

ANACONDA WALK

In the Peruvian Amazon, there is a palm tree commonly known as *aguaje* (*Mauritia flexuosa*) and the marshy land areas where these palms grow are called *Aguajales*, part of the wetlands ecosystem permanently flooded as a result of overflowing rivers and heavy rainfall.

The *Aguajales* covers more than 6 million hectares in the Peruvian Amazon, with a vast density of 250 *Mauritia flexuosa* palm trees per hectare approximately 30000 hectares in Madre de Dios.



OBJECTIVES

Technical Objectives

The *Aguajales* are a complementary alternative to understand the ecosystem of the lower Amazon rain forest which facilitates observation of biodiversity, both in variety of species and interrelation.

Eco tourism Objective

To promote environmental awareness and conservation and develop accessibility to interiors of the jungle without disturbing the habitats and environment.

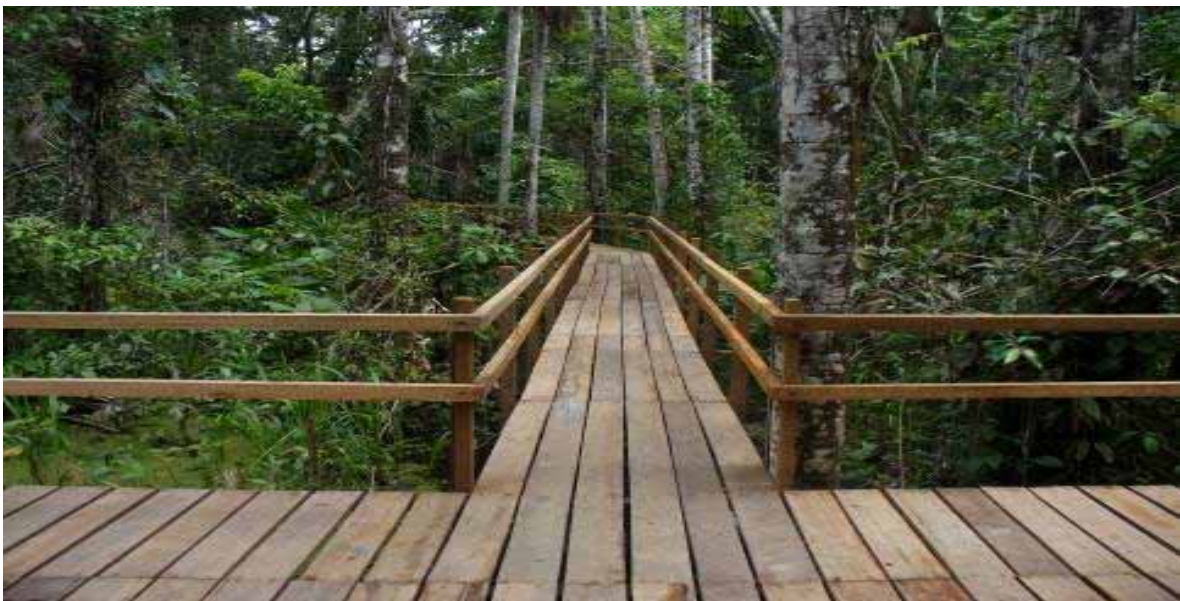
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE *AGUAJE*

The *aguaje* is a plant that has both male and female trees (which produce fruit) and can grow in pure, dense or in association with others (mixed) palm trees or plants resistant to the excess of water, such as the *renaco*. It can reach up to 35 meters in height, has easy reproduction and high capacity for natural regeneration but demolishing the *aguajes* female to obtain the fruits, lowers their production.

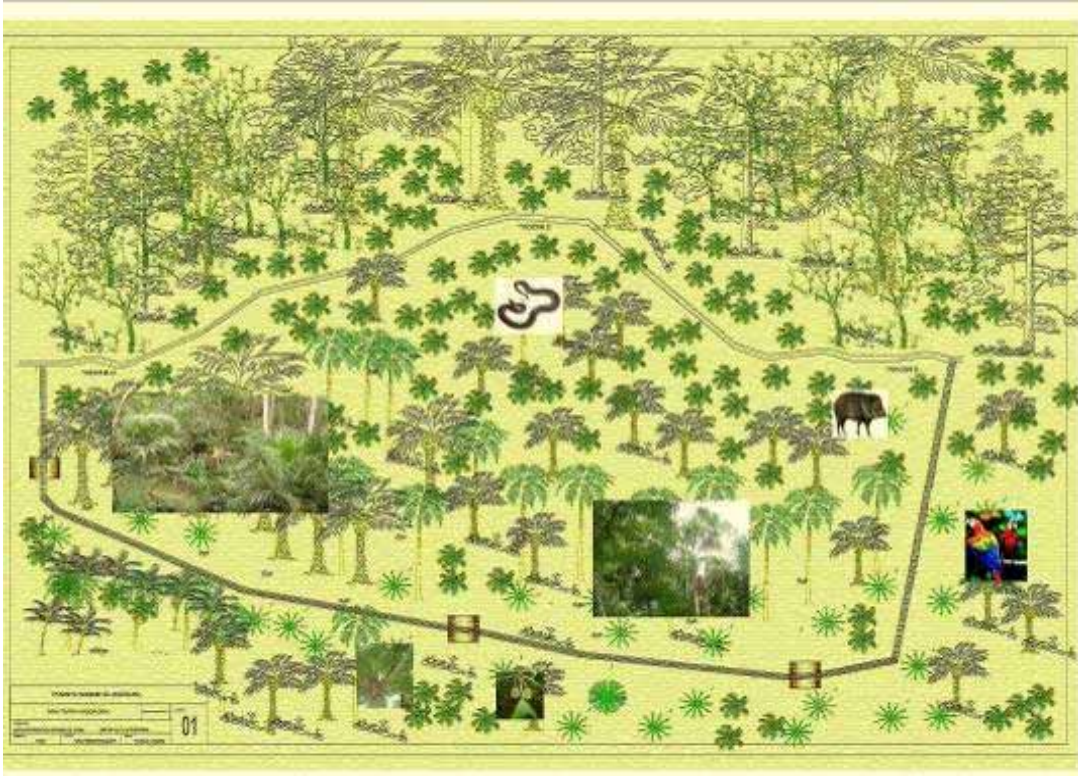
INFORMATION ABOUT THE *AGUAJALES* BRIDGE

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The Inkaterra *Aguajales* Bridge is built on the property of Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica located at Km. 17 of the left bank of the Madre de Dios River, in Tambopata, 250 meters from the trail entrance to the second Inkaterra Canopy tower.



The bridge consists of 4 sections and three platforms with a total length of 200 meters. The first stretch is 18.2 meters long and goes through some low foliage of *heliconias* and small shrubs and connects to the first 4x5 meter platform, where the introductory talk is conducted about what will be seen throughout the excursion.



Continuing to the second 63-meter stretch of the bridge, one can see the first fruits of the *aguaje* palms during the months of November to January, as well as *renaco* trees which are epiphytes. In the second 5 x 5 meter platform, guests can walk the ramp over solid ground, where they can observe birds, mammals, and dense vegetation.



The third part of the walkway is 45.3 meters long with other types of palms like a dense vegetation of *huasai* and *pona*, aquatic plants and a platform of the same size as the second.

The fourth stretch of 50.7 meters has typical plants species; the bridge ends in an exit stairway with a small platform.

SAFETY ESSENTIALS

- Long sleeved shirts and insect repellants are recommended to ward off mosquitoes and other insects.
- Running on the bridge is strictly prohibited; planks are slippery when it rains.
- It is recommended to walk slowly and for children, do not allow them to run on the bridge during the excursion.
- Interpreter-guide, binoculars, camera, poncho for rain and flashlight in case of dusk or night excursions, are required.
- The bridge has a capacity for 25 people but it is suggested that only 10 people go at one time.

BIODIVERSITY IN THE AGUAJALES BRIDGE

Among the fauna observed are invertebrates such as the species *Caligo* butterflies, which feed on wild fruits, reproduced in rainy seasons; *carambolilla* and *ciruelo de monte*. You can also see bees, *ronsapas* (large bees) and beetles, which utilize the aguaje for its reproduction.



Amphibians

Toads found in these wetlands, are camouflaged with the color of the ground or leaves, such as the two-toned *Elachistochleis*. Another frog species *Leptodactylus bolivianus* are also found. The *Bufo sp.* located on shore and sometimes in the water is the most common amphibians in this ecosystem.

Reptiles

Among the common reptiles seen is the *Gonatodes* lizard, which feeds on small insects, attracted by the flowers or secretions of the *lagunas*.



The *Epicrates cenchria* snake, which is of the forest land, may be seen near the Aguajal. The *Liophis reginae* snake can be seen where the heliconias are and feeds on rodents. The *Pseustes sulfureus* feeds on amphibians as well as the *Leptodactylus bolivianus*, often found in the vegetation near the water. Other reptiles that may be sighted are dwarf caiman, a jargon viper and some species of turtles.

Mammals

One of the most frequent mammals is the *Pichico Saguinus fuscicollis* monkey, which is a small primate that feeds on fruits of the trees, main disseminators of seeds. Another primate that can be seen is the *Fraile o Huasita Camiri boliviensis* monkey. Also heard in the area are the sounds of large primates like the howler monkey.



Birds



Among the most sighted birds is the *Ara chloroptera* macaw, which feeds on aguaje fruit as it starts to ripen, the seed being soft and easy to eat.

Other birds which also build its nest in aguajales but use other tree species are the pointed tail palm creeper and the woodpecker looking for food in barks of old trees.



