

ADVENTURE TOUR
to
M A N A U S

May 2012

Details still being finalized ... subject to amendment

OPERA-IS
TRAVEL AND LEARNING

Welcome to a really wild and crazy operatic adventure!

My own fascination with the Teatro Amazonas began with the engrossing Werner Herzog movie called "*Fitzcarraldo*" (1982) which begins with Enrico Caruso singing at the incongruous and improbable Opera House in the jungle.

Now, we'll all have an opportunity to see one of the most storied houses on the planet – and a great opera there too!

The thought of encountering a hot and sweaty jungle, torrential rains, huge anacondas, hungry piranhas and malarial mosquitos would be enough to discourage all but the most dedicated opera lovers.

So – thank you for joining me!

And I hope you are half as excited as I am!



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OUR HOTEL

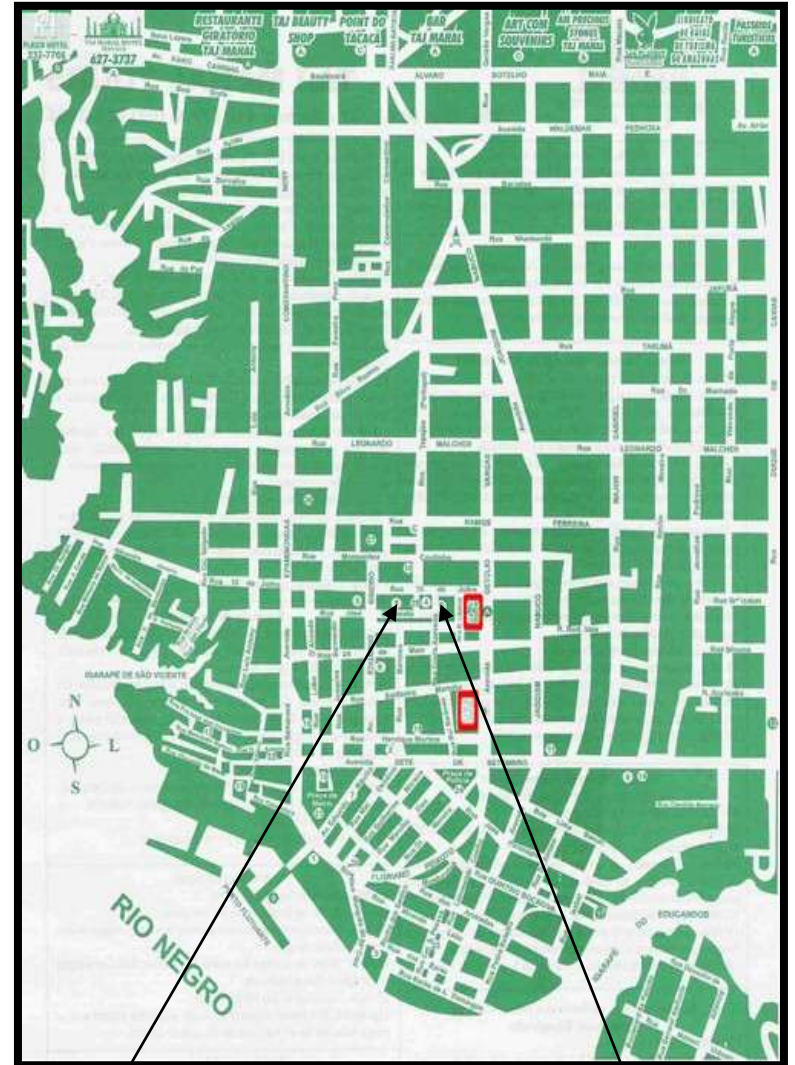
The Taj Mahal Continental Hotel

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The Teatro Amazonas

Taj Mahal Hotel

**DAY 1: ARRIVING IN MANAUS ...
(FRIDAY 11th MAY)**

We will no doubt take flight JJ8077, departing from Miami at the ungodly hour of 7:40 am and arriving in Manaus at 12:45 pm ... for customs and immigration formalities.

TOUR BEGINS: We will be met by a small minibus, which will transport us and our luggage - from the Eduardo Gomes International Airport - to our Hotel (15 km).

Check into the TAJ MAHAL Hotel.

Lunch is on your own.

**4:00 pm GUIDED ORIENTATION :
A WALKING TOUR**

An English-speaking guide will take us to the key sights within easy walking distance of our hotel ... to point out the highlights of the downtown and port areas.

**7:00 pm GROUP DINNER in the Hotel's
REVOLVING RESTAURANT**



**DAY 2: EXPLORE MANAUS BY COACH
(SATURDAY 12th MAY)**

9:00 am Our exploration of Manaus will continue with a **guided tour by Coach** to see the developments that have shaped Manaus during the Rubber Boom and the post-war Free Trade Boom. We will visit the Ponta Negra Beach area which is being spruced up in anticipation of the World Cup celebrations.

LUNCH on this Private Coach Tour is included.

Afternoon – free time

Dinner - on your own.

6:30 pm – leave on foot for the Opera:
TOSCA (in concert)



Day 3 **EXPLORE THE AMAZON**
(SUNDAY 13th MAY)

9:30 am Today we will have our eagerly anticipated **BOAT TOUR to the Meeting of the Waters.**

We will be picked up from our hotel and will have a private launch and Guide.

We will also visit a Jungle Encampment and observe the natural fauna and flora of the Jungle.

LUNCH at a floating restaurant is included.



3:00 pm Return to hotel

Afternoon – free time

Dinner is on your own

7:30 pm leave for the Opera House on foot.

8:00 pm **THE MAGIC FLUTE (fully staged)**

Day 4 **LAST DAY IN MANAUS**
(MONDAY 14th MAY)

9:00 am **OPTIONAL GUIDED WALKING TOUR**

A local guide – wanting to practise English – will take us to unusual out-of-the-way places that we might otherwise have missed.

Lunch before our departure is on your own

1:30 pm check out and leave by Minibus for the Airport

We are all flying out on TAM 8076, leaving Manaus at 3:10 and arriving in Miami at 8:25 pm

TOUR ENDS.

Independent accommodations in Miami.

*Tuesday 15th May – return home from Miami...
or continue private plans*

THE TEATRO AMAZONAS

The **Amazon Theatre** (*Teatro Amazonas*) was built during the Belle Époque at a time when fortunes were made in the rubber boom.

Construction of the Amazon Theater was first proposed in 1881 by a member of the House of Representatives, Antonio Jose Fernandes Júnior, the idea being to construct a jewel in the heart of the Amazonian forest and to make Manaus one of the great centers of civilization.

In the following year the State legislature approved some limited financing, but this was considered insufficient. In 1882, the president of the Province, Jose Lustosa Paranaguá, approved a larger budget and initiated a competition for the presentation of plans.

By 1884, construction was ready to begin under the Italian architect Celestial Sacardim who planned for the theatre in the Renaissance style to be state of the art and to include **electric lighting**. Work proceeded slowly over the following fifteen years with some stops and re-starts from 1885 to 1892.

Roofing tiles came from Alsace while, from Paris, came **furniture and furnishings** in the style of Louis XV, much from the Koch Frères company. From Italy came Carrarra marble for the stairs, statues, and columns. Steel walls were ordered from England.

The theatre has **198 chandeliers**, including 32 of Murano glass.

The curtain, with its painting the "Meeting of the Waters" was originally created in Paris by Crispim do Amaral, depicts the junction of the Rio Negro and the Solimões to form the Amazon.

On the outside of the building, **the dome** is covered with 36,000 decorated ceramic tiles painted in the colors of the national flag.

Work recommenced in 1893.

By 1895, when the masonry work and external was completed, the decoration of the interior, and the installation of electric lighting, could begin more rapidly. The Italian Domenico de Angelis painted the beautiful panels that decorate the ceilings of the auditorium and of the audience chamber. However, even after its inauguration and first public presentations, two more years would pass before the building was finally completed, a project taking **seventeen years** in all.

The theatre was inaugurated on 31 December 1896, with the first performance occurring on 7 January 1897 with the Italian opera, *La Gioconda*, by Amilcare Ponchielli.

It has been restored four times, most recently in 1929, 1974 and between 1988 and 1990.



It currently has (only) 660 seats – all covered with red velvet.

SOME BACKGROUND ON MANAUS

(in preparing this booklet I am indebted to Clive Maguire who has authored the only English guidebook to Manaus see www.visitmanaus.com.)

Manaus is as near as you can get to the middle of the Brazilian Amazon rain forest – it is about 1,500 km inland from the Atlantic Ocean to the east, about 1,000 km from the border with Peru to the west, about 1,000 km from the next nearest town to the south (Porto Velho) and a similar distance to the nearest town to the north (Boa Vista).

It is just 3 degrees south of the Equator. There is only one functioning road in – from the north – so access to the city is primarily by water or by air.

The past: The city (whose Indian name means “mother of the Gods”) was founded as a Portuguese colonial fort in 1669 to protect the river against a Dutch invasion from Suriname in the north.

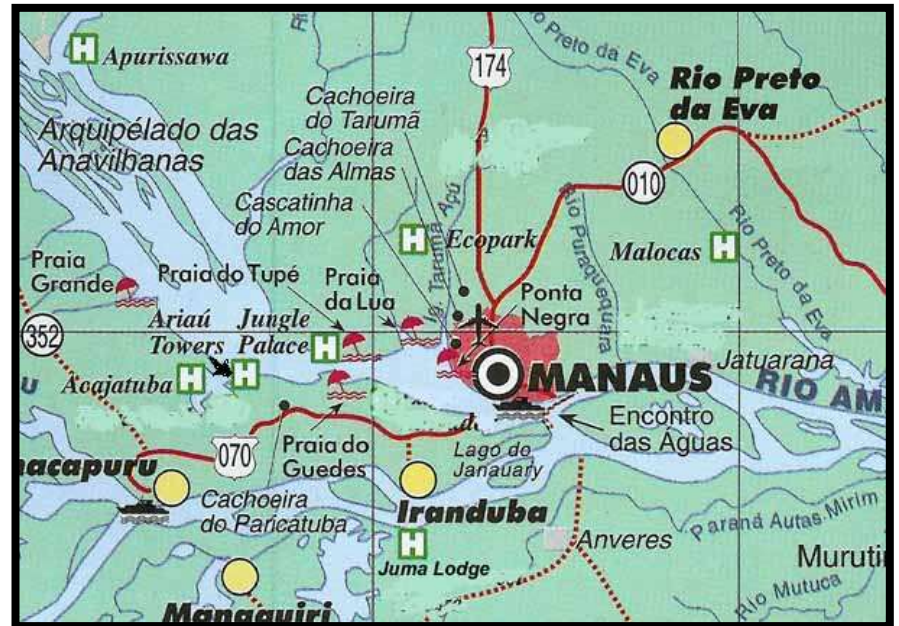
In the late 19th century, its rubber trees – and the latex they produced - became hugely coveted, and the local “rubber barons” became incredibly rich ... but when seeds of the rubber tree were smuggled out of the region in 1876, by Henry Wickham, the region lost its monopoly. Wickham germinated the seedlings in Kew Gardens, England. They were then sent to Ceylon, Singapore and British Malaya. The British Empire thus became the biggest producer of rubber ... and the economy of Manaus totally collapsed.

The city languished, isolated, forgotten and in abject poverty, until the 1950s ... when the Brazilian government created a special tax free trade zone, providing incentives for manufacturing and assembly operations. This has had spectacular success ... and today Sony, Panasonic, Bic, Gillette, Honda, etc. take advantage of the tax free haven.

The present: The city has now grown to over 2 million people. (65% Caboclo, 32% white, 2% black, 1% Asian).

A bridge is being built over the River Negro and one day, a similar one may be built over the River Solimões, giving the potential of future links to the south.

The future: The future of the tax free zone is uncertain, but the city continues to grow. The city will be one of 12 Brazilian cities engaged in hosting the 2014 World Cup of Soccer – an investment which could have as big an impact on Manaus as the rubber boom did. Rio de Janeiro will host the 2016 Olympic Games – which should also produce a further influx of tourism into cities like Manaus.



Amazon Jungle camps accessible from Manaus

THE AMAZON

The Amazon is the world's second longest river (6,400 km or 4,000 miles) after the Nile (6,650 km or 4,130 miles) and has an average discharge greater than the next 6 largest rivers combined.

At low water its width is 1.6 to 10km, but in the wet season, it expands to 48km.

At no point is it crossed by bridges.

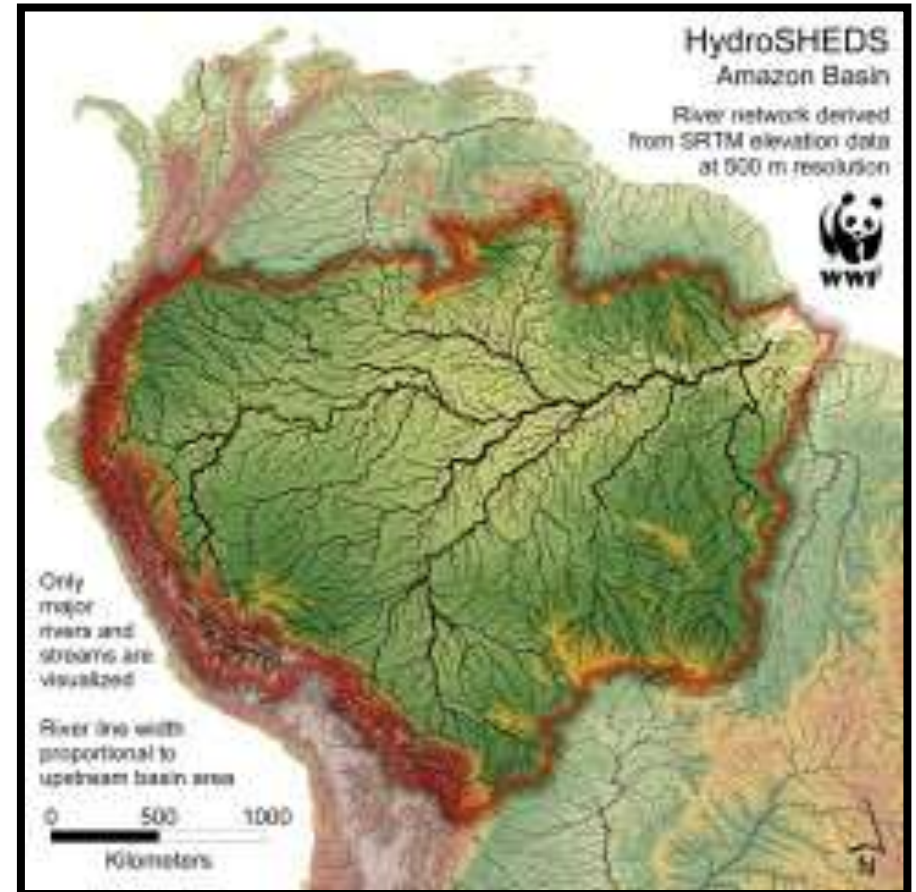
Its drainage area covers 40% of South America.

The Amazon is responsible for 20% of the earth's freshwater entering the Ocean.

The discharge plume extends 250 km out to sea.

Strictly speaking, the Amazon begins at Manaus. The main river above Manaus is called the Rio Solimões.

When the tributary River Negro (on which Manaus stands) joins with the main Solimões, the combined river is then known as the Amazon.



THE MEETING OF THE WATERS

The Solimões starts in the high Andes and as it descends, it picks up sediment. By the time it reaches Manaus, it is travelling at 6 km per hour and its bed is thick mud.

The Negro begins in the watershed between the Orinoco and Amazon basins in Columbia. This area lies at the western end of the Guiana Shield, (like the Canadian Pre-Cambrian Shield one of the oldest rock formations on earth) where the soil is relatively poor in nutrients.

For most of its length it flows more slowly than the Solimões, and as it spills slowly into the Amazon basin, humic acid from phenol-containing vegetation leaches into it and stains the water black. By the time it reaches Manaus, it is flowing at just 2-3 km per hour.



When the two rivers meet, they appear to run side by side for many kilometres without mixing. This is because:

- The Solimões is flowing at twice the speed of the Negro.
- The Solimões water is more dense than the Negro.
- The Negro is noticeably warmer than the Solimões.
- The Negro water is acidic whereas the Solimões is roughly neutral.
- The Solimões is much the larger river by volume (at least 5 times that of the Negro – which discharges an impressive 29,000 cubic metres per second into the Solimões).

