

Vinalu[®]

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*Record of a great journey in the
Peruvian Amazon rainforest*

Jungle Lodge Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción

RECORD OF A JOURNEY IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON (PART I)

by Liliane Turmes & Good Friends



With a long boat over the Madre de Dios river



to the Jungle Lodge Hacienda Concepción



with a natural wooden interior

***PUERTO MALDONADO, GATEWAY
TO THE RAINFOREST***

From our beloved Cuzco it's only a short flight to Puerto Maldonado, located in the South-Eastern Peruvian region of Madre de Dios on the Bolivian border, the gateway to the Tambopata National Reserve in the Amazon rainforest. One of our most exciting trips ever, if not the most fascinating, to discover the splendor of the Amazonian jungle. The subtropical moist and wet Amazon rainforest in Peru is among the most biodiverse and most remote places on earth, with a unique, unfamiliar flora and fauna, with a variety of plants greater than almost anywhere on the planet and with millions of species, many of which remain scientifically even undescribed... And besides its breathtaking nature, with a decisive importance for the global climate.



and with hand-carved wildlife art



Romantic tables for 2 at Casa Grande dining room

THE BRIEFING , BLACK CAIMANS & FER DE LANCE

After our arrival in Puerto Maldonado, we get a first impression of the mighty Amazon forest on a boat ride on the clay-coloured Madre de Dios river; the only way to access the jungle lodge Hacienda Concepción, our base for the next days. The cozy retreat, built on the ground of a former cacao and rubber plantation, constructed with beautiful mahagoni and cedar wood, with palm leaves in the attic, all in the native natural style, is settled in the heart of a private ecological reserve and designed to blend with the environment.

We are awaited by Fredy Herrera, our skilled naturalist explorer guide, for a first briefing on our private tour through the rainforest and on the upcoming Twilight River excursion. This exploration later in the day, before the night falls, takes us on a boat trip to observe the wildlife activity of black caimans with flashlights under darkness, with only the stars of the Southern hemisphere in the sky above us and in a deep silence, only with the soft fluttering noises of some bats around us. Apparently you can figure out the size of caimans swimming in the water, in multiplying 10 times the size of their heads; so we spotted some really big ones! In our meeting Fredy insists that, besides of being careful to animals and nature, we have to consider first of all the environment, before walking anywhere, as this is the jungle, not a park. This said, he gives us a short and useful introduction about how to identify venomous snakes, as the jungle is evidently home to many snakes. We saw already some specimen, exposed in the Ecocenter on the ground, kept in ethanol for the next 100 years...

As we were a little bit worried beforehand about meeting the most venomous one, the Fer de Lance, we prefer keeping Fredy's 5 most important identification points in mind :

- 1) the colour first, if shiny, they could be dangerous
- 2) if they have squares on their skin, they are poisonous
- 3) if their heads are triangular, it's meaning they are very poisonous, which is the case of the Fer de Lance
- 4) if their habitat is on the ground, they are very poisonous, in the branches of trees, not poisonous. We will remember point number 4, not later than the next day, when gliding on a wooden canoe through the deepest jungle, facing an 8 meter long snake, creeping slowly in the leaves of a tree and darting its tongue. Somehow frightening, yes, but at least completely harmless, as we luckily learned and also happening early in the morning, Fredy's point number 5, 'snakes, when active in the daylight, not poisonous'... So nothing to worry about. Todo bien!



Cozy living room with a spectacular roof construction

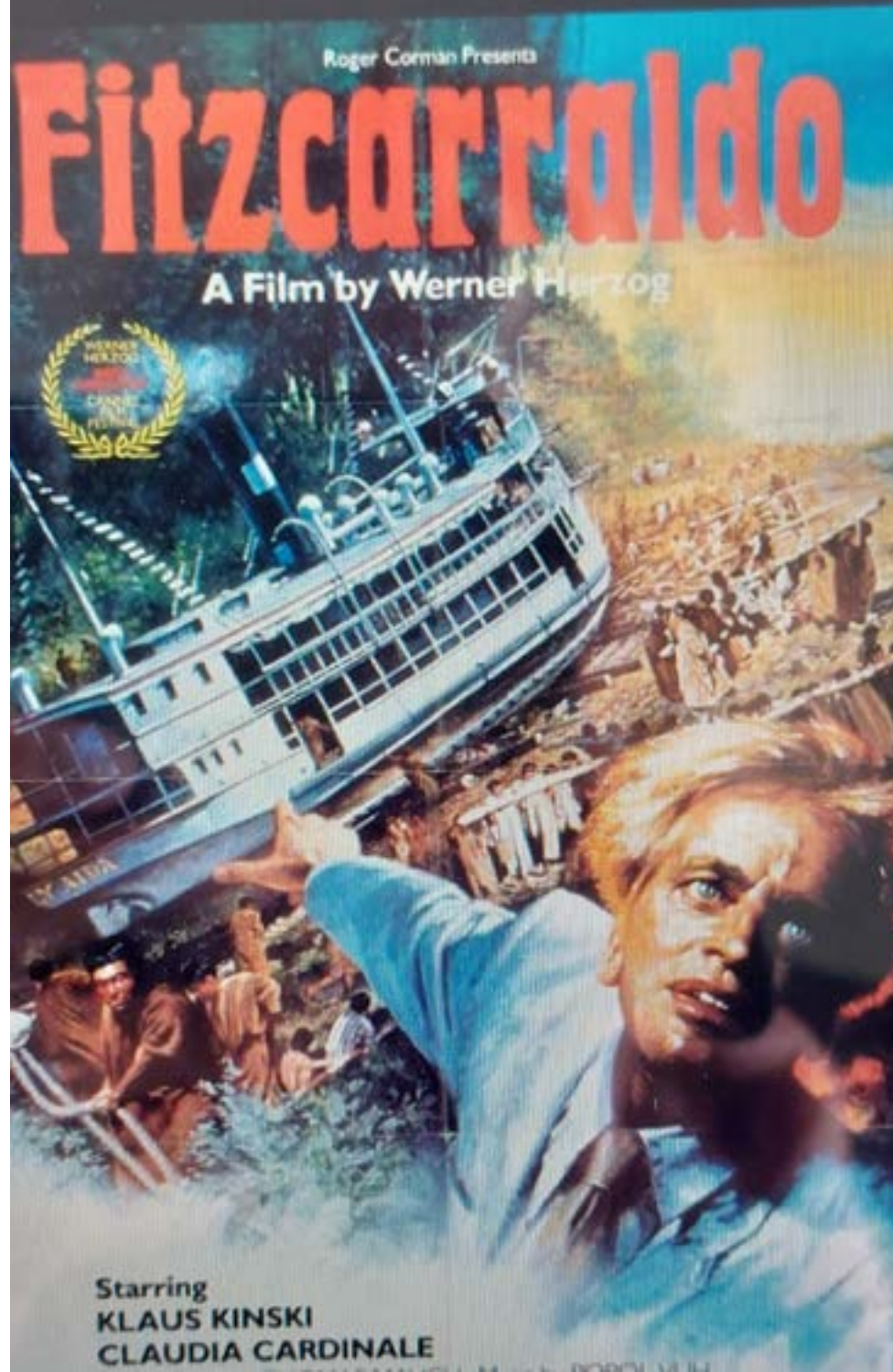


Immersion in the depth of the fantastic rainforest

FIZCARRALDO & WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

With this knowledge about the complex world of snakes, we are ready to plunge into the depths of the rainforest for a walk on the wild side, this time not in NYC like in Lou Reed's famous song, but on the property's wild nature trails, with primary and secondary rainforest. 230 ha, out of 380 ha of the property is conserved in primary forest for keeping the wildlife and natural reserve habitat for the big 5, the jaguar, the puma, the giant river otter, the anaconda and the harpy eagle. But there are other giants in the jungle, like the many giant insects, such as the giant termites living on the rotten woods and as they are known to reach out for water, it is believed, that they saved lives of men, lost in the jungle. Others, like the big ants, called Siquisapa in Quechua language, a welcome source of protein, are considered a delicacy by the Amazonian natives, eaten fried, like popcorn with yuca roots for the starch.

While immersing in the tropical vegetation with an incredible dense green foliage and listening to our guide's comments, we pass the wreckage of a ship stranded on a poor, nearly dry river in the middle of the jungle, reminding us, and apparently not only us, of the ship in Werner Herzog's masterpiece film 'Fitzcarraldo', with the great actor Klaus Kinski, and one of the reasons we are here, on the traces of the historical and chaotic rubber baron Fitzcarrald (later more about this in another Vinalu edition and about another country in the Amazon, where this fascinating story also plays).



Fitzcarraldo, the famous movie with superstar Klaus Kinski

THE HISTORY OF HACIENDA CONCEPCIÓN

It's time for our conversation with Alan Huisa, the manager of the eco-reserve Hacienda Concepción, during a traditional dinner al fresco in the palm-thatched 'Casa Grande' dining room. Starting with the 'La Flor' Sauvignon Blanc 2024, a fresh summerwine from Mendoza in the glass.

Alan, a local and familiar with the culture gives us an insight about the history of Hacienda Concepción, which started in the 1970ies. The Hacienda, formerly called Fundo Concepción, a big farm, with 380 ha, out of which 150 ha planted with avocados, oranges, bananas, rice and cacao. At that time local people in Concepción were working for Arturo Conzales Delrio, one of the owners, who was committed to support the local population. He also brought researchers on plants for food and for medication to the place. As Alan points out, Arturo even bought a boat from the Bolivian marines, with the idea to use it as a 'flying' doctor.

In 1975 José Koechlin von Stein, from Austria, and current CEO of Inkaterra, a nature lover and strong defender of conservation and protection of the biodiversity of the natural environment, a pioneer in promoting Peru's eco-tourism and the cultural heritage of the country, founded Inkaterra. After Arturo left, Inkaterra bought the place in the 1990ies. As Alan explains, Koechlin's studies in the beginning concentrated mainly on the water quality, as illegal gold mining posed severe risks to water sources. Nowadays, as he says, there are more controls on gold mining and timber logging, as the area is protected by rangers, private companies and also Inkaterra is committed to help, together with the Peruvian government.



Antonio serves the Intipalka Sauvignon Blanc



Intipalka Sauvignon Blanc 2025

THE RAINFOREST TASTING MENU

In Hacienda Concepción only local organic products from their own farms are used in the kitchen as Antonio, the food & beverage manager, explains. He suggests the ceviche of cauliflower with toasted corn and banana chips, one of the most popular starters here, prepared with ginger, cumin and with the classic leche de tigre, spicy and refreshing, with a light oriental touch and the Croquetas de quinoa with red, white and black quinoa, with a nutty taste, refined with a sweet vinaigrette and a fruity and sour tamarinde sauce as starters to share. Coming with an appetizing cacao bread.

The Sauvignon Blanc Intipalka 2025, of the Valle del Sol in Peru, a pleasant young wine, is matching with the rich variety of plates in the menu, the 'Bastones de trucha', the fried trout strips with soy sauce on mashed cassava and the 'Yuca rellena con ragú y salsa criolla', the manioc, seasoned with cinnamon and filled with soft meat ragú on a creamy yellow pepper sauce, with mango and onion slices wrapped in cucumber as a side dish.

The 'Patarashka de Trucha with patacones crocantes zanahorias horneadas' is a traditional tasteful main course with the trout, cooked & steamed in the bijao leaves giving the plate a nice acidity, accompanied with crispy fried plantains and sweet backed carrots. We like the emblematic dish of the Peruvian rainforest, the 'Juane arroz atamalado envuelto en hojas de bijao al vapor con queso y salsa de coconas', Juane tamale style spiced rice, wrapped and steamed in the bijao leaf, filled with chopped onions, fruits, the big 'minty' jungle cilantro and cheese, served with fried bananas, black olives and with a cocona sauce, a kind of wild tomatoes with a lively acidity. And super delicious!

The chef serves a creamy cheesecake with camu camu, a berry considered as the new superfood, similar in the taste to pomelos, with a strong Peruvian Sour to finish this excellent tasting menu with unexplored ingredients & exotic dishes.



Spicy Cauliflower Ceviche & Banana Chips



Croquetas de Quinoa & tamarind sauce



La Flor Sauvignon Blanc 2025



Yuca filled with ragu & cinnamon



Traditional Patarashka de trucha



Juan tamale style spicy rice & cocona sauce



Andrés prepares an excellent Sour



Creamy cheesecake & camu camu

CANOE GLIDING TO LAKE SANDOVAL

After an early morning wake up by the parakeets, chattering in the trees, we are ready for a long walk on the sun-dappled rainforest trail, to board our wooden canoe and quietly paddle onto the Lake Sandoval.

The ox-bow lake is located inside the Tambopata National Reserve, a strictly protected area, divided into different levels, where the level 0 is untouchable for humans. It is the territory reserved for the animals and the big species like jaguar, puma and tapir. We cross the swampy wetlands around the lake, the habitat of long black caimans, side-necked giant tortues, the endangered giant river otters, red-howler monkeys, and anacondas, on a wooden platform, and pass a huge Matapalo, the oldest ficus in the jungle, more than 400 years old and home to yellow crowned amazone parrots, and gigantic sacred Kapok trees, with impressive roots over the ground, to stabilize their huge stems.

To reach the floating dock of our wooden canoe and glide on a stream through a dense tunnel-like vegetation with large tree ferns, into the light and onto the lake, flanked by picture-perfect palms. WOW! You can't be than overwhelmed by such a beauty!

Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción,
Rio Madre de Dios Km7,
Puerto Maldonado, 17000, Peru.



Welcome to the jungle



Fredy spotting some swinging monkeys in the tree tops



Giant endangered river otters pictured



at the floating dock of our canoe



Gliding through the dense tunnel-like foliage onto Lake Sandoval

Impressum

Based on an idea by Romain Batya



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