

I. Commissioned Blog Post – Brazil Travel Blog

Is it Safe to Swim in the Amazon River?

We are an American family with five children, and we have lived in Salvador Bahia, Brazil for almost two years. Our goal is to see as much of this beautiful country as possible.

The Amazon River in Belém, Brazil was one of the most incredible adventures we've ever had. We were in the mouth of the Amazon, also known as the Amazon Basin. The basin is the point where fresh river water flows into the ocean. The Amazon River is the second largest river in the world, after the Nile, and the longest river in South America. It flows through Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil.

For most of its path, the Amazon River grows anywhere from one to six miles wide. During flood seasons, the river can get more than 20 miles (32km) wide. The volume of water pouring out of this massive river has so much force and pressure that the fresh water doesn't start to mix with the saltwater of the Atlantic Ocean until 200 miles (320km) out to sea.

Belém is the gateway to the mouth of the Amazon and the capital of the Brazilian state of Pará. Belém translates to Bethlehem in English. It is the largest city in this state with a population of roughly 2 million people.

We chose to bring our kids here because this is where my husband, Chris, served a two-year mission for our church. While he was here, Chris learned Portuguese, taught the people, ate the food, and lived like a native. Chris's love for Brazil started here in Belém. We brought the family to see how and where he lived and to experience an Amazon adventure!

There are many interesting points of the Amazon you can visit. We highly recommend Manaus as a wonderful wildlife adventure. Manaus is known as the Heart of the Amazon. The nature and animals are different in this section of the river. You can see piranhas, pink dolphins, caymen, and sloths.

We stopped at a local Cacao, or coco, tree farm. Coco trees originated in the Amazon basin. These trees love shade, so they thrive under large rainforest leaves and get plenty of rain. We took a tour while here and got to taste fresh coco fruit. While on the tour, we learned how the farmers harvest and dry the coco beans. We ate chocolate candy and Brigadeiro made fresh on the farm. The Amazon chocolate was absolutely delightful.

Many people have asked us if we felt safe bringing our children to the Amazon. The answer is yes! The Amazon is an exciting place for people of all ages. The locals are kind and the food is incredible. We felt completely safe exploring the city and the river. While we were exploring the river, a couple of locals let us know that there were no piranhas in the part of the river we were at. After watching people dive in for a few minutes, we let our kids play in the water. The water looks brown, but we played for hours with no problems.

The Amazon River truly was such an exciting experience for our family. We all had a great time and learned a lot while we were there.