

AMAZON TRAILS PERU

Manu Tour Information & Frequent Asked Questions

1. Do I have to be fit for a Manu Trip? Are the walks challenging?.....	1
2. What kind of vehicles do you use to travel to Manu?	2
3. What are the boats like?	2
4. Is there a luggage limit?	2
5. What is the accomodation like during the tour?.....	2
6. Do I need to bring a sleeping bag?.....	3
7. Is there electricity at the lodges in Manu?	3
8. What can I expect on a Manu tour? How to decide between the Manu Biosphere and the Manu National Park tour?.....	3
9. Will we always see birds at the big macaw clay lick in Blanquillo?	4
10. Is there Malaria and Leishmaniasis in Manu?	5
11. Which vaccinations do I need?	5
12. Is there communication when I am in Manu? Can I find a doctor in case of an emergency? .	5
13. Is drinking water provided?	6
14. What happens to the waste we produce during the tour?	6
15. How big are the tour groups for Manu?	6
16. What are the temperatures in Manu?	7
17. Are there flights from Manu to Cusco?	7
18. Why are there 2 routes for the return to Cusco?	7
19. Can I fly directly to Lima at the end of the tour?	8
20. Should I bring binoculars?	8
21. What do I need to do to book a tour? How do I pay?	8
22. What else should I know when travelling to Peru?.....	6

1. Do I have to be fit for a Manu Trip? Are the walks challenging?

Manu tours can be done with normal fitness by people of all age groups. You should be able to walk medium distances (for about 2 - 3 hours) and on often uneven surfaces. If you are travelling with children, please let us know in advance for further recommendations, depending on the age of your children.

Apart from **Tours to the Lowland (5 to 8 days)** we also do a **4 day tour to the Cultural Zone of Manu** including our **Amazonia Lodge**. This tour offers ideal conditions for bird watching (also for visitors who can't walk much) and has less travelling time (only short boat rides).

On a Manu tour you spend some time travelling by bus and by boat – this varies according to the tour (e.g. on the National Park Tour you spend more time in the boat) and we do walks that usually do not exceed 3 hours at a time. We don't have to cover big distances on the walks; we will often walk slowly or stop to observe animals and plants on the way. Sometimes we need to listen, wait and have patience... You only need to bring a day pack on the walks. Night walks are optional and usually take about 1 hour. You are not expected to carry your luggage to the lodge, but help is appreciated.

Due to the humidity and warm temperatures some people may feel a bit weak or faint, but there normally is a short 'siesta' at midday and you have the possibility to stay at the lodge instead of participating in a walk. In the rain forest it 's important to drink a lot (also see under 13).

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A rainforest tour is not a 'comfort tour', but if you bring appropriate gear (please see our packing list) you will have an incomparable experience.

2. What kind of vehicles do you use to travel to Manu?

We own two Toyota minibuses (vans) from 2012 and 2016 with comfortable seats and a capacity for 12 and 8 people. Our vehicles have been prepared for the unpaved Manu road. We have experienced drivers who know the Manu route very well as they travel to Manu frequently.

3. What are the boats like?

Our boats are 15 and 16 m long with Yamaha outboard motors. They have wooden seats with cushions and backrests as well as a roof. There are life vests for all passengers. When travelling on the river in the rain you may get wet, so you should have your rain gear at hand. Our boat staff will also provide plastic covers to protect you if it rains. There is no toilet on the boat; please just let your guide know if you need to use the bathroom, so he can stop the boat.

4. Is there a luggage limit?

Please bring a maximum of 12 kg of luggage per person on your tour. Especially during the dry season (approx. from June to September) the water levels of the rivers are low; therefore we try to reduce the weight of our boat to make headway better and faster. We recommend to bring a waterproof bag or rucksack for the tour. During the Manu Tour you can store the rest of your luggage at your hotel or at the luggage room at our office in Cusco.

In case you have special photo equipment with a considerable weight please let us know in advance.

5. What is the accommodation like during the tour?

All nights on our standard tours are spent in lodges, some of them are our own lodges. All lodges have basic and clean private double rooms and clean bathrooms with showers. Sheets, blankets, towels and mosquito nets are provided.

At **Amazonia Lodge** we have double rooms with shared bathrooms and few rooms with private bathrooms (supplement of 15 US\$ per person per night).

The **Maquisapayoj Lodge** has rooms with private bathrooms.

At the Maquisapayoj Reserve we have the unique chance to visit a mammal salt lick, which is located just about 1 hour walking distance from the lodge. Our groups usually spend one or two nights on the elevated observation platform, which means you spend the night on mattresses and under mosquito nets – similar to camping. This gives us the best chance to observe tapirs during the night. The overnight stay on the platform is optional and you can stay in a room at the lodge instead, if you prefer.

On the Manu National Park Tour, we spend 2 or 3 nights at '**Albergue Casa Matsigenka**'. This lodge is built in typical Matsigenka style and standard rooms are double rooms with shared bathrooms and showers. As in all other accommodations, sheets, blankets and mosquito nets are provided.

If you prefer a room with private bathroom you can book this at an additional 30 US\$ per person and night.

6. Do I need to bring a sleeping bag?

You don't need a sleeping bag for our standard Manu tours. All lodges provide sheets and blankets as well as mosquito nets. There also are blankets at the observation platform at the mammal salt lick. Normally the temperature doesn't drop very much during the night.

7. Is there electricity at the lodges in Manu?

At Bamboo Lodge, where we spend the first night there is electricity, but in the lowland there is none. Amazonia lodge is an exception, because it has its own little hydroelectric plant.

At Maquisapayoj Lodge there is a generator so you can charge batteries for a few hours in the evenings. At Casa Matsigenka a generator may be available occasionally. Make sure you bring enough spare batteries for your camera and flashlight for the tour. We recommend to leave your mobile phone, Smartphone, Laptop or Ipad in Cusco.

There is no Internet access in Manu, nor is there a mobile phone signal; only in some places you may receive calls occasionally.

We recommend to bring rechargeable batteries and to take used batteries back home, as they are not recycled in Peru.

8. What can I expect on a Manu tour?

How to decide between the Manu Biosphere Reserve tour and the Manu National Park tour?

Our tours to the tropical rainforest of Manu focus on observation of animals as well as rainforest plants in their natural environment and you will learn a lot about the tropical rainforest ecosystem.

Manu is a relatively remote area with little human population, and it has an extremely high biodiversity and very good opportunities to observe animals in the rainforest (especially at the clay licks), which is not very easy due to the dense vegetation.

Accommodation on our tours is in basic lodges with bathrooms. Lodge capacities are up to 24 persons.

Manu offers ideal conditions for nature and animal lovers, photographers and ornithologists.

You will not find mass tourism here. In August (high season) there are most visitors around, so it gets a bit busy.

Please note that it is not always possible to exactly stick to the program on a rain forest tour and small changes to the program may occur. In case of unusual situations caused by the weather (for example) our guide will look for the best alternative and always try to include all activities of our program. The guide will explain the situation to the group and you are welcome to ask questions.

Both tours, the Manu Biosphere Tour and the Manu National Park Tour, take you to the lowland rainforest of Manu and you visit 2 oxbow lakes to observe giant otters as well as the mammal salt lick in Maquisapayoj and the macaw clay lick in Blanquillo. The clay licks are located outside the Reserved Zone of the National Park, about 30 km south-east of Boca Manu. So if you want to visit the Reserved Zone of Manu AND the clay licks you spend considerably more time travelling by boat.

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Please also find the **map** of each itinerary on our website, for example:

5 day Manu Biosphere:

<http://www.amazontrailsperu.com/en/program/1428/explore-the-manu-biosphere-reserve>

7 day Manu National Park:

<http://www.amazontrailsperu.com/en/program/1445/the-manu-national-park-explorer>

The Manu **Biosphere Tour** is the more active tour, we spend 3 days in the area of the private reserves of Maquisapayoj and Blanquillo and we have **plenty of time for walks** on the trails. Our program is flexible and we have good opportunities to see a variety of animal species. From Maquisapayoj visit the **Camungo and Blanco oxbow lakes** (to observe Giant River Otters), the big **Macaw Clay Lick** at Blanquillo as well as the **Mammal Salt Lick**, located at walking distance from Maquisapayoj Lodge. On this tour we can visit the mammal salt lick up to 3 times.

The 5 day tour is the shortest tour to the Manu lowland, but shows you the highlights of Manu.

On the 7 day Biosphere tour we have one day (day 5) on which the group can decide what type of animals you would like to prospect for again. This day is especially rewarding for bird, tapir and monkey observation. In case of bad weather conditions we are flexible enough to modify the itinerary according to our needs and have more options to see animals. On this tour our return journey takes us back to Atalaya and through the cloud forest.

On the **National Park Tour** you enjoy the **unique scenery** of **Rio Manu's primary lowland forest**. Inside the Reserved Zone (Tourist Zone) we visit the **Salvador and Otorongo oxbow lakes** to observe Giant Otters. The scenery on Rio Manu is impressive and chances to observe wildlife on the river banks are very good. (If we are lucky we may see a jaguar.) But we spend considerably more time on the boat – travelling up on the Manu River into the “Reserved Zone” of the Park and coming back 2 or 3 days later. For some visitors the boat rides may be very long, especially for younger/active people. We spend 2 or 3 nights at Casa Matsigenka, a typical lodge run by the Machiguenga Indians.

On the **8 day tour** we have **2 full days inside the Reserved Zone** which gives us better chances for giant otter and monkey observation.

Chances to observe animals are similar on both tours. **The more time you spend in the rainforest the better the chance to see a bigger variety of animals.**

9. Will we always see birds at the big macaw clay lick in Blanquillo?

The macaw clay lick in Blanquillo is the **biggest clay lick in Manu** and has easy access. Activity is in the mornings and we observe the birds from a special, elevated wooden platform, which is less than 100m away from the clay wall. This is very close, compared to other clay licks in South America.

The **parrots and macaws** come to eat the clay because they need the minerals to neutralize toxins they have assimilated when eating seeds. During and towards the end of the rainy season (approximately until April) the forest offers more fruits and the birds eat less toxins, this is why there is less demand for eating clay.

When the dry season begins the birds need to eat more seeds which increases the necessity for them to visit a clay lick, which is from around the end of June. This means that activity at the clay lick is often lower during the first months of the year and it later increases. Until the beginning of the dry season (approximately May/ June) you may see between 10 and 60 birds whereas in the dry months you may see as many as 100 to 200 or even more individuals at the lick. But of course these numbers can still vary throughout the year. Other factors that lead to temporary fluctuation of activity at the clay lick are the presence of birds of prey, rain or other animals that disturb the macaws' activity.

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10. Are there mosquitos and is there Malaria and Leishmaniasis in Manu?

You need to be prepared for mosquitos in the lowland of Manu (below 1000m). Please bring **long sleeved clothes and mosquito repellent**.

Malaria: The Malaria risk in Manu is extremely low (less than 0.1 %). Long sleeved clothing and mosquito repellent is strongly recommended. Taking malaria prophylaxis is a personal decision, please consider that taking prophylaxis is not very secure (and check for the side effects of this medication !!). We suggest to bring a 'stand by' medicine in case you get Malaria (which can be detected by blood analysis), you can also get this medication here in Peru. In the south Peruvian rainforest there is only the Malaria type named 'Plasmodium vivax' which is completely curable.

Leishmaniasis: Leishmaniasis is an infectious disease that is transmitted by sand flies and affects the skin. The risk to get Leishmaniasis on a short stay in Manu is very low; the best form of protection is to wear long sleeves and use repellent.

11. Which vaccinations do I need?

Yellow Fever: Yellow Fever is transmitted by the Yellow Fever Mosquito. It is recommended to have a Yellow Fever vaccination for the Manu rainforest, especially as there is no therapy. If you plan to visit the Reserved Zone of Manu (on the National Park Tour) the Yellow Fever vaccination is obligatory because it may be controlled at the guard station in Limonal. The yellow fever is now valid lifelong (before it was valid for 10 years) and the vaccination should be administered minimum 10 days before visiting the lowland

It is also possible to get a yellow fever vaccination (at Hospital Regional) in Cusco (cost is about 30 US\$).

Tetanus: Tetanus is a virus infection caused by bacteria. You should have a valid tetanus vaccination for the rainforest and for Peru in general. Please check if you need to renew your vaccination before travelling.

Rabies: Rabies is a virus infection. During our Manu tours we spend all nights under mosquito nets, therefore the risk of being bitten by a bat is very, very low.

12. Is there communication when I am in Manu?

Can I find a doctor in case of an emergency?

When visiting Manu you should be aware that you travel to a **remote area** and there is no reliable mobile phone line nor internet access. In case of an emergency and for receiving short reports by our guides we have radio communication at the lodges. There is a **satellite telephone** in Boca Manu village and sometimes there is mobile phone access there as well.

Along our route there are 3 small hospital wards, apart from this the guide will carry a **first aid kit** throughout the tour.

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Please **inform us about diseases** that may represent a **risk** on the tour, such as epilepsy or heart diseases (even if symptoms date back several years), before your tour.

In case of severe illness, a **transport back** to Cusco might become necessary. Please make sure that you have good and adequate travel **health insurance**.

13. *Is drinking water provided during the tour?*

Please bring a big **water bottle** for the **first day** of the tour (min. 1.5 l) as it is complicated to get out water for you during the first day's bus ride. Then please keep your water bottle and you can refill it every day in the morning and/ or evening. We bring bottled water from Cusco for the whole tour.

Due to the high temperatures in Manu it is important that you drink plenty of water.

Please help to protect the environment and **avoid buying plastic bottles** as these are not yet recycled properly in Peru.

14. *What happens to the waste we produce during the tour?*

We try to reduce waste by avoiding tins and buying as much fresh produce as possible. All waste of our tour is gathered at the lodges and only organic waste is buried in Manu. All inorganic waste is returned to Cusco by our bus. Please help gathering all waste and do not throw any waste on the trails or roadside (including cigarettes). In case you don't see a rubbish bin please ask your cook or guide.

15. *How big are the tour groups for Manu?*

On our Manu tours the maximum **group size is 8 people** per guide. This way everybody can hear what the guide says and the group is not too big to observe animals. If there are 8 to 12 participants on a tour we take one more guide to divide the group in two while walking on the trails, but you may be sharing the bus and/ or boat. If there are more than 12 participants on the same tour we split in 2 groups, each with its own guide, cook and boat.

On some occasions our tour groups meet – for example in Maquisapayoj – and part of the boat ride and/ or the return trip may be with the same transport.

On our fixed departure dates, we operate the **Manu Biosphere tour** with min. **3 participants** and the **Manu National Park** tour with a **minimum of 4 persons** at the group tour price. If we have fewer bookings, it is possible to carry out the tour with an extra charge or to change your booking to a different tour (on the same date).

Due to changing booking habits of many visitors it is not unusual that a tour group would fill up only 4 to 8 weeks before the actual date.

If you are interested in a specific tour or if you are not very flexible with the tour date it is **recommendable to book early**.

16. *What are the temperatures like in Manu?*

During the first night you can expect temperatures between 12 and 18°C (53 to 62°F), and reaching the lowland forest you should expect between 26 and 36°C (78 to 95°F) during the day and around 20 to 26°C (66 to 78°F) at night.

On some occasions we can get a cold front (“friaje”) from the south, this occurs mainly during the months of May to July/ August (dry season). When these winds reach the lowland forest, temperatures may go down as far as 14 or 10°C (50°F), which feels colder due to the humidity in the rainforest.

On the first day of your tour we travel over the Andes, where you should have a **sweater** and **wind & waterproof jacket**. In the afternoon, reaching the cloud forest temperatures are more pleasant. Please also check **our packing list** for clothing recommendations

17. *Are there flights from Manu to Cusco?*

Unfortunately **flights from/ to Boca Manu are not operating** at the moment due to the lack of an appropriate plane for this route and the small airstrip.

Therefore we have opted for the **return route via Colorado** and on the Transoceanica which allows us to return from the lowland of Manu to Cusco in one day.

The **closest airport is at Puerto Maldonado**, which can be reached from Colorado on the last day of the 5 day Manu Biosphere tour and of the 7 and 8 day Manu National Park tours.

If you would like to connect to an afternoon flight from Puerto Maldonado (to Lima or Cusco) we can arrange for the transfer to the airport. If you wish we can also book the flight for you.

Please contact us for further details.

18. *Why are there 2 routes for the return to Cusco?*

In 2011 the paved Transoceanic road was completed, this is the road we mainly use for the return to Cusco. At the beginning of the tour we travel to the lowland on the Manu road **through the cloud forest** on the **scenic Manu road**, and after our excursions, on the last day of the tour we take the boat downriver on Rio Madre de Dios from Maquisapayoj Lodge towards Colorado, a small gold mining town.

From here, together with our guide we take a car or pickup for approx. 1 hour to get to the village of Puerto Carlos, where we cross the Rio Inambari. On the other side our private minibus is waiting for us to take us to the Transoceanic highway via Mazuko, travelling on paved road up over the Andes - passing by the Ausangate Mountain - to get back to Cusco in the evening.

It is a long trip but we can get back from the remote Manu lowland to Cusco in one day.

The **7 day Manu Biosphere Tour** takes you in and out via **Atalaya** and the cloud forest.

This route is more interesting in terms of wildlife, but the return trip takes 2 days, travelling upriver in Rio Alto Madre de Dios. Due to lower transport costs we can offer the 7 day Manu Biosphere tour at a relatively economical price.

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19. Can I fly directly to Lima at the end of the tour?

In case you have a tight schedule AND you plan to return to Lima right after your rainforest tour you may consider the option to return via Colorado and then be transferred from Puerto Carlos to Maldonado town. This would be on the last day of the tour.

From Puerto Maldonado it is possible to catch a commercial flight to Lima in the afternoon (!). An early start is required, but this way you can get to Lima on the last day of our tour (day 5, 7 or 8). If you are interested in this option please contact us for further details.

20. Should I bring binoculars?

Binoculars are essential for a Manu tour: to spot animals and get a closer view of them. 8 x 40, 10 x 40 or 10 x 42 magnifications are recommended. Quality binoculars (Zeiss, Eschenbach, Leica, Minox und Nikon brands) can be rented at our office in Cusco for 5 US\$/ day. Just let us know latest one day before the trip.

21. What do I need to do to book a tour? How do I pay?

Please read the tour program carefully before you book a tour, if you have any questions we will be happy to answer them.

Changes in the itinerary may occur, due to the natural circumstances in Manu.

Please also read our Booking and Cancellation Policy:

<http://www.amazontrailsperu.com/en/conditions>

With your booking you accept these conditions.

For a booking we need your full name, address, age, profession, passport number and nationality. To secure your booking we require a down payment of (minimum) 250 US \$ per person for the longer tours and 200 US\$ per person for short tours.

The deposit can be made to our bank account in Cusco/ Peru, our account in Germany or via Western Union or Xoom. Another option is Pay Pal. We then confirm reception of the deposit and your tour booking(s).

Please allow some time for your **pre-departure briefing** on the day before your tour.

The **balance** can be paid by bank or Western Union 14 days before your tour date (subject to bank fees), otherwise you can pay the balance in cash here at our office in Cusco latest on the day before your tour starts (in Soles or US\$). Payment in Euros is also possible, but the exchange rate here is not as good as in Europe.

US\$ traveller's cheques can be cashed at the local Interbank or Banco Continental offices (about 4 to 5 % commission) (information without engagement).

We have a **representative in the USA** for our clients, so for a fee there is the possibility to make payment in the US. Please contact us for further details.

The balance of your tour price is due at our office in Cusco, usually 2 days, and at the **latest 1 day before your tour** departure (please let us know). You can pay in cash (Soles or US \$).

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Credit card payment is not always possible and often expensive. We recommend **checking credit card conditions** (limits for ATMs) with your bank before travelling to Peru. There are ATMs at *Banco de la Nacion* and *Banco de Credito* where you can withdraw about 2000 Soles (aprox. 650 US\$) per day or more. Note: the yellow "Global Net" ATMs charge extra fees.

During the tour (e.g. for snacks, souvenirs) it's best to pay in Soles. You **need not bring much money** on the tour as there are not many occasions to spend money in Manu.

Please leave extra money in the safe at your hotel.

In general it's recommended to travel and pay with Soles in Peru.

Please note that **damaged US\$ bills are not accepted** in Peru, as it is foreign money! Even small rips are reasons for bills being refused.

Please contact us to agree upon a time for your **tour briefing** which normally takes place at our office on the day prior to your departure. Other dates are normally possible if we know in advance.

22. What else should I know when travelling to Peru?

It is recommendable to have **travel insurance** for your luggage/ valuables and **health insurance** when travelling to Peru. Leave valuables that you do not need at home.

Always have an eye on your luggage, especially hand luggage or small backpacks, also in restaurants.

Valuables like passports and money should be kept in **the hotel safe** whenever possible. If you travel with cash it's best to keep it in a money belt or neck pouch.

Only for some tours (Inca Trail, Machu Picchu) you need to bring your **original passport**, otherwise a good copy is enough.

You need to show your passport and the entry/ **immigration sheet** at the hotels, if you don't have the migration sheet you may have to pay an additional tax.

If you have any further questions you are welcome to [e-mail us](mailto:info@amazontrailsperu.com) or contact us via Skype (amazontrailsperu)!

info@amazontrailsperu.com