



# EXPERIENCES GUIDE



## ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE RESERVE

The wonders waiting at Mashpi Lodge will delight the worldliest nature lover. Perched at 930 m (3,116 feet) above sea level amid pristine lower montane rainforest and cloudforest, the lodge is surrounded by a profusion of plant species, from ferns and bromeliads to hundreds of orchid species, many rare and endangered. Monkeys, peccaries and even puma make their homes inside the Reserve crisscrossed with waterfalls between dramatic, verdant hills. A staggering 400 species of bird – including some 35 endemics – have been spotted to date, not to mention 112 species of amphibians and reptiles. The world of Mashpi is yours to discover, to experience, to cherish.

Following, we have outlined the main activities and experiences we offer our guests. You can elect to combine them as you please, depending on your interests and abilities. Every night, you will be able to choose from our activities menu. All are accompanied by expert naturalist and local community guides. If you have any specific requests for your time with us, please don't hesitate to contact us. We'll be glad to help you.



We have graded the trails according to difficulty in the following guide:

- Easy
- Medium
- Challenging

# THE DRAGONFLY

The highlight of any trip to Mashpi is a ride aboard the Dragonfly, an innovative cable system which carries you under, through and above the forest canopy: a unique way to see the world anew.

The Dragonfly consists of two stations, six towers (with an intermediate station half-way, which we can use to embark and disembark), and four 'gondolas' in which you travel. Each gondola can carry four guests plus their guide. The Dragonfly travels gently and slowly along a 2-kilometre (1.2-mile) cable between the two stations, sometimes below the canopy, sometimes through it, and also far above it – it's a bird's eye view of this magical ecosystem. It takes about 40 minutes to ride from one station to the other.

We have designed various experiences which integrate the Dragonfly ride with the Reserve's trails, rivers and waterfalls. It takes 10 minutes to walk from the lodge to the departure station.



## COMPLETE DRAGONFLY RIDE



1008 m2



820 m



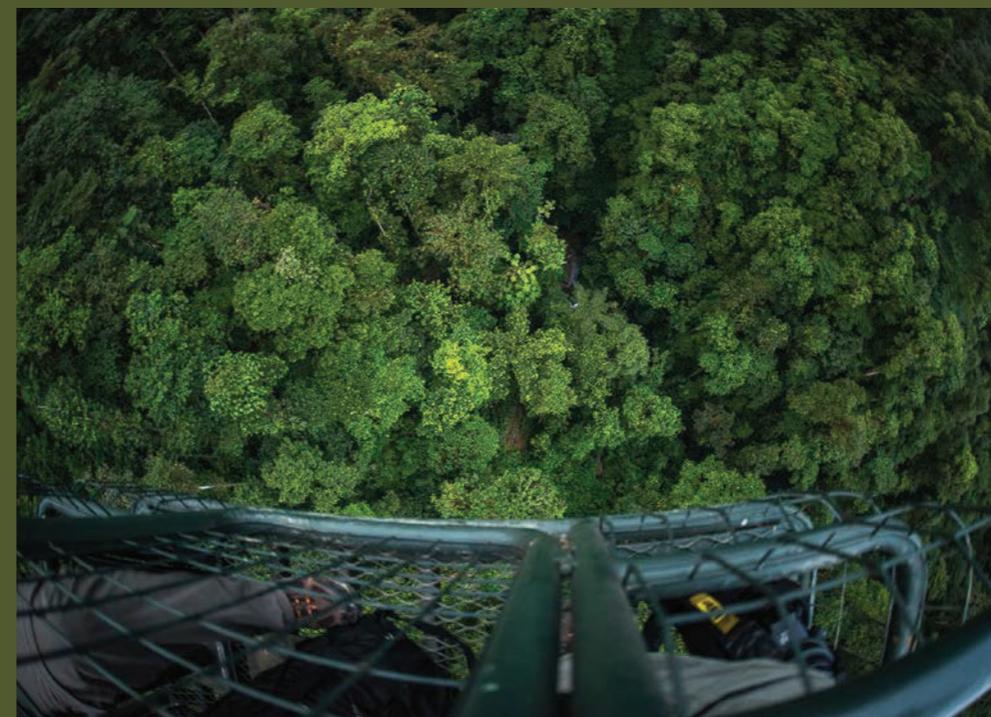
2,035 km.



2 hours

This is the complete Dragonfly experience, for those guests who just don't want to get off! You stay onboard all the way from the departure station to the end station, and then return all the way.

We can also enjoy the Dragonfly ride just to the Tower 4 and back – recommended for people with severe vertigo.





## MAGNOLIA WATERFALL + DRAGONFLY



960 m



740 m



0.3%



0.4km



1h30 min.

We take the Magnolia Trail waterfall from by the lodge, walking through beautiful forest and stopping at the viewing platform half-way. Further down, we come to a great waterfall for a revitalizing dip and pummeling shower. We then wade and walk through the Laguna River downstream, admiring the colours of the riverbed and spotting birds, before reaching Tower 4 of the Dragonfly. Here we embark for our glide up the gorge, arriving at the departure station 20 minutes' later.

This experience can also be done the other way round, beginning on the Dragonfly and returning uphill to the lodge.

## THE JUNGLE SWING TRAIL + DRAGONFLY



964 m



769 m



20%



930 m



1h30 min.

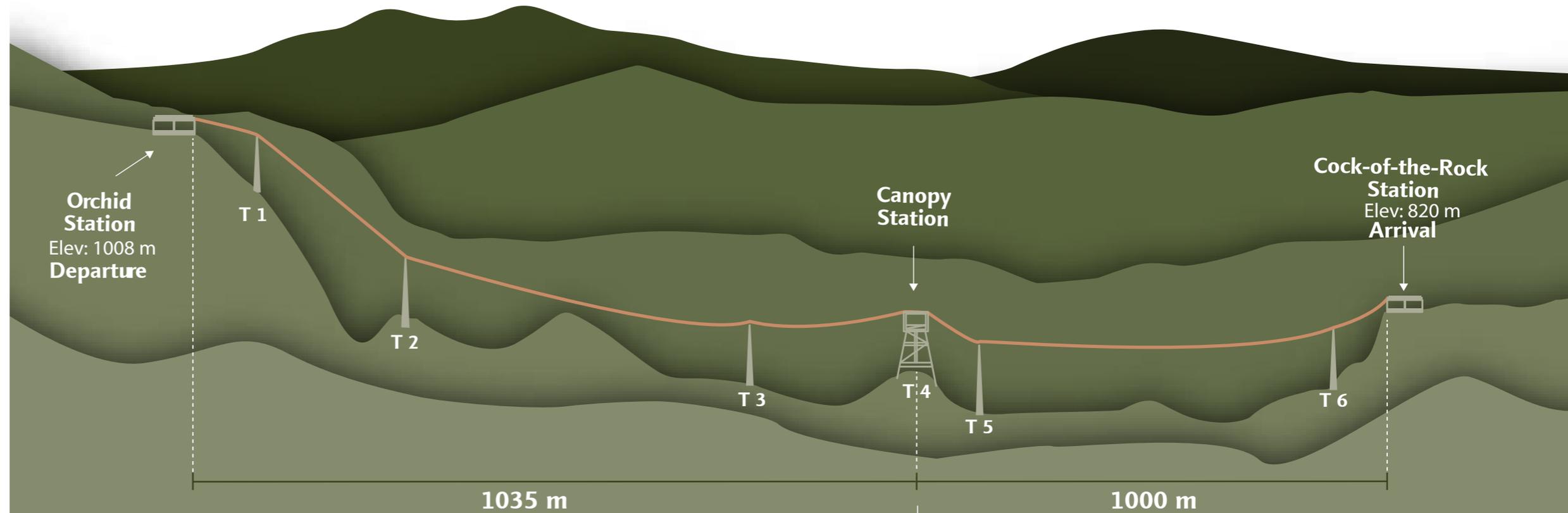
This delightful trail starts near the staff house, a short walk from the lodge. It offers an excellent understanding of the regeneration process that forests undergo following deforestation. The first part of the trail was used for pasture just 15 years ago, and now it's a beautiful young forest, dominated by pioneer species of Miconia tree.

On this trail we can put the story of Tarzan to the test. Vines are bridges connecting the forest canopy, and some are strong enough to hold the weight of a person. Halfway along this trail, we can take a swing on Mashpi's very own Tarzan rope-vine – shouting like Tarzan optional!

This trail descends to the Laguna River. By wading and walking along the riverbed, we can reach the lovely nearby waterfall for a splash, before returning to the Dragonfly's Tower 4, and returning to the departure station in a glide.

This experience is a great way to combine walking in the forest with traveling over the treetops.

# DRAGONFLY DETAILS



## Technical information:

Distance (from the departure station to the arrival station):	2035 m
Average travel time (from the departure station to the arrival station):	40 minutes
Average travel time (from the departure station to tower 4):	20 minutes
Number of towers (T1 - T6):	6
Ground level entry points:	Departure station, Tower 4, arrival station
Height above ground level:	0-200 m
Maximum number of passengers per gondola:	4 guest + 1 guide
Technical specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Main engine: Siemens de 40HP (Electric)</li> <li>· Backup engine: Siemens de 40HP (Diesel)</li> <li>· Main and backup transmission systems</li> </ul>
Emergency systems:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ropes (Departure and arrival station, towers 1-4)</li> <li>· Independent basket system for evacuation (Towers 5 &amp; 6)</li> </ul>
Structural and operational certification:	College of Engineers of Pichincha



## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The science and investigation projects are ample and varied in Mashpi. Even before construction was completed, a biologist was hired to conduct an ambitious program of research. Its aim? To find out as much as possible about the myriad natural elements within the Mashpi Reserve and their interaction with visitor activities. Complementing this work, insectaries for breeding butterflies were constructed, and camera traps placed across the terrain. The knowledge accumulated by our team is then shared with local communities, our guests and the wider public, with the aim of spreading the message of the importance of conserving this endangered and fascinating bio-region. We have worked on and collaborated with several Ecuadorian and international research projects, and have even discovered new species to science.

These initiatives have proved to us that our conservation efforts have to go beyond merely protecting our reserve with its hotel. They must be a combination of research, education, ecotourism and community support in order to be truly successful.



## GUIDED NATURE WALKS

Along the trails, guests will learn from the experience and expertise of both their Naturalist Guide and Local Guide about the myriad plants and animals that inhabit this biodiverse universe. The guides will enthusiastically share their knowledge of their characteristics, behaviour and uses.

Due to Mashpi's mountainous topography, trails are rarely flat. The trails' steepness is an advantage since the hillsides enable more light to penetrate the forest, thereby increasing the diversity of plants and animals that one can observe at each strata.

Trails throughout the Reserve cross various types of terrain, ranging from the earth and gravel of the main road, forest paths carpeted by leaves, wading through rivers, while some have been specially adapted to make walking easier and pleasant, using embedded recycled plastic crates to create steps and firm paths.



## STRANGLER FIG TRAIL —————

 945 m    
  891 m    
  5%    
  2.8 km    
  2 hours

 925 m.    
 30 min.    
 822 m.    
 45 min.

Named after one of the most curious plants in the reserve, the strangler fig. This seed plant, dispersed by birds, lowers its roots from the canopy into the ground around the host tree, and then slowly grows around it until it effectively smothers it. This trail is dominated by palms over 40 m high called pambiles or iron palm (*Iriartea deltoidea*).

## JUNGLE SWING TRAIL —————

 974 m    
  937 m    
  1%    
  1.5 km    
  1h45 min.

 50 m.    
 5 min.    
 737 m.    
 45 min.

This delightful trail starts near the staff house, a short walk from the lodge. It offers an excellent understanding of the regeneration process that forests undergo following deforestation. The first part of the trail was used for pasture just 15 years ago, and now it's a beautiful young

forest, dominated by pioneer species of Miconia tree. The trail ends in lovely mature forest before returning along the main path .

On this trail we can put the story of Tarzan to the test. Vines are bridges connecting the forest canopy, and some are strong enough to hold the weight of a person. Halfway along this trail, we can take a swing on Mashpi's very own Tarzan rope-vine – shouting like Tarzan optional!

This trail can be combined with the Dragonfly for the return journey.



## WATERFALL EXCURSIONS

Water is key to life in Mashpi, and there's nothing like a refreshing dip full of nature's energy at the end of a hike! Several rivers cross the Mashpi Reserve close to the hotel, many forming beautiful small waterfalls, cascades and pools. The water temperature is between 18 and 20°C (64 and 68°F). Don't forget your swimming suit if you want to swim!



## COPAL WATERFALL



966 m



865 m



15%



1.35 km



2 hours

→ 20 m. ⌚ 3 min.

→ 644 m. ⌚ 45 min.

This medium-difficulty trail takes us on a magical walk through primary forest where many of the centenarian trees of the Reserve survived logging, with the copal tree (*Dacryodes cupularis*) being the most emblematic. It leads us down to a waterfall, whose rocks conjure an enchanting curtain of mist all around. The resin from this tree is used as an anaesthetic and for burning as incense; it's also combustible.

## MAGNOLIA WATERFALL



941 m



779 m



20%



1.5 km



2 hours

→ 15 m. ⌚ 2 min.

→ 688 m. ⌚ 45 min.

This trail drops down right from outside the lodge to the Laguna River below. It's steep in parts, with a great viewing platform about half-way, and a beautiful waterfall and pool for bathing at the bottom – with an all-natural Jacuzzi! The waterfall and trail's name come from the tallest in the Reserve, a new species of Magnolia (soon to be published) that grows abundantly in this area, the species is heavily logged outside the reserve for its valuable timber. Its local name is Cucharillos, which stems from the shape of the petals of its flowers, which resemble spoons (cuchara is spoon in Spanish).

## THE HEALING WATERFALL

898 m   820 m   16%   3.5 km.   4 hours

→ 1.3 km. ⌚ 60 min.   → 374 m. ⌚ 25 min.   → 850 m. ⌚ 30 min.

One of the most beautiful in the Reserve, but you have to be pretty fit to enjoy the hike there and back. The waterfall has an amazing setting, and what's more, you can get round to the back of the chute of water to feel the energizing force – a special place to sit and meditate.

The walk starts from the hotel and takes four hours there and back, covering 3 km (2 miles). For an easier option, we can take a vehicle to the Capuchin Monkey trail-head and walk from there – which reduces the hiking time to 2 hours there and back (2.6 km). Another alternative is to walk to the Sky Bike Station from the lodge, cross to the other side and then walk the trail to the waterfall (1 Km, 45 min). On the way back, we can take the Walking Palm trail and walk from the Healing Waterfall 2 hours to get back to the lodge, or use the Sky Bike again. A final option is to combine the walk to the trail with the Dragonfly: Returning from the Healing Waterfall to the Capuchin Monkey trail, we continue all the way to the Laguna River (1.5 Km – 1 hour) and from there walk upstream along the river bed and banks to Tower 4, gliding back to the lodge aboard the Dragonfly.

## MALIMPIAS WATERFALL

900 m   635 m   15%   3.6 km.   4 hours

→ 1.2 km. ⌚ 40 min.   → 1.6 km. ⌚ 60 min.

One of our more challenging trails, but definitely worth the effort, since the hike ends at one of the largest waterfalls in Mashpi, which cascades down 60 m (190 feet). We wind downhill through enchanting primary forest with trees towering up to 35 m (110 feet) to the lower part of our Reserve, just where the tropical rainforest begins in earnest. The falls create a deep pond, perfect for swimming.



## CAPUCHIN MONKEY TRAIL



1076 m



773 m



5%



2035 m.



2h20 min. (to the Laguna river)  
1h30 min. (by vehicle to the beginning of the trail)

This is the longest trail we have designed so far in the Reserve. It begins on the road in-between the Walking Palm trail and the Sky Bike Station trail, and ends at the Laguna River passing Tower 5, covering more than 2 miles (3.5 km if the walk starts from the hotel) and connecting different attractions of the reserve. You can reach the trailhead walking (45 minutes) or by vehicle (10 minutes).

On this trail we can observe spots where the Club-wing Manakin birds gather to perform their courtship dances. These locations are known as leks. This trail also leads to a fork down to the Healing Waterfall (1.3 km). At the end of the trail and after more than 2 hours walking, we reach the Laguna River. After a rest, we make our way wading and walking upstream in the river to the Magnolia trail and from there back to the lodge (2 hours 1.5 km). Or we can walk upstream to Tower 4 and return on the Dragonfly.





## NIGHT WALKS

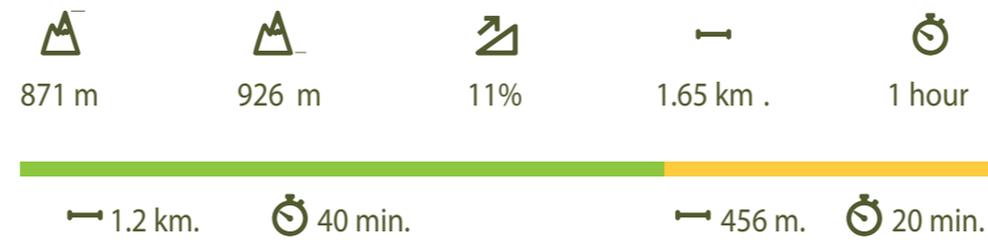
The Mashpi forest is transformed at night, with far more activity than during the day. Our night walks will head out from the hotel to discover its nocturnal creatures and their behaviours, ranging from moths as big as your hand, to miniature glass, rain and tree frogs, croaking toads, birds, owls, rodents and mammals, and even fox fire, an Avatar-like luminous fungus. It's a magical world, often astounding at the micro level, and seldom explored, ready to be discovered in expert company.

## MASHPI TORRENTEER LAGOON

This lagoon lies a short walk along the road from the hotel, where a waterfall and river form a beautiful pond. This is the ideal habitat for various species of frogs – rain frogs, glass frogs and tree frogs – as well as other fascinating species we might encounter. In this lagoon, our scientific investigation team was able to discover a new species for science: the Mashpi Torrenteer. Its Latin name is *Hyloscirtus mashpi*, which means guardian of the river.

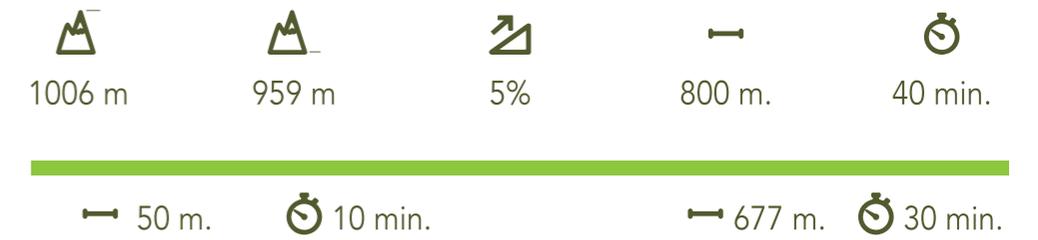


## LIFE CENTRE



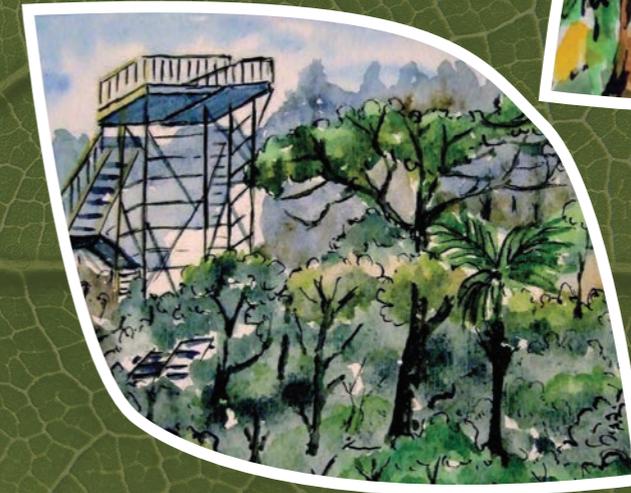
This trail connects the Life Center with the main road.

## THE LUMINOUS TRAIL



This is a short and easy trail which we use mostly for night walks due to its richness in insects. It's named after the luminous 'fox fire' fungus that occurs here. It's a glow in the dark living experience!





**OBSERVATION TOWER  
AND SKY BIKE**

# SKY BIKE

Located close to the hotel, the Sky Bike makes for an original and exciting way to explore the forest canopy up close. Designed for two people to use at once, one person pedals the bike along a cable stretched between two points in the forest, around 200 m (655 feet) apart, crossing a beautiful gorge above a river flowing between rocks and trees below. Silent, easy-to-use and fun, it's an activity for children over 1 m high accompanied by an adult, providing guests with the chance to fly over the natural world close to the lodge and even spot its denizens. The ride takes 10 minutes or 20 round-trip.

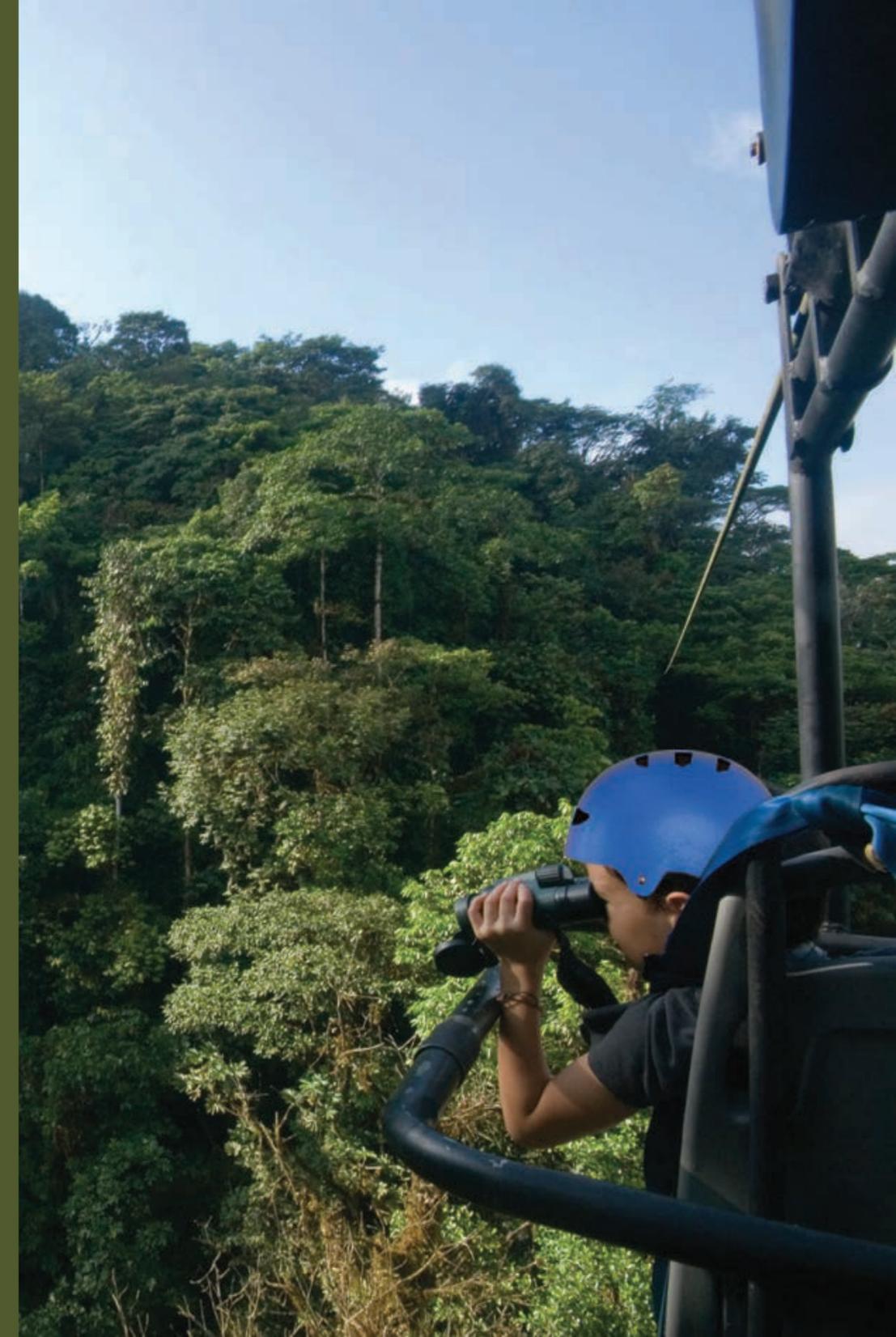
To get the Sky Bike, we walk 15 minutes along the access road, and then just 5 minutes (160 m) along a short trail.

We can combine the Sky Bike with other activities like a hike on the Walking Palm trail to the Laguna waterfall

and walk back to the lodge from there (1 hour, 1.5 miles). For a longer walk, we can take the Capuchin trail and walk to the Healing waterfall (a demanding hike and only recommended for people in good physical conditions because the hike is 2-miles long and takes 2.5 hours). The combination of activities – Sky Bike, Observation Tower and hike – lasts about 3 hours.

## **Sky Bike Safety Guidelines:**

- Maximum Capacity: 2 people
- Minimum Height: 1 m (3,3 feet)
- Guides assistance is required
- Helmets are required
- Use seat belt during the entire ride
- Do not release the pedals at any time
- Do not put your hands on or close to the cable



# OBSERVATION TOWER

One of the best ways to enjoy the beauty of Mashpi is from the observation tower. From here, we can appreciate a wonderful view of the canopy and the complex structure of the tropical forest, and on clear days we can see the lodge, the Reserve's boundaries and a mosaic of forest, crops and little villages beyond.

The tower is a metal structure with a staircase that rises about eight stories (26 m or 85 ft), ideal for the wildlife lovers. Species spotted from here include toucans, woodpeckers, barbets, tanagers and parrots, as well as birds of prey.

The observation tower is located near the Sky Bike and we combine the two activities.



# THE WALKING PALM TRAIL

1023 m      995 m      1%

850 m.      25 min.      640 m.      25 min.

This trail leads from the Sky Bike landing station to the road, following the course of the river. Here we can come across a very special palm: *Ireathera deltoidea*, famous for being able to 'walk' towards the light in order to improve its chances of growth.



# SKY BIKE & TOWER TRAIL

1025 m      1005 m      10%

540 m.      15 min.      160 m.      5 min.

This trail connects the Observation Tower and the Sky Bike with the road.





## LIFE CENTRE

Located west of the lodge, the Life Centre was conceived as a place for learning and discovery, but also as a place where our guests can disconnect while they admire the scenery from the comfort of a chaise longue on the handsome wooden deck – a great place to spot birds, and hear the roar of mantled howler monkeys, too!

Here we learn about the species of butterflies found in this region, observing the whole process of metamorphosis from eggs into beautiful butterflies. About 300 species of moths and butterflies have been identified to date in the Reserve, and our team has reproduced 50 of these to date. About a dozen can be seen in the centre itself. Most of the interpretation in the centre is provided by our guides or the employees from the local community involved in the project.

To get to the Life Centre we take the Howler Monkey trail, located 1 km from the hotel. This trail runs through primary forest and is the perfect prelude to discovering the various interactions between species inhabiting the tropical rainforests. On the way back from the Life Center we take the short Life Centre trail to the main road, and then back to the lodge. In total, we walk 3.5 km and take about 3 hours, including the visit to the Life Centre.



## HOWLER MONKEY TRAIL



941 m



872 m



9%



703 km.



45 min.

This trail runs mostly primary forest, where the dominant species is the copal tree (*Dacryodes cupularis*), with an average height of 40 m, prized for its wood. The trail get its name from the howler monkeys, a species that inhabit this forest fragment – it's quite possible we'll hear them as we walk the trail – and ends at the Life Center.

## LIFE CENTRE TRAIL



871 m



926 m



11%

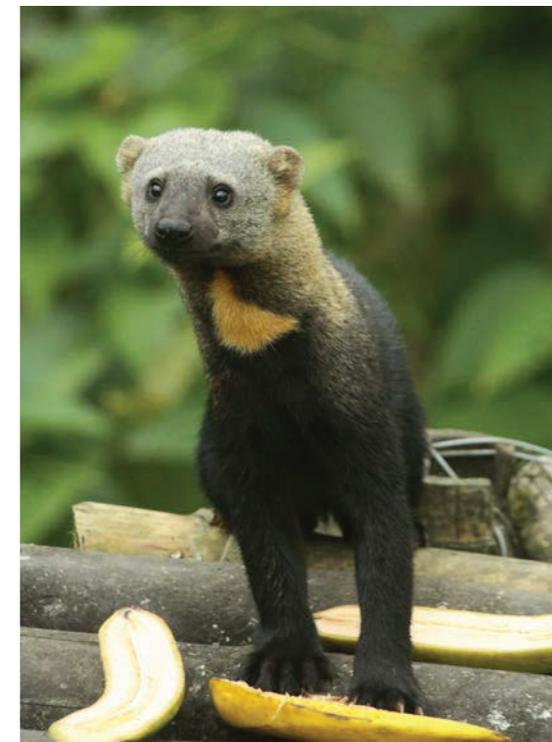


456 km .



20 min.

This trail connects the Life Center with the main road.

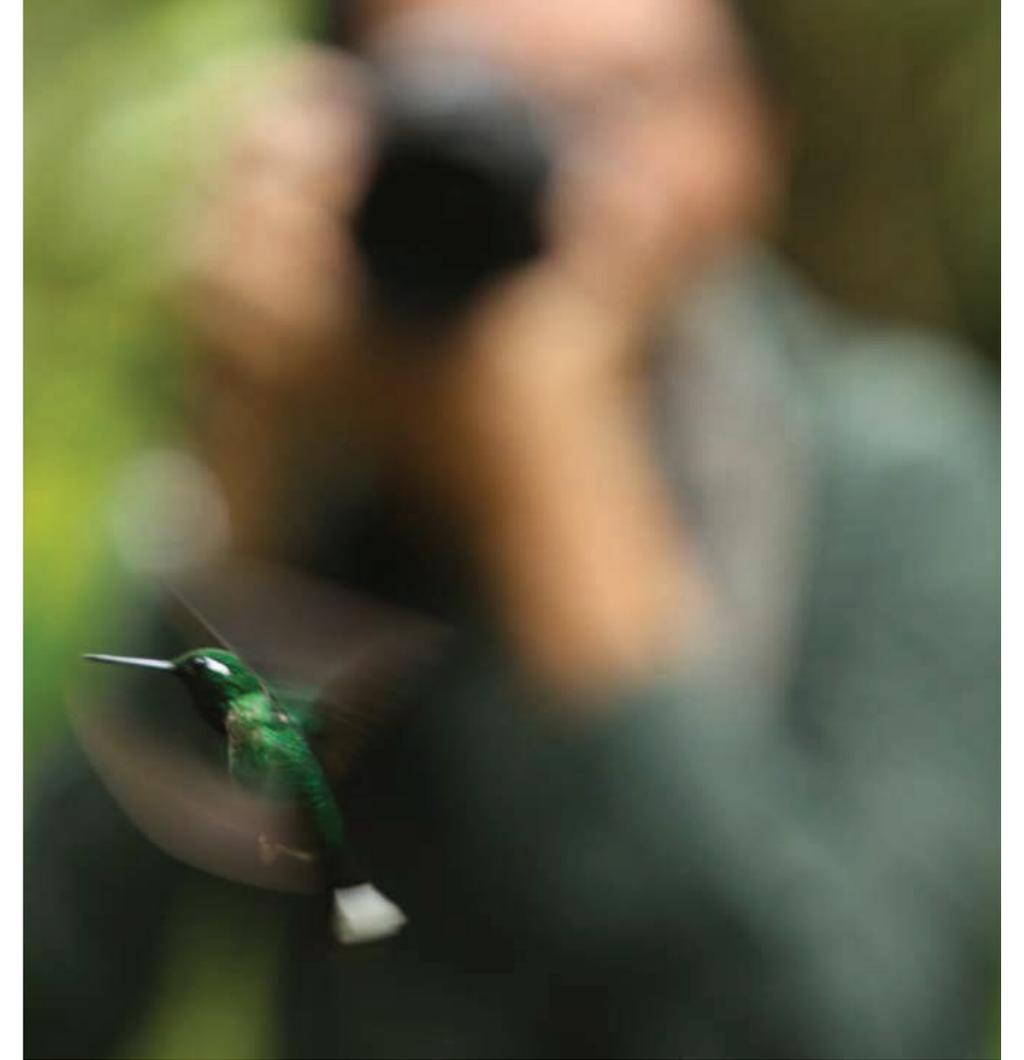


# HUMMINGBIRD GARDEN

The forests of Mashpi boast 32 hummingbird species identified to date, inhabiting different specific altitudes, with around 19 species alone observable by guests in this garden. In order to make it easier to see these amazing creatures, we placed several hummingbird feeders and fruit feeders, in front a shelter with seating providing the ideal setting. Here, apart from hummingbirds, we can also frequently spot fruit feeder species such as toucans, tanagers, squirrels, etc. The site is located at a natural

viewpoint, which, on clear days, provides breath-taking views of the Reserve's forested hills. This is a paradise for photographers, regardless of your level of experience, as well as a place to calmly connect with birds and nature.

To get to the Hummingbird Garden we take a vehicle back towards the entrance to the Reserve. The trip takes 15 minutes. We then return by foot along the road (5.3 km) to the hotel. The activity takes an hour and a half. We can also walk part of the way back and arrange for one of our vehicles to pick us up at any point of the road.



## PATH TO THE HUMMINGBIRD GARDEN



1281 m



951 m



6%



5.3 km.



1h30 min. (hiking back)  
15 min. (by car)