

**BLOG 13/03/2020**

# CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN PERU

*Adventure**Discovery**Extraordinary  
Experiences*

The narrow boat battles against the stiff current of the Madre de Dios river. Our destination is just up ahead, a small jetty and a set of vertiginous wooden steps leading to Inkaterra Guides Field Station, one of [Peru's](#) most pioneering tourism projects.

The innovative lodge is run by the Inkaterra Association (ITA), the NGO arm of Peru's original conservation tourism specialists. Inkaterra has been running holidays that place the preservation of the natural world front and centre since 1976, when its luxury Reserva Amazonica opened just downstream, at a time when such work was still seen as a niche concern. The model, however, has clearly worked. Since its conception in 1978, ITA has been able to protect 15,000 hectares of Amazon rainforest, capturing 3,400,000 tons of carbon emissions in the process. Inkaterra has become one of the leading proponents of conservation-led tourism.

**By Joe Minihaue**

The Inkaterra Guides Field Station is found just outside the Tambopata National Reserve, itself home 274,690 hectares of virgin rainforest. It is one of the most easily accessible areas of virgin forest in the world and its biodiversity is legendary.

Hence Inkaterra's decision to let guests learn about and participate in the conservation work that is done here.

As I clamber up the bank and into the lodge's grounds, the forest soon crowds the path. Fire ants march across my boots.

Howler monkeys screech high above. And a blue macaw can be seen perched on a high branch above the towering canopy.

Preserving this flora and fauna is the cornerstone of ITA's work. "Since research began in 1978, there have been 814 bird species, 365 ant species, 313 butterfly species, 100 mammal species and 1266 vascular plant species recorded in the hotel grounds and surrounding areas," says Masías, proudly. "We have also discovered 28 new species including 20 orchids, five amphibians, one butterfly, two bromeliads and one tropical vine."

To put those numbers into perspective, the bird diversity in Inkaterra's properties across Peru is equivalent to that of [Costa Rica](#), often cited as one of the most biodiverse places on Earth.



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*Inkaterra Guides Field Station was originally designed as a place to train Inkaterra Hotel's Explorer Guides. In 2017, the property was extended to act as a research facility for ITA, open to national and international students and academics, volunteers, and travellers keen to engage with hands-on conservation research in the Amazon rainforest.*

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**LIZA MASÍAS, DIRECTOR OF  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT  
INKATERRA**

The decision to open up the Field Station was born out of the United Nations classifying 2017 as the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development'.

“Since opening to the public, the property has offered guests the opportunity to explore the rainforest and contribute to numerous conservation projects, as well as granting access to the Green Lab to learn about the importance of soil, flora and fauna in the Madre-de-Dios area of the Amazon,” she adds.

Guests at Inkaterra Guides Field Station and Reserva Amazonica can take part in a series of quarter or half day excursions or more all-encompassing five-day itineraries, helping to contribute to ITA's research. Each excursion is led by one of Inkaterra's in-house Explorer Guides, whose intimate knowledge of the region and passion for its preservation is unmistakable from the moment you meet them.

Ours is Javier, who hails from the nearby town of Puerto Maldonado and has spent years working for Inkaterra, first as a member of the hospitality team before undertaking years of study right here at the Field Station.

He takes us through the property, giving us a whistle stop tour of the simple guest cabanas which brush up close to the forests and offer more basic accommodation compared with the eco lux vibe at Reserva Amazonica.

After time spent in the lab, seeing first-hand how researchers are studying the massive ant population here (a single tree here is home to more species than the entire British Isles), he leads us to the Canopy Walkway. This 344 metre-long series of seven hanging bridges gives visitors a unique perspective on the forest.

Javier laughs about our head for heights (or lack of) as we peer over the edge of the 40 metre–high viewing platform before hushing us to silence and pulling out his binoculars.

“Toucans,’ he whispers. A pair of these brightly billed birds hop between branches just metres from us. Seeing them so close is a privilege and one which would perhaps not exist without the conservation work of the ITA.

“It is crucial for visitors to learn about the rich flora and fauna of Madre de Dios to preserve these species and encourage new information to arise about this spectacular landscape,” says Masías after we descend.

It’s impossible to leave here not feeling inspired and fired up about the need to protect both the Amazon and the planet at large. For travellers who want to take part in as well as see conservation in action, there’s no better experience.

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