



Hammock time restores guests between nature activities at Reserva Amazonica.

Peru's Jungle Fever

In the Amazon, you can hang with the wildlife. By **ABBIE KOZOLCHYK**

An entire region where walls are mere technicalities, the Peruvian Amazon isn't recommended for anyone who requires creature-free spaces or anything approximating silence. On the other hand, lizards are polite roommates, and macaws, monkeys, and the occasional downpour constitute the best known auditory antidote to car alarms and e-mail pings. Bonus: While documentary-headlining animals abound in the area, tourists don't, so the nature-to-visitor ratio remains high. Here are

five eco-lodges—each a variation on the thatch-roof, lantern-lit, hammock theme—committed to maintaining this balance.

Rainforest Expeditions' Tambopata Research Center (TRC)

TAMBOPATA Sitting mid-jungle at dawn while the squawking, rainbow-colored masses swoop in from every direction, you assume you're still dreaming. But once they descend onto the local clay lick for their daily fill of needed minerals, you realize no dream is this bizarre. No wonder Duke University conducts macaw research here, and nature-lovers willingly make the two-day boat trek from Puerto Maldonado. No one seems to mind the TRC's spartan rooms given the mind-blowing wildlife. Five days from \$745; 011-51-14-21-8347; www.perunature.com.

Inkaterra's Reserva Amazonica

TAMBOPATA With its riverside massage hut, siesta decks, and private plunge pools,

this lodge is by far the poshest—and the easiest to reach. After flying into Puerto Maldonado, you'll make a short trip on the Madre de Dios River before arriving at the 34-cabana encampment. But cushiness and easy access are hardly code for "mediocre nature." The surrounding 40-square-mile private ecological reserve is exquisite from above (don't miss the 1,135-foot-long canopy walk) and below (wander the miles of trails). Two days from \$340; 800-442-5042; www.inkaterra.com.

Amazonia Expeditions' Tahuayo Lodge

TAHUAYO RIVER The standard greeting here is "welcome home," and whoever issues it isn't kidding. Four hours by boat from Iquitos, the 15-cabin lodge is family-friendly—and, not surprisingly, family-run. Mama Bichina, in particular, makes sure you're eating well between activities. These include zip-lining through the monkey-filled treetops, swimming with pink dolphins, and dancing to the sounds

of the lodge's own band (several guides double as maestros of traditional Amazonian instruments). Eight days from \$1,295; 800-262-9669; www.perujungle.com.

Sabeti Lodge

TIMPIA, SELVA DE CUSCO Though still a bit rough around the edges, this new, ten double-room lodge (with shared bathrooms) is a worthy destination. A joint venture between the local Machiguenga community and an indigenous Amazonian development agency, Sabeti offers prime access to two feats of nature: the Pongo de Mainique, a waterfall-filled ravine where the Urubamba River bisects the Vilcabamba Mountains, and the endangered Meganto macaws for whom the surrounding Megantoni sanctuary is named. The journey involves an hour-long charter flight from Lima to a high-security, multinational gas project in the middle of the jungle, then a two-hour boat ride so serene, you'll soon forget the guys who just greeted you in fatigues. From \$60 per night; www.sabetilodge.com

Manu Wildlife Center

MANU One of the Amazon's most biologically diverse swaths of terrestrial life, Manu is also home to the rare lodge that offers creature comforts and creature sightings in equal measure. A 90-minute boat ride from Boca Manu, this 22-bungalow outpost affords you a hot shower in your own bathroom before you set off to track tapirs, monkeys, and various winged wonders. Birders swoon at the mere mention of the local razor-billed curassows. From \$1,085 for 4 days/3 nights; www.manu-wildlife-center.com.



A scarlet macaw flashes its color.