

## **ECUADOR RAINFOREST GATEWAY & ENCHANTED ISLANDS**

### **DAY BY DAY ITINERARY**

#### **ECUADOR**

##### **Day 1 - QUITO**

**(-/-/-)**

Quito transfers airport/hotel  
Overnight at Hilton Colon Quito Hotel - Deluxe rooms

##### **Day 2 – QUITO / HAMADRYADE LODGE**

**(B/L/D)**

Journey to the source of chocolate tour.  
Overnight at Hamadryade Lodge – Standard rooms

##### **Day 3 – HAMADRYADE LODGE / QUITO**

**(B/L/-)**

Journey to the source of chocolate tour.  
Overnight at Hilton Colon Quito Hotel - Deluxe rooms

##### **Day 4 – QUITO / MASHPI LODGE**

**(B/L/D)**

Mashpi Lodge Program - 3 days / 2 nights  
Wayra Rooms

##### **Day 5 – MASHPI LODGE**

**(B/L/D)**

Mashpi Lodge Program - 3 days / 2 nights  
Wayra Rooms

##### **Day 6 – MASHPI LODGE / QUITO**

**(B/-/-)**

Mashpi Lodge Program - 3 days / 2 nights  
  
Overnight at Hilton Colon Quito Hotel - Deluxe rooms

##### **Day 7 – QUITO**

**(B/-/-)**

Private transfer between the Hilton Colon Hotel in Quito and the Mariscal Sucre Airport of Quito in Tababela.

**Special Remarks:**  
**B = Breakfast      L = Lunch      D = Dinner      BL = Box Lunch**

## ITINERARY DESCRIPTION

### Ecuador

A natural selection, only a Continent could give you more!

#### Day 1 - QUITO

(-/-/-)

Private arrival transfer from airport to hotel

Welcome to Quito and Ecuador! At the airport, you will be greeted by a member of our organization, we will escort you all the way to your hotel, giving you a short briefing about Quito and the country in general with valuable information you need to know. Private transportation and guide, handling of two pieces of luggage per person at the airport and the hotel.

Hilton Colón Quito for one night

Welcome to the award-winning Hilton Colon Quito Hotel. Set in La Mariscal district, on Quito's bustling commercial and touristic Avenida Amazonas, the hotel is at the heart of the city's action. Hilton Colon Quito is a 10-minute walk to Quito's Spanish Colonial old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Relax in a modern guest room with Wi-Fi, a work desk, and panoramic views of the city and mountains.

*Overnight – Hilton Colon Hotel*

#### Day 2 – QUITO / HAMADRYADE LODGE

(B/L/D)

Journey to the Source of Chocolate in the Amazon.

For this specially-designed itinerary, we have teamed up with the number one name in chocolate in the world: award-winning Pacari Chocolate ([www.pacarichocolate.com](http://www.pacarichocolate.com)). Guests will experience the finest chocolate while exploring a fascinating and biodiverse region in Ecuador – and all relatively close to the capital, Quito. The Ecuadorian Amazon was recently proved to be the birthplace of the cacao tree – not Central America! The itinerary includes birdwatching, a visit to working cacao farms, overnight at a magical rainforest lodge and a refreshing stop at an Andean thermal spring spa on the way back located between Cayambe Volcano and Antisana Volcano.

We depart Quito on the main road east, climbing up to the pass at over 4,000 meters (13,000 ft.) in the high Andes before beginning the descent into the 'green mansions' of the Amazon Rainforest. Our first stop for a snack is the charming Guango Lodge, a haven for 15 species of hummingbird and many more beautiful creatures. Continuing southeast, we arrive at the small town of Archidona and the Santa Rita community, home of the Pacari Agro Tourism Project.

This project was developed by Pacari who not only purchase the community's cacao at fair trade prices but also provide technical assistance to improve yields, varieties and production. The visits by travelers also provide an additional welcome source of income for these rural families.

We spend a pleasant and relaxing day with the community, learning how they harvest the fruit, produce the cacao and all the technical processes. As we explore the farms on foot, we come across petroglyphs, ancestral traces of the native cultures that inhabited this region for thousands of years, known as the Sacred Valley of the Anaconda.

After our hike, we are treated to lunch, served a regional specialty of river fish wrapped in a bijao palm leaf baked in a fire. This dish is accompanied by a tea made with the guayusa plant, a source of energy and good for hydrating.

After lunch, we take part in making chocolate paste, adding various local ingredients. Everyone gets to take some chocolate home with them, as well as drinking hot chocolate with the cacao harvested earlier in the day!

We continue southwards to the jungle town of Misahuallí, where we will dine and overnight at the Hamadryade Lodge.



*Overnight – Hamadryade Lodge*

### **Day 3 – HAMADRYADE LODGE / PAPALLACTA / QUITO**

**(B/L/-)**

We spend some time in the morning exploring the lodge, its forest and butterfly garden. This is beautiful high montane forest, with lots of birdlife to be spotted. Returning northwards, we wind our way back to higher altitudes, arriving at the Termas de Papallacta Resort and Spa. This complex is regarded as the best in the country, and includes volcanic thermal pools, a hotel and spa. There, we can enjoy the beautiful natural springs, have a massage (extra cost) – there is even a chocolate massage available for the true chocaholics! – and a healthy lunch. In the afternoon, we drive back westwards to the city of Quito \*.



*Overnight – Hilton Colon Hotel*

### **Day 4 – QUITO / MASHPI LODGE**

**(B/L/D)**

**Mashpi Lodge Program - 3 days / 2 nights**

The adventure begins in Ecuador's heritage capital, Quito, at our 8 AM pick-up time for guests staying in Quito's main hotels (Time will be confirmed by our Operations Department). Mashpi Reserve, a 1,300-hectare (3,200 acres) conservation property located within the Metropolitan District of Quito, forms a part of the Ecuadorian Choco rainforest, known as one of the world's greatest biodiversity hotspots. The sudden shift in altitude (from 2800 masl to 1000 masl) will allow us to discover the spectacular natural diversity of the Andean landscape as we travel through the dry valley of Pomasqui towards the cordillera's western flank, into lush, misty cloud forest, and finally reach Mashpi.



After being comfortably settled in our room we are greeted by one of our naturalists who will give us an introductory talk about the cloud forest and its conservation, the activities during our stay and some helpful tips about what to wear and what to bring to the excursions. This talk will take place before lunch at our library and lasts around 30 minutes.

At 3:30 PM we will gather together at the lobby in order to head to the Napa Trail. This trail starts at the side of the road, across areas where the forest is regenerating and large patches of pristine forest. For this reason, this trail is ideal to explain the ecological succession processes and the importance of forest conservation for the Chocó region. Also, this is a trail of great scenic beauty and toward the end of the trail you will find one of the unique attractions, a forest of "iron palm" (*Iriartea deltoidea*), which wood is used in different ways, mostly in house construction. This is also a very good trail for bird watching. It is a moderate difficulty trail and the excursion takes 2 hours.

Every evening for all our guests interested in knowing more deeply the cloud forest ecology, we have prepared a series of different lectures like the "Secret Wildlife of Mashpi, the trap camera project", the "Chocó, a biological hotspot" about the formation and diversity of the Chocó, or about our scientific research projects. The lectures will be given by one of our naturalist or our resident biologist at 7:30 PM.

## **Day 5 – MASHPI LODGE**

**(B/L/D)**

The forest always rewards the "early birds", as the dawn light lures a variety of fascinating species in their search for food. A good place to find birds is actually right at the hotel's terrace, with a cup of fresh coffee, tea or hot chocolate in hand, from where we can enjoy not only the beauty of the forest but also the many species that come to feed on insects and fruits at nearby trees. Our guides will help us spot what's around, offering a peek inside their telescope for a close-and-personal view of the incredible bird richness Mashpi possesses. This activity begins at 6:30 AM and lasts about an hour. Enjoy breakfast at our hotel restaurant.



We depart around 8:30 AM to the Sky Bike and Observation Tower (a 15-minute walk from the hotel). Looming above the treetops, Mashpi's observation tower allows our guests to enjoy the protected forest in all its glory. At 30 meters (100 feet) above the ground, this is an ideal site for nature lovers, allowing us not only to appreciate the forest's complex structure, but also the incredible species richness that thrives throughout the canopy (70% of the forest's biodiversity is found here). We climb 162 steps to reach the top.



The aerial bicycle makes for an original and exciting way to explore the canopy up close. Designed for two people to use at once, one person pedals the bike along a cable stretched between two points, around 200 m (655 feet) apart, crossing a gorge and river. Silent, easy-to-use and fun, it's an activity that provides guests with yet another vantage point to experience Mashpi's lush natural world. To enjoy the ride, one must be at least one meter tall (3.2 feet) (children must be accompanied by an adult). The bike ride takes no more than 20 minutes.

Once completed, you can walk back to the lodge along one of our many trails. One of the trails takes us to San Vicente waterfall, a 45-minutes-to-an-hour steep hike that demands good physical condition. You can also hike the Oxibelis trail that takes us to a small waterfall before taking us back to the lodge. The combination of activities (sky bike, observation tower and hike) can take between 2 to 4 hours, depending on the trail. At the lodge, a refreshing natural juice and fresh towels will be waiting for us; we then will enjoy a varied and delicious lunch at the hotel restaurant. The best way to reach the Life Centre is actually through the forest, so we take what we've come to call the "Howler Monkey's trail". This path crosses primary forest dominated by many ancient trees, being the "copal" (*Dacryodes cupularis*) the most emblematic of them.

We occasionally get to listen to rare birds, such as the Rufous-fronted Wood-quail (*Odontophorus erythrops*) or the Rufous-crowned Antpitta (*Pittasoma rufopileatum*). Our guides are keen on noticing every sound that comes from the forest deep, hoping to reveal colourful birds or elusive howler monkeys, while our naturalist guide explains the habitat's ecology; both share with us their extensive knowledge on forest plants and their medicinal uses. Once at the Life Centre, we are offered a great view of the forest from the comfort of an expansive wooden deck, where wildlife abounds. We will identify the different birds and mammals that visit our fruit feeders. The centre is conceived as a place for learning and discovery, but also a place where guests can disconnect from the humdrum of today's world. We will explore the life of butterflies, the many species found in the Mashpi area and their metamorphosis process from egg, larva and caterpillar, to chrysalis and finally winged wonder. We will also discover various species of host plants that butterflies use to lay their eggs on, such as passion flowers, birds of paradise, milk weeds and other species found in the garden. Not far from the Centre, we have also established a "tropical orchard" where many varieties of fruit trees, including banana, manioc, cacao, hot chili pepper, coffee and wild raspberries are grown. For those interested in learning more about the Ecuadorian cloud forest, we offer a lecture that sums up the different scientific research projects that take

place at Mashpi. The talk lasts around 30 minutes, and will include footage from our hidden camera traps, a great display of the astounding diversity that thrives inside the forest.

#### **Day 6 – MASHPI LODGE / QUITO**

**(B/-/-)**

This activity begins at 6:30 AM in the hotel lobby and takes advantage of the fact that many bird species come to the hotel to feed. After a cup of coffee, we walk down the road seeking out mixed-species feeding flocks: these usually feature different insectivorous bird species that move together while foraging. In a single flock, we may see over 20 different species, making these more-or-less common encounters an undeniable treat for bird aficionados. The activity takes one hour; we return to the lodge for breakfast.

*Overnight – Hilton Colon Hotel*

#### **Day 7 – QUITO**

**(B/-/-)**

Private transfer between the Alameda Mercure Hotel in Quito and the Mariscal Sucre Airport of Quito in Tababela.

*END OF SERVICES*

### **NOTES**

**Private transfer in/out airport to hotel or vice versa- Quito.**

#### **Notes**

Quito airport is located about one and half hours from Quito depending on traffic conditions, please make sure you do not leave anything behind.

#### **Included**

Private transportation and guide, handling of two pieces of luggage per person at the airport and the hotel

#### **Not included**

Tips

#### **Recommendations**

Please check all your travel and personal documents before leaving your hotel.

#### **Journey to the source of chocolate**

#### **Notes**

\* This tour is easily combined with others: returning to the E-35 highway which runs north-south to the east of the city, it's easy to reach the airport at Tababela; Otavalo to the north; Cotopaxi to the south.

- Maximum 15 guests.
- Daily from Quito. From February to July the visit to the cacao farm is as described above. From August to January, cacao is not being harvested in the region, and we undertake other activities in the farm with the community.
- The order of the visits may vary - depending on weather conditions and the day of the week.
- This tour includes walking at various altitudes

#### **Recommendations**

- Dress in layers (T-shirt, blouse, sweater, and coat).

- Rain protection
- Sun protection (SPF 40).
- Good walking shoes.
- Great photo ops, don't forget your camera

### **Included**

Private tour with guide and driver, 2 days/1 night program, daily from Quito, including 1 night at Hamadryade Lodge and all meals mentioned.

### **Not Included**

Drinks not mentioned, personal expenses, tips.

## **Mashpi Lodge Program. 3 days / 2 nights.**

### **Summary of activities**

#### *Trails*

As you enter the realm of the rainforests, you will become aware of Life at every step: mushrooms and "fox fire" fungi below, tree trunks festooned with orchids, lichens and mosses, giant ferns reaching up to the light above, coiling vines, swirling mists and clouds of moisture. And then, from nowhere, comes the sound of rushing water, a waterfall amid this glistening, green world, where you can wade through rivers, walk along their banks, revive your senses...

The two main trails are the Howler Monkey and Cucharillo (named after an oak). Both link up with the Tower #5 of the canopy gondola system. Along the trails, guests will learn more from both their Naturalist Guide and Local Guide about the myriad plants, insects and animals that inhabit this biodiverse universe. The guides will enthusiastically share their knowledge of their characteristics, behavior and uses.

Due to Mashpi's mountainous topography, trails are rarely flat. The Howler Monkey (mainly primary forest) and Cucharillo (mainly secondary), although short – 2 km and 700 m, respectively – are steep. The trails' steepness is an advantage since the hillsides enable more light to penetrate the forest, thereby increasing the diversity of plants and animals that one can observe at each stratum. Both trails have been specially adapted to make walking easier, using embedded recycled plastic crates to create steps and firm paths.

The way back uphill on both these trails can be aboard the gondola, reached by wading through the shallow river in rubber boots, and walking the connecting trail to the Cotinga Tower.

#### *Life Centre*

Close to the lodge, the center is conceived as a place for learning and discovery, but also where guests can disconnect, where they can contemplate the views, sit in comfortable chairs, read a book, and enjoy a fresh cane juice.

Guests will learn more about the butterflies that inhabit the region, being shown the process of these creatures from eggs to pupae to chrysalis to winged wonder. Some 200 species of butterfly have been identified to date in the Reserve, with nearly a dozen observable at the Centre. Other points of learning dozens of species of orchids, bromeliads and passion flowers all around the structure.

Close to the Centre, we have established an area for growing medicinal plants (ideal for a reviving herbal infusion) and beyond, many varieties of bushes and fruit trees, including

banana and plantain, manioc, cacao, tobacco, coffee, bread fruit and heart of palm. These attract all sorts of wildlife, from birds to rodents to mammals – making for easier observation from the comfort of the Centre’s expansive wooden deck. Most of the interpretation at the center will be imparted by local guides or people involved with the project from local communities. Guests will find ingredients from these gardens in the dishes prepared back at the lodge.

#### *Observation Tower*

There are few easier or better ways to appreciate the beauty of the Mashpi Reserve’s forest and hills than climbing the Observation Tower. Here, guests are able to enjoy an exciting bird’s-eye view and the dramatic panoramas that surround the lodge from the observation tower. This is a metallic structure, with a staircase that climbs to about eight-stories high (26 m or 85 ft.), ideal for wildlife observation, particularly at dawn or dusk. Species that can be spotted here include toucans, woodpeckers, barbets, tanagers and parrots as well as raptors. The tower lies a 10-minute walk from the lodge.

#### *Night walks*

The Mashpi forest is transformed at night, with far more activity than during the day. Optional night walks will head out from the hotel after dinner to discover its nocturnal creatures and their behaviors, ranging from moths as big as your hand, to miniature glass and tree frogs, croaking toads, birds, owls, rodents and mammals, and even fox fire, an Avatar-like luminous fungus. It’s a magical world, often astounding at the micro level, and seldom explored, ready to be discovered in expert company.

#### *Sky Bike*

Located close to the hotel, the sky bike makes for an original and exciting way to explore the forest canopy up close. Designed for two people to use at once, one person pedals the bike along a cable stretched between two points in the forest, around 200 m (655 feet) apart, crossing a gorge above a river flowing between rocks and trees below. Silent, easy-to-use and fun, it’s an activity for children over 8 years-old accompanied by an adult, providing guests with another chance to observe the natural world close to the lodge and even spot its denizens.

#### *Hummingbird Viewpoint*

The forests of Mashpi boast 22 hummingbird species identified to date, inhabiting different specific altitudes, with around 16 species alone observable by guests. In order to make it easier to see these amazing creatures, a shelter with seating provides the ideal setting, feeders for the birds strung from its roof. The site is located at a natural viewpoint, which, on clear days, provides breathtaking views of the Reserve’s forested hills.

#### *Refreshing waterfalls*

Water is key to life in Mashpi, and there’s nothing like a refreshing dip at the end of a walk. Several rivers cross the Mashpi Reserve close to the hotel, many forming beautiful small waterfalls, cascades and pools. The water temperature is between 18-20°C (64-68 F).

#### **Included**

- Accommodations
- all meals
- guided daily excursions (in English and Spanish only) to primary forest
- Sky Bike
- Specialized lectures
- Rain ponchos and rubber boots
- Transfers in (shared basis), includes entrance fee and visit the Tulipe Archaeological Site



- Transfer out (Mashpi-Quito, shared basis)

#### **Not Included**

- Dragonfly
- Gratuities
- Bar
- gifts and personal items.

*The itineraries are planned with great care, although, for operational reasons, it may be necessary to change the sequence of activities in the itinerary or the specified route, and though such cases are exceptional, in general the itinerary should be treated only as a basic guideline*

### **INFORMATION**

#### **NOTES**

- No reservations have been placed.
- This is a preliminary costing; hotels may vary according to availability.
- All services stipulated above are subject to availability at the time of booking/ reservation.
- All entrance fees are subject to change without previous notice.
- All tips are optional and voluntary.
- Rates apply for the whole year except on the Peak season dates in Galapagos Christmas and New Year, and any other National or Religious Holidays which may have special rates; please verify.
- Rates are subject to change without prior notice in case supplier conditions change.

#### **INCLUSIONS**

- Private services with local English or Spanish speaking guide, except where otherwise specified.
- All entrance fees to the sites mentioned above.
- Meals: As indicated in the itinerary.
- Journey to the source of chocolate program. 2D /1N. Overnight at Hamadryade Lodge.
- Mashpi Lodge program. 3D / 2N
- Nights' accommodation as mentioned above
- Permanent assistance during the trip

#### **EXCLUSIONS**

- Meals or any other item not described in the itinerary.
- Early check-in, late check-out, services and non-mentioned meals in the itinerary
- Personal expenses.
- Drinks during meals, hotel extras and personal spending
- Tips