

# Amazonia Explorations:

## Rio Negro

June 5-16, 2018



A natural history expedition with Walt Anderson & Mark Riegner



Imagine cruising on a great river with forested uplands stretching as far as the eyes can see. The surface of the water breaks, and one of the two freshwater dolphin species of the Amazon appears as if by magic. Imagine gliding smoothly in a canoe into flooded forest, alert for monkeys, parrots, herons, perhaps even one of the big cats. Envision yourself walking in the intense shade of a forest, senses alert, exotic sounds and ecological stories enveloping you.

You can do more than imagine these things: join three fine naturalists in a voyage of discovery organized through Amazonia Expeditions of Brazil. Near the famous rubber-boom city of Manaus, we will climb a tower into the canopy of the rainforest, giving us an incomparable look at life in the tree-tops. We'll take the comfortable river boat *Dorinha* to explore the black-water Rio Negro and its extensive maze of islands en route to the mouth of the Rio Branco, a white-water river still little-known biologically. The Amazonian rivers act as biogeographic barriers to primates and understory birds, with sibling species on opposite banks. Back near Manaus, we will explore Amazon River islands home to endemic bird species, sloths, iguanas, and more.

We will be visiting some wild, wild places, little known to science. New species of birds and mammals are still being discovered in this tropical paradise. Towering trees, lianas, bromeliads, orchids, and other plants can be in flower or fruit at this time of year. Your senses will be stimulated by the exotic sights, sounds, and fragrances of the pristine rainforest.

Brazil is an enormous country (half of South America), but instead of dashing around to many sites, we will focus on in-depth exploration of the central Amazon area. This will allow us to sample extraordinary biodiversity while living well and comfortably on the *Dorinha*. Your guides will help you to see more than you could imagine and will provide behavioral, ecological, and evolutionary stories to enrich your understanding.



# Amazonia Explorations: Rio Negro

Walt Anderson & Mark Riegner — June 2018

This journey will give us access to a remarkable range of habitats, from white-water rivers on the Amazon and Branco to black-water on the Rio Negro to tall *terra firme* (high-ground forest) along the shores. We will be on the rivers at high-water season, allowing us to canoe in the canopy of the flooded forest (also known as *varzea*). We will explore the Jau National Park, part of the Central Amazon Conservation Complex of almost 15 million acres. This World Heritage Site is the largest forest reserve in South America with some of the world's highest biodiversity; species are still being discovered in this little-known wilderness. We will venture through the maze of channels of Anavilhanas Archipelago, an incredibly complex and fascinating system of islands.

South America is rightly called the “bird continent.” There may be as many as 500 species of birds just in the relatively small area we will explore (if you are a birder, you can reasonably expect to see several hundred species, many severely range-restricted or endemic). It's good to come prepared to try to distinguish among the many species of hummingbirds, puffbirds, antbirds, woodcreepers, flycatchers, raptors, icterids, and tanagers. One of the world's largest and most impressive eagles, the Harpy, is possible. Macaws, parrots, trogons, and toucans are common.

On night trips we will have the opportunity to see several species of potoos, owls, and nightjars, as well as nocturnal mammals. The heavens in this dark-skies region are simply breath-taking.

The mammals of the area are diverse and poorly known. We will have the chance to see primates (e.g., tamarins, sakis, titis, squirrel monkeys, howlers, capuchins, uakaris, spider monkeys, night monkeys). We also have a good opportunities to see two species of river dolphin, sloths, porcupines, opossums, pacas, agoutis, tree rats, and many awesome bats. These are not your North American opossums or porcupines either! We will always hope to glimpse some of the scarcer mammals, such as Jaguar, Ocelot, Jaguarundi, Giant & Neotropical Otters, Tayra, Brazilian Tapir, Brocket Deer, anteaters, Kinkajou, South American Coati, and Amazonian Manatee. Any of these would be a rare treat.

The Amazon is the world's greatest river (nothing else even comes close). It is a biodiversity hotspot without equal. The river and its tributaries support over 3000 species of fish (the Mississippi River system has 300 natives, and the Colorado River only 31). Some of the well-known fish are the armored catfish, electric eel (this area supports an incredible 64 species of electric fish!), piranha (most species are vegetarian, and they rarely bother eating vegans), neon tetra, and pirarucu (*Arapaima*), one of the world's largest freshwater fish. While the diversity is mind-blowing, the ecological relationships are complex and fascinating. The forest trees and the fishes literally depend on each other. Reptiles (iguanas, boa constrictors, caimans, and more) add to the diversity we'll experience.

There are thousands of species of plants, too many to identify to species, but there are common types that we will be able to appreciate: palms of many kinds, cecropias, orchids, pseudobombax, heliconia, and many species of legumes.

Insect diversity is off the charts. Hundreds of species of butterflies, including the dazzling Blue Morpho; ants, including leafcutter and army; termites; beetles (evolution's darlings), moths, and much more are all worthy of our admiration and contemplation.

Though we naturalists tend to be “taxa collectors,” we intend to go beyond names to the stories behind the species and to the bigger landscape-level context, as well. We also approach nature with the inquisitive enthusiasm of a child, curious and engaged in observation. Walt is also happy at any time to offer photo or drawing tips to help you to capably capture images to celebrate your discoveries.

Capped Herons & Greater Ani, Blue-crowned Trogon, Owl Butterfly

*Photos by Walt Anderson*





Amazon Pink Dolphin

Raul Orcajo photo

**Activities** You should arrive by the evening of June 5. We plan to visit a canopy tower in Reserva Adolpho Ducke early on the morning of the 6th. This is the way to get high in the tropics! Instead of looking up into the bright sky through tall trees, you are up there with the birds and monkeys, an experience to treasure. We will come back for late breakfast and take a break before having one or more afternoon activities in Manaus. We will orient you for the rest of the trip, which will involve morning and afternoon excursions from the *Dorinha* either in canoes or on trails. We will do some optional evening outings to look for night birds and mammals. We'll leave from the *Dorinha* on the afternoon or evening of the 16th.

**Accommodation:** We will be based on the *Dorinha* from the 7th -16th. This is luxury wilderness travel: air-conditioned rooms with two bunks, private bathrooms, well-stocked bar, and outstanding food. Imagine watching the sunset from the upper deck of the boat with caiparinha (Brazil's national cocktail) in hand. There is a library of relevant books on board, and you may choose to stay on the boat as an alternative to any of our many outings.



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths

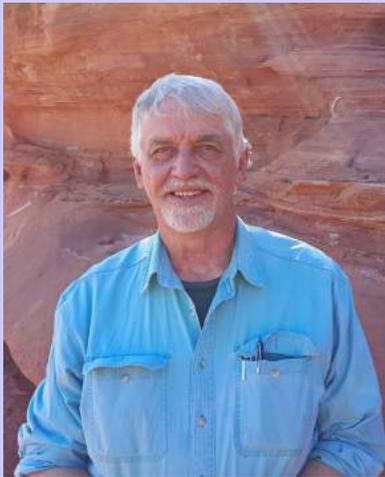
Walt Anderson photo



“Delight itself is a weak term to express the feelings of a naturalist who, for the first time, has wandered by himself in a Brazilian forest. The elegance of the grasses, the novelty of the parasitical plants, the beauty of the flowers, the glossy green on the foliage, but above all the general luxuriance of the vegetation, filled me with admiration. A most paradoxical mixture of sound and silence pervades the shady parts of the wood. . . . To a person fond of natural history, such a day as this brings with it a deeper pleasure than he can ever hope to experience again.”

Charles Darwin in *The Voyage of the Beagle*

## Your Leaders:



**Walt Anderson**, Professor of Environmental Studies at Prescott College, teaches natural history, ecology, wildlife management, conservation, ecotourism, nature art & photography. His words, illustrations, and photographs have appeared in many media, both scientific and popular. Walt's extensive experience and knowledge are shared with keen enthusiasm and humor. Walt led the first US ecotourism adventure to the national parks of Brazil for the Stanford Alumni Association, which was followed by many more throughout Brazil and around the world, including Tropical Treasures of Amazonia in June 2017. Walt is an expert in field identification of organisms; in teaching ecological concepts and natural history; in collaborating with foundations, NGO's, and local groups; and in facilitating group dynamics.



**Mark Riegner**, Professor of Environmental Studies at Prescott College, teaches courses on ecology, natural history, evolution, and conservation, as well as field courses in Costa Rica and the Gulf of California. He has led natural history and birding tours in the Neotropics, including two previous trips in the Brazilian Amazon. He is an expert in wading bird ecology and has written many magazine articles, a book, and scientific papers on this group. His current research focuses on the interface between morphology, development, and ecology of herons. He has published on the parallel evolution of avian plumage pattern, as well as on aspects of the history and philosophy of biology. Mark enjoys interpreting natural history phenomena and weaving together the threads of ecology and evolution to present the Big Picture of natural systems.



**Moacir Fortes Junior**, captain of the *Dorinha*, grew up in the Amazon and studied biology at the University of Manaus. He is an outstanding birder, herpetologist, and all-around naturalist with an irrepressible sense of humor. He and his family have led Amazon adventures for over 30 years, serving universities and tour companies such as Field Guides, New York Botanical Society, and Bat Conservation International. Deep familiarity with the diverse ecosystems allows him to navigate the maze of rivers to maximize our chances for spectacular wildlife discoveries.

## General Information

**Expedition Cost:** \$4900 per person

**Discounts:** -\$400 for enrolled student. -\$300 per person for couples or family signing up together. -\$300 per person if previous participant with us. Maximum discount \$400 per person if you qualify for more than one discount. If enrollment is low, there will be a modest small-group surcharge.

**Single Supplement:** \$600 (if it is not possible to find you a room-mate)

**Air Travel:** Note that the expedition begins on June 5, 2018 and ends on June 16 in Manaus, Brazil. We are leaving air arrangements up to you, though if we can provide reasonable suggestions, please ask. Most Americans travel through Miami. If you arrive the day before, Amazonia Expeditions can help you with reservations at Hotel Tropical or elsewhere (not included in tour price). You would fly out on the 16th unless you wanted to spend more time in Manaus on your own.

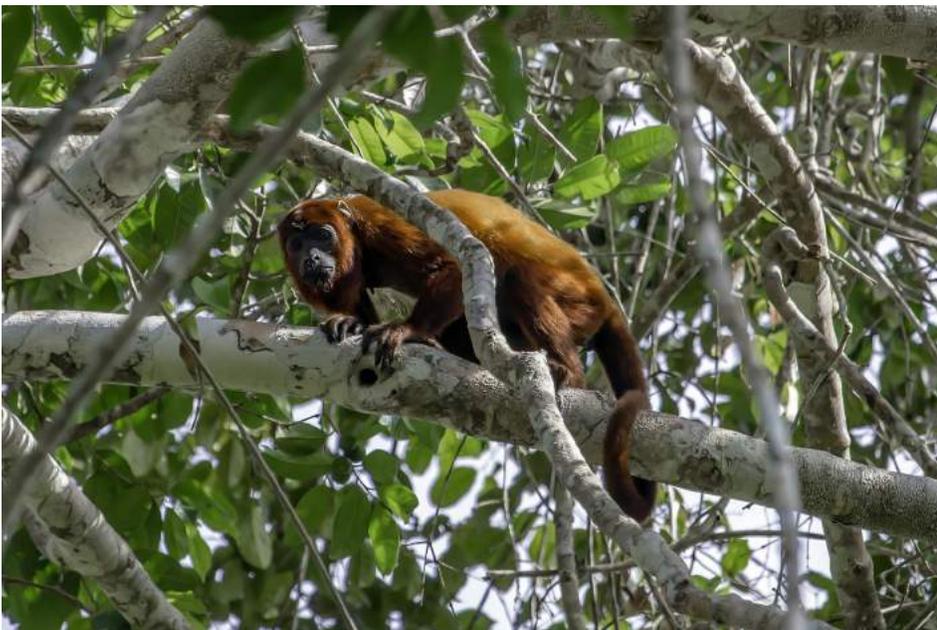
**The tour includes the following:**

- Accommodation and meals in the exclusively chartered *Dorinha*; lodging and breakfasts at Hotel Tropical on June 5 & 6.
- Instruction and leadership by Walt Anderson, Mark Riegner, and Junior.
- Daily excursions from June 6 - 16, including tower visit in Manaus.
- Pre-departure information on all aspects of the trip, including reading suggestions, travel tips, etc.

**The tour does not include the following:** International airfare or airport taxes, passport and visa fees (visa about \$270, but valid for 10 years), excess baggage charges, personal and baggage insurance, personal items (e.g., room service, laundry, medicines, phone or e-mail bills), soda and alcoholic beverages, other on-board purchases (e.g., t-shirts, jewelry), photographic expenses, optional activities/excursions not described (if any), airport shuttles, lunch & dinner on June 6, meals or lodging if you stay in Manaus before or after the expedition, or tips to the crew of the *Dorinha*.

**Fitness and Health:**

Anyone in reasonably good health should do well on this expedition, as most activities are not strenuous, and longer hikes will be optional. Of course, trails are not of US national park quality; we are in genuine wilderness at times. Your accommodations are comfortable and food excellent, though you may experience traveler's diarrhea as a consequence of travel. We will provide useful travel and medical tips. Upon registration, you will be sent a reservation and personal information form, which includes the typical liability release. You must fill this out in order to participate. You must be covered by medical insurance that is valid overseas, and we encourage you to take out medical and trip cancellation/interruption insurance. We reserve the right to turn down any application at our discretion.



Red Howler Monkey by Raul Orcajo

### \*Travel Protection:

As a travel agent, Walt has access to an **excellent travel insurance plan offered through [Berkshire Hathaway](#)**.

The program is really cutting-edge in responsiveness with access to the company through a smart phone app, Facebook, Twitter, email, Webchat, phone call or even text. Customers can get service for many claims by simply taking photos of documents, receipts and boarding passes and remitting them electronically. You can get real assistance (including money with the assistance services) incredibly quickly (they can deposit money directly to your designated account). There are **several options:**

**ExactCare** is comprehensive, customizable, and affordable based on a fraction of the trip cost. It can even cover **pre-existing conditions** if it is applied for **within 15 days of making the trip deposit** (certain guidelines apply)! Well worth being proactive. **ExactCare can help reimburse you for losses** with respect to trip cancellation, trip interruption, trip delay, missed connection, lost baggage/baggage delay, medical expense benefit (including dental), medical evacuation, and more. Options include **ExactCare Value & Extra**.

**AirCare** is an alternative if you only want benefits directly related to flights (no medical). For a very modest fee, you can get paid for a delayed flight, missed connection, delayed bag, lost bag, or tarmac delay.

# Amazonia Explorations June 5-16, 2018

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ space(s) on the Amazonia Explorations tour from June 5-16, 2018.

Price: \$4900.

Discounts: -\$400 for enrolled student. -\$300 per person for couples or family signing up together. -\$300 per person if previous participant with us. Maximum discount \$400 per person if you qualify for more than one discount.

Single Supplement: \$600 (If it is not possible to find you a room-mate; *would be payable with final payment*)

Deposit: \$900 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Balance due: \_\_\_\_\_ Payable by March 1, 2018. If enrollment is low, there will be a modest small-group surcharge (we will notify you if so).

Deposits refundable less \$100 handling fee until March 1, 2018.

No refunds after Mar. 1, 2018 (trip cancellation insurance advised; see below\*). However, if enrollment is too low, we will cancel tour on March 1 with full refund.

A personal check, cashier's check, money order, or even a bank-to-bank transfer using Zelle (free) should be possible. <https://www.zellepay.com>. If you choose to *wire* funds, there will be some charges. If you send a check, make it payable to *Walt Anderson*. Talk to your banker and let me know if you need any more information.

Please mail or email Reservation Form to Walt Anderson, 2911 E. Granite Gardens Drive, Prescott AZ 86301-8457 or [geolobo@cableone.net](mailto:geolobo@cableone.net). Send deposit by mail or through bank transfer, as suggested above. If you have questions, call Walt at 928-308-9017 or email at [geolobo@cableone.net](mailto:geolobo@cableone.net).

Names of persons traveling \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures (required) \_\_\_\_\_

*You may skip the contact info if you have included it on the separate personal information form and liability release*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers. Day: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_; Evening: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_; Cell: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (most information will be sent by e-mail, if possible): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am traveling with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to room alone and am willing to pay the single supplement charge (\$600). (Single rooms subject to availability)

\_\_\_\_\_ I am traveling alone and would like to share a room. Please assign a room-mate. I understand that if none is available, I will be charged the single supplement.

**You must also send the *personal information form and liability release* (required for trip participation).**

## Travel Protection:

As a travel agent, Walt has access to an **excellent travel insurance plan offered through [Berkshire Hathaway](http://www.bhthp.com)**. Use the live link or go to [www.bhthp.com](http://www.bhthp.com) and mention Walt Anderson, Code AA0568. Note that pre-existing conditions are covered if you enroll within 15 days of making your trip deposit. An early decision may save you most of that money if plane tickets go up later. You may still buy the travel insurance right up until travel time, though pre-existing conditions would not be covered.