



# EXPLORE ECUADOR

Active Exploration, Cultural Immersion  
& Service Learning Journey

**SOUTHERN SKY  
ADVENTURES**  
IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS



Discover the mystical Amazonian  
& Cloud forests while partaking in  
physical, cultural and service  
learning activities.



[www.southernskyadventures.com](http://www.southernskyadventures.com)



21 Days / 20  
Nights



+1 (770) 324-0068  
+27 (83) 368-6969



[info@southernskyadventures.com](mailto:info@southernskyadventures.com)  
[liame@ssa.email](mailto:liame@ssa.email)

## Tour Route



### Photography



Students will reside at Bellavista and Tucan Lodge—two distinct paradises—plus a third site for service learning. Each location offers year-round stunning views and a rich variety of animals and birds.

### Education through experience



The best way to learn is through experience! In the Bellavista Cloud Forest, students will have direct contact with animals of all kinds, while learning within a safe environment.

### Research Groups



At Bellavista, we are privileged to host a global tapestry of researchers whose collaborative efforts spark the invention of scientifically-enriched activities, seamlessly woven into the fabric of our nature reserve.

# BELLAVISTA HISTORY



Richard Parsons and his wife Gloria first started thinking of buying a piece of the cloud forest in 1989. After many months of searching, they came across 55 hectares of land which had recently become available. Both Richard and Gloria were so enticed by the beautiful view and surrounding forest, that they immediately purchased this land and started on their journey of conserving the forest and all the creatures inhabiting it.

Over the years, Bellavista has grown to more than 400 hectares. Conservation comes first at Bellavista, and ever more birds and other wildlife are seen close to their buildings and new, spectacular orchids are discovered every year. Bellavista not only contributes significantly to the local economy, but also offers opportunities to learn how to live in synergy with the breath-taking forest. Ecotourism is at the heart of all they do; introducing people from all over the world to the deep connection that exists between humans and nature, and the importance of conservation and preservation. Bellavista works with both local and international schools and universities, on study programmes and projects to learn more about the cloud forest ecosystem.

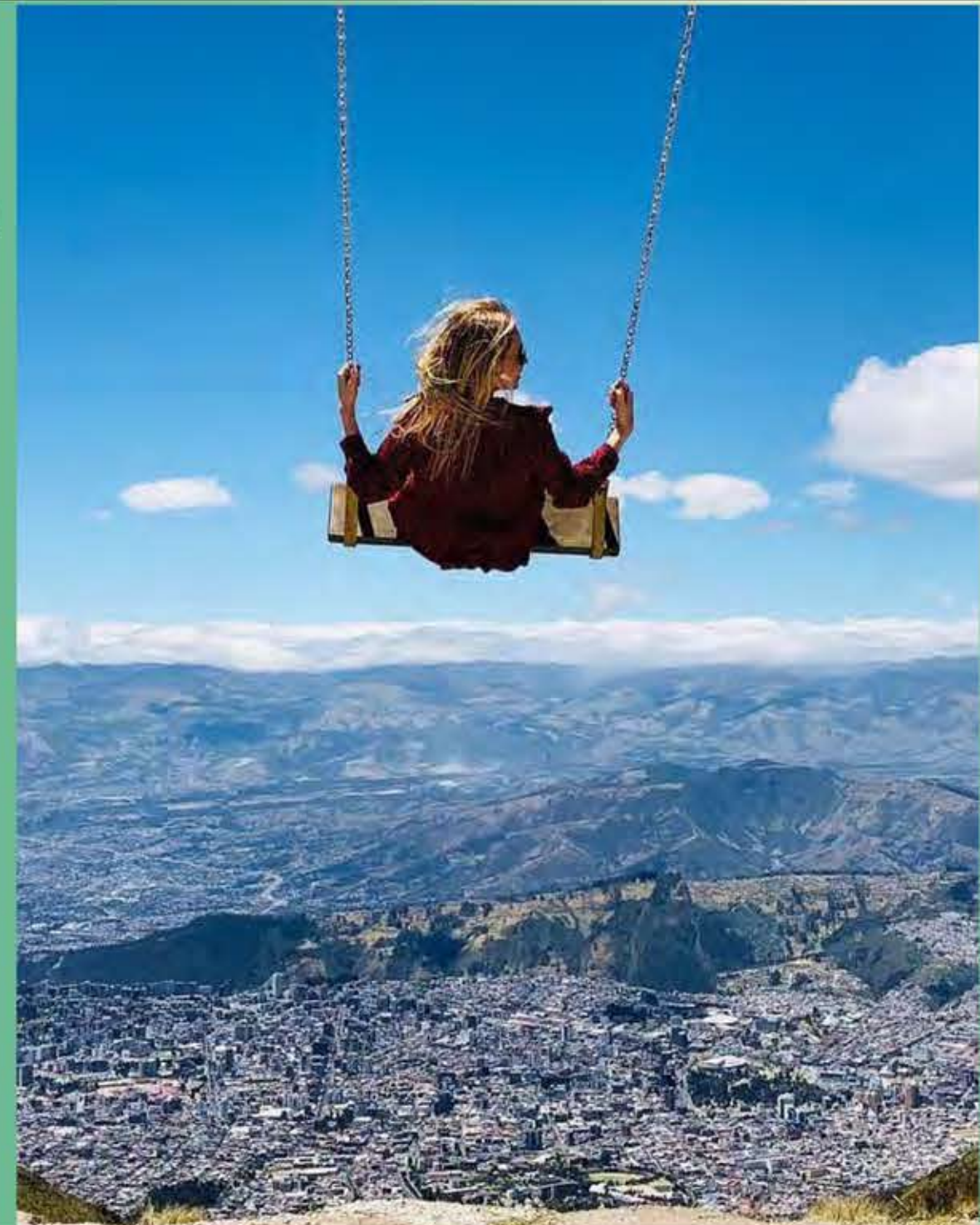
In 2019, they succeeded in having Bellavista Reserve declared the first Private Protected Area as part of the National System of Protected Areas of Ecuador.

# Week 1: Adventure & Ecology - A Kinetic Journey Through Ecuador

## Overview:

The first week of physical activities offers a vibrant introduction to nature's wonders. Students will explore Bellavista's cloud forest, rich in biodiversity, where trekking provides both exercise and exceptional animal interactions and birdwatching opportunities. Daily excursions will enhance their senses and endurance, involving them deeply in the ecosystem.

Adventures in Mindo add excitement with ziplining and river tubing, promoting teamwork. These experiences, coupled with wildlife projects, enrich students' practical understanding of ecology. By week's end, students will have developed not only physical fitness but also a profound respect for the environment, ready to present their findings with a sense of accomplishment. This active week forms a deep, physical connection with Ecuador's diverse landscapes, turning learning into an unforgettable adventure.



## Learning Objectives:

**Physical Fitness:** Improve stamina through activities like hiking and birdwatching.

**Environmental Consciousness:** Gain awareness of ecosystem diversity and conservation.

**Wildlife Knowledge:** Identify and understand local bird species and their habitats.

**Research Proficiency:** Conduct and present findings from wildlife ecology projects.

**Adventure Skills:** Participate in adventure sports, fostering courage and teamwork.

## Expected Outcomes:

**Enhanced Endurance:** Students will demonstrate improved physical fitness.

**Ecological Understanding:** Students will show an increased knowledge of environmental conservation.

**Fieldwork Skills:** Students will be adept at wildlife identification and basic field research techniques.

**Research Project Completion:** Students will successfully complete and present a mini research project.

**Adventure Competence:** Students will display new skills and confidence in adventure activities.



## Day to Day

### Day 1

Upon arrival in Ecuador, located on the equator on South America's west coast, we head to Bellavista cloud forest.



### Day 3

Pack your snacks and get ready for a full-day excursion to a very active Cock of the Rock lek. Here, we get to see the brightly coloured males squawking in the trees and strutting their stuff to attract the females.

Thereafter, we head up to the Amaguza Reserve, a perfect place for observing rare and colourful birds up close.



### Day 5

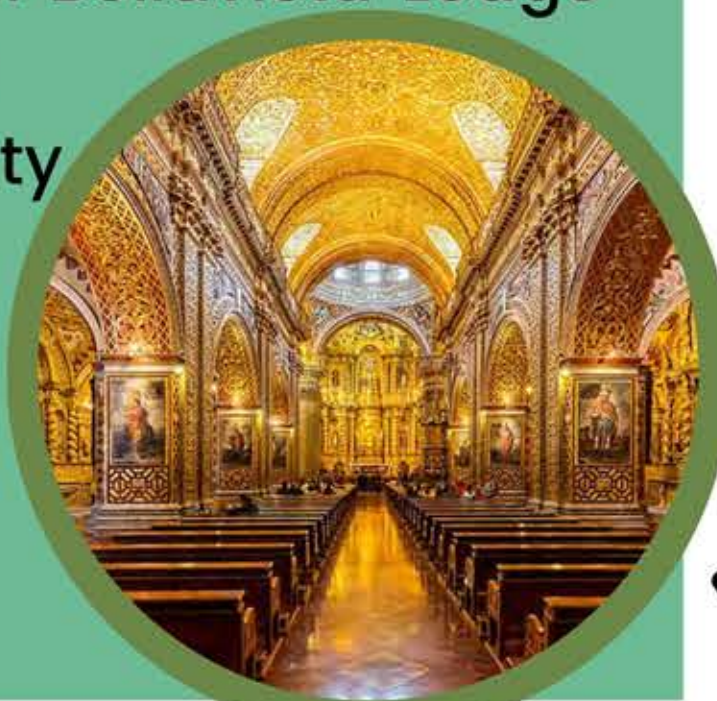
Get ready for another full-day excursion! We head to Mindo, a town about a 1-hour drive from Bellavista.

Here, we get to go ziplining and tubing down the river. We also visit a chocolate factory to learn about how artisan chocolate is made. Lastly, we learn all about the life cycle of butterflies at Mariposario butterfly park.



### Day 7

We leave the beautiful Bellavista Lodge today and head to our next destination: the city of Quito. It is a cultural hub with ancient houses and churches, and narrow streets buzzing with activity.



### Day 2

While accompanied by guides, we explore the Bellavista cloud forest. Get your binoculars ready for some incredible birdwatching! Some sightings may include the Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Masked Trogon, Turquoise Jay, and a myriad of Tanagers. Expect a close encounter with hummingbirds, who often land on your fingers when you hold out a feeder! Don't forget to jot down ideas for your mini wildlife ecology projects to be presented on our final evening at Bellavista.



### Day 4

We embark on a trip to a hidden waterfall deep in the cloud forest and we get to explore the Bellavista reserve some more. We also set up some moth traps and camera traps within the forest. Some animals you can expect to spot on the camera traps are the spectacled bear, peccary brocket deer, various feline species, and more. Remember to keep working on your wildlife projects!



### Day 6

Today is our last full day at Bellavista. We will spend the day working on your mini projects and present them in the evening.



# Week 2: Cultural Immersion – Discovering the Heart of Ecuador

## Overview:

The cultural segment of our Ecuador trip offers a deep dive into the country's heritage and natural splendors. Starting with a spectacular view from the Pichincha Volcano, students will taste the richness of Quito's cuisine and markets. Traveling towards the Amazon basin, we will observe iconic wildlife like the Andean Condor and soak in thermal springs.

In the following days, we will traverse varied ecosystems, canoe through the Amazon, and learn from the Quichua people, gaining insights into the local culture and ecology. By the end of the week, as we return to Quito, students will have experienced a vibrant blend of Ecuador's cultural and environmental landscapes, equipping them with a nuanced understanding of the region's diversity.



## Learning Objectives:

**Cultural Appreciation:** Understand and respect the diverse cultural heritage of Ecuador through interaction with local communities and experiencing traditional customs.

**Environmental Geography:** Learn about the Andean geology and Amazonian ecosystems through direct observation and expert guidance.

**Biodiversity and Conservation:** Recognize the variety of species in different Ecuadorian habitats and understand the importance of conservation efforts.

**Culinary Exploration:** Experience and analyze the flavors and culinary techniques of traditional Ecuadorian dishes.

**Historical Context:** Gain insight into Ecuador's history and how it has shaped contemporary society and its environment.

## Expected Outcomes:

**Enhanced Cultural Insight:** Students will exhibit a deeper understanding of Ecuador's cultural diversity and traditions.

**Geographical Knowledge:** Students will be able to describe the key geological features of the Andes.

**Biodiversity Awareness:** Students will identify various species endemic to Ecuador and understand the ecological value of preserving biodiversity.

**Culinary Appreciation:** Students will develop an appreciation for Ecuadorian food and knowledge about its preparation and significance.

**Historical Understanding:** Students will connect Ecuador's historical context with current cultural and environmental practices.



## Day to Day

### Day 8

We take the Teleferico cable car to the top of the Pichincha Volcano. Up here, the views are spectacular, and we get to learn all about the geology of the Andes Mountains. We also visit one of Quito's bustling markets, and taste some of the exotic fruits! One of our meals for the day consists of local dishes – get ready for a taste explosion!



### Day 10

We travel through different forests; first the elfin forest, then down the eastern slope cloud forests, into the tropical Amazon basin.



### Day 12 + 13

We explore the streams and rivers near Tucan Lodge and learn more about the ecosystem from our Quichua guides. We get to delve deep into the tree canopy by climbing up trees as tall as buildings! We also head to a parrot lek, where we can spot many brightly coloured species of parrots. We learn about the culture of the local people from Siona and their partial adaptation to modern civilization.



### Day 9

We start our trip towards the Amazon basin, descending the eastern slopes of the Andes. Along the way, we stop at the Antisana Volcano, which is known to be the home of the Andean Condor in Northern South America. Other special species to be seen in the Andes are the *Giant Hummingbird*, *Andean Ibis*, *Ecuadorian Hillstar*, *Carunculated Caracara*, and *Andean White-tailed Deer*. In the afternoon, we continue to Papallacta where we find some amazing hot springs for us to soak in while surrounded with spectacular *Andean Vistas*!



### Day 11

We go canoeing deep into the Amazon jungle. Enjoy the wonderfully varied scenery, listen to the insects, and try to spot some monkeys and birds!



### Day 14

Today, you will be transported to your accommodations, marking the beginning of the service learning segment of your journey.



# What is service-learning?

Service learning integrates classroom lessons with community service, providing students with practical experience and a chance to apply academic concepts to real-life challenges. It develops empathy and problem-solving skills, while fostering civic responsibility and cultural awareness. This approach not only benefits the community but also prepares students for active, informed citizenship and leadership. Service-based learning can be applied across educational levels, cultivating informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.



## Benefits of service-learning:

1. Enhances Personal Efficacy
2. Improves Academic Outcomes
3. Builds Resilience and Networks
4. Fosters Personal Growth
5. Cultivates Sociopolitical Awareness



# Week 3 (Day 15 - 21): Community Development and Conservation Initiatives in the Andean Chocó Biosphere Reserve

Students will actively participate in a series of community development and conservation activities within the Andean Chocó Biosphere Reserve in Northwestern Ecuador. Their involvement, depending on time, season, and necessary activities, might allow for engagement in some but not all of these activities. The experience will encompass:

- **Agricultural Development:** Students will engage in establishing organic vegetable gardens, contributing to local food security and learning sustainable agricultural techniques.
- **Infrastructure Improvement:** They will assist in enhancing the infrastructure of local schools, focusing on projects like upgrading bathroom facilities, which will provide valuable lessons in basic sanitation and support educational environments.
- **Community Building Projects:** Collaborating with community members, students will take part in revitalizing public spaces such as village squares, planting trees, and installing benches, thereby improving communal living areas.
- **Forest School Facilities Enhancement:** Here, students will help develop resources and physical structures for a forest school, gaining hands-on experience in creating educational environments that promote environmental awareness.
- **Conservation Efforts:** In line with the region's status as a Biosphere Reserve, students will engage in activities that fuse community development with environmental stewardship, learning about and contributing to broader conservation initiatives.
- **Youth Involvement and Education:** This period emphasizes the role of young people in community and environmental efforts, offering students a chance to contribute meaningfully while absorbing lessons in conservation and community engagement.
- **Appreciating Local Significance:** Throughout these activities, students will gain an understanding of the ecological and cultural importance of the Andean Chocó Biosphere Reserve, learning about the necessity to preserve its unique biodiversity and heritage.

This comprehensive, hands-on experience aims to educate and involve students in sustainable development and conservation practices, emphasizing the importance of community collaboration and ecological preservation in one of Ecuador's most vital regions.



# TERMS

## Included

- Local flight back from Coca (Amazon) to Quito
- Transport by bus
- All entrance fees mentioned in the itinerary
- Shared accommodation
- Three meals per day (except on arrival and departure days)
- English speaking guide services
- Tax and service costs
- Bottled drinking water

## Excluded

- International flights
- Personal health insurance (should be considered essential)
- Items of a personal nature
- Laundry
- Soft drinks or alcoholic drinks
- Snacks outside meal times
- Optional gratuities

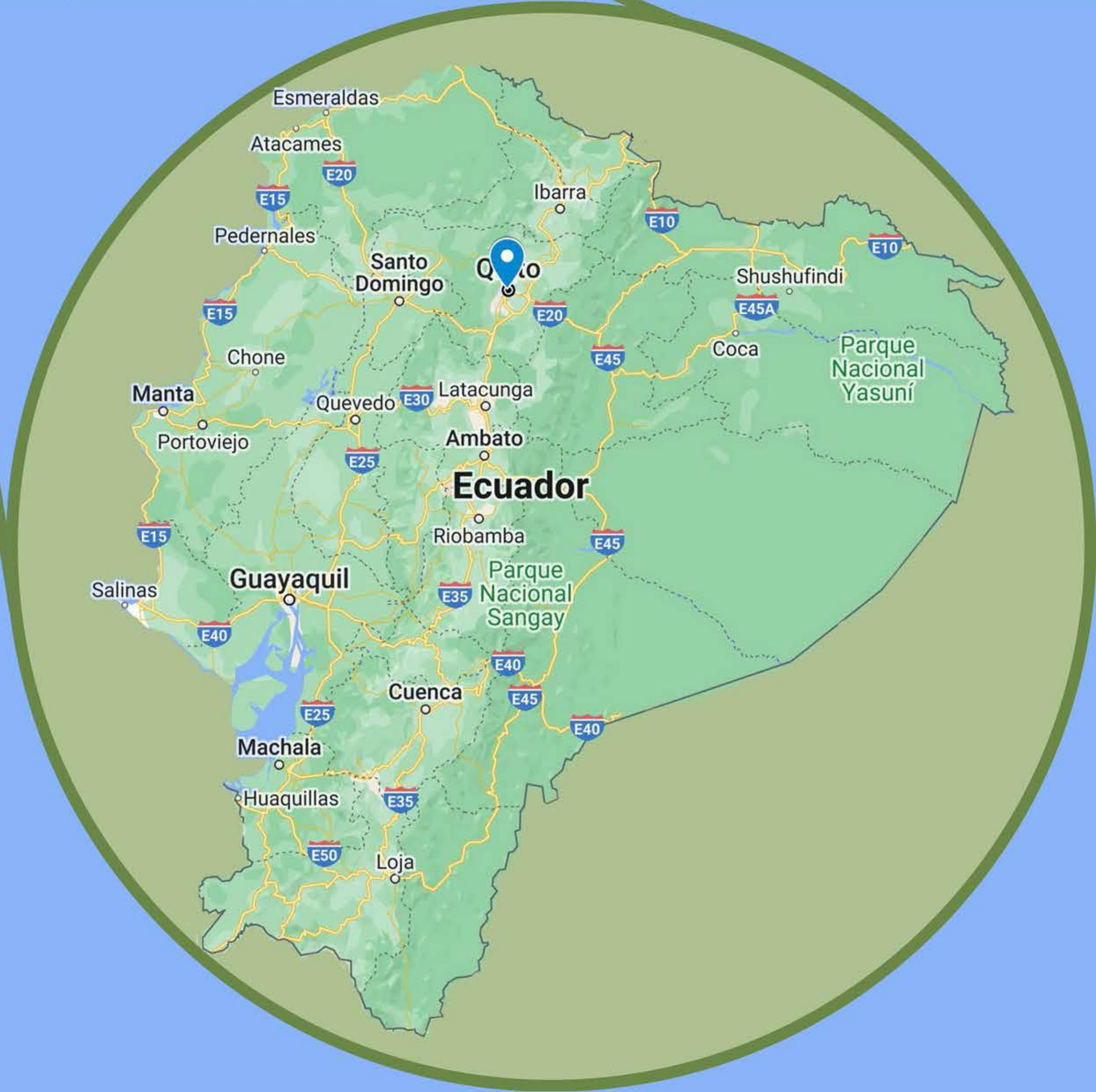
...IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS...

\*All itineraries can be adjusted/customised to suit your specific needs

**Ecuador is one of our many tour locations, as indicated by the pin drops!**



**SOUTHERN SKY  
ADVENTURES**  
IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS



# ABOUT Us

## Southern Sky Adventures

For almost two decades Southern Sky Adventures has introduced discerning travellers to the sheer magnificence of AFRICA. A land of warm welcomes, breathtaking sunsets, pristine wilderness areas and diversity as colourful as the local artwork.

Our tailormade- and expertly-guided safaris showcase Africa's finest hidden gems, the elusive BIG 5, wild remote locations and a natural space to unplug from the stress of modern-day living. We pride ourselves on the delivery of exceptional, once-in-a-lifetime and truly memorable travel experiences for not only families, honeymooners and friends but also business travellers, school- & university groups and adventure seekers. Although passionate about travel, we care deeply for the preservation of these untouched wild areas, the inhabiting wildlife and the surrounding communities.

Sit back, relax and allow our team of destination specialists to design and deliver your dream vacation!



Southern Sky  
Adventures



[www.southernskyadventures.com](http://www.southernskyadventures.com)



@southernsky  
adventures

