

VACATION AGENT

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The Changing Face of Luxury

How to take advantage of emerging trends

The Aria Amazon plies the waterways of Peru's remote Pacaya-Samiria Reserve. Photo courtesy of Aqua Expeditions



IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE!

AQUA EXPEDITIONS' LUXURY ARIA AMAZON PROVIDES AN OPTIMUM WAY IN WHICH TO EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA'S LONGEST RIVER

By Carla Hunt

One of the biggest differences between ocean cruises and river cruises is this: the former takes you *to* countries while the latter takes you *through* countries. When it comes to Peru, the waterway is the Amazon and the vessel is the elegant 16-suite Aria Amazon of Aqua Expeditions, the first adventure travel company to introduce luxury cruises on the Peruvian sector of the Amazon River.

Accommodations: The Aria Amazon's 16 Design Suites measure 250 square feet and are stylishly appointed in neutral tones, and feature floor-to-ceiling windows. Each air-conditioned suite comes with a comfy California King-size bed that can be converted to twins, as well as a sitting area with sofa and a chair. The stone-hewn bathroom has a shower big enough for two. Four suites can interconnect for families.

What's for Dinner? The Aria Amazon's restaurant is overseen by Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, the chef and owner of Lima's award-winning Malabar. Its menus take full advantage of the Amazon's huge pantry of fresh fruit and edible flowers, wild oregano and coriander, yucca and pumpkin. Guests are treated to deliciously creative dishes, which fuses rainforest ingredients with haute cuisine. Some examples include hearts of palm soup



An Aria Amazon suite. Photo courtesy of Aqua Expeditions



The outdoor lounge aboard the Aria Amazon. Photo courtesy of Aqua Expeditions

JUST THE FACTS

- ✓ **Cruise line:** Aqua Expeditions
- ✓ **Vessel:** Aria Amazon
- ✓ **Size:** 32 guests
- ✓ **Entered Service:** 2011 and totally upgraded in 2015
- ✓ **Crew:** 27
- ✓ **Itineraries:** Three-, four- and seven-night itineraries sail from Iquitos, Peru, year round.

✓ **Airline access:** Clients join their cruises in Iquitos, a 1.5-hour flight from Lima. Aqua Expeditions airport transfers in Iquitos to and from the boat are included only for passengers arriving and departing on LATAM. The carrier offers convenient connectivity for both passengers and baggage with its nonstop services to Lima from the U.S.

✓ **Price:** \$3,645 for three nights, \$4,860 for four nights and \$8,505 for seven nights, per person double

✓ **Contact:** www.aquaexpeditions.com

continued from page 30

and yucca empanadas, Amazon tomatoes and river snails, grilled tiger catfish wrapped in bijao leaf, and camu camu crème brûlée.

Excursions: Each day, guests bearing cameras, binoculars, sunhats and bird-lists cast off in eight-person skiffs manned by expert naturalist guides and boatmen, each with an uncanny knowledge of just where the wild things are.

Excursions depart early mornings and late afternoons when humidity is lowest and animal sightings highest.

Depending on location, sightings may include pink dolphins breaching, anacondas, brilliant blue morpho butterflies, and three-toed sloth, capuchin monkeys, and blue and yellow macaws. Voyages also include kayaking, swimming, visits to villages and local schools, fishing for red-bellied piranhas and spotting for caimans at night.

Onboard Entertainment:

Daily lectures give a sense of place to the flora, fauna, culture and sustainable resource management



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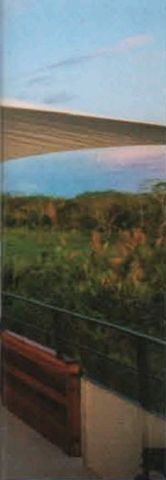


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A guide provides guests with an up-close-and-personal anaconda encounter. Photo by Carla Hunt



The Aria Amazon's indoor lounge. Photo by Carla Hunt

projects in Amazonia. Guests may also participate in cooking demonstrations and learn how to fold towels and napkins into animals and flowers. Additionally, they can make use of the small exercise room, enjoy a massage in the spa, read in the handsome bar/indoor lounge or laze on the sundeck with a cool pisco sour in hand.

What's Included: Rates include suite accommodations, all meals and soft drinks, selected premium and sparkling wines and craft beers with meals, excursions with naturalist guides, National Reserve entrance fees, onboard lectures, and airport

transfers for passengers arriving and departing on recommended flights.

Who Goes on This Vessel? The voyages cater to "discerning adventure travelers seeking to explore remote destinations aboard luxury vessels," according to Aqua Expeditions CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro. He said that 40 percent of guests are from the U.S. and range in age from 50 to 69.

"The people I've booked on the Aria are almost always seniors, well traveled, often well heeled, and have often cruised before but never on an expedition vessel," said Peggy Newfield, founder of Latin American

Escapes, which operates custom and group itineraries to Latin America.

Key Selling Points: You can tell your clients that the Aria Amazon's low-key luxury ambiance, along with its impeccable service, gourmet cuisine and expert guides, provide an optimal way in which to experience the destination. The remote Pacaya Samaria Reserve is the Amazon's most pristine cruising ground, offering one-of-a-kind wildlife viewing opportunities.

Insider Booking Tip: For top client satisfaction, recommend at least a four-night cruise.



*"The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on **one's own country** as a foreign land."*

- G. K. Chesterton

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