



FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

AMAZON: STUDY ABROAD TRIP PREPARATION & INFORMATION 2008

The study abroad component of the FIU Honors College Amazon program is being conducted with the assistance and cooperation of Project Amazonas, Inc., a non-profit US-Peruvian organization that maintains field sites in the Peruvian Amazon for use by courses, individual researchers and ecotourists, and by Margarita Tours which is arranging logistics, supplies and doing much of the coordination for the study abroad program. You can find out more about Project Amazonas at www.projectamazonas.com, and about Margarita Tours at www.amazon-ecotours.com

HELPFUL TRIP INFORMATION

Travel Documents and Legal Considerations:

Entering Peru is simple and without any difficulties. Citizens of the Americas (except Cuba), Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union are required only to have a valid passport. Citizens of other countries should inquire about requirements. Firearms and ammunition are forbidden for import, or to carry or convey to another person. Drug offenses are severely punished in Peru and luggage is searched and sniffed by drug dogs upon arrival and departure. US citizens can download the necessary forms for applying for, or for renewing a passport, from the National Passport Information System over the internet at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Environmental Regulations and Wildlife Laws:

Most Peruvian wildlife is protected by law, and is not legal to purchase or sell. Peruvian and international regulations and laws also prohibit the international transportation of items made in whole or in part from protected wildlife. Likewise, it is illegal to transport live animals or plants without the necessary corresponding permits – such permits can be difficult and expensive to obtain. Transport of animals, plants, or animal parts without the necessary permits may subject you to travel delays, fines, or criminal prosecution. It is your responsibility to be aware of relevant laws and regulations, and to abide by Peruvian and international laws for the protection of flora and fauna. Leave the Amazon's flora and fauna where it belongs!

Communications:

Once in Iquitos, you can easily phone or e-mail internationally. Cybercafés are everywhere, computer time is less than \$1 per hour, and connection and download times are reasonable – internet phone connection is available in many cybercafés and is the cheapest way of phoning internationally. To phone the US or Europe by regular phone, purchase a phone card in Iquitos – costs are very reasonable. Phone cards and calling cards from outside of Peru do not seem to work well. Using coins in payphones is expensive and it is better to use calling cards. To dial the US from Peru, simply dial 001, then the area code and 7-digit number. To call Iquitos from the USA, first dial 011-51-65, then the six-digit (land-line) or 7-digit (cell) local phone number. The “51” is the Peru country code, “65” is the city code for Iquitos. There is limited phone service in Amazon areas outside of Iquitos, and no email access! If you bring a cell phone, be sure you have a Peru “chip” in it that enables you to call the US from Peru. There is NO cell phone service at the Madre Selva Biological Station, and no email capability either. We do have a satellite phone for emergency use only, and for checking in with Iquitos on a regular basis. This phone will not be available for general student use.

Electricity, Outlets, & Battery and Camera Charging:

Electrical current in Peru is 220V. On board our riverboat, both 110V (US & Canada standard current) and 220V current is available for recharging batteries and cameras. Outlets are clearly marked with the current they provide – be sure to double check before plugging in any items. At the Madre Selva Biological Station, both 110V and 220V outlets are available in some of the buildings. If you want to recharge batteries/cameras in Iquitos, you may need to bring a 110/220 voltage adaptor, these are available at low cost from most hardware stores. Most camera and battery charge units already have built in adaptors – check on the back, and if it says 100V-240V, then you can plug it in to any outlet without worrying about the voltage. Most electrical outlets in Peru accept either two flat, or two round prongs. Three-prong outlets are absent or rare. If you have a three-prong plug, you may wish to bring a plug adaptor with you.

Health Requirements:

No vaccinations or preventative treatments are required to legally enter Peru. For the purposes of the study abroad course, however, we require that you are up to date on tetanus, and that you have received hepatitis A and yellow fever inoculations. Prophylaxis for malaria is also a requirement. A doctors clearance will be required for each student who participated in the study abroad program (see course syllabus for deadline date). We carry basic safety and emergency equipment, and are equipped to provide emergency first-aid in case of illness and injury. Specialized medical attention may be difficult to secure, however, and it will not be available on the remote rivers where we travel. We do have emergency evacuation plans. Be sure to bring sufficient amounts of any prescription medications, and other basic first-aid materials (anti-histamine cream, antacid, anti-diarrheals, nausea medication (if you are prone to air- or sea-sickness), antibiotic topical cream, sun-screen, etc.).

The tropical sun is intense and it is very easy to burn or become dehydrated. Appropriate clothing and hats and 15 (or higher) SPF sunblock are a necessity. Take a water bottle with you at all times (and drink from it!).

A wealth of web-based health information about travel to tropical countries is available. Good sites to start with (which also have many links to other sites) are the **Travel Health Information Service** <http://www.travelhealth.com>, a well constructed and interesting site, as well as the **CDC** site <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> and the **Medical College of Wisconsin International Travelers Clinic** <http://www.intmed.mcw.edu/travel.html>.

Climate:

The Iquitos area, less than 3 ½ degrees south of the Equator, is characterized by strong tropical sun and a warm humid climate. The dominant vegetation is rain forest. Temperature varies from the mid- to high 80's during the day, night-time temperatures can drop some 10 degrees or even more in the summer (dry season) months of July-September. Rain normally occurs during the afternoon or night, and humidity levels are high. The 'dry' season corresponds to the northern summer, and is the coolest time of year, with occasional cold fronts in July-August (temperatures in the 60's F). The climate in Lima can be humid and cold, and it is advisable to bring a sweater or light jacket for use in Lima or on flights. This may also come in handy if you are in the Amazon during a cold front. During the dry season, several days may pass without rain, but normally there will be some rain several times during a week. The 'rainy' season corresponds to the northern winter. During the rainy season, temperatures are higher, the nights warmer, and rain can be expected on a daily basis, though all-day rains are infrequent.

What to Bring: A Generalized Packing List

- Personal toiletry articles, shampoo, disposable razors, etc.
- Prescription medicines – sufficient to last the trip plus a few days.
- Malaria prophylaxis – for this to be effective, you will need to begin taking the treatment prior to your trip, and continue treatment for a short period following your trip, consult your physician. Avoid Lariam – this malaria prophylaxis produces negative side effects in many people. Malarone or Doxycycline are recommended. Doxycycline is cheaply available over the counter in Iquitos.
- Other medications such as Tylenol/Aspirin or similar, antihistamine lotion (for insect bites), antibiotic ointment (Neosporin or similar), Pepto-Bismol or other similar medication for upset stomach, diarrhea, or nausea (in case of motion sickness on moving boats). High SPF sunscreen (at least 15 SPF).

- Insect repellent (Muskol, Jungle Juice, etc. - high DEET content or repellent with Picaridin). Citronella and most other 'natural' insect repellents are largely ineffective. Sulfur powder is effective against chiggers – these may be encountered around villages, but are not present at the biological field stations. Be very careful not to apply DEET around cameras, tents, binoculars, eyeglasses, etc. – it melts many plastics and can seriously damage cameras and other expensive items. Many people do not use any repellent at all. Spraying clothing with Permanone (which bonds to the clothing and remains through many washes) is an excellent alternative.
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs (NOTE: D and AA sizes are the only batteries commonly available in Peru. Super efficient LED flashlights are excellent for general use - one set of batteries can last up to 400 hours in some models, and they have no bulbs to break and replace.
- Tennis shoes or other canvas-topped shoes which dry quickly, with rubber soles. These should be broken in already; you don't want to get blisters on your Amazon trip! These are for wearing in town, on board boat, or on the plane home. An old pair that you don't plan on taking home can be useful for wading in water (for fishermen), or for slogging through mud on forest trails.
- Hiking boots, jungle boots, or gum-rubber boots. Again, be sure these are well broken in! Be aware that if you are hiking on jungle trails, visiting villages, and having a real Amazon experience, your footwear will get wet and muddy. Gum-rubber boots (farmer boots, wellies, etc.), are popular with experienced jungle travelers, they are cheap (\$5-\$6/pair in Iquitos), easy to put on and take off (no muddy laces), dry quickly, easy to clean, and provide excellent protection against snakes, insects and thorns, to say nothing of mud. They also have excellent tread. Whatever you select, be sure that your footwear is comfortable and broken in.
- Binoculars. Invest in a good pair of lightweight binoculars that are water resistant, if not waterproof. Your experience will be enhanced if you have the ability to examine birds, treetop flowers, dolphins, monkeys, and miscellaneous happenings along the route up close! Besides, you are traveling to the Amazon to see nature, aren't you? Why cheat yourself!
- Photographic equipment and film, etc. Once again, don't stiff yourself. You will kick yourself if you don't have a good quality camera (that you know how to use...). Don't forget extra batteries! A bag of silica gel to dry out damp equipment may be a good idea. See 'specialized equipment' below for additional suggestions.
- Hat with wide brim or bill (essential for the tropical sun, useful also for rain).
- Fannypack or small backpack, weather proof.
- A **battery operated portable fan** can make sleeping in a tent or mosquito net much more comfortable. Foldable models are readily available at sporting goods stores, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, etc.
- Light poncho or rain jacket (essential for small boats).
- Lightweight shorts and pants (avoid jeans which take a long time to dry and become heavy when wet).
- Lightweight shirts, both long/short sleeves – t-shirts are fine.
- Swimwear – swimming in the Amazon and its tributaries is very refreshing, and piranhas are NOT an issue!
- Underwear (loose is better) and socks – cotton are best for keeping you dry and comfortable. Wool socks are great for padding your feet if you wear gum-rubber boots.
- Lightweight jacket or windbreaker – in the dry season (northern summer), it can feel quite cool at night.
- Polarized sunglasses – great for river travel, the glare off the surface of the water can be intense.
- Trade items: popular items include D-cell batteries (in their original packaging – proves that they are 'fresh'), flashlights, T-shirts (smaller sizes!), children's and women's clothing, women's makeup, sheets, towels, ceramic busts of Elvis (OK, that's just a joke, but you never know!), knives, scissors, toys, fish hooks and fishing line, bottles of aspirin, baseball caps, etc. Use your imagination – if you bring clothing, remember that most Peruvians in the Amazon are smaller than the average 'gringo' – small sizes are better!
- Books in Spanish and various school supplies make a great donation to the poorly equipped schools of some of the villages that we will visit and work with.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

Camera and Photography Equipment:

The Amazon is a photographer's paradise. If you still shoot film, bring a variety of film speeds for the jungle environment. Lighting conditions within the forest itself (where 400 speed film is best, unless you are using a tripod and/or flash) are very different from those on the open rivers (where 64 or 100 speed film is fine). Video cameras can get excellent footage even in low light situations. Carry re-sealable plastic bags on excursions to protect equipment from

rain and moisture. Packs of silica gel are suggested for drying camera gear overnight (be sure to have an airtight container in which to put camera equipment and silica gel).

If you are shooting film, bring plenty - it is expensive in Iquitos! Machines for screening checked luggage at airports can severely damage film - put all your film in your hand luggage. Regular speed film (64 to 400 ASA) is not supposed to be affected by the machines used to check hand luggage, but ask to have film checked by hand. Having film in a clear zip-lock bag and out of the individual canisters will speed up the inspection process.

Nighttime is one of the best times for photography in the Amazon, particularly if you are interested in insects and other invertebrates, frogs, reptiles, and the like. Many animals are most active and most easily approached at night. Of course, a flash is essential for night photography! A tripod is recommended for natural light photos of plants, insects, other animals (that sit still), and scenery (particularly within the forest itself). Serious photographers will want a variety of lenses.

Fishing Equipment:

If you enjoy fishing, bring a fishing rod that can be broken-down and transported easily – one can be packed inside a PVC tube for airline handling. Sport fishermen may want to bring an assortment of lures, weights, bobbers, fishing line, etc. Simple hooks can be purchased in Iquitos. We will have a selection of dipnets, small seines, and large 40' seine for fish and aquatic ecosystems projects.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Persons with dietary or medical needs (vegetarian diet, diabetes, low-sodium diet, hypersensitivity, etc.), or with physical disabilities should notify the course faculty well ahead of time so that all possible arrangements can be made to accommodate your needs. We may not be able to make last-minute arrangements once you are in Peru. *Leave expensive and non-essential items (jewelry, nice watches, etc.) at home. Take a few minutes to contemplate what you really need.*

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EMERGENCY CONTACT & AIRPORT INFORMATION

The best laid plans of men and mice sometimes go astray! If there is an emergency, a flight seriously delayed or cancelled, or you miss a flight for ANY reason, contact us at one of the numbers below, so that we will know where you are, and how best to help you! We DO know when the Lima-Iquitos flights are delayed and when they are scheduled to arrive, so there is no need to contact us in the event of a delayed flight unless it is seriously delayed and you are making alternate arrangements on another flight.

Contacting the FIU Honors College, Margarita Tours, and the Course Professors in the USA:

This will be fleshed out as the departure date approaches

Margarita Tours: If you are calling from US, dial **1-786-232-2674** (Eastern Standard Time) or **1-619-562-2422** (9 AM to 5 PM, Pacific Standard Time). If calling from outside of the US, first dial 001 – the US country code, then the area code and 7-digit number. The ‘786’ number for Margarita Tours will not be available from 25 June through 27 July 2008 as the respondent will be in Peru preparing for, or coordinating course logistics at that time.

Contacting Margarita Tours and the Course Professors in Peru:

Iquitos: To contact Professor Graham in Iquitos, dial **011-51-65-967-3809** (Peru cell phone exactly as dialed from the US or from anywhere outside of Peru) or send email to mionectes@aol.com. An additional contact in Iquitos is Guillermo Guerra (transfer agent) who can be reached at **011-51-65-967-0516** or by email at gaguerra2003@yahoo.es. While the course is at the Madre Selva Biological Station (from 2-23 July 2008), contact Guillermo Guerra. We have a satellite phone for emergency use and also to check in with Iquitos on a daily basis so he will be able to convey any messages in either English or Spanish.

The international country code for the USA is “001”, the international country code for Peru is “011-51 (international dialing code and then Peru country code)”.

In the event that you are unable to contact us in person, please leave a message telling us the problem and where we can get in contact with you. We will respond as soon as possible.

Contacting Hotels in Peru: The desk personnel at the hotels noted below speak English.

Hospedaje La Pascana (Iquitos): This is the hostel that we will be using in Iquitos for the nights of 30 June and 1 July, and also 23-26 July (and the following morning). To phone the hotel, dial 011-51-65-23-3466. Staff speak Spanish and English both. To email, the address is: pascana@tsi.com.pe. Staff are reliable and will pass on any messages as soon as possible.

Other Information:

Photocopy your passport prior to departure from home, and keep a copy at home and bring another copy kept apart from your passport. Double-check to see that your passport is current and not about to expire. Also, **carefully check** the information on your flight ticket itself to ensure that the dates and times are what you wanted! **This is very important!!** The airline agents at the counter will be going by what your ticket actually says, not the itinerary that your travel agent printed out for you, and which could contain an error.

Navigating Airports

Common sense and taking the time to look around you will be your best tool. When packing, remember that your bags will all undergo security checks, so you may need to open them for inspection – don't have them so tied/locked/taped/bundled up that it will be difficult to do so. Likewise, when you go through airport security with your carry-on luggage, remember that you will need to remove all metal objects from your person – loose coins, belt buckles, watches, etc., and may also be requested to remove your shoes (many have metal in the heels). If in doubt about what to do, just ask, be polite and you'll have no problems.

Lima Airport

This is your entry point into Peru. On your flight down, you will be given immigration and customs declaration cards to fill out – be sure to have a pen with you so that you can do this easily on the flight. The immigration card is straightforward and simple – just provide the requested information which will include your passport # and flight information. Mark that you are coming in as a tourist, and for the address in Peru, just put "Iquitos". Be sure to fill out the bottom (detachable) portion of the card as well – this will be returned to you, and should be kept with your passport – you will need to give that detachable portion to the immigration officer when you depart Peru.

The customs declaration form should be likewise filled out. You will check "no" for most or all of the boxes provided. There is no need to give an itemized list of the items that you have with you – just put down "personal items" and leave it at that, unless you are bringing things that you are planning on selling in Peru and whose individual item value is greater than \$100. This probably does NOT apply to you, however! You are a tourist bringing in regular tourist stuff, and will be taking most or all of it out with you again, so you will have no problems.

Clearing Immigration

Depending on your time of arrival, there may be long lines at immigration. Be patient. Just get in a line, and when you get to the immigration officer, give him/her your passport and the filled out immigration and customs forms. The officer will scan your passport, check your forms for completeness and stamp your passport with an entry visa for 60 or 90 days, depending on the mood they are in. There is no fee. They may ask how long you will be in Peru, but apart from that, there should be no questions.

Getting Luggage & Clearing Customs

Once through immigration, you proceed to baggage claim – there are several belts – check the screens to see which belt has luggage from your flight. Free carts are available for use. Once you find your luggage, proceed to the customs checkpoint – you will need your customs declaration in hand, and also need to have your baggage claim tickets ready as they will be checked to make sure that you actually have your own bags. When you get to the customs checkpoint, you'll be asked for your declaration card, and asked to push a button. If you get a green light, head straight out of customs – you're free to go. If you get a red light, you'll need to put your bags through a scanner – this will be no problem and after scanning the bags, you'll be waved on. The only potential holdup here is if you have some weird item in your luggage or a lot of electronic stuff (apart from what a tourist would normally carry) that you didn't declare on your customs form.

If you are bringing in high-end electronics for sale or as gifts in Peru, you will need to pay 30% customs duties, and have the bill of sale handy as proof of the price. This shouldn't apply to any of you, however.

Making your Connecting flight to Iquitos

As you leave the customs area, there will be a large crowd of people waiting for loved ones, and you'll also have to run the gauntlet of taxi-drivers trying to get fares. Just keep repeating "No Gracias - Connection" and you'll be able to clear the gauntlet without problem. If you are going to a hotel in Lima and have pickup waiting for you, look for a hotel placard with your name on it. If you won't be leaving the airport, head straight onward to the airline check-in counters directly opposite the Customs exit. All the airline counters are in the same area so you only have to walk down the length of the concourse until you find yours. Lan counters are located close to the far end of the concourse. Only ticketed passengers are allowed in the check-in area (keeps it a lot more orderly and less crowded), so you may need to show your onward ticket to security at the entrance to the check-in area.

If you are flying to Iquitos on Lan (as most/all of you are), it doesn't matter what time you arrive and how long it is until your flight to Iquitos – you can proceed to the Lan counter and check in your bags for the flight. This is a huge

plus, since if you have several hours to wait in the airport (for that 5:15 AM flight, for instance), you don't have to keep watch over your luggage. Once you have your luggage checked and boarding pass in hand, you can either wait in check-in area (there are comfortable seats) or proceed upstairs to the domestic and internationals departure area. On the upstairs level there are shops, an internet café, and restaurants – all of which are open 24/7. There are also ATM's and money changing booths, though you are unlikely to need to use those. Payment at all businesses can be made either in Peruvian currency (solis), in US dollars, or in Euros.

To get to the actual departure gates for your flight to Iquitos, you will need to show the Peru domestic flight tax sticker (\$6.05 – a sticker will be put on your boarding pass-this is included in course pricing), and then pass through security to the actual departure gates. The domestic flight departure area may not open until 4 AM, however, so you may need to wait in the restaurant/shopping area until that time. Once through security and in the departure lounges, there are some more shops and coffee spots, and best of all, some very comfortable seats that you can actually stretch out on for some quality napping. TV screens and intercom announcements will keep you up to date on the status of your flight.

Airport Security, Etc.

The Lima airport is very secure and very clean. Most airline personnel and many of the security persons and other employees of the airport will also speak English, so you'll have no problem navigating around the airport. Services are good and bathrooms are very clean. There is no reason at all to feel uneasy about spending time in the Lima Airport – quite likely it is the safest spot in town! As anywhere, however, don't leave your hand luggage unattended, your wallet and passport out on a table, and so forth. Use basic common sense.

Travel Happy and Smart

Don't stress! You'll make it with minimal or no problems, and as previously mentioned, we'll be watching out for you! Some final suggestions for more relaxing travel – bring a good novel/i-pod/puzzle book/etc. to help pass the time. If you want to catch some sleep on the flight, ear-plugs would be good to have (great for on the boats as well), as well as eyeshades. If you can't sleep on flights, an Ambion might do the trick for you! Happy and safe travels!