



A guide to the:
Amazon Conservation Project in Peru



The Amazon Conservation Project in Peru

Focus: Birds, Amphibians & Mammals
Location: Peru

Start Date: Set Dates - Please Enquire
Arrival & Starting Point: Cusco

Spanning an impressive 17,163km², Manu National Park is to many, the very definition of conservation. With its rolling green valleys and mountainous backdrops dissected only by snake-like rivers, Manu's make-up is the perfect place for countless plants and animals to thrive - but it hasn't always been that way. Just over 30 years ago, the land here lay sparse, human activity had stripped much of the forest from the area (including the Amazon basin), and in its place stood grazing cattle, miners, and loggers. With the rainforest at risk and ecosystems shrinking, the UNESCO organisation stepped in to rescue this once natural land, recognising the area as a Bioserve in 1977 and later, a World Heritage Site.



After years of hard work, the Manu Biosphere has managed to thrive against all odds, with a myriad of fascinating and endemic species such as sloths, jaguars, and macaws returning home. With over 200 species of mammals, 1000 different types of birds, 200 species of reptiles and amphibians, 200 types of fish and an impressive 1200 species of butterflies, the fauna is so plentiful it is practically unrivalled across the entirety of the South American jungle. For this reason, it is no surprise that visitors from around the globe flock here to bask in the rich biodiversity and educate themselves on the conservation efforts that are held in such high esteem.

As a volunteer, you will assist the team at the Manu Learning Centre in carrying out their research on Peru's native animals by collecting data and carrying out ecological surveys, perhaps even making new discoveries along the way! Whilst embarking on your educational adventure in one of the most iconic jungles in the world, you'll have the opportunity to study exotic and symbolic animals, as well as support and empower the local communities by helping them to improve their livelihoods and living standards.

Join us in the wild, where deep in the Peruvian Amazon, you'll have the chance to discover a nature and culture like no other - and perhaps, you'll even discover a little about yourself along the way!



Amphibian & Reptile Monitoring

Amphibians and reptiles are excellent bio-indicator species, as they are extremely vulnerable to changes in their environment: their thin skin (used for gas exchange) makes them sensitive to chemical pollutants and changes in climate, such as temperature and humidity. This means that understanding the health and ecology of these animals over time offers a great insight into the conservation value of regenerated forest.

Volunteers therefore carry out transect surveys at night along a series of 100m trails through the forest in search of these animals. You may also take part in pitfall surveys, which consist of four 20 litre buckets dug into the ground and covered with light foliage to capture the animals for study at the centre. Here they are then identified, weighed, and measured before being returned to the habitat in which they were found. The team have made some fascinating discoveries whilst researching reptiles and amphibians, including a brand-new species of poison-dart frog, and perhaps you will too!!

Avian Monitoring

The field site is located in one of the best places for bird watching in the world, and as the composition and diversity of bird species can tell us a lot about the forest, such as its structure, age, health, and level of human impact, you will conduct early morning transects along the reserve to listen and look for birds.

The team are also conducting research specifically around the population of blue-headed macaws, as over recent years, there has been a decrease in the number of these birds using the nearby clay lick. Therefore, volunteers also visit the clay lick each day before dawn to record the number and activity of macaws (and parrots), as well as observing the impact tourists may be having on the area.



Mammal Monitoring

As well as monitoring the health and population of smaller animals such as birds, amphibians and reptiles, the project also aims to understand the importance of regenerating rainforest as a habitat for large mammals. So far more than 40 mammal species have been recorded at the field site through camera traps and tracking, including 13 individual jaguars. This is hugely significant as jaguars are regarded as an umbrella species and their presence is often a focus when making conservation decisions. As many of these mammal species are particularly elusive, the research can be quite ad-hoc, so you may be helping to set up seasonal camera traps or perhaps record mammal prints during early morning surveys or through incidental sightings.

Butterfly Identification

Like reptiles and amphibians, butterflies are also a significant indicator species, and are vital in pollinating the rainforest. Due to this, the team are working to create an inventory of the butterfly species at the field site and you will join your group in setting up butterfly nets baited with fermented bananas to attract these insects. You will then carefully retrieve and identify them, using the field guides created from previously found species.



Biogardens

In the nearby town of Salvación, many children suffer from malnutrition due to a lack of fresh vegetables in their diet. As a volunteer, you'll work with the local community, specifically helping local mothers to combat child malnutrition. The project set up an initiative called 'GROW' in the hopes of eradicating this issue, and to date, volunteers have helped build over 50 family biogardens and 6 institutional biogardens in which crops, and vegetables are produced. You will work alongside the local mothers to plant and retrieve the produce, which will provide both a healthy diet for families through nutritious, fresh food and an income to the members of the community from surplus crops.



Itinerary

The below itinerary is based on a stay of 4 weeks, as this is the recommended minimum duration to ensure you are able to experience all that the project has to offer. If staying for fewer than 4 weeks, the training period will be shorter, and you may not be able to get as involved in all of the conservation activities.

Day 1

After arriving at Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport, you'll be met by a member of the project team and transferred to a hostel in Cusco. You will receive a short briefing about the schedule for the next few days and will be able to spend the rest of the day acclimatising to the altitude and perhaps take some time to relax or explore the city.

Day 2

Today, you will meet the rest of your volunteer group for an induction and orientation. Then it's off to explore the ancient Inca capital, experiencing Andean culture and realising its role in shaping the Amazon's future. You can then use the afternoon to ensure that you have all the right equipment and supplies before heading off to the jungle the following day!

Day 3

You will leave Cusco bright and early to begin your journey into the Amazon. This is a spectacular route cutting through Andean mountains before finally reaching the Manu Biosphere Reserve. Along the way, you will learn about local ecosystems and may possibly spot the national bird of Peru! You'll then spend the night in the rustic Cloud Forest Lodge.

Day 4

Today marks your transfer to the project site, which is roughly a 3-hour journey through the foothills of the Andes to the Amazon lowlands. The final part of this journey includes a 30-minute walk through the rainforest to the boat dock, followed by a short boat ride. Upon arrival, you will settle into your accommodation before heading out into the jungle to explore.

Days 5-8

These days are your training days where you will learn about the aims of the project, as well as learning the necessary skills and knowledge which will allow you to constructively participate in conservation tasks throughout your stay. You can expect your training period to be packed full of learning opportunities through field-based learning, presentations and visits to local communities.

Day 9

This is considered your last day of training, during which you may take part in a workshop, a community project, or an element of conservation fieldwork. Be sure to rest up tonight, as you will need to be up early to take part in the next day's activities, armed and ready with your newly acquired knowledge!

Days 10-31

Having completed your training, you will now take part in a variety of different conservation activities. Typically, there is a morning and afternoon session each day, with Sundays allocated as rest days. To see a breakdown of a typical day during this period, please see the page below.

Day 32

Today you'll be leaving one of the most iconic jungles in the world, so make sure to take some time to memorise the sights and sounds of rainforest life! After breakfast, and bidding farewell to the Manu Learning Centre and the project team, you'll transfer back to Cusco to spend the night in a city hostel.

Day 33

This is your final day, and after checkout at midday, you can be transferred to the airport for your return flight home or commence any independent travel plans. Please note that the return airport transfer is not included but can be provided for a small additional fee.

Itinerary

After completing your training period, you will spend your time on the project taking part in a variety of different conservation activities. Below is an example of a typical day, however, it is subject to change depending on which activities you are taking part in on each day.

A Typical Day

5:30am

The sun rises early in the rainforest, so what better way to make the most of your morning than by visiting the clay lick? Here, you will monitor the beautiful blue headed macaws as they flock to enjoy the minerals dispensed by the clay. Afterwards, you will return to your accommodation for breakfast.

7:00am

After the colour and calls of the macaws have woken you up a bit, it's time to enjoy a typical Peruvian breakfast as fuel for the rest of the day.

7:30am

After breakfast, you may find yourself strapping on your walking boots to trek into the jungle to be surrounded by Amazonian butterflies, where you'll use baited nets to capture and release the different species and record what you find. Or possibly, you'll be checking camera traps to see if any jaguars have paid a visit to the centre in the night!

12:30pm

You'll sit down for lunch with your fellow volunteers after a busy morning out in the field!

1:00pm

After an early start and an action-packed morning, you've earned yourself a well-deserved break. You may choose this time to relax with your fellow volunteers or possibly take some time to explore your jungle surroundings. This respite will give you time to rest and prepare for the next activity!

3:00pm

It's time to get back up and out there! You may find yourself helping local mothers in the biogardens this afternoon, helping to plant and collect crops to combat malnutrition and generate extra income.

5:00pm

After your first afternoon activity, you may head back to the centre to take part in Spanglish lessons whilst helping to prepare dinner. This is a learning opportunity for both you and the staff!

6:30pm

Join your fellow volunteers for an evening meal where you'll be able to share stories of your day! The rest of the evening will be at your leisure, and you'll be able to relax with a cold beer or have an early night. On some days you may head out after dinner at around 7:15pm on a night transect in search of amphibians! On these nights, you'll finish late (around 10:30pm) with a hot chocolate before bed, and of course will have earned a lie-in the following day!

Accommodation

For your first two nights and your last night in Cusco, you will stay in a comfortable hostel in the city centre, sharing a room and en-suite bathroom with one other volunteer.

Your third night will be spent in a rustic lodge within the cloud forest, and finally, you will stay in a beautiful, airy pod at the Manu Learning Centre for the duration of your time thereafter. The pod offers a stunning view of the rainforest, so lay back and relax whilst listening to the sounds of the endemic wildlife! Rooms are on a twin or triple share basis, with bedding and linens (including mosquito nets) provided and changed once a week for you.

As the project aims to reduce its environmental impact, water is generated from a pump in the ground, and showers, internet connection, and electricity are all solar generated.



Food & Drink

During your time on the project, you will be provided with three meals per day. A typical meal could consist of rice and beans, eggs, vegetables, soups, and occasionally meat. Should you have any dietary requirements, please let us know well in advance of your project start date - the staff will be able to cater for you, but sufficient notice is kindly requested.



What's Included

- Transfer from the airport to Cusco upon arrival
- Transfers between Cusco and Manu National Park
- Three meals per day
- An English-speaking project coordinator
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Return transfer to the airport from Cusco on your final day
- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Travel insurance
- Soft or alcoholic drinks and extra snacks

Volunteer Reviews

Lorina

"Every day was different; you just don't know what will happen in the forest. I loved the butterfly surveys - at one point I had three colourful butterflies on my face! I'll never forget this project."



Thomas

"I'll never forget seeing a group of spider monkeys swinging around in the forest and playing together!"



Lily

"My favourite moment was when we finally arrived in the depths of the Amazon and jumped into a little speed boat. Seeing the jungle and its overwhelming beauty was unreal."





What Next?

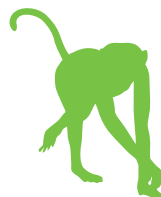
Becoming a volunteer on the Amazon Conservation Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Peru!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

#thegreatprojects



www.thegreatprojects.com

+44 (0)208 885 4987