



Amazonian Ecuador Conservation Photo Tour

8-Day custom tour with RawRainforest Immersion Photo Tours

Featuring the Rio Hollín, Jatun Sacha Biological Research Station, Pañacocha Biological Reserve & the Yasuní National Park & UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

- A custom interpretive photography tour with Dr. Bruce Farnsworth (featured in *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic* & *Outdoor Photographer* magazines) & his Ecuadorian research friends.
- Expert on-site educational field seminars include entomology, herpetology, conservation, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), fair trade in wild resources, impacts/threats and conservation.

Activities

- Explorations in research centers, river & lagoon, canopy platforms & gentle trails
- Accommodations with established lodges and providers, all meals included
- Visit Lowland Quichua (Kichwa) communities to share food and conversation
- Visit field sites with friends in science to get under-the-skin of rainforest topics
- Enjoy photography coaching from Bruce at some of his favorite locations!
- Appreciate the full diversity & multiple values of the rainforest environment
- Optional night-time rainforest walks for insect and other wildlife photography.
- Optional extension to see the Amazon pink river dolphins at Boca Yasuní

Quito	Upper Amazon	Lower Amazon
Hotel Manor Cultural	Grefa Ranch, Rio Hollin	Pañacocha Lodge Sani Lodge

Introduction

Photographs © Bruce Farnsworth

Join zoologist and conservation photographer Dr. Bruce Farnsworth and his personal guide Fausto Andy, one the best indigenous lowland Quichua guides in the upper Amazon. Your tour takes us down the Napo River, one of two major tributaries of the mighty Amazon. During this tour — enriched by expert Ecuadorian presenters — Bruce will share the larger story of the Amazon basin in terms of bio-cultural values, community-based success stories and trends in sustainable development. And there will be time to simply immerse in the sights, sounds & sensations of this amazing region and build your photo stories for presentations!

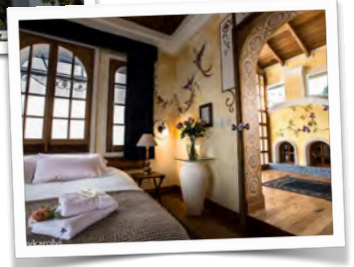


Detailed Tentative Itinerary

Quito Arrival (Travel Day)

Upon your arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito, you will be met by Dr. Farnsworth or his representative and shuttled to the **Boutique Hotel Manor Cultural**, just 11 miles away (right). Your tour includes two nights at the start of the tour and one night upon your return to Quito.

Hotel Manor Cultural provides secure storage to Raw Rainforest tour participants for the duration of their stay in Ecuador. Clients will receive a guide to Quito prior to the tour with information on where you can buy quality supplies and souvenirs close to the hotel. Please contact us as early as possible so that we may facilitate additional nights before or after the tour.



Day 1

Today, we enjoy a scrumptious breakfast with Ecuadorian coffee in the hotel restaurant and share our excitement in starting this tour!

Two “Meet with the Expert” sessions are planned for you this morning as part of your orientation to Ecuador and the scientists working to save species. You will meet pre-eminent herpetologist **Dr. Luis Colóma**, during a tour of the [Fundación Jambatu](#) Research Center Research and Conservation of Amphibians which he founded and directs.



Amphibians are disappearing at an exponential rate. Ecuador is ranked #3 in the world for amphibian diversity with over 10 percent of the world's amphibians. Almost 50 percent of these species are unique to the country. The 2.5-acre facility is dedicated to conservation breeding, research, field surveys, analysis of data to describe new species and reintroduction into the wild.



Our second meeting will be with **Dr. Giovanni Onore**, Professor Emeritus of entomology at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador in Quito. Research has found the the flowering trees play an important role in maintaining canopy beetle diversity in the Amazon and conversely beetles play a great role in maintaining the diversity of trees. This is just one example of plant-insect mutualism that you'll see close-up. By visiting the university's insect collection, the largest in Ecuador, Dr. Onore will show how physical adaptations have evolved in insects to support plant mutualism.

Enjoy lunch with Bruce at one of his favorite restaurants in Quito before returning to Boutique Hotel Manor Cultural to relax and have plenty of time to prepare for our morning drive over the Andes and into the Amazon basin. Dinner at the hotel.

Day 2

Over the Andes and into the Amazon basin

*Destination: The Ranch of Gabriel Grefa,
Lowland Quichua plant expert on the Rio Hollín*



After an early breakfast in the hotel restaurant we set out in a 2020 model truck for the three-hour drive from Quito (9,350' feet elevation) to the community of Hollín in the highest reaches of the Amazon basin (elevation 4,450 feet). To get there, we'll cross the Andes at Papallacta Pass (13,356 feet) and see the Antisana Volcano as we descend along the transitional eastern slopes of the Andes. It's a fascinating view of communities from paramo to cloud forest to rainforest. Situated above the spectacular Rio Hollín is the working farm of Native Lowland Quichua (Kichwa) botanist Mr. Gabriel Grefa.

Mr. Gabriel Grefa is an expert in the medicinal and useful plants of the region who has participated in many seminal research projects that have established the amazing floristic diversity of Ecuador (Missouri Botanical Gardens, Kew Gardens, American Museum of Natural History).



Bruce is one of the few individuals with whom Grefa has shared his personal list of known medicinal plants. He's an expert in permaculture, reforestation, and the identification and propagation of endangered trees. He has participated Smithsonian studies in Panama and Ecuador and has worked for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. With more than 30 years of experience in the field, he will share with us fascinating seed dispersal mechanisms and speak to forest dynamics, succession and research underway.



A portion of the proceeds from this tour will be donated to the Indigenous Herbarium project of Mr. Grefa. He'll share more about this project when you meet him.

Day 3

Hands-On Conservation Focus: Rio Hollín to Jatun Sacha

Today, we will continue down the Baeza-Tena road to Tena, capital of Ecuador's Napo province. We'll chat with some local farmers and lumber mills to see how local economies influence the resource conservation picture.



Joining us will be biologist **Ms. Ximena Buitrón Cisneros**. She is the former director of Ecuador's office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and an international expert in the illegal trade of endangered plant and animal life and effective policies to regulate the commercialization of wild resources and stem the theft of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).

Bruce has worked with Ms. Buitrón on editorial coverage of the illegal trade wildlife trade. Ms. Buitrón Cisneros is affiliated with the [FairWild Foundation](#), which works internationally to enable transformation of resource management and business practices to be ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable throughout the supply chain of wild-collected products.



Our final destination today is the **Jatun Sacha Biological Station**. The Jatun Sacha Biological Station, created in 1986, is a center for field research and education in the tropical rainforest region of the upper Napo River basin. The station includes a reserve of 2,200 hectares. The name “Jatun Sacha” (haw-tune saw-she) means “big forest” in Quichua. It’s a great place to see light gaps and forest regeneration.

With neighboring areas being rapidly cleared for logging and agriculture (café, cocoa, corn and, sometimes, plantain), the biodiversity of Jatun Sacha is precious. Besides counting and tracking local species, the foundation develops reforestation initiatives and agro-forestry alternatives with local farming communities and indigenous groups.



Studies have demonstrated that there are over 1000 species of plants (250 different species of trees) in one hectare, including 17 new species found here. There are over 110 species of amphibians and reptiles; 222 species of orchids have been collected in the reserve. Bands of the saddleback tamarins (*Saguinus fuscicollis*) (at left) are regularly seen. A portion of the tour proceeds will go to [Fundación Jatun Sacha](#), one of the first nonprofit organizations that was formed to promote rainforest research, conservation and education in Ecuador.

Before we return to Gabriel’s home, we expect to visit with **Mr. Matt Terry**, Executive Director of the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute. He’s an American kayaker-conservationist living in Tena, Ecuador. His investigative work in revealing the impact of multinational mining and hydroelectric projects in the country along with his efforts to rally the concerns of local communities has been pivotal in pushing for better project review and environmental impact assessments. A portion of the tour fee will go to the [Ecuadorian Rivers Institute](#), protecting whitewater resources, economic sustainability, and biodiversity in Ecuador.

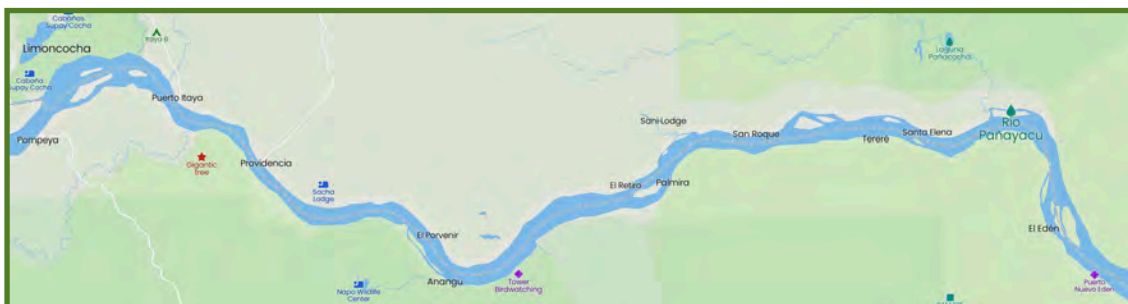


Back at the finca of Don Gabriel, there will be time to relax. Bruce might install a remote flash setup to photograph hummingbirds or bats feeding at a flowering shrub or tree. Before the daylight fades, we can walk to the shore of the Rio Hollín. Dinner will be a traditional Lowland Quichua dinner made by Gabriel’s wife Mercedes or one of their daughters, featuring hearts of palm salad and a refreshing beverage squeezed from fruit on his riverside farm.



Day 4
Traveling the Napo River Corridor toward Pañacocha

From Rio Hollín to Coca: This morning, we say goodbye to Gabriel and his family and continue east into the lower Amazon basin of Ecuador. We will travel by private car to the port town of Coca, the capital of Ecuador’s Orellana Province (820 ft. Elevation). That’s where you’ll meet Fausto, my personal guide since 1997, and our “cocinero motorista” or cook/canoe pilot. Before loading the covered motorized canoe, we’ll have some refreshments on the docks. Our destination is Sani Lodge, about 4 hours down the Napo River, with a couple stops along the way.



Pompeya Norte: Our first port will be the Saturday indigenous market at Pompeya Norte (Feria de Pompeya) where you will see a variety of fascinating indigenous foods and forest products for sale. Though the activity has been largely curtailed by enforcement, you may also witness the illicit trade of wildlife or wildlife parts.



Indillama: A little further downstream, we will tie up at Fausto’s home community of Indillama to enjoy a lunch of *Maito de pescado* with his family. *Maito de pescado* is a traditional Ecuadorian dish of river fish such as pintadillo, bocachico (or cultivated red tilapia) that's wrapped in banana leaves and cooked over firewood.

African oil palms: At the community of Providencia, we can take a 10 minute taxi ride to view a massive African oil palm plantation. Just as in Indonesia, these large farms are driving deforestation throughout the tropics, and leaving habitat fragmentation, river contamination and soil erosion.



Sani Lodge: A small stream takes us north into the idyllic Laguna Challuacocha, site of the Kichwa community-operated Sani Lodge (shown below). Arriving in the late afternoon increases our chance of wildlife sightings. The community has an excellent canopy observation tower which we can visit in the evening or the following morning. We will have dinner and stay the night.



Sani Lodge
at Laguna Challuacocha

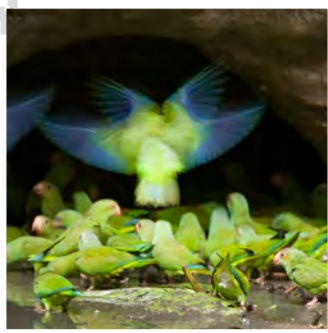


Room at the lodge

Days 5 & 6

Two full days to explore Laguna Pañacocha and Laguna Piguali

After we leave Sani Lodge, we will encounter the delta of the Pañayacu River (720 feet elevation) as it flows out into the Napo. We may see wildlife as we enter the mouth of the river, so have your binoculars in hand.



Option: If we arrive early enough, we can cross over to the south shore of the Napo to visit the *saladero de los locos* (parrot clay lick) in Yasuní National Park, which is managed by the Añangu Kichwa community. Here, several species of parrots, parakeets and Scarlet macaws feed on clay that helps them digest hard seeds and nuts. It's a 45-minute walk from the boat along an easy cement path to the viewing blind. Typically, about 10am each morning, the birds descend to feed and provide fabulous photo opportunities, as in this image made by Bruce. No worries though, as we will visit this clay lick on Day 7.

Motorized canoe travel up the Pañayacu River to reach the main lagoon. The 216 square-mile Pañacocha Protected Reserve is actually a network of blackwater lagoons and small rivers located between the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve to the north and the Yasuní National Park to the south. The flooded and terra firme forests are home to an incredibly diverse flora and fauna. We have good chances of sighting Red Howler, Capuchin and Squirrel monkeys as well as many parrots, macaws, toucans, kingfishers and hoatzins.

The name Pañacocha means "Lake of the Piranhas" in the lowland Kichwa language. There are several species of piranha, spectacularly-colored catfish, Pink and Grey Amazonian River Dolphins and manatee, both of which are critically endangered. As we pass sunlit beaches and fallen tree trunks, you may see hundreds of butterflies in a mesmerizing show of colorful patterns. Forming a biological corridor between Cuyabeno and Yasuní, the Pañacocha reserve provides habitat for jaguars, ocelots, nine species of monkeys and over 500 species of birds.

Fausto and Bruce will be focusing attention where river currents trap food and attract aquatic wildlife. Bruce has made some of best images in this area, shown here working from a tree blind over Pañacocha Lagoon several years ago.



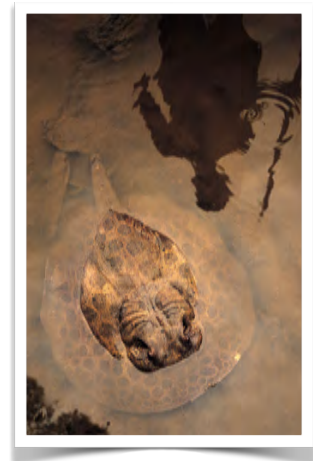
By Water & Trail

We will explore by water and land, with some light hikes on trails in the shoreline forests. Lunch will be on the boat with snacks and beverages available as needed. In the forest, you will be amazed by the symphony of bird sounds. Fausto and Bruce will identify many of them by their vocalizations if they are not seen. In the understory, we may see the Black-mantled Tamarin or the pocket-sized primate known as the Pygmy Marmoset.

Private Camp

Fausto and our motorista-cook will be setting up the Amazon version of “glamping” for one or both of our nights in the Pañacocha region. You will have a comfortable bed on a raised cot in a large fully-screened tent, with a portable shower. For dinner, eat at a finely set table and choose from local fish - which you’re welcome to help catch - or chicken or beef with local fruit, rice and salad. Soup is served with popcorn tossed on top as is the Ecuadorian custom. A second tent has a table and chairs for relaxing after dinner.

Here in the Pañacocha region is where having your own Native guide and motorista-cook can really pay off. Since we will be self-contained with meals on board, we can explore much more of the area than tour groups with excursions close to the lodge. We can access the most pristine areas of the flooded forest and do so without the walking required in terra firme forest. From the canoe, we can get great views of sloths, nesting birds and noisy “Guangana” or white-collared peccaries running in the forest, for example.



We will visit Laguna Pigualli, where Bruce once photographed a man hunting this massive *Puma raya* or Jaguar stingray (*Potamotrygon otorongo*) during a community harvest where food was harvested from the lagoon using indigenous methods in preparation for a wedding celebration.

Join Bruce and Fausto on optional night-time forays for close-up photography of strange and colorful insects and amphibians. We may go out in a canoe with spotlights to look for such wildlife as caiman (right), boat-billed herons and other animals.

We will descend the Pañayacu early in the morning, maximizing opportunities for wildlife observation as we reach the Napo.

Day 7

Leave Pañacocha / Yasuní parrot clay lick / Sani Lodge observation tower

We will leave the Pañacocha Lodge early to arrive at the wonderful parrot clay licks in Yasuní National Park. One of them can be found on the banks of the Napo river. The second lick (mentioned previously) is a fairly level walk. We will have a box lunch ready for you at the clay lick observatory. We will return to our canoe and head to Sani Lodge once again.



In the late afternoon, consider their canopy observation tower. The 12-story high (111 feet) tower is built beside a giant Ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra*) and takes you right into the crown to take you right into the crown of the tree. Since we are traveling as a small custom tour, you will have the time you need, if you feel you are able, to climb any portion of the tower with all the rest breaks you need.

Just a few floors up and you will see the layers of the rainforest and the rich epiphyte growth on the tree. Bruce will bring a super telephoto lens and a spotting scope for photography and bird observation.

To reach the tower, we will be taken on a 30-minute paddle boat ride across Lake Challuacocha followed by a short 10-minute walk to the base of the tower. From the tower you can look for toucans or Red Howler monkeys sleeping in the canopy. More than 565 species of birds have been sighted here and it's said that 85% of tower visitors see a Harpy eagle, the most powerful eagle in the world. Delicious meals and our final tour night in the Amazon basin at Sani Lodge.

Day 8

Leave Sani Lodge for Manor Cultural, Quito

The morning of our departure, the motor canoe will be loaded with our bags for the trip back to Coca. After breakfast, you will have another opportunity to visit the forest observation tower.



Our private taxi will be waiting for us in Coca to take us back to Quito, unless you prefer to fly back on TAME airlines. In Coca, you can confirm your return flight arrangements for Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito. We will arrive in Quito mid-afternoon.

Since most flights to the USA leave early in the morning (American #932 departs Quito's Mariscal Sucre airport at 6:48 a.m.), the tour price includes a final night in an

nice double room at Boutique Hotel Manor Cultural.

If you'll be in Quito for the evening, consider a celebratory post-tour dinner with us.



What is included:

- Custom itinerary designed to meet desired subjects/locations and your stated physical capabilities
- Expert environmental education & photography instruction by Dr. Farnsworth
- Expert field seminars by scientists and conservation partners of Dr. Farnsworth
- Professional Native Kichwa rainforest guide
- Canoe pilot/chef/assistant for water travel & camping
- Lodging in-country
- All camp equipment & set-up
- Rain ponchos and rubber boots
- Travel during the itinerary includes professional drivers, covered motorized canoe, small canoes, gas, engine oil, safety gear
- Transfers between airports, hotels and pre-tour reception.
- All gourmet and ethnic meals during the itinerary
- Bottled water along the trip
- Park entrance fees at Yasuní National Park and other reserves
- Taxes and surcharges related to the aforementioned

*** Note:**

Dates in the itinerary are tentative, however the proposed dates are aligned with weekly Pompeya Fair which is held on Saturdays.

Included in the tour price are \$100

honorariums for each of the guest Ecuador presenters for a total of \$500. One or more presenters may accept their fee as a donation to these Ecuador-based non-profits, as follows:

Dr. Luis Coloma, Herpetologist

Donation to Centro Jambatu

Ms. Ximena Buitrón Cisneros, Biologist

Working closely with FairWild Foundation

Dr. Giovanni Onore, Entomologist

Donation to Fundación Otonga

Mr. Gabriel Grefa, Kichwa Botanist

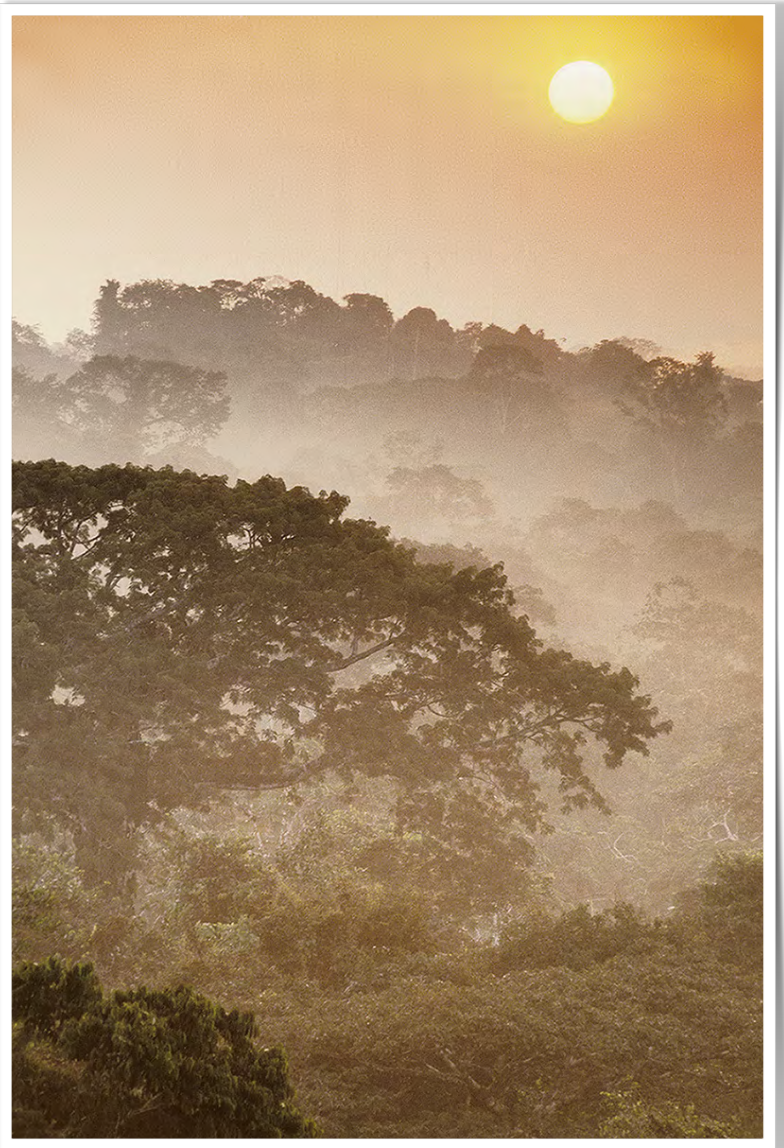
Donation to Project Herbario Kichwa

Mr. Matt Terry, Executive Director

Donation to the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute

What is not included:

- Vaccines, medical clearances, travel insurance and travel preparation
- International airfare or travel to Ecuador
- Air transportation in Ecuador, such as Quito-Coca-Quito
- Additional lodging, food, fuel and other expenses resulting from the client's request to change or extend the itinerary.
- Medical care, medical transport or related costs
- Excess baggage, oversize or vehicle costs for extraordinary gear.
- Snacks outside of meals
- Alcoholic drinks
- Tips, gratuities & souvenirs
- Any expenses not specified in tour



Sunrise over Yasuní National Park
& UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Contact

RawRainforest Immersion Photography Tours
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