

WILD ANDES CONSERVATION JOURNEY

A nature-focused journey through Ecuador's protected reserves, cloud forests, high-altitude grassland ecosystems and community-led conservation initiatives

(10D / 9N)

*Brought to you by Maquita Impact-Based DMC
Where Travel Creates Equity*

THE EXPERIENCE

This Nature Conservation journey explores the Ecuadorian Andes through protected areas, private reserves, community-led initiatives and landscapes where biodiversity, local livelihoods and environmental care are deeply connected. From high-altitude grassland ecosystems and volcanic craters to cloud forests, condor nesting areas and community conservation projects, the program offers a meaningful view of how nature is protected, restored and experienced across Ecuador's Andean territories.

The journey is designed for travelers who want to experience nature beyond scenery. Each day reveals a different layer of Ecuador's ecological diversity: endangered species conservation, private reserve management, responsible agro-production, community ecotourism, protected areas, volcanic landscapes and the relationship between people and fragile ecosystems.

Through naturalist walks, birdwatching opportunities, volcanic landscapes, interpretive visits and community encounters, travelers gain a deeper understanding of conservation in action. The experience connects Ecuador's iconic nature with the people, reserves and organizations working every day to protect it.

ITINERARY AT A GLANCE

Day 1: Arrival in Quito – Private transfer in – Accommodation.

Day 2: Quito – Chakana Reserve – Andean condor habitat, high-altitude birdlife and highland grassland landscapes – Quito by night – Accommodation in Quito.

Day 3: Quito – Yanacocha Reserve – Cloud forest conservation and hummingbird habitat – Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve – Accommodation in the Mindo area.

Day 4: Mindo – Pacto raw cane sugar project – Sustainable agro-production and fair trade – Yunguilla community ecotourism project – Accommodation in Yunguilla.

Day 5: Yunguilla – Equator line marker museum – Cayambe – La Calera community tourism project – Accommodation in Cotacachi.

Day 6: Cotacachi – Cuicocha crater trek in Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve – Casa Matico cultural project in Peguche – Accommodation in Puenbo.

Day 7: Puenbo – Cotopaxi buffer zone – Andean cowboy-style horseback riding – Cotopaxi National Park and Limpiopungo Lagoon – Agroecological hacienda experience in Tigua – Accommodation in Tigua.

Day 8: Tigua – Quilotoa crater – Ilinizas Ecological Reserve landscape – Transfer to Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve – Accommodation in the Chimborazo area.

Day 9: Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve – High-altitude reserve experience – Guano hacienda lunch – Transfer to Puenbo.

Day 10: Puenbo – Breakfast – Private transfer out – Departure or optional extension to the Amazon Rainforest and/or Galápagos Islands.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Quito

Arrival in Quito and private transfer to the hotel. This first day allows travelers to settle into Ecuador's capital and prepare for a journey focused on nature, conservation and the remarkable ecological diversity of the Andes.

Dinner is open, allowing travelers to rest or explore according to arrival time.

Accommodation: Quito

Meals: None

Day 2: Quito – Chakana Reserve – Quito by Night

After breakfast, the journey begins with a visit to Chakana Reserve, a protected high-Andean landscape known for its role in the conservation of the Andean condor. The reserve protects an inactive stratified supervolcano and surrounding high-altitude grassland ecosystems that provide habitat for one of Ecuador's most emblematic endangered species.

The visit includes the Laguna Secas viewpoint, from where travelers can observe the rocky cliffs and highland grassland formations associated with condor nesting areas. The route continues through authorized low-impact tourism areas of the reserve, gradually moving into higher sectors where the landscape opens toward one of the most important condor habitats in Ecuador.

Beyond the condor, Chakana also offers opportunities to observe high-altitude birdlife, including the Ecuadorian Hillstar, a remarkable hummingbird adapted to extreme elevations that may reach up to approximately 5,200 meters above sea level. The reserve is also part of the natural habitat of the spectacled bear, along with several small and medium-sized Andean species. Wildlife observation depends on natural conditions, but the ecological value of the territory is present throughout the experience.

Lunch will be provided according to the timing of the visit. In the late afternoon, the group returns to Quito. As evening falls, the program continues with a night visit through the Historic Center, allowing travelers to experience the first UNESCO World Heritage city under the warm lights of its churches, plazas and colonial façades.

Dinner is open. Transfer to the hotel for overnight.

Accommodation: Quito

Meals: B, L

Day 3: Quito – Yanacocha Reserve – Bellavista Cloud Forest

After breakfast, the day begins with a visit to Yanacocha Reserve, a key conservation area created to protect the critically endangered Black-breasted Puffleg, a hummingbird with a very limited distribution range. The reserve offers a gentle and accessible introduction to the montane cloud forest ecosystem.

Travelers walk along a mostly flat trail of approximately two kilometers, passing through lush vegetation and several feeding stations that attract hummingbirds, tanagers and other bird species. One of the most remarkable species frequently seen in the area is the Sword-billed Hummingbird, known for its extraordinary bill length.

The route then continues toward Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge, located in the Mindo area. Bellavista is recognized as a pioneering ecotourism initiative and private conservation area within the core zone of the Chocó Andino Biosphere Reserve. Its trails offer an excellent opportunity to explore the Andean cloud forest, observe birds and experience the humidity, vegetation and biodiversity of one of Ecuador's most important ecological corridors.

Species that may be observed in the area include Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Masked Trogon, Ocellated Tapaculo, Tanager Finch and several hummingbird species, including restricted-range species of high conservation value.

Lunch will be provided according to the flow of the activities. Dinner and overnight in the Mindo area.

Accommodation: Mindo area

Meals: B, L, D

Day 4: Mindo – Pacto raw cane sugar Project – Yunguilla Community

After breakfast, the journey continues toward Pacto, where travelers learn how sustainable sugarcane production supports the elaboration of "panela", an unrefined cane sugar, and contributes to local livelihoods. With the support of Maquita Foundation, local producers

work toward fair pricing and responsible commercialization, connecting community production with national and international markets.

The visit provides an integrated view of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable agro-production. Panela is presented not only as a product, but as part of a broader system where fair trade, local organization and environmental care are directly connected.

The route then continues toward Yunguilla, a community near Calacalí with more than three decades of experience in community ecotourism. Yunguilla has become a national and international reference for community-led conservation and sustainable livelihoods, positioning itself as a guardian territory at the entrance to the Chocó Andino Biosphere Reserve.

In this transition zone between inter-Andean shrublands, high-altitude grasslands and cloud forest, travelers experience how a community can organize around conservation, tourism, local production and long-term territorial care. The visit introduces the community's history, challenges and efforts to build a sustainable way of life.

Lunch will be served according to the day's activities. Dinner and overnight in Yunguilla.

Accommodation: Yunguilla

Meals: B, L, D

[Day 5: Yunguilla – Inti Ñan Solar Museum – Cayambe – La Calera](#)

After breakfast, the group travels to San Antonio de Pichincha to visit the Inti Ñan Solar Museum, where travelers learn why this area of Quito is associated with the "Middle of the World." The visit introduces geographic, physical and cultural interpretations linked to Ecuador's equatorial location.

The journey then continues toward Cayambe for lunch before moving north to Cotacachi and the community of La Calera. Located in the province of Imbabura, recognized by UNESCO as a Global Geopark, La Calera offers travelers a closer look at community life, local identity and territorial organization.

During the visit, the community introduces its projects and local initiatives, helping travelers understand how culture, landscape and community-based tourism are connected in this Andean territory.

Dinner and overnight in Cotacachi.

Accommodation: Cotacachi

Meals: B, L, D

[Day 6: Cotacachi – Cuicocha Crater Trek – Casa Matico – Puenbo](#)

After breakfast, the day begins with a visit to Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, specifically the volcanic crater of Cotacachi, where the impressive Cuicocha Lagoon fills the interior of the caldera. Travelers follow a loop trail around the crater, taking in the flora, fauna and dramatic volcanic landscape of the reserve.

This activity offers one of the strongest landscape experiences of the itinerary and connects directly with the conservation value of Ecuador's highland ecosystems. The route is moderate and subject to weather and trail conditions.

After lunch, the journey continues to Casa Matico in Peguche. This community-based project welcomes travelers into a world of handmade textiles, manual looms, local crafts and living traditions. The experience includes the process of creating handmade garments, access to the local store and a deeper encounter with cultural practices connected to music, dance, legends, medicinal plants and food traditions around the family hearth.

Later, the group transfers to Puenbo for accommodation in a hacienda-style property. Dinner is open.

Accommodation: Puenbo

Meals: B, L

[Day 7: Puenbo – Cotopaxi National Park – Tigua](#)

After breakfast, the journey heads toward the province of Cotopaxi and the buffer zone of Cotopaxi National Park. If weather conditions allow, the route offers views of Ecuador's famous Avenue of the Volcanoes, where some of the country's most emblematic snow-capped peaks and volcanic landscapes rise along both sides of the Andean corridor.

Upon arrival, travelers enjoy a chagra-style horseback riding experience at a local tourism hacienda. The term chagra refers to the traditional Andean cowboy of Ecuador's highlands. This activity introduces the Andean landscape through a local rural perspective, connecting geography, culture, mobility and the traditional highland relationship with horses.

The route then enters Cotopaxi National Park for a closer view of the snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano and the Limpiopungo Lagoon, located between the slopes of Cotopaxi and Rumiñahui. This protected area offers a clear example of high-altitude conservation, volcanic ecosystems and high-altitude grassland landscapes.

Lunch will be served according to the day's timing. The journey continues toward the community of Tigua, where travelers stay at a hacienda and take part in an agroecological experience linked to artisanal milk, cheese and manjar production, a traditional milk-based sweet spread.

Dinner and overnight in Tigua.

Accommodation: Tigua

Meals: B, L, D

Day 8: Tigua – Quilotoa – Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve

After breakfast, the group departs early toward Quilotoa, an extraordinary volcanic crater located within the Ilinizas Ecological Reserve. Along the way, travelers can observe the Toachi Canyon, a striking geographic formation that reveals the depth and complexity of the Andean landscape.

Upon arrival at Quilotoa, travelers admire the turquoise lagoon inside the crater and compare its scale, colors and volcanic setting with Cuicocha, visited earlier in the journey. Depending on timing, weather and physical conditions, travelers may descend toward the lagoon or visit the glass viewpoint for panoramic photographs. Optional kayaking or boat rides at the lagoon are available at the traveler's own expense and subject to local conditions.

Lunch will be served according to the day's activities. In the afternoon, the journey continues toward the Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve, named after the snow-capped Chimborazo Volcano, which rises around 6,263 meters above sea level and whose summit is considered the point on Earth closest to the sun due to the planet's equatorial bulge.

The reserve was created to protect and recover Andean wildlife and high-altitude ecosystems. Overnight near the slopes of this iconic mountain.

Accommodation: Chimborazo area

Meals: B, L, D

Day 9: Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve – San Andrés – Puenbo

After breakfast, the group enters Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve to experience the immensity of Ecuador's highest mountain at close range. The route may reach the second refuge and, if the group's physical condition allows, continue toward Condor Cocha Lagoon.

This high-altitude experience allows travelers to feel the cold, thin air and austere beauty of the Andean high-altitude grasslands, one of Ecuador's most distinctive ecosystems. It is also a powerful closing point for the conservation narrative of the program, connecting volcanic geography, wildlife protection and the resilience of life at extreme elevations.

After descending from the reserve, the journey continues toward the community of San Andrés, where the group will enjoy a restorative lunch at a local hacienda. The route then continues north toward Puenbo for accommodation in a hacienda-style hotel.

Dinner is open.

Accommodation: Puenbo

Meals: B, L

Day 10: Departure or Extension to the Amazon Rainforest / Galápagos Islands

After breakfast, private transfer to the airport for departure, marking the end of the mainland Nature Conservation journey.

For travelers wishing to expand their experience, this program can be seamlessly extended through Maquita DMC's dedicated Amazon Rainforest Experience and/or Galápagos Islands Experience.

Accommodation: None

Meals: B

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Amazon Rainforest Experience 4 Days / 3 Nights

The Amazon Rainforest Experience offers a natural continuation to the Wild Andes Conservation Journey, extending the conservation narrative from Ecuador's high-altitude ecosystems into the rainforest landscapes of Napo. Centered around Shandia Lodge, the journey integrates forest trails, river life, community-based tourism, Kichwa cultural practices, medicinal plants and locally rooted gastronomy. Through Maquita DMC's long-standing community network in the Amazon, travelers experience the rainforest not only as a biodiverse ecosystem, but as a living territory shaped by ancestral knowledge, local stewardship and community organization.

Galápagos Islands Experience Cruise-Based or Island Hopping Extensions

The Galápagos Islands Experience allows travelers to extend the conservation journey toward one of the world's most iconic natural destinations through either cruise-based exploration or island hopping programs. Cruise-based journeys offer integrated expedition flow, onboard comfort and wider geographic reach, while island hopping experiences provide land-based flexibility, hotel comfort, local island atmosphere and modular daily exploration. Through selected local operators in the islands, Maquita DMC coordinates Galápagos extensions with clear logistics, responsible travel standards and a coherent service framework connecting mainland Ecuador's conservation landscapes with the protected ecosystems of the archipelago.

✓ PROGRAM INCLUDES

- Private transportation
- National bilingual tour guide (English/Italiano/Deutsch/Français - Spanish)
- Accommodation according to itinerary:
 - 2 nights in Quito
 - 2 nights in Puenbo
 - 1 night in Mindo area
 - 1 night in Yunguilla
 - 1 night in Cotacachi
 - 1 night in Tigua
 - 1 night in Chimborazo area
- Meals according to itinerary
 - (B = Breakfast / BL = Box Lunch / L = Lunch / D = Dinner)
- Entrance fees and activities included:
 - Welcome Kit by Maquita Turismo
 - Entrance to Chakana Reserve and local naturalist guide.
 - Quito by night city tour.
 - Entrance to Yanacocha Reserve and local naturalist guide.
 - Entrance to Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve and local naturalist guide.
 - Entrance to the Pacto panela project.
 - Entrance to Yunguilla community ecotourism project.
 - Entrance to Inti Ñan Solar Museum.
 - Entrance to La Calera community project.
 - Cuicocha crater trek in Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve.
 - Entrance to Casa Matico project.
 - Chagra-style horseback riding experience in Cotopaxi.
 - Entrance to Cotopaxi National Park and local naturalist guide.
 - Agroecological hacienda experience in Tigua.
 - Entrance to Quilotoa.
 - Entrance to Chimborazo Wildlife Production Reserve and local naturalist guide.

✗ PROGRAM DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International flights
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Dinners on Days 1, 2, 6 and 9
- Optional kayaking or boat ride at Quilotoa Lagoon
- Personal expenses
- Tips
- Activities not specified in the itinerary

💰 RATES PER PERSON (USD)

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Rates	2 - 3 pax	4 - 6 pax	7 - 9 pax	10 - 15 pax
NET	USD 2.575,00	USD 2.499,00	USD 1.999,00	USD 1.809,00
GROSS	USD 3.675,00	USD 3.570,00	USD 2.855,00	USD 2.585,00

Note: Rates for 2 to 3 passengers include a guide/driver, while rates for 4 passengers or more include a guide and a driver

COMMERCIAL CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Currency

USD. All payments must be received net of bank fees.

Payment Terms

Booking type	Commercial rule
FIT standard	No payment required for blocking before 90 days. Confirmation requires 30% deposit 60 days before travel. Final balance is due 45 days before travel.
Groups / tailor-made	No payment required for blocking before 120 days. Confirmation requires 40% deposit 90 days before travel. Final balance is due 60 days before travel.
Last-minute bookings	45 days or less: 100% at confirmation.

Cancellation Policy

All cancellations must be received in writing. Charges apply to the total confirmed booking value.

Time before departure	FIT standard	Groups / tailor-made
91+ days	0%	0%
90-61 days	0%	25%
60-45 days	30%	50%
44-31 days	70%	50%
30 days or less / no-show	100%	100%

Note: Non-refundable services may apply

Key Conditions

- Prices subject to availability at booking
- Non-refundable components override general policies
- Changes may generate additional costs
- Services confirmed upon payment

Force Majeure

- Recoverable funds will be refunded net of supplier costs.
- Alternative arrangements will be proposed whenever possible.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

- The itinerary may be adjusted due to operational, weather-related, or safety conditions to ensure a smooth and responsible travel experience.
- Wildlife observation depends on natural conditions and cannot be guaranteed.