

THE SOURCE OF THE AMAZON

Iquitos, Nauta, Pacaya-Samiria



Archivo PromPeru

Marañón and Ucayali confluence form the Amazon river

Looking down from the Andes to the east, one gazes out over a vast sea of green that stretches out into the horizon with no visible end. It is the richest and most varied tropical jungle on earth, a jungle that the 16th century Conquistadors believed hid the treasures of El Dorado. But the region's greatest treasure is its marvellous biodiversity.

Iquitos (122 masl/400 feet) is Peru's most important city on the banks of the Amazon River, and much of the architectural pomp of the 19th century rubber baron years is still intact. Trips can be made from Iquitos to a number of typical jungle inns, with visits to native communities such as the Bora and the Yagua.

Only 20 km (12 miles) from Iquitos, on a paved road, stands the entry to the National Allpahuayo-Mishana Reserve, which holds the greatest number of species of trees per hectare (close to 300); the largest number of reptiles (140 species); and 28 endangered species such as the otter, the harpy eagle and the giant armadillo.

South of Iquitos, 105 km away by paved road, is the port of Nauta: Nearby, the confluence of two great rivers, the Marañón and the Ucayali, can clearly be seen and give birth to the majestic Amazon, the world's largest river, which runs for more than 6,788 km (1,928 miles) before reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

Opposite Nauta lies the National Pacaya-Samiria Reserve, with two million hectares (five million acres) of lakes, lagoons, swamps and wetlands. This is the territory of the manatee or sea cow, the pink dolphin, the charapa turtle, and the anaconda. It is the largest flood forest in Amazonia.



T. Incognita / PromPeru

White Cayman

KUELAP

city in the clouds



M. Tweedie / PromPeru

Main entrance to Kuélap

Located in northeastern Peru in the Amazonas region, 72 km (44 miles) from the city of Chachapoyas, the regional capital, Kuélap (3,000 meters / 9,840 feet), is an ancient stone fortress built strategically on a mountaintop looking out over the Utcubamba Valley.

Kuélap was discovered in 1843. It was built around the 9th century by the pre-Inca culture of Chachapoyas, in difficult terrain of the cloud forest. The citadel covers an area of around 6 hectares (around 14 acres) with some 420 circular buildings that include a watchtower and a castle. The defense walls are very impressive, reaching 25 meters (82 feet) in height, with three points of access shaped like funnels, so that only one person can enter at a time. Kuélap includes an area for camping that provides spectacular views.

The region's attractions include Leymebamba, where there is a community museum that exhibits valuable remains of the Chachapoyas culture. There is also a fascinating trail (15 hours by mule) to the mysterious Laguna de los Condores or Lake of the Condors (also called Lake of the Mummies), where a series of pre-Inca mausoleums stand high above the shore. Some 48km (5 hours by mule) northwest of Chachapoyas is the village of Shipata (2,760 meters / 9,052 feet) and the impressive vertical tombs of Karajia perched on the rockface facing the valley of Juscubamba. There are also remains of the ancient Chachapoyas and varied folk arts at Jalca Grande (2,890 meters / 9,479 feet).



W. Silveira / PromPeru

Kuélap Inírze

