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TOUR UPDATE

The Newsletter of mikesworldtour



Tour Highlight:

May 2023
Border of Brazil, Colombia,
and Peru



Jeff Bezos? No The Largest Rainforest in the World

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

The Amazon rainforest covers over 6.7 square kilometers, and is home to 10% of all species in the world. 47 million people live in the Amazon including over 2 million indigenous peoples. The Amazon is an important carbon sink that stores carbon and is vital in fighting climate change. Recently deforestation has become a big issue in the Amazon, and scientists fear climate change will destroy the ecosystem having drastic effects on the world. The widest point of the river is over 40 miles long which increases in the wet season. The town of Leticia was founded as a military outpost by Peru 1867 and was passed to Colombia in the 1930s. It functions as an outpost with no major industry many of the people living around the town live by hunting. Tourism has grown recently with direct commercial flights to Bogota every day. Throughout the Amazon there are no major roads, and most travel is down by small boats.

Amazon, Brazil/Colombia/Peru

The title of this tour update may be confusing as it does not follow my normal style. Rather than visit a specific city in a country, I spent the weekend tucked away in the Amazon rainforest at the Palmarí nature reserve which is in Brazil with Peru on the other side of the river. To get here we flew from Bogotá to Leticia in Colombia (a domestic flight only offered 2-3 a day to get here) and then took a taxi through Leticia to the Brazilian town of Tabatinga which is connected to Leticia. From here we took a 3.5 hour boat ride through the river to Palmarí. Since it is high water season right now the boat ride was faster, and it can be even up to 5 hours when water levels are low. This weekend was amazing to disconnect and enjoy nature. I will get into the sleeping arrangements, food, and activities in a bit, but the Palmarí nature reserve truly has so much to offer and is perfect for nature lovers, people looking to disconnect for a little, and travelers looking to get off the beaten path. The reserve does have wifi in the main center, so you are not fully connected but during activities and in your accommodation you truly are off the grid.

ACCOMMODATION

HAMMOCKS

The cheapest option at Palmarí is to stay in a hammock inside a mosquito net in a shared space with others. Luckily for us we were the only people sleeping in hammocks while we were there so we had the entire space to myself. I was slightly hesitant at first since I move a lot in my sleep and thought that I was going to fall out of the hammock. Honestly, it was a really great sleep and super comfortable. I woke up each morning feeling super refreshed and it was very comfortable to fall asleep. It really all comes to down to your hammock sleeping technique which I am now an expert at. Instead of laying how you would normally imagine (straight line with the hammock) you actually want to sleep diagonally to maximize comfort. This also ensures that your feet will not be above your head which is no bueno because then blood will flow to your head in your sleep. Palmarí also provided us with a pillow, sheet, blanket, and towel.

If sleeping in hammocks is not your style, and you are not a college student trying to ball on a budget you have more options. If you pay more you can get a mattress in a shared space and even your own bedroom if you are willing to pay the price.



EXPERIENCES

The way Palmarí works is that for the entire time you are there you have a local guide who takes you on various activities which are all included in the price of your room/stay (some activities cost a little more but we did not do them). Also every meal is a shared meal with everyone staying there and follow their specific meal times, the food is also included in the price you pay and was very good! All day you can get hot water to make tea or coffee as well as they have portable drinking water that you can get all day. Once you get there you can pick through their book of activities which have a wide variety of experiences. Below are the activities we chose to do!

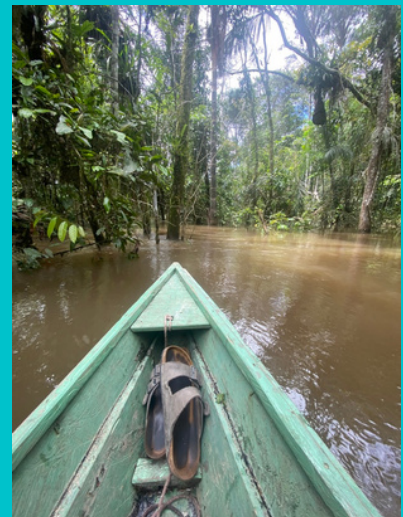
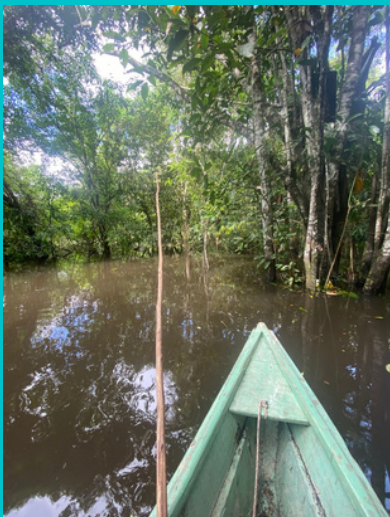
DOLPHIN SPOTTING

You might be thinking, the Amazon river is freshwater there are no dolphins here??? Wrong, there is actually a species of dolphins that live in fresh water ecosystems (hence the Amazon river) and come in gray and pink in color. We actually were able to see a bunch of them, but since it is high water it is hard to see them come out of the water for a while. I am including a picture of these dolphins just in case you still do not believe me. Also it is best to see them at sunset, and being on the river for sunset was absolutely beautiful. With all the rain in the Amazon we also were able to see a bunch of rainbows (also on the right).



FISHING

The next activity that we did was fishing in the morning the next day. One might think fishing means you are trying to catch fish, but that would be another false assumption. The most common thing that is caught in the Amazon river is piranhas, and there are many species of them living in the river. We actually were served them for dinner one night showing how common they truly are. Most of the piranhas in the river will not do anything to you, but a few are fairly aggressive and you need to be slightly careful while swimming. Unfortunately we did not catch any piranhas (the stick on the left is my fishing rod), so we were not able to eat that day, kidding;), but nevertheless the views while fishing were also spectacular. We were in a really small boat, so we were really close to the water which was cool. I forgot how much patience fishing takes, which I do not have!



Amazon, Brazil/Colombia/Peru

NATURAL POOLS/JUNGLE HIKING

The next activity we did was go on a hike within the preserve that led to natural pools. Originally I thought it was gonna be this super clear blue water, but now I have no idea why I was thinking that because I had not seen blue water anywhere. Anyway, the natural pools are in the middle of the preserve path, and because of rain were a little flooded. There are hours of walking trails in the jungle behind the reserve, and we even got to see where they grow some of the fruits within the community. During the hike here we saw an alligator which caused me to run the other way (foreshadowing) making my guide laugh a lot. Either way it is really cool to see all the animals and plants in the reserve.



ALLIGATORS



Yeah I am not the biggest reptile person, but I was not going to pass up the opportunity to see Amazon Alligators at night. We took a boat at night into the more forested areas. It was really impressive because our guide was scanning the jungle areas so fast with his headlamp to see for larger alligators. We went into a grassy area, and our guide reaches into the water and just grabbed one out with his bare hands (crazy right). We learned a little about the alligators in the Amazon, and the one he had caught had part of its tail missing because the piranhas ate it off (the predator of the smaller alligators). He said in that area of the jungle, alligators don't get too big, but if you go deeper into the Amazon they will be much larger (my worst fear). You can tell their age based on their size and other development factors such as the hardness of their head.



500 YEAR OLD TREE & VISITING PERU

Since Palmarí is on the border of Brazil and Peru we took the boat to visit the village of Santa Rita in Peru. Here we got to see the elementary school they have for their children as well as a church & community center. One thing that's interesting is the language they teach in here (Spanish) but across the river kids learn in Portuguese. We also visited this massive tree that is about 500 years old. The trees are important to the people indigenous to the area because it is believed spirits stay in the tree. This tree was massive and had the biggest roots sticking up out of the water. Our guide said in a few years the tree will fall because the river stream pull on the tree causes it to be unstable.



Amazon, Brazil/Colombia/Peru

KAYAK

We did a two hour kayak throughout the river which was cool because you can take the kayaks into smaller areas that bigger boats cannot go into. We were able to see different types of trees and plants that are technically part of the river right now because of the high water. Also since the border of Peru and Brazil goes through the river I can now say that I have kayaked across an international border which is super cool for a travel enthusiast like me. Kayaking is also a great workout as my arms were pretty sore the next morning from this.



NIGHT WALK/BIOLUMINESCENCE

There is a special fungus in the reserve that causes plants and other trees to light up in the night. This fungus sticks to leaves causing it to form natural light when it is dark outside. The indigenous tribes used this fungus as light before energy and technology existed. Since the moon was kinda bright it was a little hard to see, but on some leaves we still could see the fungus glowing which was super cool. I was so impressed that our guide knew the paths even in the pitch black darkness. During this hike at one point we turned off our flashlights and held each others hands to walk to see the bioluminescence better. It was also cool to hear all the sounds in the jungle at night because many animals are nocturnal. Because of the nature of this activity I have no photos, so I guess you will have to go to truly see the coolness of the bioluminescence.

THINGS TO KNOW/FAQS

- Everything in the Palmarí nature reserve is all inclusive (except some additional paid activities) and they even provide nature friendly shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and bug spray
- Government agreement do not require you to go through migration if you are not going past 80 kilometers in the Amazon so you literally can cross Leticia into Tabatinga without going through a migration point
- It rains sporadically so bring a rain coat and quick dry clothing
- Here is not the place to have a big suitcase, backpacks are the way to go since you have to transport your stuff through tiny boats
- The resort has Wifi in the main house to use/charge devices but everywhere else there is no service
- The guides only speak Spanish, but there are amazing volunteers there to help you translate and learn more about the reserve

I hope you enjoyed this abnormal type of tour update from me. Going to the Amazon was such a cool experience and the Palmarí nature reserve really has something for everyone to do. I highly recommend checking them out if you want to go to the Amazon. I had such a great experience disconnecting and enjoying the nature around me!



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!