



## Program Overview:

**Duration: 8 days**

**Highlights:** Head to the legendary Amazon, home to the largest collection of living plant and animal species in the world, find the hidden secret of Ecuador: a hotel mixed with the native flavor of the Andes.

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## ITINERARY:

### Day 1

#### Quito-La Mirage

Welcome to Quito!

Upon arrival you will be transferred directly to La Mirage Garden Hotel & Spa.

From Quito, drive north through dramatic mountain landscapes dotted with tiny villages, and white churches to Cotachachi. Perched on a hillside, two hours from Quito, you will find the hidden secret of Ecuador: a hotel mixed with the native flavor of the Andes. with a beautiful view of the mountains and gardens. This former hacienda is a paradise of plant life filled with a thousand fragrances from its bougainvilleas, hibiscus, roses and orchids that you will also find in freshly cut bouquets beside your bed.

In the intimacy of your suite, enjoy a bottle of sparkling wine and fresh strawberries dipped in sweet, organic Ecuadorian chocolate. To end this magical night a romantic candlelight dinner will be served at the elegant main restaurant.

**Overnight : La Mirage Garden Hotel & Spa**

### Day 2

#### La Mirage

After breakfast, we will visit *Cuicocha*, a crater lake located in the Western Cordillera of the Andes 25 kilometres west of Otavalo. “Cuicocha” is a Kichwa word meaning “Guinea Pig Lake”, a name given due to the shape of the large islands in the centre of the lake.

Created 3,100 years ago by a massive eruption, the lake is three kilometres long and occupies a stunning setting with deep azure waters. You have the option of hiking along the ridge surrounding the lake; a trek which can last anywhere from 30 minutes to six hours depending on your ambitions and the schedule of the day.

We will enjoy a lunch in a local restaurant and make a stop in the village of Peguche to visit the home of Mr. José Luis Pichamba, whose family has a long lasting musical tradition. Your hosts will show you the process of crafting traditional instruments as well as demonstrate how to play them. If you're up for it, you can even try to play them yourself! Peguche is also home to many of the area's textile weavers. A visit to one of their workshops is easily arranged. Here, you will be able to see examples of the ancient weaving techniques to produce their famous textiles.

### **Overnight : La Mirage Garden Hotel & Spa**

#### **Day 3** **Otavalo-Quito**

Today we will visit the famous Otavalo market, the colorful and authentic produce market, which gives you the opportunity to see many of the unique fruits and vegetables of Ecuador.

We won't leave without visiting the *Plaza del Poncho*, where the textile market is held. This is a real explosion of colors and smells. It is also interesting to see the vendors; they are dressed in a traditional way that shows the evolution and maintain of their identity.

After a lunch in Cusin, a very interesting Hacienda, beautifully decorated and with gardens hosting a lot of birds and local plants. We'll then, leave to go to Quito.

Afternoon at leisure.

### **Overnight : Plaza Grande Hotel**

#### **Day 4** **Otavalo-Quito**

Depart from Quito for a spectacular 30 minute flight over the eastern Andes mountain range to Coca. After landing and completing airport procedures, transfer to Napo river port.

Here, you will board a comfortable covered motor canoe and begin the 90min trip down the Napo River to the port in the Napo river where you'll board the M/V Anakonda. Along the way you'll be able to spot from our sundeck birds like herons, kingfishers, and many others. The sounds of civilization are soon forgotten here – only the water and the myriad sounds of the surrounding rainforest. After the dinner, we'll have the opportunity to go for a night walk into the forest to discover the mysteries of this unique environment and see how life emerges in the dark.

In 1541, the very first Europeans set out from Quito to explore the dense jungles east of this ancient Incan capital in search of gold and cinnamon. Not the jungle nor the natives ever revealed where the precious metal of "El Dorado" was to be found, as they floated for 800 miles down the Napo to come upon what they thought to be the Atlantic. But it wasn't the Atlantic - yet. It was the Great Amazon River, fed by over a thousand tributaries, emptying one third of the planet's fresh water into the sea!

Almost 500 years have passed since the discovery of this magnificent river system that flows through the world's largest primeval forest, containing 10% of all existing trees, 70% of all pharmaceutical compounds, and native Indians that live symbiotically with their unique ecosystem.

This is the habitat of wildlife that is sure to be watching you - or vice versa - if you are lucky: 500 species of birds, half a dozen species of monkeys, caimans, tapirs, 2,500 species of butterflies and much more.

**Overnight : M/V Anakonda**

**Day 5**

**Pañacocha Biological Corridor**

We will continue our navigation downstream to the Pañayacu River delta; take a canoe trip up the river to experience the sights of this fascinating reserve. We will seek out Pink River Dolphins, common squirrel monkeys and much more. Pañacocha (Piranha Lake, in Quechua) is an ecosystem flooded by white waters. The rivers and lakes here are the perfect habitat for the infamous Piranha, as well as the Water Monkey Fish (Arawana) and White Caiman. After a refreshing swim (for the courageous!), we will enjoy a delicious Amazon-style BBQ meal and refreshing beverages at a nearby camping site. In the afternoon, we will head out on exploration trails, and return onboard for dinner.

**Overnight : M/V Anakonda**

**Day 6**

**Kury Muyu & Parrot clay lick**

Breakfast served on board. Today we will enjoy a cultural & ethnic encounter with the locals.

We will spend some time at one of the forest communities to learn about their everyday lives. Take advantage to shop for local handcrafts and souvenirs. Later we head over to the Parrot Clay licks, a great place to witness one of the most exciting wildlife spectacles in Amazonia. After lunch, explore one of our local jungle trails as we head to a most unique water museum, where you will learn about many of the creatures that inhabit this environment. After the visit, conditions permitting, paddle your way downstream back to the Napo and enjoy more opportunities to observe wildlife.

**Overnight : M/V Anakonda**

**Day 7**

**Anakonda- Coca- Quito**

Today make an early departure by motorized canoe for your return to Coca. Once in Coca, you'll be transferred to the airport for your return flight to Quito.

**Overnight : Plaza Grande Hotel**

**Day 7**

**Departure**

Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

**"End of A&K Services"**