

# The Reptiles & Amphibians of Ecuador

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

### Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Arrive Quito
<b>Day 2 – 4</b>	Mindo
<b>Day 5 – 6</b>	The Naturetrek Reserve
<b>Day 7 – 8</b>	Misahuallí
<b>Day 9 – 11</b>	Coca
<b>Day 12 – 14</b>	Napo
<b>Day 15</b>	Guango
<b>Day 16 – 17</b>	Depart Quito, inbound flights

### Departs

February – June

### Focus

Reptiles and Amphibians

### Grading

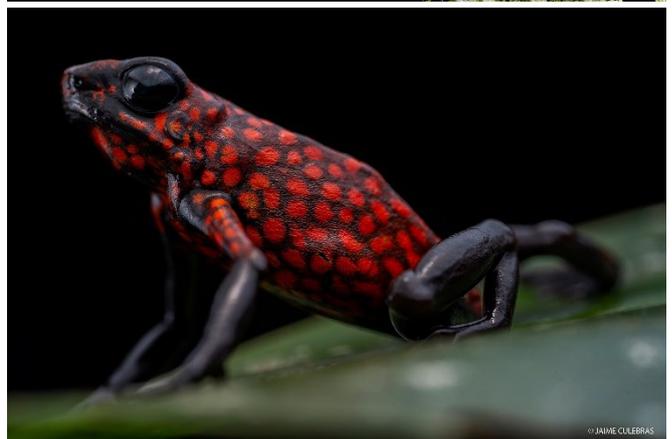
**Important:** please read the 'Tour Grading and Focus' section at the end of the document before booking.

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ECU18)

### Highlights

- Incredible reptiles including Pinocchio Lizard, Mata-mata Turtle, Eyelash Viper and Rainbow Boa.
- Beautiful amphibians including Poison Frogs, Monkey Frogs and Glassfrogs.
- Visit the Naturetrek Reserve!
- Superb fauna- and flora-rich habitats to explore diurnally and nocturnally.



Pinocchio Anole, Little Devil Poison Frog, Triangle Treefrog –  
© X. Muñoz, J. Culebras & J. Culebras



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## Introduction

Ecuador, with its three diverse ecosystems – the Amazon rainforest, the coastal west, and the mountainous Andes – which give the region mouth-watering levels of biodiversity across the taxa – birds, mammals, plants and the tour’s targets; Ecuador’s reptiles & amphibians. Not only are there high levels of biodiversity throughout the region’s cloud and rainforests, but these habitats hosts some of the most superb and sought-after reptiles and amphibians on Earth.

An incredible 630 amphibian species are found in Ecuador’s habitats, almost half of which are endemic to the country. Treefrogs, Glassfrogs, Poison Frogs, Monkey Frogs and Mushroom-tongued Salamanders make up just a selection of the exciting families of amphibians we’ll have the opportunity to find as we explore the cloud and rainforests. Similarly impressive are the numbers of reptile species – over 490 species, of which more than 160 are found only in Ecuador. Anoles, Tegus, Woodlizards, Boas, Vipers, Turtles and Crocodilians are among a huge range of reptiles we’ll be searching for during both diurnal and nocturnal excursions. Our after-dark walks will delight us with a rarely-seen and sensational performance of the Amazon’s amazing micro-ecosystems.

On this very special itinerary we’ll visit the Naturetrek Reserve! For over a decade Naturetrek have been working to protect threatened cloud forest in the Ecuadorian Andes. Through the World Land Trust and their Ecuadorian partner Fundación EcoMinga, we support direct purchase of the forest as a nature reserve. We continue working to expand the reserve’s boundaries and, at the time of writing, the reserve stands at 1,629 acres in area. Here in the reserve, under the guidance of our herpetologist tour leader, one of our main targets will be to see the superb Naturetrek Leaf Frog (*Noblella naturetrekii*). A huge number of species are protected in the Naturetrek Reserve and we’ll enjoy every minute of searching for wildlife here, some of the exciting highlights we shall hope to see are listed in the Naturetrek Reserve day summary below.

When you add to this exciting itinerary Ecuador’s welcoming people and its quality lodges, it’s easy to see why this is an unmissable opportunity for any passionate naturalist!



One of the many stunning biotopes we’ll search for Reptiles & Amphibians on this tour

## Itinerary

*NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

### Day 1

### Arrive Quito

If using the group flights, we leave London Heathrow in the morning, usually on KLM's or Iberia's service to Quito. Changing planes in Amsterdam or Madrid, we will arrive in Quito in the evening and transfer to our hotel. Should you wish to join the holiday from another home country, please do get in touch and we will be very pleased to assist with such arrangements.

Quito is located in a hollow at the foot of the volcano Pichincha. On a clear day Andean peaks tower around and the sun is bright and strong. The climate is delightful: the name means "Eternal Spring" in the ancient language of Quechua. Standing at 2,850 meters, Quito is the second highest capital in the world. In our comfortable hotel – in easy reaching distance of the airport – we'll share our first meal together before getting a good rest for the thrilling itinerary which lies in wait!

### Day 2 – 4

### Mindo

It is just a one hour and 40 minutes drive from Quito to our first lodge, in the heart of the Mindo cloudforest. Here the opportunities for a breathtaking array of species begins from a wonderful lodge with spectacular mountain views.

In easy proximity to the lodge we'll have the opportunity to see two iconic and sought-after species with remarkable rostral appendages; the Pinocchio Lizard (*Anolis proboscis*) and the Pinocchio Rainfrog (*Pristimantis appendiculatus*).



Pinocchio Rainfrog (*Pristimantis appendiculatus*) © F. Muñoz

Locating shy and elusive snakes is always challenging, but with our expert herpetologist guide we have the best possible chance to find some stunning species; Eyelash Viper (*Bothriechis schlegelii*), Campbell's Toad-headed Pitviper (*Bothrocophias campbelli*), Osborne's Lancehead (*Bothrops osbornei*) and Regal Coral Snake (*Micrurus ancoralis*) are just a selection of the diversity here in Mindo.

Anole lizards are one of Ecuador's specialties and, along with the Pinocchio Lizard, there are some of Ecuador's most beautiful species here in Mindo and it's where we'll hope to find Fraser's Anole (*Anolis fraseri*), O'Shaughnessy's Anole (*Anolis gemmosus*), and Equatorial Anole (*Anolis aequatorialis*).

Glassfrogs will be high on the wishlist of many tour participants and again Mindo obliges with some exquisite species such as Nicaragua Giant Glassfrog (*Espadarana prosoblepon*), and the Red-spotted Glassfrog (*Nymphargus grandisonae*). Rainfrogs are particularly numerous in this region and along with Pinocchio Rainfrog, Blue-thighed Rainfrog (*Pristimantis crucifer*), Mindo Rainfrog (*Pristimantis mindo*), Ornate Rainfrog (*Pristimantis ornatissimus*), and many more. Tadapi Treefrog (*Hyloscirtus alytolylax*), Executioner Treefrog (*Dendropsophus carnifex*) and the gorgeous Diablito 'Little Devil' Poison Frog (*Oophaga sylvatica*) are all possible during our time here.

Around the lodge we can find lizards such as Western Basilisk (*Basiliscus galeritus*) and we'll make an excursion to find the striking Red-eyed Woodlizard (*Enyalioides oshaughnessyi*).



Western Basilisk (*Basiliscus galeritus*)

There will be opportunity during the day-times for a rest as we re-charge our body (and camera!) batteries for our searches along the trails at night in search of those nocturnal species listed above. For those with endless energy, Mindo is a magnificent place to birdwatch. Over 450 species of birds have been recorded within the valley and and just a few of the tantalising possibilities

are Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager; Golden, Black-capped and Summer Tanager. Velvet-purple Coronet; Brown Inca; Violet-tailed Sylph and the spectacular Empress Brilliant. The endless list continues with Crimson-mantled and Powerful Woodpeckers, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Toucan Barbet, Golden-headed Quetzal, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Red-billed Parrot, Scaly-naped Amazon, Slate-throated Whitestart, Western Hemispingus, Beautiful Jay and many more!

## Day 5 – 6

## The Naturetrek Reserve!

After wonderfully exciting days in the cloud-forests of Mindo, we'll make a 2.5-hour journey to Volcán Cotopaxi where we will stop to enjoy lunch and views of the second highest summit in Ecuador, at 5,897m. From here it will be just a two-hour drive to the town of Baños where we will be based in a comfortable tourist hotel for our excursions into the Naturetrek Reserve.

The full range of reptiles and amphibians inside the Naturetrek Reserve is still being realised with ongoing surveys and analysis. Searches



Naturetrek Leaf Frog (*Noblella naturetrekii*) © Lou Jost

so far have been very fruitful and there is a rich herpetofauna-biodiversity. One recent discovery is the Naturetrek Leaf Frog (*Noblella naturetrekii*), described in 2019 and named after Naturetrek in recognition of our role in saving this species and its habitat. We'll go on an exciting search for this lovely diurnal species during our time in Baños.

In the Naturetrek Reserve there are yet more newly-discovered species still to be named and amongst them is a new frog and a new lizard species. We hope to share news of these discoveries during the forthcoming months.

It is just a 15 minute walk to the reserve entrance from the nearest road. Once at the entrance there are more than 10km of trail to explore from here. We'll take a packed lunch with us so that we can enjoy the whole day exploring and enjoying all the reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals and flora that the Naturetrek Reserve offers.

Of the known rich amphibian diversity inside the reserve we'll search for such lovely species as Cochran's Glassfrog (*Nymphargus cochranae*), Shreve's Sarayacu Treefrog (*Dendropsophus sarayacuensis*) and Espada's Rainfrog (*Pristimantis galdi*).

Other highlights in the reserve include Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Giant Antpitta, the endangered Black-and-chestnut Eagle and a beautiful, rare, tree named after Sir David Attenborough, *Blakea attenboroughi*.

After an exhilarating two days in Baños, we'll get a good night's sleep in our comfortable hotel before heading onwards tomorrow for our next destination — the gateway to the Amazon — Misahuallí.

## Day 7 – 8

## Misahuallí

After breakfast we shall head 285km east to the lower foothills of the Amazon at 500m. Here we'll encounter a whole new range of families of reptiles and amphibians!

A wide range of snakes are represented here and some of the varied beautiful species we can hope to find are South American Coral Snake (*Micrurus lemniscatus*), Black-backed Coralsnake (*Micrurus melanotus*), Fer-de-lance (*Bothrops atrox*), Boa constrictor, Amazon Tree-boia (*Corallus hortulana*), and the mesmerising Rainbow Boa (*Epicrates cenchria*).

There are plenty of special amphibians to discover here too including Brownbelly Monkey Frog (*Phyllomedusa tarsius*), White-lined Monkey Frog (*Phyllomedusa vaillanti*), Ecuador Poison Frog (*Ameerega bilinguis*), Zaparo's Poison Frog



South American Coral Snake (*Micrurus lemniscatus*)

(*Allobates zaparo*), Variable Poison Frog (*Ranitomeya variabilis*), South American Common Toad (*Rhinella margaritifera*), Marbled Treefrog (*Dendropsophus marmoratus*), Reticulate Treefrog (*Dendropsophus reticulatus*), Midas' Glassfrog (*Teratohyla midas*), and Upper Amazon Glassfrog (*Hyalinobatrachium munozorum*) amongst many others.

Here in Misahuallí we'll stay in jungle lodges in the heart of the forest.

## Day 9 – 11

## Coca

After sensational days and nights in the amazon, it will be time to leave and drive just two hours to our next stop, the Coca region in the lowlands of the Amazon.

This morning we'll continue our journey towards the heart of the amazon, heading further east where we'll be based on the River Napo. We'll break the journey into two manageable journeys, stopping for lunch and a walk near Loreto Waterfall.

Around the river at Napo we'll have the chance to start to finding some of Ecuador's more aquatic reptiles, which include the infamous Green Anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*), Black Caiman (*Melanosuchus niger*), Spectacled Caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*), Suriname Toad (*Pipa pipa*) and Northern Caiman Lizard (*Dracaena guianensis*) and the little-known and superbly cryptic Mata-mata Turtle (*Chelus fimbriata*).



Mata-mata Turtle (*Chelus fimbriatus*) © J. Culebras

Giant Parrot Snake (*Leptophis ahaetulla*), Neotropical Blunt-headed Treesnake (*Imantodes cenchoa*), Banded Cat-eyed Snake (*Leptodeira annulata*), and Broad-headed Woodlizard (*Enyalioides laticeps*) are a selection of the other reptiles we can find here.

At night we'll enjoy searching on the trails for the exquisite Orinoco Lime Treefrog (*Sphaenorhynchus lacteus*), Milk Frog (*Trachycephalus cunauaru*), Polka-dot Treefrog (*Boana punctata*), Manaus Slender-legged Treefrog (*Osteocephalus taurinus*), Troschel's Treefrog (*Boana calcarata*) and many others.

Mammals we may encounter here include Spotted Paca, South American Tapir, Common and White-bellied Spider Monkeys, Nine Banded Armadillo and even Jaguar! Some of the birds include Hoatzin, Blue-gray Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-crowned Manakin, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker and White-throated Toucan amongst many others!

In the Coca region, we'll be based in a eco-lodge right on the River Napo in the rainforest.

## Day 12 – 14

## Napo

This morning we'll take a short boat journey downriver to Napo. Here we have our best opportunity to find some hugely impressive Black Caiman. Here too we'll also have another chance at Rainbow Boa, Amazon Tree-boa, Common Lancehead and Boa constrictor. We'll also have a great chance to see Yellow-spotted Amazon River Turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*), South American River Turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*) and Yellow-footed Tortoise (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*). Our night searches here provide the opportunity to find the splendid Two-striped Forest-pitviper (*Bothrops bilineatus*).

The area surrounding our lodge is home to a total of 11 species of monkeys including Squirrel Monkey, Saddle-backed Tamarin and White-fronted Capuchin Monkeys. Rarer species include Monk Saki, Spider, Woolly and Golden-mantled Tamarin Monkeys. Additionally whilst searching for arboreal herps, we can hope to spot a wonderful Three-toed Sloth. Whilst scanning the river for caiman, we'll hope to spot a family of Giant River Otters.

Some of the beautiful birds we may find include Many-banded Aracari, White-throated Toucan, Scarlet Macaw, Paradise Tanager, Spangled Cotinga, Green Honeycreeper, Wire-tailed Manakin, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Ringer Kingfisher, Crested Owl and the superbly camouflaged Great and Common Potoo.

In Napo we'll be based at Napo Wildlife Centre, an excellent ecolodge in the heart of the rainforest.

## Day 15

## Guango

Today will mark the beginning of our journey home, as we take a scenic 4-hour drive from Coca, with a final destination lined up for us to explore before our onwards journeys home.

Guango is located in the highlands of eastern Ecuador. Here we'll target some very special amphibians indeed. Linda's Treefrog (*Hyloscirtus lindae*), the rare Papallacta Rainfrog (*Pristimantis acerus*), Riobamba Marsupial Frog (*Gastrotheca riobambae*) Papallacta Valley Rainfrog (*Pristimantis gladiator*) and Bruised Rainfrog (*Pristimantis lividus*).

Reptiles here include the diminutive but very elegant Shieldhead Gecko (*Gonatodes caudiscutatus*), Mountain Pholidobolus (*Pholidobolus montium*) and Günther's Whorltail Iguana (*Stenocercus guentheri*).

Guango is exceptional for birding too, particularly for hummingbirds! Tourmaline Sunangel, Chestnut Breasted and Buff-tailed Coronet, Collared Inca, White-bellied



Linda's Treefrog (*Hyloscirtus lindae*) © J. Culebras

Woodstar, Long-tail Sylph, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tryian Metaltail and Shining Sunbeam just part of the kaleidoscopic line-up.

In Guango we'll be based at a comfortable lodge with wonderful vistas.

## Day 16 – 17

## Quito

After a magnificent exploration for Ecuador's Reptile & Amphibians we'll have a final breakfast together as a group before we make our way back to Quito for our onward journeys. A number of extensions are available to this holiday. Quito is the gateway to a dream destination for many visiting herpetologists – the Galápagos Islands – and we would be pleased to provide extensions to the Galápagos Islands for those who wished.

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## Tour Grading & Focus

On a typical day on our herpetology tours we'll begin searching in the field after breakfast, when the sun has warmed the substrates and landscapes, often getting into the vehicles at 9am and, after stopping for approximately one hour for lunch, we'll continue into early-evening when we will stop for a rest and dinner. Most evenings it will be possible to do excursions in search of nocturnal species, which will on average be for three hours after dinner. With an equal percentage of the target reptile and amphibian species likely to be nocturnal, these night searches are an important part of the tour but are optional, with some participants preferring to rest on some of the days. On average, 5-8miles are walked per day.

We'll focus our time in the field on building an enviable list of reptile and amphibian species seen. Whilst searching, there is no doubt we'll come across a huge variety of amazing fauna and flora, of which we'll also take time to enjoy, but reptiles and amphibians will strongly remain our focus. Sensitive checking under stones, logs and other refugia is an effective way of finding many species. Some of the target reptile or amphibian species may require longer field hours to locate and therefore this tour is suitable, and most enjoyable, for experienced herpetologists or naturalists who, aside from wishing to see the region's rarely-seen reptiles and amphibians, relish being in the field searching for and identifying the vast array of birds, mammals, butterflies, invertebrates, orchids and other wildlife which can be found sharing the wonderful habitats that we'll explore on the tour.

In summary, Naturetrek herpetology holidays are suitable, and offer tremendous value, for those of whom spending most of their holiday time in wildlife habitats and for whom seeing some of the world's superb reptiles and amphibians is the focus of their time away.

This is a traditional lodge-based wildlife tour. Whilst some of the lodges are appointed simply, each is comfortable and has en suite facilities. A certain level of fitness is required for the tour, as the terrain may be rough, steep, or slippery in parts. The time spent up at Guango will be at over 2,700m in altitude.

## Weather, Clothing & Equipment

The climate in Ecuador varies enormously, depending on the region and the altitude. Quito is mild and temperate with chilly nights; like a spring day in England. The Amazon is hot and humid. There is a possibility of heavy rain at any time, but hopefully not to the extent that it will spoil your enjoyment. A strong waterproof torch is essential and amongst the options available a powerful head-torch will be most useful, which keeps your hands free for balancing.

## What's Included

All accommodation and meals starting with dinner on Day 1 and ended with breakfast on Day 16 are included. Please note that we do not include items of a more personal nature such as drinks, tipping, laundry and souvenirs.

## Extending Your Holiday

There are a number of options available as an extension:

- Visiting the Galápagos Islands
- A stay at Mashpi Lodge
- A herping extension to neighbouring Colombia

Should you wish to discuss these options the tour's manager Dan Lay will be more than happy to help. Please email [dan@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:dan@naturetrek.co.uk) or call 01962 733051

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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