

BIRDWATCHING & PHOTOGRAPHY TOURS IN SOUTH AMERICA

7-Day Budget Manu — Reserved Zone

Seven days from Cusco into the heart of Manu's Reserved Zone — two nights at Cocha Salvador, where Giant Otters still fish the oxbow.

Photo © Charlie Hamilton James

DURATION

7 days / 6 nights

DEPARTURE

Very early morning
from Cusco, returning

ELEVATION

~295–3,650 m

LODGING

San Pedro ·
Hummingbird · Cocha

FROM

\$1,690 per person
2 pax \$2,540 · 3+ pax \$1,690

The 7-Day Budget Manu tour goes where the short trips cannot: past the last villages on the Alto Madre de Dios, up the Manu River and into the Reserved Zone, the 400,000-hectare core of the park set aside for tourism and research alone. It is reached entirely by road and river, which is what keeps the cost far below a fly-in Amazon expedition, and it ends with two nights camped beside Cocha Salvador in forest that has never been cleared.

TARGET SPECIES

Giant River Otter
Andean Cock-of-the-Rock
Horned Screamer
Capped Heron
White-eyed Parakeet
Red-capped Cardinal
Capybara
Squirrel Monkey

Black Caiman
Hoatzin
Black Skimmer
Blue-headed Parrot
Chestnut-fronted Macaw
King Vulture
Woolly Monkey
Howler Monkey

DAY BY DAY

Day 1 — Cusco to the cloud forest

A very early departure from Cusco across the inter-Andean valleys, stopping at the pre-Inca chullpas of Ninamarca and the colonial town of Paucartambo with its site museum. At the Acjanaco pass, 3,650 m, you cross the park checkpoint into the Amazon basin, then descend for hours through elfin and cloud forest — orchids, bromeliads, ferns, lichens, Spectacled Bear country — with nature walks on the way to the Orquídeas de San Pedro lodge at 1,400 m.

Day 2 — Cock-of-the-rock lek to the Hummingbird Lodge

Out at first light for the Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek. After breakfast the road drops through dense forest to Pilcopata, with the option of an hour and a half of class I–II canoeing on the Koñeq and Alto Madre de Dios, and on to the port of Atalaya at 600 m. A motorboat then carries you downriver to the Hummingbird Lodge, with time in the afternoon for the trails around it.

Day 3 — Down the Alto Madre de Dios, up the Manu to Cocha Salvador

After breakfast you continue downstream, watching for skimmers, herons, kingfishers and swallows, and stop at the Limonal ranger station to sign the Reserved Zone visitor book. From there it is about four hours up the Manu River into the core of the park — macaws, herons, capybara, both caimans, river turtles and monkeys on the beaches, and the outside chance of a cat. You reach the Cocha Salvador camp for the first of two nights, with an afternoon walk in pristine forest.

Day 4 — A full day in the Reserved Zone

Howler monkeys usually do the waking. A pre-breakfast walk takes advantage of the cool hours, then a catamaran crossing of Cocha Salvador for the endangered Giant Otter, Black Caiman, Hoatzin and the lake's flora. There is the option of visiting the Matsigenka community house, and a trip to Cocha Otorongo, where a 15-metre tower opens up the primary forest canopy and the local otter family. A short night walk looks for frogs and insects.

Day 5 — Cocha Salvador to Dorado Lodge

An early walk around the camp and the lake, past enormous Ceibas, butterflies and squirrel, capuchin and woolly monkeys. After breakfast you board the boat and sail back down the Manu River, watching for peccaries, caimans, turtles and birds, reaching the Dorado Lodge in the afternoon to settle in, relax and take a short night walk.

Day 6 — Shintuya hot springs and Erika Lodge

Leaving Dorado after breakfast, you cross the Alto Madre de Dios to the Shintuya hot springs for a soak, then continue to the Erika reserve and its trails through the transition between high and low jungle. In the afternoon a catamaran on Machuwasi Lake brings Hoatzin, Horned Screamer, Red-capped Cardinal, Capped Heron, herons and cormorants, with monkeys and capybara on the bank; if there is time, a trail to the giant Ceiba, and an optional night walk.

Day 7 — Clay lick, then home to Cusco

A dawn boat to the clay lick on the Alto Madre de Dios, where Blue-headed Parrots, White-eyed Parakeets and possibly Chestnut-fronted Macaws come for minerals. After breakfast you run upriver against the current to Atalaya, reaching the port before noon, and drive back with a stop at the Mirador Pico de Hoz hummingbird garden at 750 m for hummingbirds, toucans, King Vultures, monkeys and perhaps a sloth. Arrival in Cusco in the afternoon.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

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- Ground and river transport, Cusco–Atalaya–Cusco
- Specialised bilingual guide
- 1 night at Orquídeas de San Pedro Lodge (cloud forest)
- 1 night at the Hummingbird Lodge
- 2 nights camped in the Reserved Zone (Cocha Salvador)
- 1 night at Dorado Lodge
- 1 night at Erika Lodge
- All meals in the itinerary — vegetarian, vegan and allergy options
- Mineral water throughout the tour
- Full canoeing and rafting equipment
- First-aid kit and luggage storage

NOT INCLUDED

- Breakfast on day 1
- Drinking water for day 1
- Dinner on the last day
- Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages
- Souvenirs
- Tips

Ready to book, or want it tailored?

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