



## Exploring Ecuador - Volcanoes & Jungle

### ITINERARY

#### **DAY 1 Depart London**

Depart from London Heathrow Airport for the flight to Quito. On arrival we are met by our local guides and transfer to a hotel in the centre of Quito. We stay close to the old quarter of the city near to the Spanish colonial buildings.

#### **DAY 2 Quito City Tour**

Today we have a full day city tour which takes in all the traditional parts of the Old City. We will also visit the Mitad de Mundo (middle of the world), the line where the equator runs through Ecuador and where you can jump from one hemisphere to another. After lunch we drive out of Quito, heading towards the Mindo Cloud Forest Reserve. This is an extraordinary region rich in plant and bird life. We stay at an eco-lodge and can enjoy a mountain bike ride in the Reserve.

#### **DAY 3 Mindo Cloud Forest Day Hike**

Today we can enjoy a fascinating hike in the beautiful Mindo Cloud Forest. The forest is alive with bird life and there are beautiful streams and waterfalls to visit. Mindo is home to 500 known species of bird. Flower lovers will be amazed by the wild orchids. We will also visit the butterfly and orchid conservatory. After your hike, a hearty lunch is served at our lodge with breathtaking views. After lunch, you have the option to relax and watch the hummingbirds and admire the constantly changing play of cloud and light, or take yourselves on another hike into the forest. The trails are well marked and safe.

#### **DAY 4 Pichincha Volcano Hike**

After Mindo we take in a hike on the Rucu Pichincha Volcano. This is the inactive smaller cousin of the larger Guaga Pichincha, which albeit periodically, is still very much an active volcano. A cable car can be used to whisk us up the lower slopes of the mountain to Cruz Loma where the hike commences. From Cruz Loma to Rucu's peak consists of a one and a half hour walk along a grassy ridge that steadily rises towards a rocky base beneath the summit. Once you reach the rock, you traverse until you reach a sandy slope that leads to the summit. There are great views over Quito and the surrounding area.

#### **DAY 5 River Rafting at Rio Blanco**

Today we will raft the Rio Blanco. This exciting river is regarded as a perfect introduction to rafting in Ecuador. This cloud-forest river rolls along the coastal front of the Ecuadorian Andes and is well-known as the longest navigable whitewater river in the country. There are excellent moderate rapids and as a backdrop we have the stunning spectacle of the lush green forests surrounding the river for company.

### **DAY 6      Shiripuno Jungle Lodge**

In the morning we will transfer by private coach to Quito Airport and take the domestic flight to Coca in the far north-east of the country. On arrival we are met by our local guides and then transfer by motorised canoe to the Shiripuno Jungle Lodge. This is a new lodge in the Ecuadorian Amazon, located in pristine forest within the Huaorani Anthropological Reserve. From Coca it is about a three hour drive south on a very rough road to the Shiripuno River. Here we board motorized canoes and head downstream along the narrow and sinuous river for about 3 hours to the lodge. The lodge is located in a small clearing on the edge of the river. It is simple but comfortable, although there is no electricity and no hot water, but there is wonderful feeling of remoteness here which more than compensates for the slight lack of material comforts. The accommodation huts at Shiripuno have been built from materials available in the area in order to maintain harmony with the environment, using traditional techniques and making as little negative impact on nature as possible. There are a total of 4 thatch-roofed cabins divided into double, triple, and quadruple rooms, with private facilities. The total capacity is for 24 visitors.

### **DAY 7 - 8      Amazon Jungle Exploration**

The Shiripuno River is located in the area just south of Yasuni National Park, which is the largest national park in Ecuador. The river formerly belonged to the national park, but later became part of the Huaorani Reserve. Extensive development has not reached this territory so human impact still remains quite minimal. For this reason, the region enjoys the same biodiversity as the national park and visitors are able to experience an abundance of spectacular flora and fauna. We have two full days at Shiripuno for local exploration. The lodge is co-owned by Jarol Fernando Vaca, a naturalist and bird guide with extensive experience of the Amazon in Ecuador. The bird life here is legendary and we will also be able to explore the river, jungle and the wildlife that lives here.

### **DAY 9      Return to Quito**

After an early breakfast we transfer by motorised canoe back up river to where we meet our road transportation for the onward transfer to Coca. From here we return by air to Quito. For our final night in Ecuador we will go out to celebrate at a city centre restaurant.

### **DAY 10      Depart Quito**

The day will be free for sightseeing and final souvenir hunting. In the later afternoon we transfer to the airport for our homeward flight.

### **DAY 11      Arrive London**

Arrival into London in the afternoon.