

### Special Remarks:

B = Breakfast      L = Lunch      D = Dinner      BL = Box Lunch

## ITINERARY DESCRIPTION

### Day 1 - Quito

(-/L/D)

### Mashpi 3 days / 2 nights Itinerary

The adventure begins in Ecuador's heritage capital, Quito, at our 8 AM pick-up time for guests staying in Quito's main hotels.

Mashpi Lodge is located three hours by car from Quito (110 Km, 70 miles) in the evergreen wilds of the Andes' western slope. The sudden shift in altitude (from 2800 msnm to 1000 msnm) 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, a nature sanctuary located in the spectacular Chocó, one of the most celebrated bioregions in the world, known for its record-high endemism, rainfall and altitudinal range. We first stop at Pululahua Crater and its lookout point, where we can marvel at the unique scenic beauty of a collapsed volcano where people live and farm, taking advantage of the fertile volcanic soil. On our way to Mashpi, we visit the archaeological ruins at Tulipe, said to have belonged to the ancient Yumbo civilization of pre-Inca Quito, set in a magical forested location.

We'll taste delicious Ecuadorian appetizers and fresh-brewed coffee prepared by members of the local community before our final one-hour descent into Mashpi Reserve.



Around 12:30 PM, we are received at the Hummingbird Station. Mashpi boasts a total 32 hummingbird species identified to date, many of which inhabit different altitudinal ranges, with around 19 species considered common at our specially designed feeder station. Not only will we observe hummingbirds of all kinds, but also toucans, tanagers, squirrels, and more.

The site is located at a natural viewpoint, which, on clear days, provides breathtaking views of the reserve's forested hills. This is a veritable photographer's paradise, regardless of your level of experience.

After settling into our respective rooms, we are introduced to our naturalist guides who will briefly speak about the cloud forest and its conservation, the activities you will be offered during your stay, and helpful tips about what to wear and bring to the excursions. This will take place before lunch at our library (lasts around 30 minutes).

The trail is named after the Cucharillo Tree (*Magnolia dixonii*), which in Spanish means 'little spoon', an Ecuadorian endemic that is common at Mashpi, although otherwise threatened throughout the country. The trail requires some physical condition due to its steeper portions, but has been made less demanding thanks to recycled plastic crates that have been used to form steps and make paths firmer. At the end of the trail find a large waterfall and rocky riverbed with beautiful ponds and smaller waterfalls. The excursion takes about 2 hours to complete.

The forest transforms by sunset: the sounds and smells intensify and other senses are awakened. We will discover the evening croaking of nocturnal frogs and incessant buzz of insects. If we turn off our flashlights, we will be able to observe sparkling fireflies and feel bats zipping by. On the ground, we'll discover the faint glow of bioluminescent fungi all around. And as we turn our flashlights on again, we'll quickly notice the reflection of hundreds of tiny insects.

As we continue on, owls and other nocturnal birds may call into the night, while the rustling of branches above us may mean that we're in the presence of kinkajous (*Potos flavus*), an arboreal mammal relative to the raccoon, making their way through the trees in search of ripe fruit. The excursion begins at 7 PM and takes about 45 min to an hour. We then return to the lodge to enjoy a delicious dinner.



## Day 2 - Quito

(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 mt (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 colorful 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 3- Quito

(B/L/-)

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.

Approximately at 8:30 AM we leave the hotel and head to Copal Waterfall. This beautiful 2-hour-long hike features a landscape of moss-covered trees, bromelias and orchids at every corner. The trail ends at a spectacular waterfall over 50 m high.

We return to the hotel by noon for check out and enjoy our last meal at Mashpi before heading back to Quito at approximately 1:30 PM.



### Packing List Items

Guests will be supplied with **rubber boots**. Please ensure you send us your size. We also have binoculars for guests to use. The lodge supplies **walking poles**, but you may want to bring your own, as well as natural, insect-repellent bracelets and small backpacks.

- Headlamp (or Flashlight)
- Sunhat
- Sun block
- Sunglasses
- Swimwear
- Walking shoes/sneakers
- Socks: we recommend joggers' socks that don't slip easily inside rubber boots. Asics Tegan Knee-High or Kayano Classic Quarter are both good options. 2 pairs per day are ideal.
- Light-weight, earth- or dark-coloured, long-sleeved T-shirts and shirts
- Earth- or dark-coloured, light-weight trousers
- Light fleece/sweater
- Sandals/Tevas
- Dark or earth-tone colour Goretex jacket – guests will also be supplied with waterproof ponchos
- Extra insect repellent (natural, not chemical like DEET)
- Good binoculars (Guides will have pairs to share)
- 6 Ziploc bags of different sizes for keeping things dry
- Sealable bag for packing dirty laundry in luggage

- Extra batteries
- Appliance chargers. Plugs in Ecuador are US-style, 2 flat pins 110 volts. 220 volt adaptors can be supplied upon request.

The small boutique at the lodge sells a range of books, guides, clothing (T-shirts, shirts, hats, buffs), crafts, as well as essentials (batteries, health care products, etc.).

We kindly ask that luggage not exceed **45 lbs (20 kilos)** in weight, with one item per person.

Due to the Lodge's waste water management system, we request guests only use **biodegradable soaps and shampoos** (the Lodge supplies these as part of its amenities).