

The Northern Peru Birding Route: Iquitos





IQUITOS

Iquitos is the capital of Loreto Region and the largest political region in Peru, covering nearly a third of the country. The city grew quickly in the XIX century due to the rubber boom, but later lost its dominance with this product and the economy diversified with timber, agriculture, fishing and other products. Tourism also became an important economic activity and today Iquitos is a key destiny for people looking for a jungle experience.



Iquitos is also the largest city in the world which cannot be accessed by road, meaning all tourists arrive by plane. It is possible to travel to Iquitos by boat from Yurimaguas, although this would be for the more adventurous traveler. Iquitos, and sometimes Yurimaguas, is also important in providing access to the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, Peru's largest protect area with 2,080,000 ha. Located between the Marañón and Ucayali rivers this reserve of varzea forest and lakes is a paradise for nature and bird lovers, with more than 500 bird species recorded.

Near Iquitos

Near Iquitos there are several sites good for birdwatching, which allow quick trips or full day visits:

The **Malecón** or boulevard one block from the Plaza de Armas, allows some easy birding looking over the river.

Birds: Blue-winged Teal, Snail Kite, American Golden-Plover, Wattled Jacana, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Tern, Large-billed Tern, Lesser Hornero, Parker's Spinetail, Little Ground-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, White-throated Kingbird & White-winged Swallow.



Three lakes near Iquitos of interest are: Lago Quistococha reserve (370 ha), 13.5 km south of Iquitos, Laguna Moronococha and Laguna Santo Tomás.

Birds: Short-tailed Hawk, Short-tailed Swift, White-bearded Hermit, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Swallow-winged Puffbird & Palm Tanager.

ACA Garzal Santa María de Fátima - boat from Iquitos to village of Santa María de Fátima, 40 min to 1.5 hr. From village it's a 40 minute walk to lake. Interesting for nesting colonies of birds.

Birds: Boat-billed Heron, Agami Heron, Black-banded Crake & Gray-breasted Crake.

Allpahuayo-Mishana National Reserve - 58,000 ha, entrance at 26.5 km on the Nauta road. Important for white-sand forest bird species.

Birds: Ancient Antwren, Allpahuayo Antbird, Zimmer's Antbird, Pompadour Cotinga, Orange-crowned Manakin, Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin, Mishana Tyrannulet, Yellow-throated Flycatcher, Zimmer's Tody-Tyrant & Iquitos Gnatcatcher.

Clearly the main reason for visiting Iquitos is to experience the rainforest of the Peruvian Amazon and its unique biological diversity. There are many hostels in the area, but one stands out for its location, service and opportunities to appreciate nature in its pristine state:



Muyuna Amazon Lodge

Muyuna Amazon Lodge is located south of Iquitos in the Tamshiyacu-Tahuayo Community Reserve. The journey takes 3 hours by speedboat to cover the 140 km or 84 miles upriver to the lodge. Compared with the much impacted forest north of Iquitos, the area of Muyuna is pristine habitat and little explored.

The lodge was designed and built by locals from the San Lucas de Yanayacu community, taking care to follow the traditional architecture of the region. As the water level of the Amazonas and its tributaries can vary by a few metres, the lodge is built on stilts. Rooms are airy and sealed with mosquito netting on windows and the roof. The large dining area provides space for socializing, with hammocks to take a quiet rest. Muyuna is a small lodge and rooms are distributed depending on the client (single, double, family and bunk-beds, etc.). Also each room has its own complete modern bathroom. All rooms have a porch with hammock and views of the forest or river, where river dolphins can be seen during breeding. From the porch, impressive sunsets paint the sky, while the deafening silence of the jungle will accompany you through the night.



Lighting is from solar panels and available 24 hours a day, although there are some restrictions. Due to the lodge's remoteness there is no cell phone coverage. The lodge is however in constant contact by radio with its office in Iquitos. In the evening batteries, tablets etc. can be recharged with a small generator.

Muyuna employs locals from the San Juan de Yanayacu village, as well as have strong ties with the community and always helping the people when something is needed. Muyuna and its activities follow environmental and socially responsible standards. The locals grew up having the jungle as their home, without electricity, internet or luxuries and the lodge aims to respect their way of life.



The lodge offers different birdwatching programs, both day and night. This allows the visitor to see the most rare and/or emblematic species of the Peruvian Amazon. The lodge has nature guides specialized in birds and tours visit a variety of habitats (flooded forest, forest, lakes etc.), meaning the tours are the most complete along the Amazon river. A much sought after bird is the Wattled Curassow (*Crax globulosa*), a rare and threatened species, although in Muyuna it is almost guaranteed you will see it in its natural habitat. With a 4 day tour it is possible to see around 380 bird species.

As well as its impressive avifauna, at Muyuna it is easy to see other fauna such as Speckled Caiman, Gray Dolphin, Pink River Dolphin, Piranha, Dusky Titi Monkey, Night Monkey, Wattled Curassow, Common Squirrel Monkey and Pygmy Marmoset.

Access: Muyuna has its own boats with 150 and 200 hp engines, meaning a fast journey, about 3 hours, to the lodge. Boats are fully equipped with lifejackets and first aid kits.



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Birds: Horned Screamer, Wattled Curassow, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Wattled Jacana, Hoatzin, Great Potoo, Long-tailed Potoo, Amazonian Motmot, Paradise Jacamar, Lemon-throated Barbet, Amazonian Antshrike, Saturnine Antshrike, Point-tailed Palmcreeper, Plum-throated Cotinga & Caqueta Seedeater.



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