

Adventure Series

# Amazon Adventures



*John Rasmussen*

**Cobblestone Press**

Adventure Series

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## **Amazon Adventures**

### **Disclaimer**

**This e-book reflects the personal experiences of the author and information provided by other publications or sources as described herein.**

**If you have questions about Amazon travel consult with your travel agent and the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate for passport and visa requirements.**

**For immunizations consult with a travel medicine practitioner regarding health risks and the potential need for immunizations, medications and precautions for international travelers.**

**Information regarding country-specific requirements and recommendations are available through the *Travel Medicine Advisor*© by AHC Media; the World Health Organization publication “International Travel and Health” and the Embassy of the Federative Republic of Brazil (202) 238-2818.**

**Any travel itinerary described in this e-book is subject to risks which require the reader to prepare for adventure, which is her or his sole responsibility.**

**Cobblestone Press LLC  
P. O. Box 131525  
Ann Arbor, MI 48113**

**First Edition, September 2010**

**ISBN Pending**

**CobblestonePress@aol.com**

**Cover photo  
A macaw in Santarem**

## Adventure Series



### Dedication

**This e-book is dedicated to Ocineide, English teacher and Livramento barrio children's program coordinator for the Pastoral do Menor in Santarém, Para, Brazil.**

**Not only did Ocineide volunteer to build a soccer court, she brought snacks morning and afternoon. "Obrigado"**

**When volunteers helped build classrooms in a barrio outside the city "centro" she traveled daily by motorcycle taxi to work along side Rotary volunteers.**

**This e-book is dedicated to Ocineide, who inspires children to aspire to become teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, artists, boxers and yes, soccer players.**

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## The Author

**This e-book introduces the reader to places and stories of the Amazon River between Manaus and Belem. Santarém is 500 miles from the Atlantic Ocean where the river is 30 miles wide.**

**The Amazon beckoned the author to travel to Brazil for volunteer with Rotarians to help build a soccer court for children in Santarém's Livramento Barrio in Brazil's lower Amazon region.**

**Rotarians and children board the River Boat Nova Estella IV for a day trip with families bringing music CD's, a CD player and a lunch of traditional feijão (beans) plus vegetables and fish.**

**The captain pilots the Nova Estella IV to the meeting of the waters of the clear Tapajos River and the muddy brown Amazon. Motoring up the Maica River we wave to children along the river.**

**The captain motors from the Amazon to enter a shallow passage where we run aground. No problem. Reverse gear broke us free. My experience led to three more trips to the Amazon in 2006-08.**

**Imagine a journey on the Amazon, the Tapajos and Maica Rivers. Go outdoors, climb into a "hāy-gē" (hammock) and experience the river as the night ferry travels the Amazon under the stars.**

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## **Amazon Adventures**

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## GETTING THERE



**Manaus and Santarém are served by TAM and GOL Airlines.**

**Tam flights from New York (JFK) to Sao Paulo have connecting flights to Manaus. Flights from Miami to Sao Paulo connect with flights to Brasilia and to Manaus on the Amazon.**

**Direct flights Miami to Manaus are five hours with one daily flight so book well in advance. Manaus to Santarém is 1 hour by plane. Return flights to Miami from Manaus are full, so book early and arrive two hours before flight time when flying from Brazil to US.**

**For hardy travelers a riverboat from Manaus to Santarém is an adventure providing you bring a hammock and have the time. Hammocks are available from street vendors in Manaus.**

**I like to stay at the Hotel Manaus, sit outdoors in the square, dine, tour the city and decompress before travel to Santarém.**



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### MANAUS



**Manaus Opera House**

**Manaus, a city of 1,250,000, is the gateway for Amazon tours at the confluence the coffee cream colored Amazon River and the black waters of the River Negro flowing from the forest.**

**The rubber boom of 1890 to 1915 followed by the gold boom of 1950-1980 created a city in the jungle. More recently a free trade zone brought international trade, electronic firms and businesses producing DVD's for games, movies and music.**

**Teatro Amazonas, the Manaus Opera house, built during the rubber boom in 1896 is open for visitors from 9 to 5 with English speaking tours of the 700 seat restored opera house. Hear a rehearsal or visit the ticket office for current programs.**

**The square in front of the opera house with paving stones depicting meeting of the waters is worth a visit in the evening. Cafés on the square with outdoor seating offer a place to enjoy an evening of people watching with a fresh juice or cachaça.**

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## Rubber Boom



The rubber boom of 1890 to 1915 is portrayed in this riverside café mural near the Manaus cruise ship terminal, reached by an overhead walkway. If you arrive on a cruise ship coming up the Amazon, this mural will greet you as you disembark.

If you prefer an Amazon Riverboat instead of a cruise ship the nearby riverboat terminal offers tours to river destinations. Booking offices book rain forest tours with jungle lodges. The riverboat terminal cafés offer a place to hang out when it rains.

When you arrive in Manaus see the riverboats, “barco” ferries and outboard motorboats loaded with tropical foods to get a taste of how people, food and goods go from place to place.

While Les Halles, the French market, closed for restoration it is worth seeing the relocated bustling mercado by the river. Manaus is a shopping destination of covered street markets, air conditioned stores, parks, Indian craft markets and restaurants.



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## SANTARÉM



### A Macaw in Santarem

**Santarém is known as riverboat city. Located at the confluence of the Tapajos and Amazon Rivers, the river is a busy harbor for Amazon ferry boats, fishing boats, tour boats and work boats.**

**Come to the Tapajos River, walk the orla along the river. See the people, the riverboats, the fish and truck loads of bananas.**

**I walk to Mercado 2000 across the street from the fish dock to view colorful foods and sights. Fish, fish and more fish in refrigerated displays and “carne” in glass refrigerated cases.**

**Behind the fish market I see dried shrimp, all sorted by size. Down rows and rows of vendors I see peppers, more peppers and pepper sauce. Rice, beans, potatoes, greens and more greens.**

**Pineapples, papaya, mangos, oranges, watermelon, jackfruit. What can I carry back to my room? on the bus? or walking?**

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The gazebo plaza offers artist stalls while men play board games.



IESPES University's library is inside a former gold miners home

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## Santarém

**Santarém is the third largest city in Brazil's Amazon region.**

**With 250,000 residents the population swells when the river overflows as relatives relocate to the city overlooking the river. Santarém is situated at the widest part of the Amazon, which stretches 30 miles wide at low water and 50 miles when it floods.**

**The river brings life, food, supplies and whatever is needed. The highway connecting Santarém brings trucks of soy beans from the south for shipment by ocean freighters, most likely to China.**

**The rubber boom of the 1890's and the gold rush of the 1980's influenced Santarém. Near Santarém the infamous Mr. Wickham took local rubber tree seeds or seedlings, which he sold to Malaysia, which overtook Brazil as a major rubber producer.**

**A gold rush prospector built a magnificent house with carved wood doors and swimming pool. When his fortune declined the home became a library for IESPES University in Santarém. (Tours of the library can be arranged through IESPES University.)**

**The Museu De Santarém in the yellow building near the riverfront is worth a visit for early archaeological findings, the slavery exhibit and unique murals on the walls.**

**The square anchored by a gazebo is lined with stalls of women selling jewelry, carvings and crafts while men play board games. Prices are fair providing direct income to artists and their family.**

**Day time sounds of children playing and laughing, noise of motorbikes and riverboats. At night music drowns other sounds. Restaurants and cafés along the riverbank and across the road are favorite evening destinations for outdoor dining and drinks.**



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### OBIDOS



**Colorful hammocks on the Lady Lourdes going to Obidos**

**Obidos is about 200 miles up the Amazon River from Santarém and approximately 600 miles downriver from Manaus.**

**An early fortification at Obidos overlooks the Amazon at the narrowest point of the river. To see the fort ask the policemen at the fort, which is now home to the Obidos police station.**

**Known for Brazil nuts, which are served in delicious cookies, Brazil nuts are harvested and shipped by riverboat from Obidos to Cities around the world. Coconuts are a major commodity.**

**We stayed with a local dentist Dr. Luis Bentes. Our host has a dental office nearby. Portuguese is the spoken language.**

**Horaldo and I visited the mercado, fish market, cultural center and attended a Rotary Meeting at the house of friendship.**

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## *The Lady Lourdes*



The Lady Lourdes provides overnight ferry service from Santarém 200 miles up river to Obidos and return at night. Ferry service is strictly BYOH bring your own hammock.

Watching the crew align the TV satellite dish with his upraised foot on a moving ferry in the middle of the Amazon night provided entertainment in itself!

Imagine the delight of the men raising their cerveja and cheers with a goal scored or less gleeful noises when the other team scores or the satellite dish loses the picture.

We watched soccer on TV on the upper deck, but soon retired to the open sided deck below for the night. Haroldo gratefully inquired if the captain's cabin was available for an extra fee for the night, which it was.

I had the luxury of sleeping in the captain's bed, while Haroldo hung his hammock in the captain's cabin for a swinging bed. We even had a toilet, sink and shower.



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### *Man Swims Amazon*



**Martin Strel's support boats and outrigger canoe**

**Martin Strel, the man that swam the Amazon, was accompanied by his son and a support team. The photo above shows a crew member with his support boat and outrigger canoe at Obidos.**

**The 53 year old Slovenian completed his 3,372 mile world record swim at Ponta de Pedras below Santarém just one day after swimming for four nights from Obidos to Santarem.**

**I didn't see him swim as he swam at night. I did see his support boats at Obidos and again 200 miles downstream at Santarém. He swam at night to avoid being sun burned. Guess what comes out at night? Everything you don't want to see.**

**His support team traveled by outrigger canoe and riverboat, while he swam the Amazon at night. Martin Strel is reported to say "creatures of the river thought he was just one of them."**

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## Man Swims Amazon

*Ronaldo, Vera and I sit at a café table on Santarém's public pier. The man swimming the Amazon reached Santarém today. Ronaldo, tells us about Martin Strel swimming to the public pier at Santarém only to learn he arrived before the photographer. So, guess what? He swims back out into the river at the widest point with current of both the Tapajos and the Amazon. When the photographer was ready he swam back to the pier.*

**What gave Martin Strel physical, mental and spiritual strength? According to Martin Strel he lost 26 pounds during the swim. (I think losing 26 pounds is not a reason to swim the Amazon}**

**How “To cope with the delirium...Strel turned to his doctor.” His doctor, a psychotherapist, guided him to redirect his inner thinking away from his pains “toward other things.”**

**(We don't know what those things are, but it worked for him.)**

**Physical might is not enough. Mental toughness is not enough. Inner thoughts give spiritual guidance to reach personal goals.**

**The stamina of Martin Strel is amazing. Ocean tides influence river currents and he faced “piranhas, the dreaded toothpick fish, bull sharks, the cramps, insomnia and dehydration.”**

**We don't have to swim the Amazon, but we can use our physical, mental and spiritual strength to live fully each day and live a fulfilling and satisfying life, where ever we are.**

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### **BELTERRA**



**John Copeland views an old rubber tree with slash marks**

**Belterra south of Santarém is Henry Ford's 1930's legacy city. The streets are lined with bungalows and an active community center is now in the former rubber depot.**

**Ford employed Mundurucú Indians at Fordlandia on the Tapajos River and later upstream at Belterra. Lumberjacks from Michigan's U P logged and burned forests to plant rubber trees.**

**Unlike natural rubber trees growing wild in the forest the rubber trees were planted in dense rows. When trees grew tall for the branches to touch, disease spread tree to tree dooming the trees.**

**Visitors can walk through rubber trees behind the administration building, visit the rubber depot and learn the history of Belterra.**

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### ALTER DO CHAO



**Alter do Chão is a weekend destination one hour from Santarém. Stay overnight on Friday and Saturday or arrive early on Sunday. Buses depart Santarém 6 times a day from beside Mercado 2000. Bus fare \$0.50 USD. Taxi fare from Santarém is about \$20 USD.**

**The “Island of Love” with its sand beach offers six beach cafés. Row boats ferry four passengers to the white sand beach and grass roof cafes for lunch, sun and fun. Order lunch of local fish and the cook’s specialties. Relax, swim or kayak until lunch.**

**At the end of the beach is a trail and overland hike to a hill top overlooking the river, lagoon and the community across the river. As small businesses are not likely to accept credit cards be prepared to pay cash for pousada, food and other purchases.**



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**Alter do Chão cafés and a distant cross atop a hilltop**



**Come enjoy the beach and cafés at Alter do Chao**



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## RIVERBOATS



### River boats and Amazon Ferries at Santarém

**Check ferry schedules at Santarém public pier. Ferries leave from a floating dock in the background. Non-Portuguese speakers may want to know key phrases or have written directions.**

**Be warned, it is necessary to BYOH bring your own hammock. Passengers bring hammocks to sit, hold belongings and to sleep.**

**Riverboats are likely to have 2 cabins and a 100 hammock hooks. The Captain's cabin behind the wheel house has a bed, shower and toilet. Ask if the Captain's cabin is available for fee upgrade.**

**A second cabin, typically with an upper and lower bunk is on the port side, which can be booked for an additional charge. It may be possible to book one of the two cabins after boarding.**

**Larger ferries have more cabins. Check with tour guide services.**

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## **BELÉM**

**Belém today is four or more days by riverboat from Manaus.**

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**A shrimp boat fisherman told me fishing boats, ocean going freighters and cruise ships contend with the current of the mighty Amazon river which extends for miles into the Atlantic.**

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**When the moon reaches a certain phase a surge of water flows up the surface of the Amazon. Those who try to surf the surge and photographers filming the surfers have been swept away.**

**As a city of 5 million and the capital of the State of Pará the skyline is outlined with skyscrapers with a busy port at the mouth of the Amazon serving mining, agriculture and industry.**

**The city grew with expanding transportation connections. The Belém-Brasilia Highway, completed in 1960, runs 2,350 km (1,460 mi) almost straight north-south between the two cities. The state university, active newspapers, and the white marble Paz Theater serve the educational and cultural community.**

**Belém, founded by the Portuguese in 1616, was a focus of several economic booms. Republic of Pará was proclaimed on 16th November 1689. In 1690 the Municipal Council accepted the proposal of its President, Artur Indio do Brasil to recognize the flag of the Republican Club as the official flag of Belém.**

**While some would like to see the state of Pará divided into two states with Belem, being the capital of the east and Santarem, serving as the capital of the vast western area of Para.**

**Para extends to the state of Amazonas on the west and includes a major portion of the lower Amazon basin watershed.**

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## *Amazon River Adventure*

**An adventurous couple with a pet dog traveled by raft, dug out canoe and riverboat from Peru to Belém. Their story has enough adventure and seat gripping suspense to be made into a movie.**

**Enduring hot sun, rain, mosquitoes, floating islands and dwarfed by the 30 mile wide Amazon River near Santarém they relished completing their Amazon River odyssey in Belém.**

**Safely past the confluence of the Tapajos River they by-passed Henry Ford's rubber plantation at Belterra, which was hard to see from the river, while jungle already reclaimed Fordlandia.**

**Motoring downriver they approached a wide bay near Belem. The end of their river journey was in sight. Then wind velocity increased creating whitecaps. Wind, river current and waves tossed and deflected their riverboat off course.**

**Visibility diminished. Rain increased. Waves came over the bow. The bilge pump strained, then stopped. Removing the bilge pump filter it was discovered the pump's filter was plugged.**

**What? the filter was plugged with hair, dog hair, their dog's hair.**

**Before he could clean the filter a big wave struck the bow. Loosing balance he accidentally dropped the filter into the murky dark bilge water. Plop. The filter was lost in the bilge.**

**It couldn't get any worse, but it did. The rising water in the bilge flooded the engine. The engine quit. Even if the engine was running it was nearly impossible to steer directly into the wind.**

**With the engine flooded forward momentum was lost. The powerless boat tossed about like a toy boat. The rocky shore on either side could gash, smash and sink the small boat.**

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## Amazon River Adventure

**They both bailed water with buckets. The dog watched. It was impossible to keep ahead of waves of water coming over the bow. They had few choices, they must get the pump working.**

**With wife at the wheel he reached into the murky bilge water. The smell of fuel oil. Salty sweat ran down his face. It was dark. He couldn't see the filter. He sweated. He could hear his heart beat.**

**Then he found it, the filter. His fingers wiped hair from the filter. He put the filter in the pump. He worked the bilge pump, his wife scooped buckets of water over the rail. The dog watched.**

**Without the engine steering was impossible. Dropping anchor was not likely to work. The power of the wind and water would only drag the anchor. A sea anchor was no match for the wind.**

**The engine was wet. The ignition was flooded. A hair dryer might help, but they had neither a hair dryer nor electric power. Turning around, he saw a fire extinguisher clamped to the cabin.**

**Releasing the clamp, he pulled the safety pin, pointed the fire extinguisher toward the ignition wires and squeezed the lever. CO2 from the fire extinguisher blew away water from the ignition.**

**He moved to the cabin. Turned the key. The engine coughed, then it caught. Chug, chug, chug. What a beautiful sound.**

**The clouds parted. The sun shone through the open clouds. Ahead was Belem. Safe, but wet they motored to a safe harbor.**

**The Amazon River adventure is a story worth telling. It's true.<sup>1</sup> Lucky for the dog in the story, the dog didn't stray from the boat.**

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<sup>1</sup> Exploring the Amazon by Helen and Frank Schreider, The National Geographic Society, 1970.

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## *Amazon Itinerary*<sup>2</sup>

Imagine a two week wintertime escape for an Amazon Adventure.

### Manaus to Belem

#### DAY 1-3 Manaus

Manaus is five hours from Miami unless flying though São Paulo.

Manaus, founded in 1669, is the gateway to the Amazon River at the confluence of the rio Negro and rio Solimoes where the city grew from the jungle in the 1890 rubber boom and 1980 gold rush.

Teatro Amazonas, the 1896 Opera House is open for tours as is Rio Negro Cultural Palace; Le Halles, the French Market is under restoration; the mercado is a bustling riverfront public market.

Sao Sebastian Square is the place to sit, sip and see the night life. English speaking guide(s) relate stories of rubber barons, bricks made of rubber, French market, floating dock and the rain forest.

#### Day 4-5 Santarém

Santarém, riverboat city, on the south bank the Amazon where the clear waters of the Tapajos River flow along side the Amazon.

Walk the riverfront orla. Watch riverboats bring fresh fish to market, walk through the Mercado 2000 facing the Tapajos River. "Cafe" is a light breakfast. Coffee in demitasse cups is strong.

Enjoy fresh fish, shrimp and calderada (fish soup) in local restaurants. Visit the yellow color Museum by the riverfront and IESPES University's Library in the former gold miner's home.

Check email at the internet cafe opened by a New York City friend located on the corner across from the orla along the river.

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<sup>2</sup> Consult licensed tour operators before undertaking Amazon travel. Caution is advised of hawkers offering tours provided by others. Ferryboats are BYOH bring your own hammock, the larger the hammock the better. Some riverboats serve food. Beverage service is offered on the upper deck.



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### Day 6-7 Alter do Chao

**Alter do Chao comes alive weekends so plan to arrive Friday PM, or Saturday AM and stay two nights. You won't be disappointed.**

**The "Island of Love" with its sand beach offers six beach cafés. Row boats ferry four passengers to the white sand beach and grass roof cafes for lunch, sun and fun. Order lunch of local fish and the cook's specialties. Relax, swim or kayak until lunch.**

**At the end of the beach is a trail and overland hike to a hill top overlooking the river, lagoon and the community across the river.**

**As small businesses are not likely to accept credit cards be prepared to pay cash for pousada, food and other purchases.**

**For pousada or hotel lodging see Tourist Information in Santarém located on the Tapajos River pier or consult Brazil guide books.**

*Lonely Planet travel guide writers visited Alter do Chao to check out the local cozy pousadas and the upscale Belalter Hotel. I find Lonely Planet guide books to be consistently reliable for ecco traveler friendly listings and warnings of possible dangers & annoyances.*

### Day 8- Belterra

**In 1928 Henry Ford built a complete city of bungalows with a hospital, streets with electric lights, a water system, water tower and fire hydrants for his Brazilian rubber plantation.**

**Bungalows on First Avenue are lived in. The rubber depot is a community center with computer classes and musical performances. A new municipal hospital replaces Ford's hospital. A few rubber trees remain. Enjoy fish and traditional fijoada in a local café. A new pousada (small inn) opened in Belterra in 2007.**

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### **Day 9- Ponte Pedras (Santarém Day trip – 2 to 4 hours)**

Ponte Pedras beach south of Santarém is popular for swimming, watching the action or being part of the action. I heard international visitors speaking French or other languages. This beach is one half hour from Santarém and is a local hangout.

### **Day 9- Bosque Santa Lucia (Santarém Day Trip 3-4 hours)**

Contact guide, Steve Alexander, to tell the story of the Amazon forest from the museum in the forest. He guides tours through forest trails to see termite mounds, rubber trees and nut trees.

Hear creatures of the forest from cicada, howls of monkeys and perhaps see green parrots. Steve has lived in Brazil over 30 years and is a guide's guide. Steve Alexander [www.amazonriver.com](http://www.amazonriver.com)

### **Day 10- Boat Tour (Santarém Day Trip 4- 6 hours)**

Maicá is a small tributary (furo) of the Amazon River downstream from Santarém. Birds and dolphin (boto) are sometimes seen. The Maicá offers an opportunity to see life along an Amazon tributary,

A chartered Maica riverboat day cruise from Santarém begins across from Mercado 2000, where I buy fresh fruit for the trip. Nova Estella IV can be chartered by guide Steve Alexander.

In the middle of the river, the meeting of the waters forms a line extending for miles separating the “muddy brown” Amazon from the “clear” Tapajos river each with a unique composition.

### **Day 11-12 Alenquer (Overnight river boat 3-4 hours each way)**

Located across the Amazon River from Santarém, Alenquer has several impressive waterfalls. This is not a day trip as crossing the river can take 3 or 4 or more hours.

Riverboats depart twice daily and once on weekends from behind Mascotinho Restaurante in Santarém. Return riverboats depart at 6 AM and 12 noon weekdays. Check schedules for updates.

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## HEALTH CARE

### Manaus

**Manaus is a major city with both private and public health care. Brazilian nationals receive public health care services. Visitors who are accustomed to “fee for service” healthcare can choose private “fee for service” health care providers. Inquire at hotels.**

### Santarém

**Santarém has not-for-profit clinics, a busy municipal hospital, private medical hospitals and a newer regional public hospital. Guide Steve Alexander updates the blog for Fundacao Esperanca describing programs and is knowledgeable of medical providers.**

**Hospital Municipal (Public)**

**Hospital e Maternidade Sagrada Familia (Private)**

**Imaculada Conceição (Private)**

**Hospital e Maternidade Joao XXII (Private)**

**Hospital Sao Raimundo Nonato (Private)**

**Hospital e Maternidade Santa Terezinha (Private)**

**Regional Hospital (Public) new 2007**

**Rotary International provided x-ray equipment and training to serve the Santarém Municipal Hospital in 2009-2010.**

**Fundacao Esperanca (hope foundation) is a community resource created after the death of a beloved priest, Luke Tupper, M.D to provide local health care as well as serve upriver forest villages.**

**Santarém has five clinics operated by Fundacao Esperanca. The medical, dental, diabetes, children’s and family clinics and medical laboratory serve limited income families with sliding fees.**

**My friend Rachael traveled to Santarém to confirm delivery of x-ray, ultra sound and dental equipment to hospitals in the lower Amazon. Ten days after returning home she gave birth to her son, River.**

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## HEALTH CARE

### Obidos

Obidos health care providers include Luis Bentes DDS, a family clinic and Misericordia, a private hospital.

A new hospital is proposed. While construction was halted in 2009 it is expected a new (public) municipal hospital will be built.

A prospective physician in Santarém, fluent in English and Portuguese told the author she wants to serve in Obidos.

### Belterra

Belterra Municipal Hospital replaced the original hospital built by Henry Ford for the rubber plantation in the 1930's.

A Rotary International 3H grant (Health, Hunger and Hospitality) provided new x-ray equipment for the municipal hospital in 2010.

The hospital is equipped with a pharmacy, two birthing stations and separate patient wing. A new surgical wing is proposed.

### Belem

Belem is the largest city and the Capital of the State of Para.

Expect to have a choice of private and public health care. Portuguese is the local spoken language throughout Brazil.

Be prepared to have a English – Portuguese dictionary.

If you have even a limited vocabulary in Portuguese before arrival in Brazil you will find native speakers willing to speak slowly which encourages visitors to communicate in their language.

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## ADVISORIES

### DRESS

The climate in Brazil is hot and rainy and clothing styles reflect the steamy climate. Visitors seeing bare skin may be stimulated, but be warned bare skin is not an invitation, it is a cultural thing.

Visitors are likely to mistake exposed skin for risqué behavior, which is not the case. Nude swimming is not acceptable here.

Sandals are typically worn without socks and a size smaller than shoe size to reduce slapping sounds. Tourists take note.

### MALARIA

Consult tropical health care practitioners in your community at least two months before arrival for current advisories.

Immunizations (yellow card) are typically required for yellow fever, hepatitis A & B, tetanus and polio or as required by Brazil and/or recommended by your health care provider.

Prescriptions for preventive care for Malaria need to be obtained before arrival in the Amazon region of Brazil. Follow prescription directions, which may advise taking appropriate medications before arrival, during a stay and for a specified time upon return.

### STING RAYS

Sting Rays may be present in beach areas. Shuffling feet to stir up sand may encourage sting rays to move away from the beach.

Poking a pole, stick or paddle in a river bottom before wading in a river could reduce the likelihood of stepping on a sting ray.

I have not experienced a sting ray. I am not anticipating contact.



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## SNAKES

Snakes are present, but seldom seen. In the forest follow your guide's directions and ask your guide how to minimize risk.

"Anacondas... can way weigh up to 500 pounds." Historical account of T. Roosevelt in *The River of Doubt* by Candice Millard.

Steven Alexander's *Santarém Riverboat Town* describes snakes and snake encounters from 30 years of guiding forest visitors.

"Bushmaster or surucucu. "It can grow up to four meters long and is the terror of the forest-especially at night." (*poisonous*)

"The bushmaster is for most part a nocturnal snake, feeding on small forest mammals, such as forest rats. Many stories are told about how bushmasters stalk man at night and how they are attracted to fires or light."

Guide Alexander tells of a man being attacked by a bushmaster one night while walking home from the main road. "He threw his flashlight at the serpent and while running ahead, looked back to see the snake rolling in the road with the discarded torch."

*Tossing a torch to distract a snake suggests having two torches.*

"Corals" *True (poisonous) or false corals are seldom seen.*

"Fer-de-lance" or jararaca pit viper is the most common poisonous snake in the Amazon. "More than 60 percent of poisonous snakebites in Brazil are attributed to the jararaca."

"Rattlesnakes" "are more common to the tropical savanna, such as Alter do Chao." *e.g. trails on the island away from the beach.*

Non poisonous snakes- "pap-ovo" (egg eaters) "tree climbing."

*I have seen photographs of a snake which swallowed a man whole... boots and all. (No documentation of the location.)*

## ANTS

Fire ants. Do not touch is the rule.

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## BOOKS TO READ

To learn more about the Amazon and its stories, I recommend-

§

*The River of Doubt* by Candice Millard, a former editor and writer for *National Geographic* tells of “Theodore Roosevelt’s Darkest Journey” from letters written by members of the expedition to the river December 12, 1913 through February 25, 1914.

An unexplored Amazon tributary became a daunting challenge to physical and mental survival when the expedition had too few provisions for descent of the River of Doubt, which required three months, February 27, 1914 though April 26, 1914.

§

In *Fordlandia* Greg Grandin tells of the story of Henry Ford’s “forgotten jungle city” 18 hours by riverboat south of Santarém.

Lumberjacks from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula found softwood too soft or hardwoods so hard saws stopped halfway into a log. Fordlandia fed workers “oatmeal and canned peaches imported from Michigan for breakfast” then deducted food cost from pay. In the end the jungle won. Ford acquired land further upstream toward Santarém and developed a rubber plantation at Belterra.

On visits to Belterra in 2007-08 bungalows were lived in, city offices occupied the administration building and the rubber depot held computer classes, music and community events. A new hospital replaces a wooden structure designed by Albert Kahn.

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*Santarém Riverboat Town* by guide Steven Winn Alexander tells “A Gringo’s Own Account of Tourism on the Brazilian Amazon and Tapajós Rivers.” Steve Alexander [www.amazonriver.com](http://www.amazonriver.com)

Steve knows the legends, birds, fruta, fish, trees and the culture. He came to Brazil at 18, served in the public health service in Alaska and returned to Brazil to head up a community health service before becoming a legendary Amazon guide.

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### **Santarém Tour Guide and Author Steven Alexander**

**Nigel Smith, Professor of Geography, University of Florida describes in the foreword to Steven Winn Alexander's book *Santarém River Boat Town* that "Santarém and environs is really a jewel when it comes to tourism possibilities."**

**"One of the most rewarding parts of any visit to Santarem and its vicinity is to interact with the people who, as Steve points out in this book, are so friendly, helpful, and eager to show you aspects of their daily lives..." Nigel Smith**

***Steve Alexander is a guide's guide to the lower Amazon of Brazil. "He knows the legends, birds, fruta, fish, trees and the culture." "I appreciate cultural awareness as told by Steve from removing caps & hats when eating to sandal & banheiro etiquette."***

***John Rasmussen, Author and Tour Guide***