

Cruise an Amazon UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site

The Central Amazon Conservation Complex

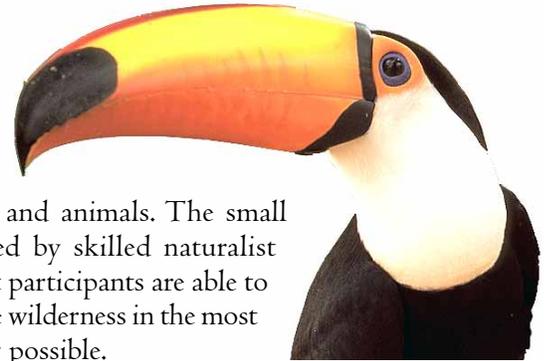
Voyage to the Heart of the Amazon - Motor Yacht Tucano

In August of 2007 environmental authorities of Brazil created the world's largest rainforest reserve the *Central Amazon Conservation Complex*. This reserve is in the very middle of the Amazon and covers much of the southern watershed of one of the most pristine and undeveloped rivers in all of the Amazon, The Rio Negro. Currently there is only one cruise that ventures deep into this reserve: the expedition cruise *Voyage to the Heart of the Amazon*. Conducted on the Motor Yacht Tucano, this cruise explores far into pristine rainforest and spectacular wilderness.

This vast reserve, also known as the *Corredor Ecológico Central da Amazônia* is recognized as a *UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site*, the only one accessible by small cruise boat in the entire Amazon. This reserve encompasses several whole river systems and tens of thousands of square miles of uninhabited wilderness. Administered by the *Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of Bio-Diversity* (ICBBIOS), the reserve is an area large enough to preserve biological diversity of this still remote and undeveloped part of the Amazon. This region is so remote that it is generally off the flight path of planes. It is still inhabited with the creatures that have made the Amazon the object of myth and legend.

Access to the reserve is very strictly controlled, though some educational expeditions to the area are permitted. The cruise on the Motor Yacht Tucano, *Voyage to the Heart of the Amazon*, has permission to explore this region. Over eight days and seven nights the Motor Yacht Tucano navigates narrow wilderness channels and explores areas that are mostly uninhabited by humans. All of the animals for which the Amazon is famous still thrive in this area. On this voyage guests explore the rainforest

on foot and in the ship's launches to observe exotic plants and animals. The small groups are led by skilled naturalist guides so that participants are able to experience the wilderness in the most authentic way possible.



The Rio Negro and the Central Amazon Biological Corridor

The part of the Amazon Biological Corridor which is within the lower Rio Negro region is called the *Anavilhanas Ecological Reserve* and is monitored by the *Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of Bio-Diversity* (ICBBIOS). This area contains one of the largest archipelagos in the world with approximately 400 islands threaded by innumerable small channels and a network of small passages. The Anavilhanas Archipelago is a natural landmark which is being preserved not only for scientific purposes but also for its rare scenic beauty.

Within the reserve there is a great variety of vegetation types that include flooded forest (igapó), high forest (terre firme), sandy soil shrub land (chevascal) and flooded shrub land. These different habitat types, combined with the very dynamic seasonal changes in water depth, have created a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna and also a high degree of species endemism. The scientific term "endemism" means that some creatures have evolved to live specifically in this region and cannot be found anywhere else on earth.



UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/998>

The Central Amazon Conservation Complex
The Central Amazon Conservation Complex makes up the largest protected area in the Amazon Basin (over 6 million hectares) and is one of the planet's richest regions in terms of biodiversity. It also includes an important sample of varzea ecosystems, igapó forests, lakes and channels which take the form of a constantly evolving aquatic mosaic that is home to the largest array of electric fish in the world. The site protects key threatened species, including giant arapaima fish, the Amazonian manatee, the black caiman and two species of river dolphin.

This reserve protects a number of species under threat of extinction. Among these are the Amazon Manatee, the Jaguar, the world's largest freshwater fish, the Pirarucu, and several endemic species of birds including the Klage's Antwren. Other creatures commonly found in the area but which are becoming rare elsewhere are Pink River Dolphins, Grey River Dolphins, River Otter and also Giant River Otter, Macaw Parrots and also the Amazon's crocodiles, Caimen.

The reserve was created with the objective of preserving the flora and fauna of region but also conducting scientific research. There are no extractive purposes of any kind permitted. Some specific activities that are not be permitted are hunting, fishing, extraction of wood or sand, starting of fires, carrying of arms, or possessing tools for wood extraction. No activities of any kind that threaten flora or fauna are permitted. The management plan for this region, created in 1999, permits visitation for educational purposes only. The only activities permitted must have as their objective the protection of biological diversity. Scientific research will be permitted only with the authorization of the environmental authority of Brasil, IBAMA.

Translated and adapted from: "Normas, Diretrizes e Procedimentos para Ingresso no Programa de Visitação Educativa", Estação Ecológica de Anavilhanas, IBAMA, Manaus, Brasil (2007)

