COFÁN LODGE CUYABENO WILDLIFE RESERVE PROGRAMS

The Cofán are among the oldest surviving indigenous tribes in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Since time immemorial, we have lived in the forests where the Amazon Basin meets Andes and its volcanoes. The Cofán territory includes rainforest, beautiful winding rivers, extended swamp forests, and the richest biodiversity found on earth. Part of the traditional territory of the Cofans is protected in the 590,112 hectares Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, where we live in the village of Zábalo.

For many years, we provided ecotourism services to different tour operators, without having our own facilities. However, recently we decided that we should have our own lodge and our own programs to host you, our visitor, in our beautiful Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, so you can enjoy our paradisical jungle right from our own village. So we built our Cofan Lodge.

We have 2 specific programs:

1. 4 days 3 nights Standard Cofan Lodge program. Excursions are the Aguarico, Zábalo and Cuyabeno Rivers;
2. 5 days Cuyabeno Loop traversing a 200 loop through the Western Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve.

Day 1
The tour begins when we pick you up in the oil town of Lagoagrio, carved from the forest in the early 1970s to take you to a hamlet called Nuevo Union where we embark in our specialized visitors canoe.

The trip down the Aguarico River- originally called the Cofa Na’e, hence the name of the Cofan people - takes you through multiple zones of forest habitats. The first section is heavily colonized by pioneers who came from other parts of the country during the 1970s and 80s. However, as we navigate farther down the river, the impacts of Western civilization become fewer and fewer, and after we pass the mouth of the Cuyabeno River, we enter Cofan territories, where the small village of Zábalo and various extended family groups live.

We arrive at Zábalo in the late afternoon, to be welcomed by our all-Cofán staff. A welcome dinner of the famous “maito”, fish roasted in a special leaf domesticated for centuries for this very purpose, and an orientation by our lead guide wraps up the evening. Accommodations are in our comfortable three room cabins, while meals and talks take place in a large thatch-roofed house built in typical Cofan style.

Day 2
We will have an early breakfast and be ready for a trip up the Zábalo River. But first, we will take a short walk through the village, where we will take a look at the extensive medicinal and useful plant production around each house. Everything from stomach ache medicines to wild fruit trees to fish
poisons and face paints are part of the daily experience of Cofan families.

Then we will board our canoes for a trip up the pristine black water Zábalo River. The dark waters harbor many rare and wonderful creatures, including the giant anaconda, the pink river dolphin, and the endangered giant otter. Monkeys, Scarlet Macaws, Toucans, and other wildlife abound. In the evening, we return to to enjoy a dinner with traditional dishes.

Day 3
We begin the trip up the Cuyabeno River, following the ancient Cofan-Siona route into their shared territories in the upper Cuyabeno region. The programs split into two. For the Cuyabeno Loop, while looking out for animals, your Cofan hosts will take you up the Cuyabeno River to the Siona village, Puerto Bolivar, where you will be shown the traditional uses of plants important to the Siona People.

The Cofan Lodge Standard Program will explore the lower Cuyabeno River and return to the Cofan Lodge to spend the night and bring you back to Lagoagrio on Day 4.
The Cuyabeno Loop will arrive at the Cuyabeno Lodge by the falling of the night, located on a seasonal island along the breathtaking shores of the famous Cuyabeno Lake. Time permitting, you will enjoy a sunset swim in the lake, after which you will enjoy a home-cooked meal in the lodge. After dinner, you will be taken on a wildlife exploration along the borders of the lake, to look out for Caimans along the lake.

Day 4
After breakfast, you will be exploring one of the most scenic lakes of all of the Amazon in the Andean-Amazon countries. You will probably see Blue and Yellow Macaws flying noisily across the Lake, while Hoatzins whisper their hoarse sounds as they scope the Bonsai-shaped Macrolobium trees for food.

You may also hear the mysterious swelling sound of the Howler Monkeys or see a troop of squirrel monkeys bouncing through the treetops. On the lake itself, you are most likely to see one or both species of Amazon dolphins, and if you are really lucky, a manatee.

After lunch you will be taken deeper into the Macrolobium swamp forest, to look out for anacondas, orchids, different species of herons, several of the 10 species of monkeys and whichever species of bird, mammal or reptile that your guide can spot. At sunset a plunges into the lake.

In the evening, you can join a nightly walk through the woods with a flashlight. During such walks, you may find some of the strangest creatures, like a harmless whip-spider, tree frogs, armadillos, bats, etc.

Day 5
After breakfast, you will be travel up the Upper Cuyabeno River, to the official entrance of the Cuyabeno Wildlife reserve, where a car will be waiting for you to take you to the town of Lagoagrio from where you can take either the bus or your flight to Quito.
Prices are based on a minimum of 2 passengers.

4 days 3 nights stay in Zabalo: $540
5 days Cuyabeno Loop: 850

We are aware that our prices are higher than the ones of the lodges surrounding the Cuyabeno Lake. This is because Zábalo is much further from the nearest road and the Cuyabeno Loop is 200 km long, so our canoes need to travel 400km, consuming lots of fuel.

INCLUDED

- accommodation, meals and non-alcoholic drinks;
- An English speaking Cofan and/or naturalist guide;
- All entry fees.

Other modules (Please consult our other website on details https://www.parks-and-tribes.com):

- 5 – 10 Days National Parks Tours on mainland Ecuador;
- Galapagos packages;
- Highlights of Peru extension.

How to get to Lago Agrio:

Flying: You can book your own flight on https://www.tame.com.ec, which costs around $150 round trip. In addition, you need to pay $25 each way for a taxi from Quito to the airport and back (total $50).

Night bus from Quito to Lagoagrio: Leaves at night (usually around 23:00) from the “Terminal Norte” in Quito and arrives in Lagoagrio early in the morning. The costs are about $22 one way.

Private transportation: $300 to be shared among the passengers, hotel pickup. This takes you on a fascinating journey across the Andes flanks, making stops along the Cayambe-Coca Reserve: The high paramo (Andes meadows) at the Papallacta Lake, the San Rafael Waterfalls and the active Reventador.