

# Maquipucuna Cloud Forest Lodge



## Highlights

Located on the western flank of the Andes Cordillera, the Maquipucuna Cloud Forest Reserve is home to an awesome array of flora and fauna, from dazzling orchids to Technicolor tree frogs! Experience the richness of life in the clouds with this 3-day ecolodge tour!

It may be the second smallest country in South America, but what Ecuador lacks in size it more than makes up for in natural and cultural diversity! Straddling the equator on the northwest coast of the continent, Ecuador is a land of ancient cities, lush cloud forest, volcanic highlands and palm-fringed coastline. In a single day it's possible to travel through all these landscapes and more, making Ecuador the most diverse nation on Earth! One of 17 megadiverse countries, with 15% of the world's known bird species as well as 250 endemic reptiles and amphibians, the "Republic of the Equator" is also home to four UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including its capital, Quito, and the Galapagos archipelago, the lost world that inspired Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Small wonder, then, that Ecuador is a traveller's dream!

The Maquipucuna Reserve is a destination like no other! Cloaked in cloud and moss-mantled, these 15,000 acres of primary and secondary forest constitute one of the world's top 5 biodiversity hotspots, where birds and insects of scintillating splendour dance in the mist like mischievous sprites. At the heart of all this (yet just two hours from Quito) is the Maquipucuna ecolodge; your base for 3 days of jungle exploration. You're free to fill your time as you wish, whether that's hiking, bird-watching or swimming in the nearby clear-water river. There are guided nature walks on offer, as well as a trip to the local sugar cane mill where you can try a glass of guarapo (cane juice) or aguardiente (fire water)! And if all that sounds a little too hectic for your liking, you can kick back and relax in your hammock with a book from the lodge's library.

## Is it for me?

This trip is for people who care about the natural world and the tribal cultures that still manage to survive in small pockets across the globe. You need to have a sense of social responsibility and to be able to empathise with the people you will meet.

Ecuador's cloud forest is a special place and the eco-lodge offers you a chance to live within it without disturbing its delicate ecosystem. If you can't imagine a holiday without TV, sun beds and beach bars, best look elsewhere! The eco-lodge has spacious double and family rooms and can house up to 18 people.

## Accommodation

The Maquipucuna Cloud Forest Lodge offers a truly unique cloud forest experience. Set amidst several hectares of jungle and gardens, the stilted bamboo cabañas can accommodate up to 18 people. All are clean, spacious and en suite, with porches and balconies providing backstage access to this living theatre!

The food in the lodge is no less spectacular, with a skilled chef in residence to cook up some fabulous forest fare. The menu is gourmet Ecuadorian, meaning lots of fresh and exotic fruits and vegetables, exquisite fish and seafood dishes, soups, stews and a mind-boggling variety of potatoes! You can also expect some great wines and beers from neighbouring Chile.

## Itinerary

Prices from

**488** GBP (3 days) per person

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This is the perfect holiday for someone who wants to explore the rainforest. The itinerary is not prescribed, but below is a sample:

#### Day One: Maquicupuna Cloud Forest

On the way to Maquicupuna Cloud Forest Lodge you will visit the Middle of the World monument and museum which marks the equatorial line. You'll arrive at the Maquicupuna Reserve for lunch. In the afternoon you'll hike in the cloud forest along the river trail. You will return to the lodge for a dinner at sunset.

#### Day Two: Bear Trail

After an early morning breakfast you will head out on the Bear Trail with a packed lunch. You will return to the lodge mid-afternoon, with time to swim in the nearby clear-water river, to swing in your hammock or check out the lodge's mini-library.

#### Day Three: Rainforest - Quito

Today you will leave early for the bird-watching trail and return in time for lunch. During the second half of the day you will visit the local sugar cane mill where you can try a glass of 'guarapo' and see how 'aguardiente', a popular spirit, is made locally. It's then back to Quito, arriving late in the afternoon.

## Details

### Getting there

Flying from the UK...Major airlines flying to Ecuador are Iberia, Intercontinental, British Airways and LAN Ecuador. All flights require at least one stop over in José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport - Guayaquil (GYE), and often two, possibly in Madrid or Houston. Fly to Mariscal Sucre International Airport - Quito (SEQU).

You will be picked up from your hotel in Quito at the start of your trip and driven to the lodge.

### Price includes

Accommodation, food, airport transfers to and from Quito, entrance fee to the reserve.

Prices are based on 2 people sharing.

### When is best

The weather is by nature very changeable in Ecuador - so be aware of what is forecast for your visit and be sure to pack accordingly. The weather in this part of the Amazon rainforest is warm and humid, with temperatures ranging from 18 to 36°C.

### Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

### Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed