

# Not all Amazon Cruises are the Same

## Comparison of Cruises on the M/Y TUCANO to Typical Cruises in Iquitos, Peru



For a travel professional or a prospective traveler, it is not easy to distinguish one Amazon cruise from another. What are the most important elements of an Amazon cruise? Is it the accommodations, the itinerary, or is it geography? In general, for most travelers, what matters most in the success of an Amazon cruise is an *authentic and thorough experience in the rainforest.*

In the following pages we will compare our cruises originating in Manaus, Brasil to those typically offered out of Iquitos, Peru. There are differences in accommodations between boats, and some vessels publicize the luxury aspect of their cruises. But in the final analysis are luxury accommodations what define an Amazon trip? Actually what really matters for a traveler is to be able to appreciate the wild beauty of the Amazon in a full and authentic way. In this most important measure of an Amazon cruise, our trips are very different, and better, than other cruises offered in the Amazon.

### Authenticity

Voyages on the our vessel the MOTOR YACHT TUCANO are a great deal more authentic than found on virtually all of the other vessels in operation. We do not include in our voyages any “made for tourism” experiences. There are no visits to a shaman, no certificates of trip completion, and no feeding or photo opportunities of captive animals. We avoid visits to local communities where the inhabitants have been encouraged to imitate tribal dress and customs.

Instead, we take special care to present the people and natural history of Amazonia as they are without exaggeration. There is no need to dramatize the Amazon for it remains a truly extraordinary place. The true story of Amazonia remains very compelling and for most passengers, voyages on the M/Y TUCANO are a thrilling experience and far exceed their expectations. The remote places we visit, our frequent and intensive excursions, the training and quality of the staff, and the carefully conceived itinerary combine to make the experience an extraordinary and memorable one.



### More Time in the Wilderness

Our cruises spend much more time in wilderness rainforest than virtually all other cruises. One reason our cruises offer more cruising time is that there is good rainforest close to where the trip begins. In just a few hours from where we embark on the M/Y TUCANO in Manaus, Brasil we are able to explore rainforest that has a good collection of the signature wildlife of the Amazon. In contrast cruises departing from Iquitos can take up to two days of river travel to reach wilderness rain forest. Most of the cruises that begin in Iquitos travel to the *Pacaya Samiria National Reserve*, which is 114 miles from Iquitos. The river banks for most of that distance has quite a lot of settlement and the forest has been cut and regrown many times. Cruises to this region are simply unable to spend much time in wild forest because it is so far away from the point of departure.

### Small Group Size

While many Amazon tour vessels have groups sizes of 25 - 45 passengers, the MOTOR YACHT TUCANO accepts a group size up to the capacity of our 9 cabins. With single occupancy this means that our groups usually have only 15-18 travelers. This small group size offers a vastly different and better experience than larger groups. When we go into the forest we are able to stay focused on nature and the trips are much more productive. Additionally, on our daily excursions we divide into smaller groups, so that generally while exploring we are with 9 or fewer others in a group. Small groups are more attentive and quieter and this gives us a greater opportunity to observe shy wildlife. Small groups in the forest enable the travelers to have close contact with the guides which is a much richer experience.



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The small group advantage is also reflected in many of the logistical aspects of a trip which really enhance the experience. Our launches are smaller which means smaller and quieter engines. All those organizational events of a trip like baggage and meals are more simply completed. Getting on and off the launches is quieter, quicker and less regimented. All of our activities such as lectures, meals, and all of the group gatherings are more intimate and focused.

Another consequence of the smaller group is that the vessel can be more nimble. The MOTOR

YACHT TUCANO is comfortable and certainly elegant, but is at the same time small enough to be able to enter deep into small tributaries where larger vessels simply cannot go. In these small wilderness tributaries we often see some of the most lovely flora and fauna.

### More Time Exploring

The days of our Amazon cruises are quite full and we spend most of our time in forest areas. In contrast, on many Amazon cruises the vessels need to spend most of the first and last days actually reaching natural areas. Most of these cruises also include days visiting theme-developed tourist sites instead of actually examining the flora and fauna of the rainforest. These made for tourist features include visits to a “native shaman” or swimming with dolphins. One truth of Amazon travel is that the more time travelers spend in the forest, the better the experience.

Our Amazon cruise itinerary is devised to maximize our opportunity to observe wildlife and we often modify the itinerary to find the creatures. There is nothing routine or touristy about our voyages. We go where the creatures are. But many tour boats make the exact same trip week after week on a fixed and rigid itinerary. This makes the trip routine for the passengers *and* the crew. One of the great pleasures of travel is spontaneity and on the M/Y TUCANO we vary the itinerary so that the trips are interesting for the passengers and the guides.

### More Active Cruises

Many Amazon tour vessels offer passengers a small number of daily excursions off the vessel, often as few as two. On our trips we explore off the main vessel four and sometimes five times each and every day of the cruise. We scout in the Tucano’s launches, walk in the forest, and visit local settlers. We walk in the tropical forest every morning which is unusual among tour operations.

Our cruises are devoted to observing wildlife and understanding the rainforest environment so we take every opportunity to get off the boat and explore. Our program is more intensive and we utilize our time to best observe wildlife in the early morning, late afternoon and

some nights. While active, our trips are not necessarily strenuous. We divide into two small groups one that prefers a rigorous experience and another that would like to travel at a more leisurely pace. Travelers can choose to take some but not all of the excursions off the vessel so that they can themselves choose the level of activity they prefer.

### More Efficient Airline Access

Manaus, Brasil is the most easily accessible major city in the Amazon. There are a number of international flights directly to Manaus from the United States and from Central American airline hubs. Manaus is also very well served by several major airlines from other parts of Brasil. This enables travelers to spend more time on the cruise and fewer hotel nights in waiting for flight connections. Travelers to Manaus are usually able to arrive in Manaus without having to spend any nights in any other city in Brasil. In contrast, the majority of travelers to Iquitos, Peru must spend two nights in the City of Lima, one on arrival and one on departure. Also, because of the need to fly from Lima to Iquitos, the Amazon cruises departing from there usually embark in the evening which entails a lost day of travel. In analyzing an itinerary it is essential to study the embarkation and disembarkation times. Our Amazon cruises enable travelers to very well use their time in the Amazon exploring instead of waiting for flight connections.

### Carefully Planned Program and Skilled Guides

On the MOTOR YACHT TUCANO our entire staff, not just the guides, are devoted to examining and telling the full story of the Amazon. We see our task as not to just finding and seeing the signature fauna like primates or colorful birds, but telling the grand story of Amazon wildlife. We endeavor to inform the travelers of the variety of habitats that exist in Amazonia and place our wildlife observations in the framework of tropical ecology. Our objective is to help our travelers understand the dynamics of the environment as a whole, the scope and character of the diversity of flora and fauna, and also the culture and survival strategies of the people that live in the wilderness. Our voyages are vastly more authoritative, carefully conceived and executed than any other cruises operated in Amazonia.





On our voyages we go into the forest on foot every day. This gives travellers the chance to experience the most fascinating and diverse environment in the Amazon and with more time actually in the forest, our guests have a much greater chance to experience the strange and beautiful aspects of the forest that are hidden to most travelers.



Essential to the success of our program is our guides. They are highly trained naturalists who have worked with us for many years and in addition to exceptional forest skills, have a commitment to share the culture and nature of Amazonia with our travelers. Their knowledge of flora and fauna help us to observe and understand the secrets of the forest. They not only help us find wildlife, but they also share their knowledge of the astonishing habits of these fabulous creatures. Many cruise companies use free lance guides who are often better linguists than forest guides. But only with years of experience and working together as a team can an expedition cruise crew offer the kind of thoughtful and intensive exploration of Amazon nature that is found on the MOTOR YACHT TUCANO.

### Geography of Amazonas, Brasil

Cruises based in Manaus have a tremendous *geographical* advantage over those operated from Iquitos, Peru. This is because we voyage on both the *Rio Negro* and the actual *Amazon River*. These two rivers have a much greater variety of habitats than cruises that begin in Iquitos. On our cruises we able to explore four very distinct environments, each of them with a different collection of wildlife. These are the *Igapó* black water flooded forest, the *varzea* white water flooded forest, the *chevascal* a strange low grassland, and the *terra firme*, the high forest. Especially important is that on our cruises we are able every day to walk in the high forest of the *terra firme* where the greatest diversity of flora and fauna can be found.

In contrast, the cruises that begin in Iquitos are mostly confined to a single forest type, the *varzea* flooded forest. While this is a rich environment, for much of the year it is almost totally flooded. This means that travelers are not able to find many places to actually go into the forest and that those few places are very heavily visited.

### Smaller, Smarter, Better

In summary, cruises on the MOTOR YACHT TUCANO offer an experience that is more thoughtful, efficient, and authentic than cruises operated any where else in the Amazon. The small group size, the skilled and attentive staff, the years of experience in tour operations have resulted in an exceptional and superior experience for travelers. For the two decades that we have been operating in this remote rainforest, most travelers have regarded our cruise as the most extraordinary trip that they have ever taken.



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