

# A LADY IN LONDON

AND TRAVELING THE WORLD

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## Lady in the Peruvian Amazon

I've been spending a lot of time in the jungle lately. Last month I traveled to Brunei, where I explored the rainforests of [Borneo](#). This month it's South America, where I just started a trip to Peru with a visit to Puerto Maldonado in the famous Amazon region.



The journey started off on a high note when my hotel, Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica, picked me up from the airport. The vehicle that carried me and my fellow passengers from the small arrivals area to the hotel's butterfly house and check-in lounge looked more like a veranda on wheels than a bus.

The covered platform with white wooden chairs carried us the short distance to where we lounged on sofas and enjoyed cold towels and bottled water as the check-in process took place amidst the butterflies.

When that was finished, we boarded our veranda-on-wheels for the 15-minute drive to the Madre de Dios River. Along the way we passed through the city of Puerto Maldonado, which was full of colorful buildings, town squares, and armies of Asian-style tuk tuks. I later learned that these vehicles were a byproduct of the ever-increasing Chinese influence in the region.

Once at the river, we boarded a motorized canoe for the 45-minute journey to our lodging in nearby Tambopata. The wide river was lined with dense jungle on both sides, and the trip was reminiscent of my journey from Bandar Seri Begawan to the rainforest in Brunei.





When we arrived at the lodge, we ate a delicious three-course lunch that consisted of a potato and heart of palm salad followed by a fish curry and fresh fruit. I had heard that the food in Lima was world-class, but I learned in Tambopata that that phenomenon extended across the entire country.

After lunch I checked into my cabana, which the hotel had offered me for two nights. It was rustic-chic and came complete with woven hammocks, wooden lounge chairs, bathrooms, showers, and large beds over which hung very necessary mosquito nets. The only thing not to like about it was that the windows were screened in, and due to the close proximity of one bungalow to another, I could hear every word spoken in the neighboring cabanas. Other than that, it was great.



I had a few minutes to relax in my hammock before happy hour, during which all guests were offered a complimentary pisco sour every night. The one I drank was the first of my trip to Peru, and it reminded me of the ones I had in [Chile](#) last year. It was good to be back in South America.

After happy hour, I met with Moises, my guide during my stay at Inkaterra. He gave me an overview of the options for the lodge's excursions, most of which were included with the stay (the same went for all meals). Everything from river safaris to night hikes and bird watching was offered.

I chose to go on the night river cruise that evening, and I'm glad I did. We saw numerous caimans, or Amazonian crocodiles, as well as capybaras, the world's largest rodents. We also saw birds such as egrets. But perhaps the best part of the night safari was the millions of stars in the sky. Not since my trips to Borneo and [Namibia](#) have I seen a sky so full of stars. It was beautiful.

The next day my excursions continued with a trip to Lake Sandoval. To get there, we took a 3-kilometer hike through shin-deep mud that made us thankful for the wellies that Inkaterra provided. Along the way we saw all kinds of wildlife, including brown capuchin monkeys, tropical birds, butterflies, and all kinds of plant life.

Once we got to the water, we took a motorized canoe along a river that led to the lake. The sun was shining, and we had great views of the bizarre "chicken birds", caimans, and a very playful spider monkey that stuck its tongue out at us as it swung from branch to branch.

I was exhausted by the time we returned to the lodge, but not so much so that I passed up the chance to go on another excursion. Most of the guests went on the canopy walkway, but after my terrifying-yet-rewarding experience of watching the sunrise above the canopy in Borneo, my next 20 years worth of courage and adrenaline had been used up. My fear of heights won out over my sense of adventure in Peru.

Instead, I went with a guide to Monkey Island, which was located right across the Madre de Dios River from the lodge. There we went on a walk through the jungle, where we saw frogs, a wasp nest that I almost walked right into, and more Amazonian flora.





That evening I was almost too tired to move, but I forced myself to go on the night hike. I was glad I did. We saw tarantulas, tree snakes, night monkeys, and even a lone crab in the middle of the trail. It reminded me a lot of my night walk in Borneo.

We also saw millions of mosquitoes, 23 of which decided to bite me that evening. I'm hoping I don't come down with malaria anytime soon, but if I do, at least I will have seen some really amazing fauna in the process.

When I wasn't out on excursions, I was enjoying Inkaterra's grounds and cuisine. The former were gorgeous, with cabanas that blended into their surroundings. Inkaterra was very environmentally conscious, so every day from 3pm to 6pm the electricity was switched off. That served as an added incentive to get out and explore. Not that I needed any, what with the abundance of adorable agoutis hopping around to keep my cute quota filled at all times.

There were also amazing views of the river from my room, not least during the sunrise, when the sky turned fuchsia and lavender above the placid pink river. They made waking up at 5am for my excursions worth it.



Then there was the pretty tree trunk path that led the way to the main lodge where all of my meals took place. Like my lunch on the first day, all of my meals at Inkaterra were very good. The fish was definitely the best option, as the chicken and meat could be a little tough, but the freshness of the ingredients and the use of local produce made for many outstanding meals.

So did the company. As a solo traveler, I was expecting to eat my meals alone. But all of the other guests I met were incredibly friendly, and I ended up sharing every meal with one or more other party. It was a huge improvement on my usual read-a-book or stare-at-the-wall-because-I-forgot-my-book dining experiences, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the Americans, Brits, Australians, and Canadians I met.

On my second morning in Tambopata, some of those people and I were up at 5am to get ready for our journey back to Puerto Maldonado airport. We boarded the boat and then the veranda-on-wheels, and soon enough we were back at the butterfly house communing with the winged beauties before heading to the airport.

When we arrived, I took my bag, paid the annoying departure tax, and waved good-bye to the Peruvian Amazon. It was my second jungle experience in a month, and as with my Borneo trip and its [Angkor Wat](#) segment, my Peru trip's next destination included an amazing cultural wonder: the legendary city of [Machu Picchu](#). To be continued...

