

Where two mighty rivers meet

MY two-hour bird's eye view of the rainforest is broken by the sight of the remotest of Brazil's World Cup venues. From the plane, I see the 40,000-seater Arena da Amazônia stadium, designed to resemble a wicker basket.

At ground level, the city is an architectural hotchpotch, its epicentre the bustling Sao Sebastião Square, home to a wavy black-and-white mosaic floor representing the 'meeting of the waters', the confluence of two rivers, the Rio Negro and the Rio Solimões, where different coloured waters meet but never mix.

Last week, the waters of Rio Negro rose, threatening to create chaos in a city already struggling to meet deadlines for its World Cup duties.

Crossing the square, I arrive at the Casa do Pensador restaurant and its fine views of the Opera House. Opened in 1896, the opera house was built at the height of the Brazilian rubber boom when Manaus sought to mimic European cities such as

Remote World Cup host city **Manaus** is where metropolis and rainforest coincide. By *Kiki Deere*

Paris and London with Beaux Arts palaces, wide boulevards, beautiful piazzas and elaborate fountains.

The traffic, skyscrapers and busy intersections make it hard to believe this busy harbour city, a hub for waterborne Amazonian traffic and home to 2million people, lies in the heart of the rainforest.

The outlying districts of Vieiraves, Adrianópolis and Ponta Negra are full of bars, restaurants, locals and tourists.

In Adrianópolis, I stop at the Cachacaria do Dedé, a bar, restaurant and dance floor filled with flamenco dancers. It is lined from floor to ceiling with bottles of cachaça, a spirit made from sugar cane juice. The bar has an impressive 150 different types of cachaça on offer, with another 800 said to be stacked away out of sight.



Class act: The Manaus Opera House and (inset) huge rainforest water lilies

Most visitors use Manaus as a portal into the Amazon rainforest. There are plenty of jungle lodges just a few hours from the city centre where you can fish for piranha, join jungle treks, spot alligators and canoe through verdant creeks.

Day trips allow me to see the meeting of the rivers, where the alkaline waters of the Rio Solimões and the black acid waters of the Rio Negro converge to form the Amazon, flowing separately for several kilometres due to differences in temperature, density and speed.

Another must is the beautiful Parque January, home to the victoria amazonica water lily, the largest of its kind with a diameter measuring up to an incredible 2.5m. They are part of a wonderful wild world on the edge of a bustling city.

Getting there

Kiki flew with TAM Airlines (tam.com.br) from London to Manaus via São Paulo for £835 return. She stayed at Anavilhanas Lodge (anavilhanaslodge.com), from £490 per person for two nights including three daily meals, transfers to and from Manaus and Jungle Lodge activities.

Could you adopt a child like me?

We need people to adopt children from a wide variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

You do not need to be wealthy or own your home.

Seats are limited at these information events:

please phone in advance to register your attendance.

Thursday 5 June 2014

6pm – 8pm

Westminster City Hall

64 Victoria Street

London SW1E 6QP

Freephone

0800 781 2332

adoption@rbkc.gov.uk

[f /adoptionandfostering](https://www.facebook.com/adoptionandfostering)



For more events visit

www.lbhf.gov.uk

www.rbkc.gov.uk

www.westminster.gov.uk