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Delfin Amazon Cruises Marks 20 Years in the Amazon:

ON BEING FIRST AND STAYING TRUE

As Delfin turns 20, the family-owned Peruvian pioneer reflects on two decades of redefining luxury in the Amazon; from early intuition to regeneration, community reciprocity, and global recognition.

Iquitos, Peru (30 April 2026): Being first is often mistaken for being loud.



In travel, firsts are easily reduced to headlines: first to launch, first to arrive, first to claim a category. But the first that matters most is quieter. It is conviction. It is seeing something before others do, and building it with patience, humility, and care.

As Delfin Amazon Cruises marks 20 years, that distinction feels worth making.

Founded in 2006 by Aldo Macchiavello and Lissy Urteaga, Delfin became the first luxury river cruise company in the Peruvian Amazon, and later joined Relais & Châteaux in 2017. Yet the deeper story is not chronology. It is that Delfin began before the industry had the language it now uses so fluently; before purpose became expected, before sustainability became standard vocabulary, and long before regeneration emerged as the more demanding ambition.

Twenty years has a way of clarifying what was always true. Not only what a company has done; but what the world has learned to name.

A QUIET BEGINNING, A PERUVIAN POINT OF VIEW



In 2006, luxury travel still spoke mainly in the language of access, comfort, and exclusivity. The Amazon was rarely imagined as a setting for refined hospitality; let alone one rooted in intimacy, cultural depth, and a distinctly Peruvian sensibility. In those early years, the idea itself met resistance.

“There was a great deal of disbelief” said Lissy Urteaga, Co-Founder of Delfin Amazon Cruises. *“People told us the Amazon was not a luxury destination... But we saw something different: a unique place in the world, with extraordinary biodiversity and a living culture that deserved to be shared with dignity.”*

Delfin was first in ways that mattered:

- **First to bring boutique luxury** to this part of the Amazon through a lens that felt local, not imported.
- **First to let design emerge from place:** from regional textures, materials, and craft traditions.
- **First to choose intimacy over scale,** placing the guest experience at the centre, not the numbers.
- **First to insist** that hospitality in the Amazon cannot be separated from respect for the river, the forest, and the communities that call it home.

For Delfin, the Amazon was never a backdrop. It was the reason.

“When I think back to those early days, what moves me most is the mixture of hope and vertigo,” Urteaga said. *“We had no guarantees—only a conviction that the Amazon deserved to be experienced with respect, sensitivity, and excellence.”*

WHAT CHANGES IN 20 YEARS

Anniversaries invite easy language: milestone, legacy, celebration. All true. Not quite enough.

Because over two decades, the vocabulary of travel has shifted...dramatically. Sustainability moved from the margins to the mainstream. And in recent years, sustainability itself has begun to feel like a baseline rather than a finish line. The newer ambition is regeneration: not simply reducing harm, but helping restore ecological resilience, cultural continuity, and local prosperity.

For Delfin, this language resonates because it describes what the company has long understood intuitively: the Amazon is living. It must be engaged with relationally; through stewardship, reciprocity, and enduring local partnerships.



RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX, AND THE MEANING OF RECOGNITION

A defining milestone came when Delfin joined Relais & Châteaux in 2017. The recognition mattered not only for its prestige, but for what it affirmed: that Amazonian hospitality, rooted in place and executed with excellence, belongs fully within the highest international standards of the art of hospitality.

"Being part of Relais & Châteaux was very special," Urteaga said. "It validates a philosophy: hospitality with identity, cuisine rooted in territory, service with purpose... without losing our essence."

Delfin did not earn global recognition by becoming more generic. It earned it by becoming more fully itself.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LUXURY



Over these two decades, luxury has evolved. Material markers have given way to quieter values: authenticity, slowness, silence, cultural integrity, and emotional resonance. In that sense, the wider market has moved closer to what Delfin set out to build from the beginning.

“Today, luxury is time, silence, authenticity,” Urteaga said. “It is hearing the sound of the forest without interference... less ostentation, more meaning.”

That philosophy lives across Delfin I, Delfin II, and Delfin III, and in the brand promise: Woven by Nature, Crafted for You. A form of luxury that whispers rather than performs, shaped by Peruvian craft, Amazonian knowledge, refined cuisine, and the belief that in a place like this, true hospitality must be relational.

A FAMILY STORY; NOW CARRIED FORWARD

Delfin has always been family-owned and proudly Peruvian, shaped by the complementary strengths of its founders: Urteaga’s aesthetic sensitivity and narrative instinct, and Macchiavello’s structure and long-range vision. That balance helped create something emotionally resonant; and durable.

Now, at 20 years, the story enters a new chapter: the next generations of the Macchiavello family are stepping more fully into the legacy. A living handover. A deeper commitment to coherence, to craft, to the communities and ecosystems that have shaped Delfin since the beginning.

Because the truest measure of a pioneer is not being first once. It is staying true...over time.



WHAT COMES NEXT

Delfin enters its third decade with clarity about what the future demands: not growth for its own sake, but deeper impact. Stronger community alliances. More rigorous environmental accountability. A more explicit regenerative model; grounded in long-term relationships and measurable stewardship.

"The challenge is not growth for growth's sake," Urteaga said. "It is depth; consolidating our social impact, strengthening our alliances with communities, continuing to innovate without losing our essence. Twenty years is a milestone, but the river keeps flowing."

If the first 20 years were about opening a path, the next chapter is about deepening it...patiently, purposefully, and together.



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