

ECUADOR MAINLAND: Mindo Cloud Forest 2 day / 1 night private Tour

The region of Mindo is within the protected Mindo-Nambillo forest, located a short two-hour drive to the northwest of Quito. Mindo cloud forest has an incredible diversity of avian fauna, particularly hummingbirds, as well as butterflies. This area of primary forest with an immense biodiversity also has some of the highest rates of plant endemism in the world: orchids, bromeliads, heliconias, ferns, vines, mosses and lichens grow in abundance here. Specially trained guides introduce guests to the mysteries of the Cloud Forest, pointing out the unique flora and fauna and leading excursions along nature paths flanked by crystalline rivers.

Below is the 2 day/ 1 night private guided tour. This tour can be reduced to a day trip from Quito, extended to be for 3 or 4 nights & also adapted to come from or go to the Otavalo region.

Day 1

Starts with a stop at El Pahuma Reserve for a 45-minute nature hike on a trail through lush, epiphyte-laden cloud forest, alongside a lively, sparkling creek to the 50 meter (165 foot) Pacaya waterfall. A snack is served at the waterfall. El Pahuma Reserve is a privately owned forest of an Ecuadorian family who is searching for a viable economic alternative to destructive activities such as logging or cattle raising, and protects over 600 hectares (over 1500 acres) of tropical forest.

Next visit is to Bellavista, deep in the heart of the cloud forest, where lunch is served among clouds that come and go creating an aura of mystery and magic, while at close range, a multitude of hummingbirds hover around the feeders. After lunch, don rubber boots and rain ponchos and get ready to immerse yourself for one hour in this natural sanctuary where the sight of brightly colored tanagers and the Mountain Toucan will thrill nature lovers; your guide will assist you to spot the wildlife and the vast variety of birds that inhabit this area of Ecuador. There are binoculars for rent at Bellavista. At the end of the day arrive to a comfortable lodge of the area for dinner and overnight.

Day 2

Starts early for nature lovers who fancy an early outing on their own in the surroundings to find nature's undiscovered treasures, when the birds are most active, or, for those really serious birdwatchers, a very early (still in darkness) one-hour hike to arrive at dawn and observe a lek (a place of courtship of birds) of the very attractive cock-of-the-rock. Starting with the first light

of the day, the lek lasts for about an hour with loud calls, and up to 12 birds flying from one branch to another displaying their red feathers to attract the females –an awesome and seldom seen sight! After breakfast, its downhill to the Valley of Mindo for an introduction to the many types of orchids of the area right in the quaint little village of Mindo.

Then, visit the Butterfly Vivarium, housing 25 varieties of butterflies. Flight areas simulate the outside forest with water streams, mineral deposits, and a wide range of wild flowers. Hundreds of caterpillars feed on their host plants in their natural environment to assure the best development of pupae and butterflies. A snack is served.

On the way back to Quito, a stop is made at the brim of the crater of the dormant Pululahua Volcano, just north of the equator, and considered by the natives as the Earth's navel. It is a physical and energy-filled planetary centre, probably responsible for the Pululahua's (meaning cloud of water) quasi mystical power of attraction. Its huge crater, with its own microclimate, is inhabited and its rich soil farmed in colourful patches; it suddenly disappears from view among the clouds, only to appear a few minutes later. This is an overwhelming experience. Perched literally on the edge of this spectacular crater, at El Crater Restaurant, enjoy lunch featuring traditional Ecuadorian and international cuisine. Arrive to Quito late afternoon.

Included

Private Guide & driver
Accommodations
All meals

Packing checklist

Dress in layers (T-shirt, blouse, sweater, coat).
Bring your bathing suit.
Binoculars are a must!
Rain ponchos and rubber boots are provided.
This tour includes walking at altitudes between 2,700 to 1,400 meters, (8,800 to 4,600 feet).
Sun protection (SPF 40).
Hat or cap.
Good walking shoes and extra pairs of socks.
Rain occurs throughout the year, although the climate is driest from May to September.
Temperature: Day, average 15° to 28° C / 59° to 82° F. Night, average 10° to 15° C / 50° to 59° F