



At the Aniau Towers, the largest of the Amazon tree lodges, guests can view flora and fauna from a unique perspective in the jungle canopy.

the amount of water carried by the Mississippi. A single day's discharge into the Atlantic is sufficient to supply New York City with a nine-year supply of fresh water. The Amazon's immense volume of fresh water dilutes the ocean's saltiness 161 km (100 miles) from shore.

More than two-thirds of the Amazon basin is covered by an immense rain forest. In fact, the Amazon rain forest, which represents over one-third of the earth's remaining rain forest, also constitutes earth's largest reserve of biological resources. During recent decades deforestation has accelerated due to the development of new highways and airports and the discovery of minerals. The current population of Brazil's Amazon region is some 17 million, or 3.4 inhabitants per square km. 62% of this population lives in urban areas while only 38% lives in rural areas.



Crowds gawk at a float carrying a gigantic mythical bird during Carnival celebrations in Manaus

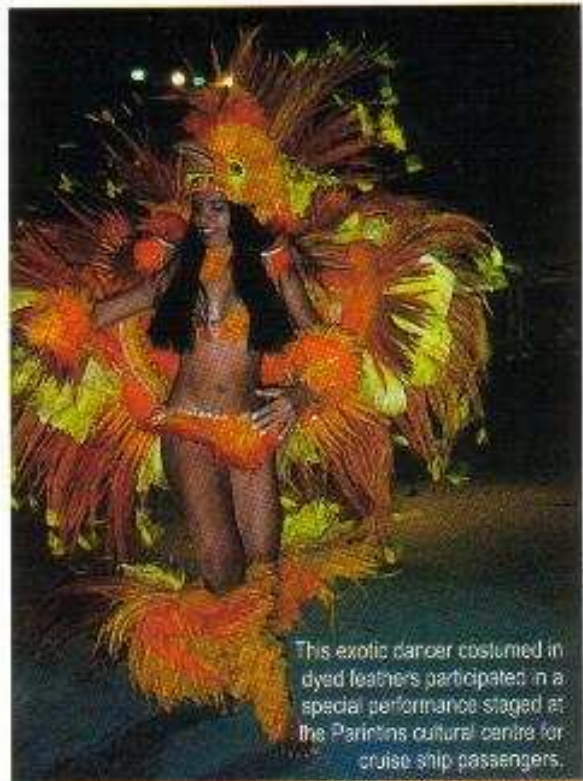
In Brazil the name "Solimoes" is used for the Amazon from Iquitos, Peru to the mouth of the Rio Negro. Brazilians use the term "Amazon"

(actually "Amazonas" in Portuguese) for the river only from the Rio Negro east to the Atlantic Ocean. Manaus (pronounced "Man-awsh"), the largest Amazon river city with a population of 1,300,000, is situated near the junction of the brownish-yellow (muddy) Rio Solimoes and the "black" Rio Negro. Interestingly, due to their different densities, velocities and temperatures, these two great rivers flow together for 6 km (4 miles) before mixing. A distinct stripe flows down the center until the two rivers eventually blend into a single uniform color.

Manaus' most famous monument is its opera house, the Teatro Amazonas, which was inaugurated in 1896. Built over a 15-year period during Brazil's late nineteenth century rubber boom from materials imported from Europe, the 681-seat neoclassical opera house was last restored in 1990 and is still in use today. Only the wood for the floors and the chairs came from Brazil, and even that wood was sent to Europe for molding before being returned to the jungle for installation.

Manaus' ingenious floating docks, constructed by a Scottish engineer at the beginning of the twentieth century, rise and fall by up to 10 meters (32 feet) with the Rio Negro's varying water level. At the Museu do Indio in downtown Manaus I viewed artifacts,

costumes and weapons from the region's principal tribes. Due to a favorable exchange rate, the museum gift shop offered expertly-



This exotic dancer costumed in dyed feathers participated in a special performance staged at the Parintins cultural centre for cruise ship passengers.

woven baskets from as little as USD 3; and I was able to purchase one large basket which stands a full meter high for only USD 9. One of the other highlights of my visit to Manaus was attending the very colorful Carnival parade there.

On the second day of the cruise the Seabourn Pride anchored near the 145-km (90-mile)-long Anavilhanas Archipelago which consists of 400 islands and is situated northwest of Manaus on the Rio Negro. Unlike the muddy Solimoes (Amazon), the Rio Negro flows over a bed of fine sand that is free of sediment. Even though the Rio Negro's water appears black, it is said that its water is purer than tap water found in most urban areas. Also, incredibly, the Rio Negro is free of mosquitoes and many other types of insects. It is thought that the river absorbs plant materials which dissolve and add natural toxins. Though not harmful to fish or jungle animals which drink from the river, the poisons apparently inhibit the reproductive cycles of most insects.

The Anavilhanas Archipelago is a developed jungle resort area. I took the opportunity to tour Aniau Amazon Towers, the largest tree top lodge. Established in 1986 with a mere eight rooms, today the resort boasts a helipad and can accommodate