for the first time in 327 BC, when he created the eastern limits of his empire on the shores of the Indus. Tropical rain forest occurs in three land areas that are between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn (23° North and South of the equator). These regions are known the American or Neotropical rain forest, the Indo Malayan rainforest and the African rainforest. The characteristic tropical climate is one of high temperatures with an average

Annual temperature above 18 °C, and a difference of less than 5° C between. The warmest and coldest month, an average monthly rainfall of above 100mm with usually short dry seasons.

There are six vegetation formations in the tropics, these are:

- Tropical Evergreen Rain Forest
- Tropical Semi-Evergreen Rain Forest
- Montane Rain Forest
- Heath Forest
- Peat Swamp Forest
- Freshwater Swamp Forest



## The Amazon:

Occupies an enormous area of almost 6 million square kilometers in South America. The Amazon basin expands eastward from the northern Andes (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) to the mouth of the Amazon River.

The basin is located between the Guiana and Brazilian shields and it is about 3000 km long and 300 km wide in the eastern part, and 600 - 800 km wide in the western region. Water is one of the main aspects of Amazonian landscape.

The great Amazon and its tributaries make up the largest river system on earth. About 20% of the whole world's freshwater passes through The Amazon River. Amazonian forest is different from most of the rest of South American flora due to its thick vegetation and huge biomass.

# Natural History

## Ecuadorian Amazon Basin:

Although Ecuador is a small country with seashore on the Pacific Ocean and with the Andes dividing the country from north to south, almost one third of the country lies in the Amazon basin. The size of the Ecuadorian Amazon basin, so called "Oriente", is around 135600 Km<sup>2</sup> that is 40% of Ecuador's area and only two percent of the entire Amazon basin.

The "Oriente" is bordered on the west by the eastern Andean range also known as Cordillera Real (Royal Mountain Range). The eastern side of Ecuadorian Amazon Region is vast, as it expands toward the Amazon plains.

The oriental flank of the Cordillera Real has an abrupt terrain that go down from an altitude of 6000-4000 m to 500 m in less than 100 Km.

For this reason, most waterways of Ecuador's Amazon system initiate along the slopes of the Cordillera Real where torrential, high gradient streams with changeable course flow southeastward to generate three main hydrographic basins: the Napo, the Pastaza and the Santiago basins.

## The Napo Basin:

Begins east of the Ecuadorian Andes and expands southeast to the convergence of the Napo and the Marañón rivers in Peru. The area of the funnel-shaped basin is 98,445 Km<sup>2</sup>. The Ecuadorian part of it is about 31,400 Km<sup>2</sup>, which is 30% of the total basin area. Additionally, the Napo basin is the largest in Ecuador, covering about 20% of the entire western part of the country.





# The Discovery of Amazon River



Fifty years after the discovery of the American continent, the first Europeans left Quito in 1541, to explore the dense tropical forests east of the Incan capital in search of gold and cinnamon. The legend created by the natives about the Man of Gold and immeasurable quantities of cinnamon, "El Dorado", raised the ambitions of the Spanish conquistadors such as Gonzalo Pizarro, governor of Quito, and Francisco de Orellana, founder of the city of Guayaquil.

While they crossed the Andean mountain range they were in the rainy season. Pizarro and his group suffered the loss of many lives, animals and supplies. The cold temperatures, constant rain and hard terrain were constant obstacles for the expedition. In April of 1541, Pizarro arrived at Sumaco where a tired Orellana met up with him.

In this area Pizarro and 80 soldiers went for an exploratory journey on foot, looking for the precious cinnamon trees. After 70 arduous days (May and June of 1541), the group finally discovered cinnamon. Unfortunately, what they found was a species of cinnamon tree (Ocoteaquixos) that has a very fragrant cinnamon compound called cinnamaldehyde only in the fruits of the tree, and not in the leaves or the bark. This characteristic meant a low commercial value for this species. The dream of finding the highly valued "El Dorado" resources began to fade, along with the spirits of the crew.

# The Discovery of Amazon River



The expedition continued Northeast, leaving the Sumaco volcano behind, and the Guacamayo mountain range which leads to the Coca River. The journey along the margin of the Coca River must have been very slow and tedious due to the impenetrable vegetation and steep riverbanks. Tired and disheartened, Pizarro and Orellana arrived at the plains of the Coca region between October and November of 1541.

In order to save their mission, Pizarro decided to build a boat in order to send a group down the river in search of supplies. It was a critical moment for the exploration, as the people were hungry, disheartened and close to the point of rebellion and mutiny.

For this trip, Orellana and his Amazonaunts took with them munitions, steel and the remnants of supplies, jewellery and coins. Without knowing it, they took with them the very things that would be useful for their travels through the Amazon. Orellana left Pizarro's camp in December of 1541.

In the first month of 1542, the Amazonaunts met up with the Omagua people in the Aparia Menor region clashed with those desperate for food, but the violent attack was controlled by the warriors Omaguas and they had to continue their journey and came to the region known as Aparia near the confluence of the Amazon and Napo, where they met other people (changing its strategy to maintain good relations with the natives) made contact with them and were well received food and gifts received.

Navigation in this part of the expedition became peaceful and pleasant. It is in this place that the Amazonaunts heard the story of the "coniu-puyaras" or warrior women. The natives warned them not to go into the territory of these warrior women. Afterwards, Brother Caspar de Carvajal referred to these women in his chronicles as "Amazonas", remembering Homer's masterpiece "Iliad".

After navigating through the Aparia regions, Orellana arrived at the convergence of the Napo and Amazonas Rivers on February 12 of 1542, almost a year after leaving Quito. On this special date, commemorated as when the Spanish conquistadors discovered the "King of the Rivers", "The Great Amazon River"!

## Green Work

Apart from highlighting the Amazon to the world, explaining to guests the importance of protecting it, working hard to promote environmental awareness not only for those who visit, but for our employees and the communities at large, our state-of-the-art vessel were purposely conceived to create the least impact possible on the environment. Our waste management programs were designed upon analyzing the sum of different experiences in Amazonian Ecuador and applying them to international standards.

All of us at Anakonda Amazon Cruises are well aware that we operate in an extremely fragile and deeply controversial region. We believe that sustainable tourism —giving visitors from other corners of the world the opportunity to experience natural heritage sites as fascinating as the Amazon Basin – offers an excellent way for local communities to reap financial benefits while protecting and cherishing the land they call home. Not only do we employ guides and crew locally, We offer important percentages of some of our most luxurious programs, such as glamping, to our employees.

We take our guests to a variety of environmentally-sound and culturally-engaging visitor sites run by local communities in order to involve them in important aspects of the tourism industry, knowing quite well by now that making conservation irresistible for the people that live in environmentally endangered areas is the only way to secure their long term conservation. There is much to be done to protect this sublimely special land, and we at ANAKONDA know that we will need help from those directly involved, the true guardians of the Amazon, to do so.



# Keep in Touch



MANATEE  
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We would love to hear your comments and opinions; besides the Comment Card, if you have any questions, comments, complaints or just want to share a great picture you can email us at:

[marketing@advantagecuador.com](mailto:marketing@advantagecuador.com).

We would also appreciate your opinion in Trip Advisor

Share your experience with us in social media using hashtag:

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