



## HUAORANI ECOLODGE

The Huaorani Ecolodge is the perfect place to go if you are looking for a cultural experience in the Amazon rainforest. Until the late 1950's, the Huaorani people lived as nomadic hunters and gatherers without having any contact with the outside world. In the following decades they have been forced to deal with the presence of oil companies and loggers, but they have succeeded to maintain most of their traditional lifestyle.

The project to build a lodge for ecotourism, was developed by the Ecotourism Association of Quehueri'ono, located at the Shiripuno river in the northwestern part of the Huaorani Territory. Huaorani were involved in its construction and are the predominant employees. This small lodge is committed to minimizing negative impacts on the area, and it is built at a reasonable distance from the community. There is room for a maximum of 10 guests in 5 comfortable cabins,



each with private bathroom and a porch. The lodge has a hammock house on the edge of the Shiripuno River, for those few moments that you are not engaged in activities away from the lodge. Experience the Amazon through the eyes of a fascinating culture!

## ITINERARY 4 – DAY TOUR

**Day 1.** Early transfer from Quito along the Volcano Avenue. After a 4 – 5 hour drive arrive at the small town of Shell, which has an airfield for flights to remote communities that are not accessible by road. If the weather is on your side, you take off around noon in a light aircraft heading northeast, gawking at the green vastness below punctuated by rivers and settlements. After about 45 minutes you will land in the Huaorani community of Quehueri'ono. From the community you are poled downstream in a shallow dugout canoe, enjoying the thick vegetation growing along the Shiripuno River and catching glimpses of riverside birds such as the Yellow-rumped Cacique, the Greater and Lesser Kiskadees, or the Amazonian Kingfisher. Arrival at the Huaorani Ecolodge where you will have an introductory briefing about the Huaorani and their relationship with the rainforest.

**Day 2.** After breakfast you take a 3-hour hike in both *terra firme* and *varzea* forest to a small hill on which grows a giant ceibo tree. You will follow a trail that parallels the Shiripuno River, crossing several small tributaries including one that some white-collared peccaries have expanded to make a wallow. Up and down several hillocks through some open forest and you reach a leaf-cutter ant metropolis on the edge of a small oxbow lake. An overlook allows you to observe the ants at work as well as catch a glimpse of any aquatic birds or reptiles that may be out that day.

After lunch at the lodge, you go back downstream to an oxbow lake formed by the Shiripuno River and walk inland a few minutes. If lucky - and quiet - you may catch a glimpse of the extraordinary *hoatzin* (one of the few birds that feeds almost exclusively on leaves), as well as anacondas, capybaras and caimans. Afterwards you will visit a heavily-used salt-clay lick. If the lick is inactive (or the animals have been scared off), you still have the opportunity to see where a variety of animals have trudged uphill to gauge out the mineral-rich soil.

The return trip is a brief night outing. 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.

**Day 3.** In the morning you go for a long hike with the Huaorani guide, also an experienced hunter. You learn about the secrets of survival in the rainforest without killing any of the creatures that live there. You learn 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.

You will spend the afternoon with the 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) and admire their beautiful

handmade artifacts, including woven hammocks and bags, blowguns, traps and necklaces.

Later on, you visit families' gardens and learn how to grow edible plants and try to harvest manioc, also known as yucca or cassava. Perhaps you will be invited to join in a game of soccer! Return to the lodge by canoe at the end of the afternoon.

**Day 4.** After breakfast you will take a 2-hour hike along a series of ridges through *terra firme* forest to a picturesque waterfall. There is a *mirador* along the way; if the weather is clear you will have an exceptional view across miles of lush rainforest to the volcanic peaks of snow-capped Altar and green, multi-peaked Sangay. To improve your chances, you spend some time at the overlook while your Huaorani guide helps you learn how to weave, make a blowgun, hollow out a canoe and carve a spear. You can experience firsthand how challenging it is to work without tools such as sandpaper, saws, hammers, or nails.

You return to the lodge for last-minute packing and farewells before heading upstream in order to catch your flight to Shell and from there drive back to Quito.

**DIFFICULTY:** moderate

**DEPARTURE:** Monday

**INCLUDING:**

- bilingual naturalist guide and local Huaorani guide
- transportation by canoe
- accommodation in First Class lodge (double cabin with private bath and hot water)
- meals and purified drinking water
- all excursions
- equipment (rain poncho and rubber boots up to size 44)

**NOT INCLUDING:**

- transportation package (USD 250 per person including private transfer Quito – Shell round trip, private flight Shell - Quehueri'ono round trip)
- entrance fee Huaorani Reserve (USD 10 per person)
- travel insurance
- tips

## ITINERARY 5 – DAY TOUR



**Day 1.** Early transfer from Quito along the Volcano Avenue. After a 4 – 5 hour drive arrive at the small town of Shell, which has an airfield for flights to remote communities that are not accessible by road. If the weather is on your side, you take off around noon in a light aircraft heading northeast, gawking at the green vastness below punctuated by rivers and settlements. After about 45 minutes you will land in the Huaorani community of Quehueri'ono. From the community you are poled downstream in a shallow dugout canoe, enjoying the thick vegetation growing along the Shiripuno River and catching glimpses of riverside birds such as the Yellow-rumped Cacique, the Greater and Lesser Kiskadees, or the Amazonian Kingfisher. Arrival at the Huaorani Ecolodge where you will have an introductory briefing about the Huaorani and their relationship with the rainforest.

**Day 2.** After breakfast you take a 3-hour hike in both *terra firme* and *varzea* forest to a small hill on which grows a giant ceibo tree. You will follow a trail that parallels the Shiripuno River, crossing several small tributaries including one that some white-collared peccaries have expanded to make a wallow. Up and down several hillocks through some open forest and you reach a leaf-cutter ant metropolis on the edge of a small oxbow lake. An overlook allows you to observe the ants at work as well as catch a glimpse of any aquatic birds or reptiles that may be out that day.

After lunch at the lodge, you go back downstream to an oxbow lake formed by the Shiripuno River and walk inland a few minutes. If lucky - and quiet - you may catch a glimpse of the extraordinary hoatzin (one of the few birds that feeds almost exclusively on leaves), as well as anacondas, capybaras and caimans. Afterwards you will visit a heavily-used salt-clay lick. If the lick is inactive (or the animals have been scared off), you still have the opportunity to see where a variety of animals have trudged uphill to gauge out the mineral-rich soil.

The return trip is a brief night outing. 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.

**Day 3.** In the morning you go for a long hike with the Huaorani guide, also an experienced hunter. You learn about the secrets of survival in the rainforest without killing any of the creatures that live there. You learn 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.

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Later on, you visit families' gardens and learn how to grow edible plants and try to harvest manioc, also known as yucca or cassava. Perhaps you will be invited to join in a game of soccer! Return to the lodge by canoe at the end of the afternoon.

**Day 4.** After an early breakfast you set off poling down the Shiripuno River in order to appreciate the sounds and sights of the rainforest. Leaving early, you're sure to catch many birds unawares, and the tranquility allows you to appreciate what life must have been like before the advent of motorized canoes. A short stop for lunch and a swim recharge you for the rest of the trip. This 6-7 hour journey takes you near the Huaorani village of Nenquepare where you will spend the night at a campsite. In the afternoon you will take a 3-hour hike to an impressive waterfall.

**Day 5.** After breakfast you continue downstream towards the border between traditional Huaorani territory and that of the petroleum companies (although it all used to be Huaorani territory). At the point where a road built by oil companies crosses the river, you leave the forest and head back to "civilization".

The symbols of modern deforestation are the roads. They provide access and means for human populations to grow at a rapid rate, which affects indigenous

peoples by displacing them from the best and most accessible agricultural soils (which aren't particularly well-suited to begin with); reducing territory available for hunting and gathering; and encouraging them via settler example and government policy to increase their reliance on agriculture and timber extraction and to convert their land from communal resource.

Here, you witness the crude reality of our collective thirst for oil as you ride alongside the miles of pipelines, which go from the Huaorani community of Tihuino to Lago Agrio, the oil hub of *El Oriente*. This brief journey through oil territory illustrates the reality of the threat facing the rainforest and the Huaorani people.

After a 2,5 hour ride, you reach the town of Coca, where you catch your flight to Quito.

**DIFFICULTY:** moderate

**DEPARTURE:** Thursday

**INCLUDING:**

- bilingual naturalist guide and local Huaorani guide
- transportation by canoe
- accommodation in First Class lodge (double cabin with private bath and hot water)
- meals and purified drinking water
- all excursions
- equipment (rain poncho and rubber boots up to size 44)

**NOT INCLUDING:**

- transportation package (USD 250 per person including private transfer Quito – Shell, private flight Shell - Quehueri'ono, flight Coca – Quito)
- entrance fee Huaorani Reserve (USD 10 per person)
- travel insurance
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