STUDY BIODIVERSITY IN THE HEART OF THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

Live in an Indigenous Shuar community while conducting your Bachelor's thesis, Master's thesis or independent research in one of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems.

LOCATION Arútam Rainforest Reserve, Pastaza, Ecuador

PROJECT Wawazonia – Community-Based Rainforest Conservation

DURATION Flexible, preferably 3 months or longer

ACCOMMODATION Private jungle houses with kitchen and basic facilities

RESEARCH FIELDS Biology, Ecology, Conservation, Forestry, Environmental Science and related disciplines

Turn the Amazon Rainforest into Your Research Site

Imagine waking up to the sounds of the rainforest, spending your days exploring pristine tropical rainforest, documenting wildlife, and conducting field research in an ecosystem where countless species remain poorly studied.

Wawazonia invites motivated university students and young researchers to conduct their Bachelor's projects, Master's theses or independent research in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

You will live in or near a small Indigenous Shuar community, surrounded by extraordinary biodiversity, with direct access to tropical rainforest, local guides and generations of traditional ecological knowledge.

This is an opportunity to combine academic research with a unique cultural experience while contributing to the understanding and conservation of the Amazon rainforest.

Arútam Rainforest Reserve – A Living Laboratory

The Arútam Rainforest Reserve is located in Ecuador's Pastaza Province, at the foothills of the Andes, approximately 550–1,000 metres above sea level.

The reserve covers approximately 1,050 hectares (2,600 acres) of tropical rainforest and is surrounded by extensive areas of primary forest belonging to four Indigenous Shuar communities: Arútam, Kaapar, Chinimp Tuna and Sumak Pakcha.

The forest forms part of a much larger landscape of interconnected rainforest extending across the Amazon Basin.

The biodiversity is extraordinary.

The forest is home to an impressive diversity of mammals, including jaguars, pumas, ocelots, margays, howler monkeys, tamarins, sloths, peccaries, anteaters and much more.

Birdlife is equally spectacular. Several hundred bird species are known to local community members in the immediate surroundings, including toucans, macaws, hummingbirds, curassows, manakins and numerous other tropical forest species.

The vegetation ranges from towering tropical hardwoods and palms to an astonishing diversity of orchids, bromeliads, ferns and other plants.

Amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, insects and countless other organisms contribute to an ecosystem of exceptional biological complexity.

Despite this richness, much of the local biodiversity remains insufficiently documented, offering exciting opportunities for students interested in field-based research.

Your Research – Your Project

We welcome students from universities worldwide who wish to develop their own research projects. Possible research topics include:

- **Biodiversity inventories:** Documenting mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, insects, fungi or plants.
- **Camera-trap studies:** Monitoring jaguars, pumas and other mammals, including species distribution and activity patterns.
- **Ornithology:** Bird diversity, habitat preferences and species monitoring.
- **Tropical forest ecology:** Forest structure, regeneration, species composition and ecological interactions.
- **Conservation biology:** Habitat connectivity, threats to biodiversity and community-based conservation.
- **Entomology and herpetology:** Investigating poorly documented groups of insects, amphibians and reptiles.
- **Ethnobiology:** Exploring traditional Shuar ecological knowledge and relationships between people and the rainforest, with community consent.
- **Forest restoration:** Comparing biodiversity and ecological processes in primary forest, secondary forest and reforestation areas.

These are suggestions rather than fixed projects. We encourage students to develop their own research questions in cooperation with their university supervisors and the local community.

Wawazonia can provide feedback and practical input on research proposals before arrival, helping students evaluate the feasibility of their planned fieldwork.

Academic supervision and formal research approval remain the responsibility of the student's university and relevant authorities.

Live in the Rainforest

We offer two separate houses located inside the rainforest, allowing students to live close to their research sites and experience daily life in the jungle.

Each house has its own kitchen and basic living facilities, providing an opportunity for independent living in a remarkable natural environment. You can prepare your own meals or arrange for a local community member to help with cooking and food preparation for an agreed payment.

Students contribute USD 300 per month, which goes towards maintaining the rainforest accommodation and supporting the local Shuar community.

You can choose to buy and prepare your own meals, have local community members purchase, deliver and cook your food, or combine both options.

Meal arrangements are flexible and can be agreed upon locally on a week-to-week basis.

Living conditions are simple and rural, and students should be comfortable with tropical humidity, wildlife, limited infrastructure and the practical challenges of living in a remote rainforest environment. In return, you will experience something few students ever do: the opportunity to live surrounded by the very ecosystem you are studying.

Experience the Culture of the Shuar People

Wawazonia works directly with Indigenous Shuar communities, who manage their own conservation and sustainable development initiatives.

The Shuar have lived in the Amazon rainforest for generations and possess extensive knowledge of local wildlife, plants, ecosystems and traditional forest management.

During your stay, you will have the opportunity to become part of everyday village life, learn about Shuar traditions, practise Spanish and experience a culture closely connected to the surrounding forest.

Local community members and experienced forest guides can assist with orientation, access to research sites and field activities, subject to local availability and arrangements.

We believe scientific research and traditional ecological knowledge can complement each other and contribute to more effective rainforest conservation.

Who Are We Looking For?

We welcome Bachelor's and Master's students, as well as independent researchers, with a genuine interest in tropical ecology, biodiversity and conservation.

You should be independent, curious, flexible and comfortable living in a remote tropical environment.

Basic Spanish is strongly recommended, as communication with local community members is primarily in Spanish or Shuar.

We prefer stays of three months or longer, although shorter research visits may be considered depending on the project.

Students are responsible for their own travel, insurance, research equipment, university requirements and any necessary research permits.

About Wawazonia

Wawazonia is a community-based conservation and sustainable development initiative working with Indigenous Shuar communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Our mission is to help protect tropical rainforest and its extraordinary biodiversity while creating sustainable economic opportunities for local families through conservation, forestry, ecotourism and other community-led activities.

By welcoming university students and researchers, we hope to strengthen biodiversity documentation, improve knowledge of local ecosystems and contribute to the long-term protection of the rainforest.

Apply for a Research Stay

Are you looking for a unique location for your Bachelor's thesis, Master's thesis or independent research?

We would love to hear from you.

Send us a short introduction about yourself, your university, your research interests, proposed topic and preferred dates.

Contact: info@shbnature.com
Website: www.wawazonia.org
Location: Arútam Community, Pastaza, Ecuador

Your next research project could begin where the road ends and the rainforest begins.

Discover. Research. Experience. Protect.