

AMAZON

Luxury Yacht Fishing Expedition

ARTICLE BY LARRY LARSEN

RIO NEGRO

Few travelers have heard of the Rio Negro, which flows southeast a short distance along the Venezuela and Colombia border and then winds its way through the Brazilian state of Amazonas; it meets up with the also little-known Rio Solimoes to form the mighty and renowned Amazon River. What many people don't realize is that both rivers are larger than the Mississippi. Their conjunction is near Manaus, the gateway city to the Amazon Basin, about the same size as Houston, the fourth largest city in the U.S.

Despite the size of the rivers, the basin has 11 rivers larger than our Mississippi River. The river city of Manaus, and its surrounding jungle is little populated. Most tributaries are more than 50 miles upstream from confluence with the Amazon are isolated. The Rio Negro, for example, has numerous

waterways where few transport barges or villages exist. Local Indians paddling dugout canoes are rare, on many waters. The Amazon jungle does have an abundance of small waters teeming with exotic fish that are hundreds of miles from a paved road or other vestige of civilization.

That's why discovering a luxurious fishing and eco-tour operation far from any crowds is unique and attractive to this angler. I've fished all over the world,

and no fish is as exciting as the peacock bass which is endemic to the Amazon River Basin. The Rio Negro and its tributaries are prime waters for the fish and the encompassing beauty of the Amazon flora and fauna. Cruising the waterway is special and seductive, particularly when doing it in style.

I have spent more than 75 weeks cruising the remote and isolated Amazon waters of Brazil and seeing a variety of wildlife. The beautiful environment along the equator can be harsh, and

that's why I prefer to enjoy the accommodations of a luxury yacht operation like Captain Peacock Yachts & Expeditions. I've traveled with numerous other outfitters/operations in the jungles of Brazil and no one offers more.

After a night in a 4-star business hotel in Manaus, a 42 seat Bombardier ATR42 twin engine turbo prop charter plane whisks up to 20 guests to the Rio Negro's primary town of Barcelos, also known as the Tropical Fish Capital of the World. Laying eyes on the





One of the comfortable bass boats in the Captain Peacock “armada” heads for the luxury yacht at the end of the day.

sporty 135 foot, diesel-powered vessel moored in the Barcelos “marina area” near two or three dozen smaller, jungle-style riverboats will make any visitor smile. The smartly dressed crew of the “Anna Beatriz I” handles all luggage and guests settle in prior to lunch.

There are 12 spacious staterooms aboard, all with interior hallway entrance, private hot-water showers, DVD and a 3-channel TV. While this is not a fancy cruise ship suite, the impeccably-maintained, 4-year old yacht does not contain what is common on almost all other fishing tour “mothership” operations

along the Amazon: tiny cabins with bunk beds. The Anna Beatriz I offers staterooms with two comfortable oversized beds on the floor with isle between. Guests are soon ready for a week of fishing and cruising the river and its tributaries, and while most guests aboard the yacht are interested in fishing half or most of each day, others want to do some of the eco experiences that Captain Peacock offers.

At times the die-hard anglers and their spouses will return for a hot prepared lunch and then split up for the afternoon with one going back out to chase fish and the other

perhaps going on a guided nature walk or local Indian village tour. Some couples may enjoy a few days fishing and then take a mid-week break to view the Amazon’s abundant wildlife from their guided bass boat. Visitors can see how local river dwellers live in the villages, how locals spot caiman in the jungle waters (in daylight or after the sun sets), or go with attentive guides on photo shoots.

There will be a half day fishing that first afternoon for those wanting to wet a line and up to six more in the week following, and all

will be in luxurious comfort. While you may be several thousand miles away from quality bass boat manufacturers, the Captain Peacock operation has some of the best made fishing platforms in the world. Imported just this year from Bass Pro Shops in Springfield MO are a dozen 2013 Bass Trackers. This armada is the highest quality and safest bass boats in the Amazon. Two sporting 90 horsepower outboard engines are black Model 190s (19-foot long) that have been modified by the manufacturer to also



to also facilitate wheel chairs for disabled anglers.

The other 10 new Bass Tracker boats are shiny red Model 175s that are 17 ½ feet long with 60 hp Mercury 4-cycle outboards on them. The 7 ½ foot beam boats offer spacious casting decks fore and aft with padded, fold flat swivel fishing chairs for unparalleled angler comfort. All are equipped with 45-pound thrust Minn Kota electric trolling motors, depth finders, flares and two-way marine VHF radios. Adding to the safety focus is that Captain Peacock employs the “buddy system” with two guides and their clients always traveling to the same general area and staying in touch all day long.

Those without appropriate tackle don’t have to worry because top-of-the-line rods, reels and lures are provided at a nominal rental cost. Boats are fully equipped also with scales, nets, first aid kits, modern life jackets and iced cooler with refreshments and lunch for those that do not choose to return to the yacht mid-day for a hot lunch. Food service aboard is exceptional, as are the adult refreshments.

An open bar all day long is included in the tour package, which includes red & white wines, vodkas, rum, whisky, cognac, imported and local beers like Brahma or Itapava. High quality liquors such as Johnny Walker Black, Baileys, and Malibu are served, along with plenty of the country’s national cocktail, the Caipirinha, which is made with cachaca (sugar cane hard liquor), sugar and lime! I have to warn newcomers to this drink slowly, or

Twelve Tracker Marine bass boats make up the new fleet of fishing boats that comfortably move anglers about the remote rivers and lagoons of the Amazon Basin. *Photo above.*

you may just miss the following day’s fishing. When guests come in from fishing, a cocktail of their choice is placed in their hands and hot and freshly prepared hors d’oeuvres are quickly served on the open-air lounge deck. Items depend on what the chef is in the mood to present and vary from sushi to local pastries to empanadas to creative meat finger food.



Barcelos, at the gateway to the Rio Negro, is the “Tropical Fish Capitol of the World”.*(Above)*
9 A sunrise in the Amazon is usually one to put in your memory bank.*(Below)*





The author hefts what these trips are all about, catching a colorful 24 pound peacock bass! It is freshwater's most exciting fish. Photo above.

Two waiters each work the lounge deck bar area and the first-class dining room, and the kitchen is staffed by the head chef and an assistant. Breakfast is set up as a buffet with bacon, scrambled eggs, locally-made cakes and bread, fruit, cereal, toast, pancakes, pastries, etc., and the chef will cook eggs and omelets to your desire. Those returning to the boat at noon get a choice of hot lunches cooked to order, and in the evenings, an exciting buffet spread in “rishows”, contain six different choices of meats including steaks, and creative fish and

chicken dishes, both American and authentic Brazilian cuisine, and hot vegetable selections. Delicious desserts are always made the same day and include pies, the best flan in the world and puddings. Everything served is fresh and first class as expected in any fine dining establishment.

The Captain Peacock operation includes daily laundry service by the housekeeping staff and all ground and air charter transportation between airports, hotels and yacht, once you arrive in Manaus. They also offer, for a fee, internet and satellite phone service onboard the yacht, personalized river and jungle-based eco-adventures and other tourist activities around town,

such as sightseeing trips to the “Meeting of the Waters”, the fish/craft market and the famous Manaus Opera House. ■

If You Go:

Information on Captain Peacock Yachts & Expeditions can be found at www.captpeacock.com or phone (817) 471-2716. For info on Amazon Basin fishing and boating, visit:

www.peacockbassassociation.com and check out the iPad/Android tablets App, “Fishing the Amazon Guide”.