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**Huaorani**  
Ecolodge



# Huaorani Ecolodge

## Overview

The award winning Huaorani Ecolodge is situated at the headwaters of the Amazon and run by the Huaorani, one of the most isolated ethnic group on earth. This is a life changing experience where you will learn how to use a blowgun, climb trees, smear your face with red achiote, and take a two day meander down the Shiripuno river in kayaks or dugout canoes watching tropical birds and monkeys and listen to an indigenous leader relate the tribe's fight against oil exploration and with luck meet Moi Enomenga a conservation hero honored by National Geographic and the Buffett Foundation.

The Huaorani are high energy, fun-loving people and they expect you to immerse in their culture and customs. Visit, learn, act, share and inspire!

flush toilet; a porch with comfortable chairs. Electricity is supplied 24 hours a day by solar panels. Environmentally friendly soaps and shampoos are provided, and for days when relaxing is the priority.

The dining area has a lightly stocked bar. The whole area is covered with traditional Huaorani-style palm thatching and comfortably seats everyone.

Other structures include an employees' dormitory, an Administrator's house, two storage buildings and, perhaps most importantly, the "Casa de Hamacas" (Hammock House) on the edge of the Shiripuno River for those few occasions when you are not engaged in activities away from the Lodge.

## Highlights & Brief Itinerary

- \* At the Huaorani ecolodge we facilitate friendships with the local communities.
- \* In our 30 kms of trails system we facilitate discovery the Huaorani food market, hardware shop and playground.
- \* In the Shiripuno river we facilitate explorations: poling dugout canoes, recreational kayaks and stand up paddling.
- \* In Nenkepare Campiste we facilitate connections to the Amazon wildest sites.
- \* On your way out of the Huaorani territory we facilitate change.

## Facilities

Huaorani Ecolodge, provides accommodations in a style harmonious with the surrounding environment and the Huaorani culture.

The lodge is cozy, providing accommodation for a maximum of ten people housed in five comfortable, traditionally built, palms thatched cabins.

All cabins contain: a pair of twin beds (which can be joined to create a double if desired and triples for small families with a young child); a private bathroom equipped with a shower and

## 4-Day program

### Day 1.-

Your journey to the Amazon begins early in the morning after being picked up at your hotel. Leaving the bustling metropolis of Quito, you will be treated to the beautiful sceneries of the Ecuadorian countryside as transportation heads south, transitioning from the Andes to the Amazon (locally known as the Oriente). The excursion winds along the impressive Avenue of Volcanoes—a strip of 14 active, semi-active and dormant volcanic mountains—passing traditional haciendas, indigenous villages and protected natural areas, giving you a taste for the local culture. With luck and clear weather, you'll be able to see the remarkably steep peaks in all their glory, including the cone-shaped Cotopaxi, one of the highest active volcanoes in the world, and Tungurahua, which has ongoing eruptions.

Baños (*bah-nyos*), named for its thermal baths that draw thousands of visitors per year and known for its adrenaline-pumping adventure sports and *melcocha* taffy, will be the first major town on the way. Your journey will continue into its surrounding green landscapes punctuated by beautiful cascading waterfalls, riding adjacent to the Agoyan River (which changes name to Pastaza once it crosses into the province of the same name) while passing under several tunnels.

Heading onward to the jungle, you'll start to notice changes in vegetation, with Spanish moss, bananas and tropical palms beginning to dominate the countryside.

Four or five hours later, you will arrive to the town of Shell, named after the oil company. This hosts the third busiest airport in Ecuador, with frequent flights in and out of the Oriente to facilitate easier travel to the region for military personnel, missionaries, various aid groups and charter companies. Around noon, you will depart in a light aircraft to the Huaorani community of Quehueri'ono (keh-weri-oh-noh), only to be warmly greeted by your guests after a short 35-minute flight. From here, you will start your expedition downstream in a shallow dugout canoe called a *quilla* (kee-yah). Your luggage will be taken ahead separately, so be sure to keep your camera, binoculars, sunscreen and hat on-board with you. Rubber boots and rain ponchos will be distributed at this point.

Immediately, you will begin to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the Amazon. The entire paddle downstream will be filled with amazing wildlife viewing, and you'll likely catch a glimpse and photo of the many riverside birds, including the Yellow-rumped Cacique, the Greater and Lesser Kiskadees, and any of the four Amazonian kingfishers. You won't want to put your camera down as you traverse the mighty Shiripuno River (shire-puno) sandwiched between thick tangles of rainforest vegetation on either side.

Finally, you will arrive at Huaorani Ecolodge, your intimate and comfortable home for the next few days. You'll have the chance to settle in, have lunch listen to an introductory briefing about the Huaorani culture and their relationship with the rainforest at the discovery trail. After dinner, feel free to rest up for day two of your Amazonian adventure, or if you have an urge to start exploring, ask your guide to lead you on a night walk.

## Day 2

Today is hunting day! And you thought this was an environmentally friendly project? Well, it is! Huaorani are hunters and gatherers and their main sources of protein are mammals (yes, including monkeys), fish and birds. The goals of this project are to preserve the traditional practices of the Huaorani culture and to protect the tropical rainforest.

After breakfast, a Huaorani guide will accompany you on a long nature hike into the forest. The local guides are also experienced hunters and they will teach you the secrets of rainforest survival without killing any of the creatures that live there. You'll 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 point out and let you taste edible insects, identify and explain the uses of medicinal plants, and show you which clay is used to make pottery.

The trail has two overlooks as it winds toward the community. There are tree trunk seats for some much-needed rest and will allow you to enjoy the view over the forest canopy, where you may see vultures soaring and trees in bloom.

Afterwards, you'll have time to change into your swimsuit and take a dip in the fresh river water, swimming beside the creatures of the Amazon. Do not worry, though, the animals won't bite; humans are the only true threat in the jungle! Most likely, members of the Huaorani community will join you for the swim; the river plays a central role in their lives and they love to play in the water! Shortly after, you'll fill up on a hearty lunch near the community.

The afternoon will be spent with the community, when you'll get to know the members personally. The relaxed, informal visit may lead you to share a bowl of *chucula* (a sweet drink made of ripe bananas) under the filtered light of the thatched houses, or admire the beautiful handmade artifacts, including woven hammocks and bags, blowguns, traps and necklaces. You'll also have the chance to visit the Bi-cultural Ecology Education project and learn how to harvest manioc, also known as yucca or cassava. Perhaps you will be invited to join in a game of ecua-volley!

If you'd like, you can visit the community's handicraft market and purchase some of the products. The production of crafts is one of the ways the Huaorani maintain their culture, and buying crafts is a way to provide direct support the Huaorani families: it provides employment in the village and another reason to protect the natural areas around the community.



You return to the lodge by canoe at the end of the afternoon to relax and have dinner, then your naturalist guide will offer a half hour discussion, or *charla*, on a subject of interest. Like the day before, if you'd like to extend your day and continue observing, ask your guide to bring you on a short night hike.

### Day 3

After breakfast, you set off canoeing down the Shiripuno River in traditional Huaorani style, or you can choose to kayak instead at an additional cost. Today the day starts extra early in order to catch a glimpse of the many different birds out at these hours. The tranquility of the morning will allow you to appreciate the true peace and calm of the rainforest, and is the perfect time to relax and engage in intimate conversations, reflect on the past few days of the journey, or to learn some Huaorani vocabulary.

Next up is a stop at the Apaika community, which lives inside the Yame Reserve, a 55,000-hectare protected area managed by the Huaorani Association, who leads the region's ecotourism initiatives. Here you will enjoy a quick snack and visit Apaika's mini interpretation center, where you can learn more about Yasuní National Park. To complete the afternoon, you'll be able to join the community in some of its daily activities and share in its history, myths and magic.

Afterwards, the group continues a couple more hours downriver near the Huaorani village of Nenquepare. You will spend the night here, camping out along the Shiripuno River, sleeping with the sounds of the Amazon's animals. The well-constructed and comfortable campsite is part of a community initiative, so you will really get to participate in and support community tourism at its finest.

### Day 4

Before the return journey and after being treated to a delicious breakfast, you will have the opportunity to hike the community trail to visit an impressive waterfall, one that has special importance for the Huaorani. Once there, you can take a dip in the

energizing waters to recharge for the trip back to Quito. The fairly easy walk is three hours altogether, and your naturalist guide will be sure to point out any special plants and animals you may come across.

Once back at the campsite, the group will bid farewell and start the return journey downstream in canoe. This will begin the "toxic tour," an introduction to how the oil industry has impacted the Huaorani lands. The group will head to the border between traditional Huaorani territory and that of the petroleum companies, though it all used to belong to the Huaorani. Here you will see the road built by oil companies in the early 1970s, which crosses the river, and transitions from forest to "civilization."

Roads are symbols of modern deforestation, providing access and means for human populations to grow at a rapid rate. This affects indigenous peoples by displacing them from the best and most accessible agricultural soils (which aren't particularly well suited to begin with), reducing the amount of land available for their hunting and gathering practices, and encouraging them via settler example and government policy to increase their reliance on agriculture and timber extraction.

On this short tour, you will witness the crude reality of our collective thirst for oil as you ride alongside miles of pipelines, which go from the Huaorani community of Tihuino to Lago Agrio, the oil hub of *el Oriente*, to be pumped across the Andes to the port of Esmeraldas. This brief journey through oil territory illustrates the reality of the threat facing the rainforest and the Huaorani people. You will also realize why your visit to Huaorani Lodge was so important!

After a 2-hour overland ride down the auca road, you will reach the banks of the Río Napo and the town of Coca, where you will catch your flight to Quito.

