

Huaorani Photographic Safari

This is an opportunity to escape from the mainstream and join us on an exciting adventure to experience tropical wildlife at its best!

With our Photographic Safari you will have the chance to discover and document the diversity of reptiles and amphibians in the Huaorani Territory.

This tour is focus in teaching the participants everything about this diversity during a once in a lifetime adventure to some of the world's most pristine and magical destinations. For this reason, we offer instructions in specialized field methods and photographic techniques for herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians) while ensuring an unforgettable and delightful travel accompanied by the fun loving Huaorani people part of this conservation ecotourism initiative.

About Our Leaders:

To make this research adventure possible, we have partnered with young, energetic, friendly and adaptable professional biologists and photographers founders of Tropical Herping.

Lucas Bustamante Lucas is a passionate biologist and local wildlife photographer. For seven years now, he has been dedicated to documenting Ecuador's biodiversity, particularly reptiles and amphibians. Lucas has lead innumerable field trips and workshops. He also has written several articles and books about tropical ecology and herpetology. Lucas' photographic work has been featured in National Geographic, Anima Mundi, Discovery Channel and many other magazines.

Alejandro Arteaga Ale is an experienced wildlife photographer and biologist from Venezuela. He has devoted the past seven years to photographing reptiles and amphibians in the new world tropics, an activity he integrates with scientific research. Alejandro is author of The Amphibians and Reptiles of Mindo and several scientific articles. He has described three species new to science and his photographic work has been featured in National Geographic, Anima Mundi, Discovery Channel and many other magazines.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Coca to Huaorani

From Coca, we will drive through the jungle for two hours until we reach the Shiripuno River. Upon arrival to the Shiripuno Bridge, we will have a quick safety introduction before setting off on our journey upriver in motorized canoe. As soon as the canoe starts moving, our naturalist guide will begin to identify the different plants, birds and animals surrounding us. We will continue upstream until we arrive at the Huaorani Territory and Reserve and our comfortable Huaorani Campsite.

We will get to Nenkepare for lunch where we will spend the night here camping out in a well-constructed and comfortable campsite that is part of a community initiative.

After lunch we will take an easy stroll to the cascade and back takes about three hours, and once you arrive at the waterfall, you can jump into the clear, energizing waters to recharge for the return walk. Along the way, your naturalist guide will point out the special features of the area influenced by the humidity of the falls as well as the special plants and animals you might have the opportunity to see. A

small charge will be made to cover the costs of maintaining the trail.

This is a moderate hike of about 90 minutes, beginning with a short steep ascent after which you walk along the ridges of undulating hills allowing you views midway into the canopy, where you may see such birds as toucans, piping guans and hawks. Listen for the incessant call of the Screaming Piha, a loud but small bird that is rarely spotted.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

- Photographic session of the waterfall and surrounding landscapes.
- Night hike and Macro-photography of Amphibians and reptiles, insects and plants of the area.

Day 2: Yame reserve, Yasuni National Park and Apaika Community

Today we will head upriver on an hour canoe ride and stop at the Apaika community, which is set in the heart of the Yame Reserve, a 55,000-hectare protected area managed by the Huaorani Communities that inhabit this region and lead the ecotourism initiatives. Here you will visit Apaika's mini interpretation center, where you can learn more about Yasuni National Park.

You will also be able to join the community in some of its daily activities and share in its history, myths and magic.

As you travel upriver on the beautiful Shiripuno River, keep binoculars and camera ready for such birds as striking Yellow-rumped Caciques, kiskadees, kingfishers, and egrets among other species.

· Arrival at the Huaorani Ecolodge

Upon arrival at the intimate, safe, and comfortable Huaorani Ecolodge, you will get the chance to settle in and have lunch before taking a guided, introductory hike on the rainforest Discovery Trail. On this walk, you will learn about the Huaorani culture and the surrounding Amazon rainforest. After dinner, you have the option of resting up for the next day of your adventure or going on an exciting night hike with your local guide.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

- Daytime photography of amphibians, reptiles, insects and birds under natural light.

Night hike in search of Amphibian and reptiles, insects and plants to photography/Search of Caimans.

Day 3 - Learn about Huaorani hunting and survival techniques, hike through beautiful rainforest, cool off in a pristine jungle river, and meet the local Huaorani community.

· Learn hunting and survival techniques

Today is hunting day! Huaorani survive in the forest by hunting monkeys, birds, other animals, fishing

in the river, and gathering fruits, tubers, and vegetables. While you will learn about basic hunting techniques, don't worry, no animals will be killed. One of the main goals of this project is the preservation of traditional Huaorani practices to keep Huaorani culture alive and protect the rainforest. Therefore, after breakfast, a Huaorani guide will take you on a long nature hike into the forest.

The local guides will teach you how to set traps, make fires without matches, build a quick jungle shelter, use a blowgun, swing a machete, and catch fish in small creeks. Your guide may also show you which insects can be eaten, identify medicinal plants and explain their uses, and show you where they find clay for making pottery.

· **A swim and visit to the local Huaorani community**

While hiking through the rainforest, you will enjoy views over the vast jungle canopy before eventually reaching the cool waters of a jungle river. While taking a dip in the river, local community members may join you to cool off in the waters. After going for a swim in the heart of the Amazon, you will be treated to a tasty lunch before a relaxed, informal visit at the Huaorani community. You will probably be invited to enjoy a bowl of "chucula" (a sweet drink made from ripe bananas) and may get the chance to admire such beautiful handmade artifacts as woven hammocks and bags, traps, blowguns, and necklaces made from jungle seeds. You will also have the chance to visit the Bi-cultural Ecology Education project and learn how to harvest manioc, a Huaorani staple.

· **A visit to a community handicraft market**

If you like, you can visit the community's handicraft market to purchase some of their hand-crafted products. Hand-crafted goods help the Huaorani maintain their culture, and buying such crafts provides direct support to the Huaorani families who make them. At the end of the afternoon, a pleasant canoe-ride takes you back to the lodge. After dinner, your naturalist guide will give a half hour talk on a subject of interest. Or, if you would prefer to go on a night hike, just let your guide know!

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Photography session of animals in the morning (session with sunlight/natural light).
- Visit to Huaorani Community.

Day 4 - An exciting day of hikes through pristine rainforest, canoe rides on oxbow lakes, and chances to see exotic rainforest wildlife!

· **A guided hike through primary rainforest**

The day starts out with breakfast or an optional early guided walk in the forest followed by breakfast. This is followed by a three hour walk through primary forest with immense towering trees, crystal

clear streams, and a myriad of bird calls from the jungle. The trail leads to a hilltop crowned by a massive Ceibo tree over 40 meters (131 feet) tall.

· **Peccaries, Leaf-cutter Ants, and a canoe ride**

The trail then follows a path that parallels the Shiripuno River and crosses small tributaries, including one that occasionally hosts groups of White-collared Peccaries. You will probably see tracks of these wild, rainforest hogs, may smell them, and might even glimpse them. You will also see a huge Leaf-cutter Ant nest before reaching a small oxbow lake. A walk along the lake leads to a river where a canoe will take you back to the lodge.

· **Another canoe ride, a visit to a salt lick, and nocturnal animals**

After a delicious lunch at the lodge, you will canoe back downstream to an oxbow lake known as the “Cocha Pequeña”. At the lake, you will have a very good chance of seeing the extraordinary Hoatzin (one of the few birds that feeds almost exclusively on leaves), Squirrel Monkeys, Capybaras (the world’s largest rodent), Caimans, and might even see an Anaconda.

On the way back to the lodge, you will watch a salt-clay lick that is often used by various animals and birds. This is an excellent site for viewing rare wildlife and birds as many animals gather here to feed on the mineral-rich clay.

The return trip from the clay lick offers a chance at seeing nocturnal animals. Since many of the rainforest animals are nocturnal, this is your best opportunity to see some of these elusive creatures. You may spot various snakes, frogs, bizarre bugs, kinkajous, owls, and other animals.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Photography session of huge Ceiba Tress
- Search for wild peccarías
- Nocturnal animals and Macro-Photography.

Day 5 - A memorable day punctuated by a canoe ride down the Shiripuno River and Toxic Tour

· **An early canoe ride down the Shiripuno**

This day starts early to give a better chance at seeing a variety of colorful Amazonian birds on our way out of Huaorani territory. 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.

The effects of oil exploration on Huaorani lands

After returning to the campsite on the Shiripuno, you will continue on downstream by canoe to the infamous "Auca Road". On the way, your guides will start to tell you about how oil exploration has affected their lands. The Auca Road was built by oil companies in the early 1970s to search for oil on Huaorani lands and is named after the Huaorani as "Auca" is the name given to them by their lowland Quichua neighbors (Auca means "Fierce" or "Savage").

As you travel along the Auca Road, you won't help but notice the stark difference between intact rainforest and deforestation that occurs when roads are carved out of the surrounding jungle. This road is paralleled by pipelines that go from the Huaorani community of Tihuino up to Lago Agrio (the oil hub of eastern Ecuador) before the oil is pumped across the Andes to the Pacific port of Esmeraldas. This part of your tour illustrates the reality of the threats facing the rainforest and the Huaorani people as much of the road passes through land that was formerly forested and lived in by Huaorani peoples. It will also help you realize why your visit to Huaorani Ecolodge was so important!

After a 2 hour overland ride on the Auca Road, you reach the town of Coca.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Take your camera and shoot the reality of oil exploration, an important testimonial of your visit and the treats the HUAorani people are trying to protect from using ecotourism as a tool for conservation.

Rate per person: \$ 1530 in double occupancy

Included:

- Accommodations
- All meals
- English speaking guide
- Guided activities (incl camping)

Not included

- Transportation Coca - Huaorani Territory - Coca (\$150 per person-subject to change)
- Ticket Quito - Coca - Quito \$ 206 (subject to change)
- Entrance fee to Huaorani Territory \$20
- Alcoholic and not alcoholic beverage
- Tips
- Personal expenses