

Walk Wildlife Ecuador Uncovered



Amazon jungle – Andean cloudforest – Otavalo area – Cotopaxi volcano – Huaorani community – Papallacta hot springs – beautiful scenery – varied experiences – genuine cultural interaction – carefully paced – first class lodges

Travel around spectacularly varied, colourful and compact Ecuador.

Enjoy the rich birdlife of the Andean cloudforest.

Explore the mountainous Imbabura region near the famous Otavalo market.

Relax in the hot springs of Papallacta after days exploring the countryside.

Walk amidst the forests and towering volcanoes of the Cotopaxi National Park.

Immerse yourself in the Huaorani culture as you explore the Amazon.

This is a Pura *handpicked* holiday with an activity rating of *low* and a comfort rating *first*.



Spend time with the Huaorani people of the Amazon.



"I just wanted to say a very big thank you for a fabulous holiday. The whole trip went without a single hitch. The wildlife was wonderful." Tricia B

Holiday Itinerary

Day 01 | Quito | **travel to Ecuador**

Fly to Quito today.

Please note that international flights for this holiday are quoted separately.

Day 02 | cloudforest | **travel to the highlands**

This holiday runs in a way which leaves you to be fairly independent as you have transfers from place to place plus a selection of locally run excursions and lodge based guides.

After a relaxed morning you are collected for the two-hour drive up to the cloudforest.

Cloudforest is basically high level rainforest – the canopy derives its moisture from the drifting clouds.

Expect it to be much cooler up here. Rain is normal – the usual pattern being clear mornings with rain setting in from mid-afternoon.

Mornings are spent exploring, afternoons tend to be relaxed affairs as you rest at the lodge.

It is actually very relaxing to lie in a hammock after your day's activities and listen to sound of the raindrops on the trees.

From the lodge you can watch birds come and go. These include such species as the Golden-headed Quetzal and Choco Toucan.

Pretty much everything about the lodge is sustainable and low impact which really helps you get a sense of being well away from the cares of the world.

The food here is delicious, much of it comes from their own garden. (b,l,d)

Day 03 | cloudforest | **walk to a waterfall**

Whilst at the lodge it is up to you how you spend your day as you have a menu of guided excursions which are run by the lodge.

Lodge staff talk you through the options when you arrive.

A normal day would start early with a guided walk to observe the cloudforest canopy as it comes to life.

If you are lucky you will see toucans, parrots and maybe the beautiful Andean cock of the rock.

Return to the lodge for breakfast.

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Walking through the rich cloudforest



Cuicocha crater lake



This afternoon, if you want, you can hop onto the nearby river wearing nothing but a life jacket and a large inner tube. Enjoy a relaxed float downstream to the nearby village.

Return to the lodge to relax. (b,l,d)

Day 04 | Imbabura | **walk in cloudforest**

You may like to try a zip wire excursion this morning through the canopy of the cloudforest (not included).

Alternatively head out again for a walk.

This afternoon, your transfer guide will collect you for the drive to the Imbabura region.

Arrive at your hotel on a mountainside about ten minutes' drive from the colourful market town of Otavalo.

Most people coming to Ecuador simply visit the market at Otavalo and then return to the capital. In fact, the surrounding Imbabura region is beautiful and culturally fascinating so well worth getting to know.

Stay in your own adobe cottage with beautiful views of the countryside.

Relax on the terrace or have a dip in the hot tub before dinner. The mainly vegetarian meals are eaten 'family style' i.e. communally.

Traditional Ecuadorian food is served and where possible is sourced from Betti's own organic garden.

Wheat, corn, vegetables and potatoes are all grown and milk is courtesy of Dominga the cow. (b,d)

Day 05 | Imbabura | **walk around a crater**

Start today with a delicious breakfast. You will usually be offered wholewheat pancakes made from wheat grown in the garden.

Today you might like to walk around Cuicocha lake; an impressive crater lake of the Cotacachi volcano about half an hour's drive from Otavalo.

On a clear day you can see the snow-capped peaks of Cayambe and Cotopaxi volcanoes.

The walk takes five hours and reaches a viewpoint at 3,500m before descending back down to 3,000m.

You are likely to see orchids and other Andean flowers and if you are lucky you may see condor – apparently there are only around 75 condors left in Ecuador but they have been spotted here.

Visit the world famous Otavalo market en route back to the hotel. It is touristy but if you like shopping for textiles, ponchos, blankets, hats and wall hangings you will be spoilt for choice here.

The largest market is on a Saturday when there is also a local food market. (b,d)

Day 06 | Imbabura | **cultural activities**

Whilst here you are in control of what you do each day.

If you like your food then you should spend today in the kitchen. After breakfast you sit down with the cook as she plans this evening's menu.

For the rest of the day you will be involved in preparing and sourcing the meal.

Start in the lodge's garden to harvest what you can. Carry on to one of the local markets to buy the remaining ingredients.

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The beautiful peak of Cotopaxi Volcano



The view from your lodge



Your comfortable hacienda near Cotopaxi



A warm welcome from the locals on arrival in the jungle

Spend the remainder of the day helping prepare and cook the food.

Remember that little or no English is spoken in the kitchen so you need to be prepared to engage and learn on this basis.

This is a unique opportunity to learn about Andean cuisine and ingredients, many of which are likely to be quite unknown to you.

Enjoy all your hard work this evening.

Alternatively, you could visit the projects which form part of the works of the charitable foundation run by Betti.

The foundation is involved in artisan workshops, schools and various community projects in the small villages of the region.

By visiting some of these projects you will get to meet normal Ecuadorians going about their day to day lives and also get a sense of the challenges associated with living in the highlands of Ecuador.

You can also visit some less-visited traditional Indian villages to watch the artisans at work in their own homes. (b,d)

Day 07 | Papallacta | **travel to hot springs**

Travel east into the foothills of the Andes to the east of Quito to stay in a comfortable hotel at the hot springs of Papallacta.

The dramatic mountainous surroundings are dotted with precarious looking farmland.

Stay in a hotel set on the side of the valley just above the village of Papallacta.

The hotel has its own outdoor hot springs with spectacular views up the mountains. (b,d)

Day 08 | Papallacta | **relax in hot springs**

Spend today relaxing in the hot springs or you can venture out to explore some of the surrounding mountains.

Leading directly from the hotel are some self-guided trails or you can join a formal guided excursions into the mountains if you are feeling more active. (b,d)

Day 09 | Cotopaxi | **travel to Cotopaxi**

Set off south towards the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Visit the Pasochoa Reserve. At just 500 hectares the reserve is small but it packs a lot in.

Walk a trail to the collapsed crater of the extinct volcano. The sides are densely forested and home to 100 or more species of bird that live in the reserve.

Stay in a small working farm on the edge of the Cotopaxi National Park. On a clear day you can see the volcano from the dining room.

The hacienda dates back as far as 1695 and is a beautiful place to spend the night.

With room for just fifteen guests you are really staying as part of Cesar and Maria's family.

Meals are eaten family style in the dining room and you may well eat with the whole family. (b,d)

Day 10 | Cotopaxi | **visit Cotopaxi NP**

At nearly 5,900m Cotopaxi is the world's highest active volcano.

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The national park which covers the skirts of the mountain are home to a wide variety of birds including condor, as well as llama, wild horses and deer.

We highly recommend that you sign up for a guided tour of the area today.

Your hotel is on the edge of the national park but the scale of the park means that even so it is a long drive to get to the start of today's walk.

Limpipungo Lake is at 3,800m above sea level and is a very pleasant place to walk. If you do the circuit of the lake it takes around an hour.

After a picnic lunch, drive up to the first mountain refuge used by walkers on their way to the summit of the volcano.

The refuge itself is at 4,500m and you will walk up to about 4,800m for beautiful views of the main volcano of Cotopaxi as well as the neighbouring Ruminahui.

Return to your hacienda to relax this evening. (b,l,d)

Day 11 | Amazon | *travel to the jungle*

Please note that today must be a Monday or Thursday.

You will be picked up after breakfast for the 3-4 hour drive down to Shell (named after the oil company) to catch your flight into the Amazon.

Enjoy the scenery as you travel south along the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

From the city of Tulcan in the north to Riobamba in the south, there are more than 60 volcanoes, eight of which are considered "active" (have erupted at least once since the Spanish conquest) and ten of which are "potentially active" (have erupted at least once in the past thousand years).

Join the Agoyan River and stop for a picnic lunch in view of one of the larger waterfalls that are easily visible from the roadside.

Afterwards catch your 45-minute flight northeast into the jungle, continuing by dugout canoe to Huaorani Ecolodge, your base for the next five nights.

On arrival you will be greeted by your guide and given a brief introductory talk about the Huaorani tribe before having dinner. (b,l,d)

Day 12 | Amazon | *canoe to clay lick*

After breakfast your guide joins you for a morning walk through the forest.

The trail winds through the trees and over quiet streams, opening out at a small oxbow lake.

Standing on a small raised hill it is possible to see colonies of leaf cutter ants at work, along with various aquatic birds at the edge of the water.

White-collared peccaries frequently use this route and their tusk marks are clearly visible along the path.

Return to the lodge by canoe for lunch and a siesta during the hottest part of the day.

This afternoon visit a salt-clay lick, a popular haunt for a variety of animals and birds who use it as a valuable source of nutrients.

Return to the lodge as the light begins to fade. Since most rainforest animals are nocturnal – especially mammals and amphibians – this is your best opportunity to see some of these elusive creatures, or at least hear them climbing through the trees or digging for food. (b,l,d)

Day 13 | Amazon | *visit the local village*

Today you join a Huaorani guide to learn the secrets of survival in the rainforest.

You are taught how to set traps, make fire without matches, build a shelter in minutes, use a blowgun, practice the perfect swing of the machete, and catch fish in small creeks.

Your guide may also show you edible insects, medicinal plants, the right clay to make pottery, and honey produced by stingless bees.

After all the hard work you have a chance to cool off with a dip in the local river.

The Huaorani of the Amazon

Visiting the Huaorani Ecolodge is a new and unique opportunity to experience the Amazon through the eyes of its inhabitants.

That isn't to say it will suit everyone.

Read on for a sense of what is involved but if you think a more traditional wildlife focused visit to the Amazon is better for you, we can include that instead.



On this trip you travel deep into the Huaorani lands to experience and learn about their way of life.

With a maximum of ten guests at the lodge, this is not a stage managed affair but a genuine opportunity to interact with members of the community.

While the community is at the heart of your time here, you also spend much time exploring the jungle on foot and by boat in the company of your guides.

There are no artificial noises here. No outboard motors, just poles. No generators, just solar panels.

Your lodge is designed to offer an intimate, harmonious and environmentally sustainable setting.

Over the course of your stay you will likely learn about the threats faced by the Huaorani particularly from logging, settlers and oil.

On your last day as you leave Huaorani territory along the so-called 'toxic highway' you are confronted with an all too stark illustration of just how immediate these pressures are.

The existence of the lodge and the income and awareness it generates allows the Huaorani to better withstand the threats to their land and their culture.

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A palm-thatched cabin at Huaorani Lodge



A local guide helps to spot wildlife from the dugout canoe

The Huaorani love swimming and playing in the water and may join you.

Spend this afternoon with the local community. Your visit is not intended to be a pre-planned activity as such, but rather a relaxing, informal social visit.

You may call on several houses, talk to family members while sharing a bowl of *chucula* (a sweet drink made of ripe bananas) or visit the families' gardens and learn how to grow edible plants. (b,l,d)

Day 14 | Amazon | watch wildlife

Today is mostly spent looking for wildlife around the Cocha Grande lake, downstream from the lodge.

Monkeys, agoutis and peccaries make this area their home, although more common sights include the variety of bird species, which come to the lake to feed.

Hike to a lookout point to enjoy a picnic lunch overlooking the lake. (b,l,d)

Day 15 | Amazon | camp in the jungle

After breakfast, you wave goodbye to the lodge and set off punting down the Shiripuno River in traditional Huaorani style.

Travelling quietly by canoe means you have a better chance of seeing wildlife along the way.

This six hour journey takes you close to the Huaorani village of Nenkepare where you camp for the night.

If the weather holds, have dinner around a campfire this evening. (b,l,d)

Day 16 | Quito | leave the Huaorani

After several days enjoying pristine jungle, today brings the plight of the rainforest and the Huaorani tribe into stark reality.

After breakfast, continue downstream to the border between the traditional Huaorani territory and that of the petroleum companies.

Continue along the new road cut through the forest, passing alongside miles of oil pipeline.

The effects of deforestation are extremely vivid.

Arrive at the small but growing town of Coca from where you catch a flight back to Quito.

Relax in comfort this evening after your Amazon adventure. (b,l)

Day 17 | flight | travel home

Transfer to the airport for your flight home today. (b)

Please note: international flights are quoted separately for this holiday.

Day 18 | home | arrive back

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Holiday Information

How active?

Throughout this holiday you have opportunities to walk and explore on foot though distances are generally not very long. Since this is a tailor made trip, you are in control of how much or how little you do.

How comfortable?

Accommodation on this holiday is characterful, comfortable and very much in keeping with your surroundings. Rooms are all en suite except for one night in the Amazon.

The cloudforest lodges are fairly simple but rooms are comfortable and have private facilities. At night you use candles for light. Meals are eaten family style.

Lodges are chosen for the quality of wildlife as well as their intimate atmosphere.

In Imbabura you stay in a small cottage with views out over the surrounding countryside.

In Papallacta stay in a 32 room hot spring hotel with first class facilities.

At Cotopaxi, stay in a seven-room hacienda which is a family run farm. Rooms are very comfortable.

In the Amazon stay in one of just five small palm thatched screened structures with double or twin beds.

Rooms are quite open to the surrounding forest but are set away from one another to give you a fair amount of privacy. All have en suite loo and shower.

On your last night in the jungle you stay in a permanent tented camp. Four good-sized tents are pitched in a row on a palm-roofed platform.

How independent?

This is a tailor made holiday.

You are semi-independent on the trip which means that you have private transfers between destinations but are independent once there.

In the cloudforest and Imbabura we include daily guided excursions. In Papallacta and Cotopaxi you can sign up for optional excursions as you wish.

On day 11 you are picked up by Amazon lodge guides who are with you throughout your time in the jungle.

How responsible?

The lodges we use are all run sustainably and operated in conjunction with local communities.

In the case of the cloudforest, the lodges we choose are very much integrated into their physical environments with the minimum impact. They also have very good connections with local communities.

In Imbabura the lodge runs a charitable foundation run for the benefit of the surrounding communities.

This includes equipping schools, supporting community based enterprise projects and buying produce from small local producers rather than from the town.

The Cotopaxi lodge is a working farm, really much like a bed and breakfast in that you stay in the family home

The Huaorani project is all about responsible and sustainable tourism being a force for positive action.

As community leader, Moi, said recently, "It is a very important way of protecting our land, please come."

When should I go?

You can do this trip year round although we would tend to advise against travelling during the rainiest months in the Andes of February and March.

There are regional variations as listed below which might help you decide on the best time of year for you.

Quito lies within 25km of the equator, surrounded by snow-capped peaks at 3,000m. It enjoys a spring-like climate year round.

Cloudforest is high and usually quite cool. Rains usually set in from mid-afternoon so most activities happen in the morning. February/March is wetter.

Imbabura/Cotopaxi again are high and quite cool. February/March is the wettest time of year here.

Amazon you can expect hot and humid conditions year round. July and August are the wettest times of year.

How do I book?

As a tailor made holiday we need to check availability and prices before taking your booking. If you would like us to prepare you a detailed proposal then simply email info@pura-aventura.com or call 01273 676 712 with your preferred dates plus any other changes you would like us to make.

Once you have the proposal and decide you would like to go ahead then please call in with the following:

- Full names, address, contact telephone numbers & email, deposit of 15%

Deposits can be paid by card, cheque or bank transfer, whichever suits you best (the balance of your holiday is due 60 days prior to travel).

Guide prices & departures

2012	Apr - Jan £2,890pp guide price
Flights	International flights are quoted separately for this holiday (<i>guide price £750 - £900 depending on season</i>). You can book these directly or we can book them on your behalf.
Price includes	Domestic flights; comfortable, generally first class, hotels) and lodges (twin or double); private transfers; guided excursions as above; entrances and activities as mentioned; meals (b,l,d) as per itinerary.
Not included	Personal expenses; tips.

Prices per person based on two sharing

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