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THE WONDER OF PERUVIAN ECOSYSTEMS

Home to 84 of the world's 103 ecosystems and 28 of the 32 climates on the planet, Peru is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries. When combined, these countries make up 70% of the planet's total biodiversity. Due to this huge variety in the environment, scientists estimate there to be 25,000 plant species, 472 species of mammals, 20% of the world's butterfly species and 1,816 bird species in just five main areas of Peru.

The Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon Rainforest is the most extensive tropical forest on Earth, with the highest density of plant and animal species in the world. Spanning nine South American countries, and 2.5 million square miles of land in total, the Amazon provides essential ecosystem services throughout its territory. The forest is crucial for stabilizing the world's rainfall patterns and for storing huge amounts of carbon, helping to prevent climate change. The Amazon is also inhabited by millions of indigenous people who, for generations, have called the jungle home.

Guests of the Inkaterra lodges in the Madre de Dios region can discover the variety of native plant and animal species by visiting the Gamitana Farm, which is part of the agroforestry project run by the Inkaterra Asociación.





The Andean Cloud Forests

The Andean Cloud Forests hold the highest number of endemic species - plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world. These forests occur in the Andes because of the humidity moving west from the Amazon rainforest cooling and condensing into water as it travels upwards to the mountains. The forests extend from about 2,000 feet (600m) to approximately 12,000 feet (3,658m) elevation, and more than 300 species of birds are found in the Cloud Forests of Peru, including the Cloud Forest that surrounds Machu Picchu, with 214 species observed within the exuberant tropical gardens of Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, of which 18 are hummingbird species.

With the steep slopes and fragile soils putting the Cloud Forests at risk of erosion and degradation, it is extremely important to protect the Andean Cloud Forests and their incredible biodiversity.

One of the most well-known species of the Cloud Forest surrounding Machu Picchu is the Andean Bear. Whilst staying at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel you can observe some of these curious creatures by visiting Inkaterra Asociación's Andean Bear Rescue Center.



Páramo Grasslands

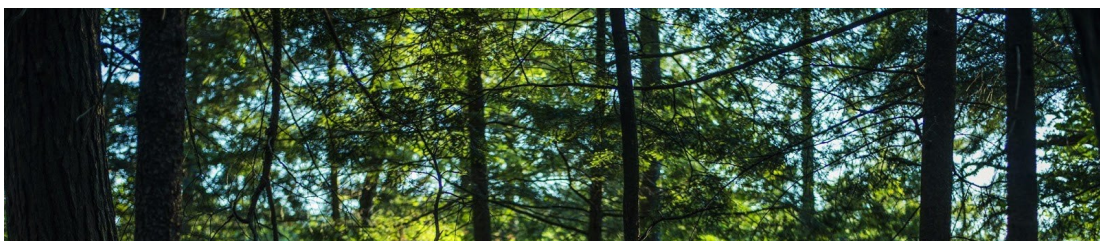
Páramo Grasslands are high-altitude ecosystems situated about 10,000 feet (2,048m) above the timberline but 18,000 feet (5,487m) below the permanent snow line. The vegetation is mainly composed of grasses, shrubs, and giant rosette plants. This unique ecosystem is located only in the Andes of Northern Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and some small areas in Central America.

In recent years botanical researchers have concluded that the Andean Páramo is very likely to be the fastest evolving biodiversity hotspot on Earth. Species in the Páramo have evolved within a hugely varied landscape of glacier-formed valleys and plains with lakes, peat bogs and wet grasslands interspersed with shrub-land and forest patches. This landscape, combined with its high-altitude, has resulted in species having to adapt to low atmospheric pressure, the drying effects of strong winds and much more.



Tropical Deciduous Forests

The Tropical Deciduous Forests are found along the northern coast of Peru and southern coast of Ecuador. These environments are dense during the wet summer, but during the dry winter the leaves fall and the canopy opens up, resulting in a wide array of uniquely adapted species. As these forests are located on the equator, they lie directly in the rain shadow of the Andes, the world's longest mountain range, meaning they get very little moisture from the ocean for up to eight months of the year.





Marine, Coastal and Wetlands

Mangroves, estuaries, lagoons, and oceans all support the complex life that sustains marine fisheries and provides the freshwater to form wetlands. They are significant for their marine biodiversity and critical for migrating birds. Peru's northern sea holds roughly 70% of the nation's marine biodiversity, including many endemic species.

New ecotourism initiatives by the Inkaterra Asociación, in the coastal town of Cabo Blanco, aim to restore and conserve the Peruvian Tropical Sea, whilst contributing to the social and economic development of the local community. There are a variety of marine conservation initiatives, ranging from biodiversity inventories and species identification, to the promotion of sustainable fishing and development of the 'Sea to Table' concept within Peru.



While staying at Inkaterra you can explore the world wonders of the Amazon Rainforest of South-Eastern Peru and the Andean Cloud Forest, find out more about these stunning ecosystems by visiting www.inkaterra.com.



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