



# Travelogue

Part one:  
A week on the  
Rio Maranon  
Next week: The two Jims in Nepal

## 'Living vicariously through the adventures of our friends'

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### Drew and Christie Eastman take on Peru's 'Grand Canyon of the Amazon'

By DREW EASTMAN  
For the News

Standing at the bottom of canyon walls that tower hundreds of feet above the river, staring at a maelstrom of whitewater knowing that it would be the biggest rapid we had ever run, and having been told that there was no way to walk around the exploding chaos named Shapalmonte, we studied the rapid intently while walking back to our kayaks.

Once at our kayaks, we tightened our life jackets and slid into the flooded river above a rapid larger than anything on the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. After splashing my face with water and energizing myself, I looked at my wife Christie and said, "We have the skills to do this, we know our line, stay on my tail, fight for vision, and paddle hard. You ready?"

With a nod of her head Christie indicated it was time to go, so we began paddling into the largest class V rapid that both of us had ever attempted in our paddling careers, each of which span well over a decade. At that moment, we had no idea that neither one of us would make it to the bottom of that rapid safely until the next day.

Spending a week on the Rio Maranon in Peru, also known as the Grand Canyon of the Amazon, with just my wife was an experience chalked full of hardships, lasting memories and endless smiles.

When Christie and I first became friends in 2008, I recall her sharing a desire to visit Peru on a whitewater adventure. Having heard stories from friends that had visited the South American country, it seemed as though any adventurous whitewater kayaker should include Peru in their travel plans. Due to other commitments as well as financial and time restraints, it wasn't until the fall of 2014 that we were able to fulfill our dream of kayaking in Peru.

Knowing that we would be in Peru during a time that the majority of the country experiences a rainy season, we knew that the typical kayaking destinations of the Colca Canyon, the Apurimac and Cotahuasi Rivers would be out of the question due to dangerously high water levels. After doing some research, we decided that our adventure would lead us to a six-day, five-night expedition on the Rio Maranon, which is the mainstream source of the mighty Amazon River.

The Rio Maranon receives water from glaciers on the highest tropical mountains in the world, with elevations over 20,000 feet; our trip



began at an elevation of about 7,000 feet. The arid canyon that squeezes the Rio Maranon into its valley is more than twice as deep as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and contains rapids that rival anything on that iconic rafting trip of the U.S.

Beginning our trip in the mountaineering town of Huaraz, located at the base of the second highest mountain range in the world, we were about an eight hour drive from the river. After the first ride we had arranged decided the roads weren't good enough and it was too far, we managed to find a different ride to the river, at an agreed upon a price. The drive was incredible, taking us over a 13,000 foot mountain pass and near sites of Inca ruins. We were in awe of the beauty of the country.

Our driver was pleasant, even showing us points of interest along the way. But the mood changed quickly when he suddenly stopped in the middle of nowhere and demanded a couple hundred dollars more if we wanted to continue and threatened us if we did not pay. After nearly thirty minutes of arguing on the side of the dirt road, we foiled his attempted extortion scheme and continued the drive. Although it was an awkward ride, luckily we weren't far from our destination, and when we arrived our driver wished us luck by exclaiming "Buena suerte!" before speeding away.

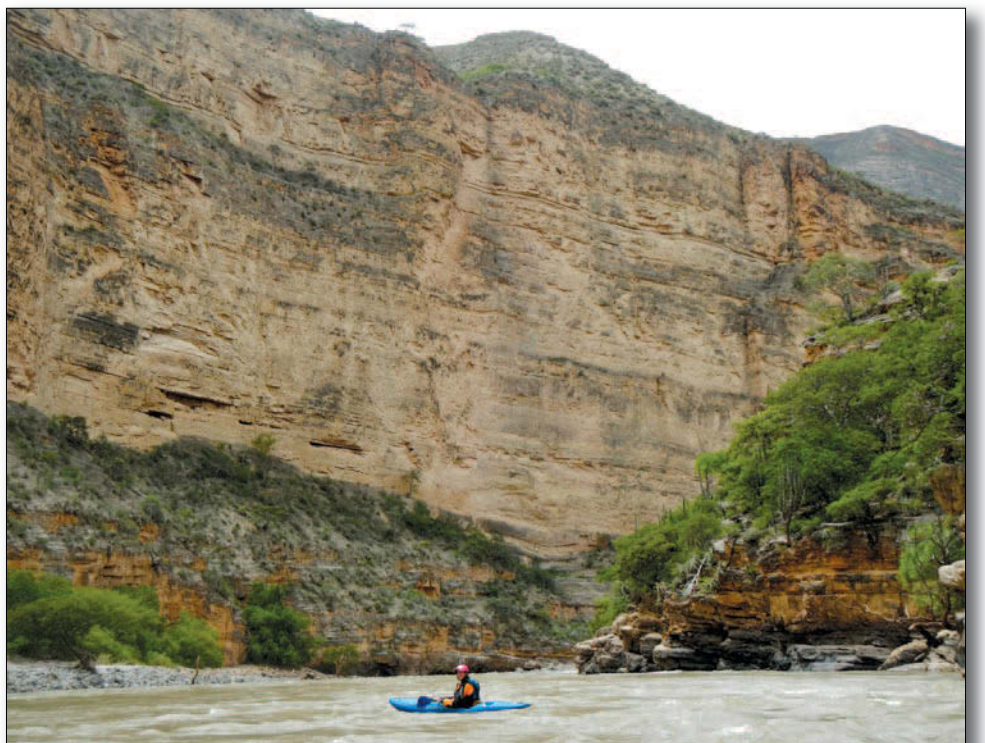
After paddling the first Class III rapid on the river, we immediately felt the power of the water; the sheer volume of the river took some getting used to. Living



in the Columbia Gorge and regularly paddling the Hood River, along with other local stretches of rivers in the Gorge, we are used to flows of about 2,500 cubic feet per second. The Rio Maranon boasts flows of over 10,000 cfs in December. The second day, Christmas Eve, was littered with many class IV rapids, sunshine and surf waves. There was even one section where the river boiled its way through a narrow canyon no more than eight feet wide.

Having an amazing day on the water, we arrived early that afternoon to our campsite, which was on a huge sandy beach. The sun was hot and the water was cool so we went swimming and worked on our tans while enjoying the serenity of our

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### About the author

Drew and Christie Eastman are Hood River residents and longtime kayaking enthusiasts. Drew works as the executive director of the Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute and Christie is an occupational health nurse and pro kayaker.



**DREW AND CHRISTIE** Eastman recently spent a week on the Rio Maranon in Peru, also known as the Grand Canyon of the Amazon. The two Hood River residents packed all the gear they needed in their hard-shell kayaks and floated the river for six days and five nights. Although they experienced hardships along the way, like rising waters, unpredictable rapids, a precarious portage and sudden illness, the two returned home safely earlier this month with an amazing story to tell and memories that will last them a lifetime.

Photos courtesy Drew Eastman

