



# Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Jaguar

## Peruvian Amazon, Macaws, and Jaguars

11 Nights/12 Days  
October 20-31 2020 (FULL) and October 5-16, 2020

This guided wildlife adventure begins in the Andean city of Cusco, taking us northeast towards Manu National Park, roughly the size of Connecticut. From there we'll traverse the famous Manu Road and a wild and fantastically scenic tropical landscape towards Atalaya and the Amazon basin via the Rio Madre de Dios. Once on the river, we'll travel through pristine Amazon forests, ultimately continuing on land to 700,000 acre Tambopata National Reserve, and plying the Tambopata River for the remaining half of our tour. Our focus along this route will be some of the most beautiful and emblematic wildlife in the region: the Andean Cock of the Rock, Red and Green, Scarlet, and Blue and Yellow Macaws, myriad cloud and lowland forest bird species, and with luck, Jaguars.

The biological diversity of Manú National Park and the Tambopata Reserve exceeds that of any other place on Earth. Figures such as 3800 plant species, 230 reptile and amphibian species, 159 mammal species, 220 fish species, 1000 bird species, and over 1,300 butterfly species are growing estimates and give an idea of the conservation importance of the region.

### Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrive Cusco Airport (CUZ)  
Day 2, 3, 4: Manu Road, Cock of the Rock Lodge  
Day 5: Transfer to Atalaya and Manu Wildlife Center  
Day 6: Manu Wildlife Center  
Day 7: Blanquillo Clay Lick, transfer to Puerto Maldonado  
Day 8, 9, 10, 11: Tambopata National Reserve, Chuncho Lodge  
Day 12: Transfer to and departure from Puerto Maldonado Airport (PEM)

## 11 Night/12 Day Itinerary

### Day 1, Arrive Cusco:

The modern city of Cusco is located in the Urubamba Valley of the Andes mountain range and is the capital of the Cusco Province. It occupies the site of the historic capital of the Inca Empire which reigned from the 13th century until the 16th-century Spanish conquest. In 1983 Cusco was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO with the title "City of Cuzco". It has become a major tourist destination, hosting nearly 2 million visitors a year, with the famous ruins of Machu Picchu nearby and the yearly Inti Raymi (Quechuan Sun Festival) celebrated here.

Elevation at Cusco is around 3,400 m (11,200 ft) above sea level.

We will arrive here around lunch time, and get settled into our centrally located hotel, La Casa Andina, housed in a renovated mansion dating to pre- 18th

century, with fully modern amenities.

*Meals: Dinner*

*Lodging at Casa Andina*

### Day 2, Transfer to Cock of the Rock Lodge:

After breakfast we'll begin our descent towards the world-famous Cock of the Rock Lodge, via the spectacularly bird-rich Manú Road. The trip will take us approximately 5 hours.

The Manu Road connects the Andes of Cusco with the Amazon basin in the Madre de Dios region. It winds along the mountains from 4000 meters elevation to 500 meters in the Amazon, and the habitat and pristine forests along the way are awe-inspiring treasure troves of biodiversity. Our journey along this remote road will guide us through different habitats and different altitudinal ranges, and afford us non-stop opportunities for

myriad bird species including mixed flocks of Tanagers, Golden-headed Quetzals, Blue-banded Toucanets, spectacular Andean Motmots, and of course our main target, the Andean Cock of the Rock. Woolly and Capuchin Monkeys are also encountered along this route, and rarely, Spectacled Bears.

We will arrive late afternoon, and may be in time for a visit to one of the nearby Cock or the Rock leks; areas of forest where the brilliant orange and black males gather to display and compete for females. Semi-elevated platforms here provide eye-level viewing of this unbelievably vibrant bird's display. If photography along the Manu Road is excellent, we may arrive too late for the COR lek, and in such case will enjoy eye-level photography from the dining area of Booted Racquet-tail Hummingbirds, Violet-fronted Brilliants, mixed Tanager flocks, Capuchin Monkeys, and even the occasional Tayra that are visitors to the lodge's abundant hummingbird and fruit feeders.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Lodging at Cock of the Rock Lodge*

### Day 3, Cock of the Rock Lodge and environs:

Cock of the Rock Lodge is adjacent to Manú National Park, located along the dramatic Manú Road and manages a private conservation area with 13,000 acres of tropical forest providing habitat for Peru's national bird, the Cock of the Rock. Wildlife and bird activity at the lodge are constant and an array of hummingbird and fruit feeders will keep us very busy!

Today will be a full day of exploring and photography around the lodge,

#### Andean Cock-of-the-Rock





Red-and-green Macaws

with a visit to nearby Cock of the Rock leks, as well as spectacular viewing and photography of hummingbirds, tanagers, capuchin and woolly monkeys and more, in and around the lodge grounds and gardens.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Cock of the Rock Lodge*

#### **Day 4, Cock of the Rock Lodge and Villa Carmen:**

After breakfast and morning photography at COR's (very busy!) hummingbird and fruit feeders, we will travel further along the Manú Road and a day of photography at the Amazon Conservation Association's Villa Carmen Lodge.

Nestled in the Andean foothills, this property is located in the buffer zone of Manú National Park, and boasts 7,600-acres spanning a wide variety of habitats, including old-growth rainforest, lower montane forest, secondary forest, bamboo, streams, rivers and waterfalls. Villa Carmen also

neighbors several indigenous Wachiperi and Machiguenga communities as well as the Haramba Queros Wachiperi Conservation Concession.

Biodiversity is the rule here, and proximity to the Rio Pini Pini, and several man-made lagoons mean a cacophony of bird calls at nearly all times thanks to the ever present Chachalacas, charismatic Hoatzins, Guans, Egrets, Herons, Gallinules, Rails, Sunbitterns and more.

Each evening, raucous flights of numerous macaw species such as Scarlet, Chestnut-fronted, and the rare Blue-headed Macaw stop en route at Villa Carmen as they return from feeding areas to their roosts in the rain forest, and their presence complements an ambience of true Amazonian wilderness.

We will return to Cock of the Rock Lodge for another afternoon visit to the Cock of the Rock lek.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Cock of the Rock Lodge*

#### **Day 5: Transfer to Atalaya and Manu Wildlife Center:**

We depart early this morning for Atalaya, a rustic port along the upper Madre de Dios River, where we'll board our covered boat for the 6 hour ride downriver to Manu Wildlife Center Lodge.

Our journey downriver will be through immense lowland forests, and we will be on the lookout, and stop, for any and all available wildlife along the way.

Manu Wildlife Center is along the Madre de Dios River, in the heart of vast, pristine Amazonian rain forest. Private bungalows set within the forest here offer access to two canopy towers, 30 kilometers of rainforest trails, 2 ox-bow lakes with floating catamarans, over 600 species of birds, 11 species of primate, plus much other mammal life such as Jaguars, Tapirs, Brocket Deer, and Giant Anteaters. Our main focus though will be the nearby Blanquillo Clay Lick, where each morning and

evening, hundreds of electric green Mealy Parrots, Blue-headed Parrots, and Flamboyant Red and Green Macaws gather to feed on nutrients from the nearby cliff-face.

We will arrive mid-afternoon, and in time for a visit to one of the Lodge's ox-bow lakes.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Manu Wildlife Center*

### **Day 6, Manu Wildlife Center:**

Today will be dedicated to one early morning and one afternoon visit to the Blanquillo Clay Lick, where our elevated vantage point will be from a well-established and furnished structure, roofed and with comfortable seating (and even a restroom). Red-and-Green and occasionally Scarlet Macaws, and huge flocks of Blue-headed, Orange-cheeked, Mealy and Yellow-Crowned Parrots gather at the Clay Licks here approximately 125 feet away, providing excellent, well-lit opportunities for shots of the birds feeding and in flight. We normally end the morning around 11:00 or so, and will return to the Lodge for lunch before visiting an ox-bow the late afternoon for a change in scenery. Ocelots and Jaguars have been recorded at Blanquillo's clay licks feeding on Macaws and Parrots, and if we are lucky, well... Depending on activity at the lake, we may have a chance of Hoatzins, Herons, Capybaras, and even Giant Otters.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Manu Wildlife Center*

### **Day 7, Blanquillo Clay Lick, transfer to Boca Colorado and Puerto Maldonado:**

After a morning visit to Blanquillo clay-lick, our boat will head for the village of Boca Colorado,



**Hoatzins**

where we'll make a land transfer to the Amazonian town of Puerto Maldonado. Dinner will be here in town, and we can take time to organize gear, do communications, or relax.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Cabana Quinta*

### **Day 8, Transfer to Chunchu Lodge and Tambopata National Reserve:**

We'll embark this morning on the 2 hours' drive taking us to the Rio Tambopata and our base for the next 6 nights, Chunchu Lodge, strategically located at the entrance to the 700,000 acre Tambopata National Wilderness Reserve.

Two different Macaw/Parrot clay licks and the river itself are haven for tapir, capybara, caimans, and one of our main targets here, the majestic Jaguar. Jaguar sightings

here are not as guaranteed as they are in Brazil's Pantanal, but they are often seen, and a plus is fewer tourists and boats that one experiences in the Pantanal. This and the combination of awe-inspiring clouds of Macaws and Parrots, and other mammals we will see along the way, make this a convenient and exciting base for us.

We will use the peak morning hours for our time at each clay lick, alternating according to activity, and in the afternoons we'll patrol the Tambopata River for the King of the Amazon, the Jaguar.

Evening hours will be for relaxing, or taking advantage of Chunchu Lodge's trails in search of reptiles and amphibians that frequent the primary forest there.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Chunchu Lodge*

**Days 9, 10, 11, Macaw Clay Licks and Jaguar patrols - Rio Tambopata:**

From our comfortable base at Chuncho Lodge, and our private boat, we have 5 full days to explore the Rio Tambopata both upstream and down, as well as make multiple visits to the area's clay-licks. This will enable access to these sites under varying conditions, and take advantage of differences in weather, lighting, and rhythms of wildlife activity so that we can get the very best possible photographs.

Red and Green, Blue and Yellow and Scarlet Macaws are abundant here, and having a relaxed amount of time here will give us opportunities for varying backgrounds, perfecting those flight shots, and of course increased chance for Jaguar along the river here. Night hikes will be available each day for reptiles, amphibians, etc.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Chuncho Lodge*

**Day 12, Transfer to Puerto Maldonado:**

Our final morning in Tambopata will afford a relaxing breakfast before departure, enabling arrival to Puerto Maldonado airport for afternoon flights to Lima.

*Meals: Breakfast*

**Included in this Itinerary**

Price includes hotel in Cusco on first night, flights from Puerto Maldonado to Lima on last day, with all land and water transfers, accommodations, meals, guide fees, guided tours/hikes, soft drinks for the period. Participants must secure and pay for: their own R-T airfare between their home city and Lima Peru, one O-W flight from Lima to Cusco on first day, and Lima airport hotel on final night depending on international flight schedules.

**Not Included**

Personal items such as alcoholic beverages, gift shop, laundry, etc. are not included.

**Travel Insurance**

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.



**Blue-and-yellow Macaw**



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