

ACEER

FOUNDATION

Environmental Issues Across the Americas “Asuntos Medio-Ambientales de las Américas”

Penn State University

December 28th, 2008 – January 5th, 2009

**In Association With
The ACEER & West Chester University of PA**

****Itinerary for Peruvian students participating in the course****

Day 1

December 27

Saturday

USA to Lima

International students and professors arrive from USA to Lima. Arriving in Lima at 5:25 AM, December 28th.

Day 2

December 28

Thursday

Lima/Puerto Maldonado

Our overnight flight arrives in Lima at 5:25 AM. After clearing customs we will continue onto our flight to Puerto Maldonado.

****Peruvian Students join the group in Puerto Maldonado on December 28th at 11 AM at the airport or at Hotel Cabana Quinta.****

Puerto Maldonado is located in the heart of the southern Peruvian rainforest in the Madre de Dios Region. This region is located in the southeastern corner of Peru, near the border with Bolivia and Brazil. It is within the Vilcabamba-Amboró Forest Ecosystem, which is a part of the larger Tropical Andes Hotspot, referred to by many scientists as the “global epicenter of biodiversity”. Located at the confluence of the Tambopata and Madre de Dios Rivers is the capital of the region, Puerto Maldonado, with a population of approximately 60,000. The area has a history of resource extraction beginning with the rubber boom, logging and gold prospecting, and more recently oil exploration. Despite this activity, 98% of the region is comprised of primary rainforest. There are three national parks and reserves in the region that together comprise more than 3.5 million hectares of protected forest ecosystems. They are: The Manu Biosphere Reserve, Tambopata-Candamo Reserve, and the Bahuaja Sonene National Park. Although the region is considered one of the world’s most biologically diverse and unique ecoregions, it is also one of the most threatened.

After we check in at our hotel, we begin our experience in the region with a visit to the local market where everything from produce, harvested from the surrounding forest, to live chickens and other animals, to motorcycle parts, and plastics are sold. Of particular interest are the medicinal herb stands, where we will have the opportunity to talk with local *curanderos* and discuss the preparation and use of traditional remedies.

After our visit to the market we will learn more about regional timber production with a visit to a local saw mill. Later in the afternoon Licia Silva, the ACEER Foundation's education coordinator, will lead a presentation and discussion of the ACEER's education and outreach programs.

Breakfast – On own in Lima Airport
Lunch - Cabaña Quinta
Dinner – Restaurant in Puerto Maldonado
Overnight – Cabaña Quinta

Day 3 December 29

Sunday

Puerto Maldonado/Infierno/Posada Amazonas

After an early breakfast we will be met by our guides from Rainforest Expeditions and board a bus for the community of Infierno. Although homes are scattered over 10,000 hectares, the “hub” centralizes the shared infrastructure – school, store, medical post, and meeting room. We only visit with community authorization. This community is part of an innovative ecotourism partnership with our hosts Rainforest Expeditions. Here we will learn about the partnership and the community history and structure.

Less than fifteen minutes from the community's hub a family of community members has built a fish farm. They have invested in two ponds where they keep both Gamitana and Pacotana, two local species of fish. Around the ponds they have built facilities for soccer and volleyball, and a small restaurant. Their property is located next to a small creek where swimming is allowed. It has become an interesting alternative for locals at weekends. An interesting example of entrepreneurship among community members.

After lunch, a local farm leader will accompany us on a farm visit. In addition to focusing on the ecology, diversity and productivity of small rain forest farms, he will help us gain insight as to the challenges presented by markets, politics, demographics and infrastructure to the farming industry in the state of Madre de Dios. We will also learn of the dreams of farmers in the state.

After our visit of Infierno we will board a boat for a 45 minute trip up the Tambopata River into the community's primary forest reserve to their lodge Posada Amazonas.

Breakfast – On own
Lunch – At the Fish Farm
Dinner – Posada Amazonas

Overnight – Posada Amazonas

Day 4

December 30

Monday

Posada Amazonas/Tambopata Research Center

After breakfast, we will depart for Tres Chimbadas Oxbow Lake. Tres Chimbadas is thirty minutes by boat and forty five minutes hiking from Posada Amazonas. Here we will search for Giant River Otters. With the help of our guides we will collect data in support a long-term project conducted by the Frankfurt Zoological Society. If we see giant otters on our outing we will record behavioral activities and physical markings to be included with on-going data sets.

Next we will transfer to the boats for the six and half hour boat ride from Posada Amazonas, into the pristine heart of the reserve, to the Tambopata Research Center. Three and half hours into our boat journey, as we cross the confluence with the Malinowski River, we will leave the final traces of human habitation behind. Within the 700,000 hectare uninhabited nucleus of the reserve, sightings of capybara, caiman, geese, macaws and other large species will become more frequent.

After dinner we will have a presentation on the TRC Macaw Project. Here scientists will provide an in depth look at the biology of macaws, their feeding habits, the theories for clay lick use, their breeding and feeding ecology, population fluctuations and the threats to their conservation.

Breakfast – Posada Amazonas

Lunch – On boat

Dinner – Tambopata Research Center

Overnight – Tambopata Research Center

Day 5

December 31

Tuesday

Tambopata Research Center

Today we rise early for the short boat trip to the clay lick. On most clear mornings of the year dozens of large macaws and hundreds of parrots congregate on this large river bank in a raucous and colorful spectacle which inspired a National Geographic cover story. Discretely located fifty meters from the cliff, we will observe Green-winged, Scarlet and Blue-and-gold Macaws and several species of smaller parrots descend to ingest clay. Outings are at dawn when the lick is most active.

Throughout the day we will continue our introduction to tropical ecosystems with hikes along the floodplain trail and the overlook trail. The overlook trail is a three to five kilometer hike will lead us to overlooks commanding magnificent views of the Tambopata winding its way into the lowlands. Much of the forest on this trail, regenerating on old bamboo forest unique to this part of the Amazon Basin, is good for Howler Monkey and Dusky Titi Monkey. The floodplain trail is a five kilometer trail that covers the prototypical rainforest with immense trees criss-crossed by creeks and

ponds. Along the trail we will experience the figs, ceibas and shihuahuacos and we will look for Squirrel, Brown Capuchin, and Spider Monkeys as well as peccaries. TRC's lodge is located within this habitat.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner - Tambopata Research Center
Overnight – Tambopata Research Center

Day 6

January 1

Wednesday

Tambopata Research Center/Refugio Amazonas

If weather permits we will rise early for a return visit to the Macaw Clay lick.

After breakfast we will depart TRC for the three and a half hour boat ride that brings us to Refugio Amazonas. After we settle in we will embark on a thirty minute walk from Refugio Amazonas that leads to the 25 meter (82 feet) scaffolding canopy tower. A bannistered staircase running through the middle provides safe access to the platforms above. The tower has been built upon high ground, therefore increasing your horizon of the continuous primary forest extending out towards the Tambopata National Reserve. From here views of mixed species canopy flocks as well as toucans, macaws and raptors are likely.

Breakfast - Tambopata Research Center
Lunch – On Boat
Dinner – Refugio Amazonas
Overnight – Refugio Amazonas

Day 7

January 2

Friday

Refugio Amazonas/Los Amigos Biological Research Station

After breakfast we will board boats for our return to Puerto Maldonado. Here we will journey along the new Trans-Oceanic Highway linking the Brazilian Atlantic with the Peruvian Pacific to the port town of Laberinto then transfer again to boats for the approximately 5 hour trip up the Madre de Dios River. Along this part of the Madre de Dios it will be apparent that this is in a multiple-use zone different from the Tambopata. Scattered along the river banks are many gold mining operations. (If time permits, there will be a visit to the native community of Vuelta Grande.) Welcome and introduction to the center by the Station Director of the Amazon Conservation Association (ACA).

Breakfast – Refugio Amazonas
Lunch – On Boat
Overnight – Los Amigos

Day 8 - 9

January 3-4

Saturday-Sunday

Los Amigos Biological Station

Activities at the research station will include; rainforest ecology, field exercises, evening lectures, visits to the local community of Boca Amigos and to gold mining operations. Hikes and field exercises will build upon the introductory hikes that we had while along the Tambopata River. The histories and social structures found among the communities of Infierno, Vuelta Grande and Boca Amigos are very different and we will discuss these and how they influence resource use and environmental issues. Gold mining and the previously visited saw mill represent significant regional livelihoods and we will explore these industries. At this point in our journey group and/or individual projects should be formulated and we will devote considerable late afternoon and evening time to their progress.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner – Los Amigos
Overnight – Los Amigos

Day 10

January 5

Monday

Los Amigos/Lima

Early boat return to Laberinto and then bus to Puerto Maldonado.

Breakfast – Los Amigos

Lunch – On Own

Dinner – On Own

****Peruvian Students course and trip participation finish in Puerto Maldonado, after arrival from Los Amigos station****

International students will continue to travel to the USA or to Cusco-Machu Pichu.

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