

DESTINATION OF THE MONTH

PERU

Destination

Luxury in the Jungle



I still remember when I made my first visit to the jungle. It was about 20 years ago to Iquitos. After nearly 3 hours in a motorboat we arrived at the hostel. It was rustic, very rustic. There was no electricity. The refrigerator ran on kerosene. The water, from the river... the food was delicious, but very limited by what the environment near the hostel offered, and very simple. It was almost like camping, or barely a step towards something like comfort (or towards less discomfort?).

The experience was more than interesting and really different, but I'm not sure if today I would like to repeat it. I like the jungle, but I have also become accustomed to certain basic comforts: a good bed, clean, hot water, good food, good service... and that, in the jungle, is a real luxury!

A new proposal in the jungle of Tambopata in Madre de Dios has been developed based on Cuzco Amazonico. In recent years, and more specifically over the course of 2007, Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica- part of the growing chain of Inkaterra establishments- has gone from being a typical jungle hostel, rustic, simple (but attractive), with basic services, to being a luxury Lodge.

The cabins with which they began more than 30 years ago, built according to the customs of the indigenous locals, have been replaced by others that really have little reason to envy a five star hotel, without losing the typical aspect that the construction techniques of the Ese' Eja community give them.

Two of their five suites have their own private open air «poza», or pool, to cool down after a hot and exhausting day in the jungle. All of them have hot water as well as electric light in the bathrooms and a ceiling fan.

They also have a Spa, overlooking the river, which offers a Menu of Massages for total relaxation after an arduous hike, combining classic spa concepts with the natural and exotic ingredients of the Amazon.

The service has been adapted to the new proposal. It is more personalized and thorough, with warmth and kindness. The ratio of staff to guests today is 1.3 and they hope to achieve, within a short time, 1.8, which would help them to personalize their service even more, approaching excellence.

The cuisine evolved according to the new product. It is more sophisticated- without losing its simplicity and naturalness- and diverse.

Varied and excellently presented breakfast buffet, lunch menu with interesting offerings, such as Cocona salad with beans, fava beans, green peas, onions, avocado and sachacilantro or Spanish cool tomato soup, as starters; Grill catfish with garlic butter and seet lemon drops or Grilled chicken with sachacilantro and spearmint, among the second courses, and, for dessert, Layered "dulce de leche" sponge cake with orange and caramelized coconut or Creamed sponge cake with Brazil nut praline; at night, a dinner buffet which will soon also be by menu. An interesting selection of wines from Argentina, Chile and Spain complement the offerings. In the evenings, the Happy Hour doesn't just offer the traditional 2x1, but also, on the house, shares the wealth of the first pisco sour that a guest orders.

An «Excursion Menu», which has been improving over time, is included in the services offered. There are 12 alternatives to choose from, such as, for example, a visit to the Trails System,

The River by Night, a visit to Lake Sandoval, Canopy and Aguajales, or palm swaps, among others. Two new alternatives, not included in the price, are a full day of bird watching and a full day to the Valencia laguna to fish for piranhas.

The adventure begins upon arrival at the airport in Puerto Maldonado, where Inkatera staff await the guests to welcome them and take them in one bus to the comfortable office/reception of the company to check in, and receive a wet towel to cool down and a welcome drink of juice.

A few minutes away is the port, from which a motorboat takes the visitors to the Lodge, at a distance of 45 minutes down river.

Reserva Amazonica staff, with trays of small towels and juice, welcome the guests, who, after lunch, leave for the first of the excursions: a walk along the system of trails around the hostel that serves as an introduction and first approximation of the excursions to come in the following days.

Before they depart, the guides (or «interpreters», as they are called in the Lodge) make a presentation in the EcoCenter about the excursion alternatives to choose from, as well as a brief description of the characteristics of each one so that the «explorer» can decide which one(s) interest him the most.

The interesting part of this concept is that it is a «living product». They are constantly making improvements and modifications in their constructions, as well as developing new excursions in order to offer more and more alternatives to the guests, in this way satisfying different interests. They are also systematically updating their cuisine and training their staff so that their service continues to improve.

Their growth projections in the short and medium terms include the construction of four new cabins and a pool.