

# The 8 Best Experiential Eco-Lodges in South America



by Paul Rubio  
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*Weather in [South America](#) is best from January through March, which means it's prime time to explore all of the wildlife, [volcanoes](#), and hot springs that the continent has to offer. Here, eight eco-lodges to help you get started.*

8 IMAGES





1/8 Mashpi Lodge, Ecuador

Immerse yourself in Ecuador’s cloud forest—home to endemic amphibians, ocelots, and more than 500 species of birds—at this high-design, three-story, glass-and-steel lodge. Daily activities showcase the best of the biodiverse surroundings: [Zip line](#) across the forest canopy by aerial bicycle (spotting rare orchids along the way), observe toucans from the scientist-frequented Life Centre, or hike deep into the mist in search of waterfalls and [Mashpi’s](#) charismatic capuchins (white-faced monkeys) and margays (small, arboreal spotted cats).

Courtesy Mashpi Lodge



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2/8 Explora Sacred Valley, Peru

A visit to [Machu Picchu](#) is just one component to the exhilarating experience at [Explora Sacred Valley](#), which offers 20 different guide-led excursions through the Sacred Valley of the Incas (on top of incredible Peruvian gastronomy, modern guest rooms, and a spa housed in an old colonial manor, that is.) Excursion highlights include the full-day *Cinco Lagunas* (Five Lakes) hike, a rewarding trek up remote snow-capped peaks to the llama-frequented lagoons of the Andean highlands, as well as the full-day, nine-mile Moray hike, which traverses lesser-known archaeological ruins and the ancient salt mines of Salineras.

Courtesy Explora Sacred Valley





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### 3/8 Napo Wildlife Center, Ecuador

The sole [lodge](#) within Ecuador's Yasuní National Park exposes nature lovers to some of the Amazon's last remaining virgin forest. Watch [Planet Earth](#) unfold in real-time under towering *Cecropia* trees as macaws and parrots call overhead and giant otters scramble for cover. Climb up the Canopy Tower or Ecological Tower for superlative rainforest panoramas and birding opportunities. Exploring the park's species-rich waterways by skiff, cruise past stingrays, anacondas, sunbathing caimans, and—if you're really, really lucky—a prowling jaguar. At night, retreat to your spacious thatched-roof bungalow and fall asleep to a symphony of geckos and cicadas.

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4/8 Alto Atacama Desert Lodge & Spa, Chile

Until you see it with your own eyes, it’s hard to believe that earth’s driest non-polar desert, the [Atacama Desert](#), houses some of the planet’s most colorful and diverse landscapes. At [Alto Atacama Desert Lodge & Spa](#), choose from more than 30 excursions, including a half-day trip to the Chaxa lagoon—which glitters in the pink of its resident flamingos—and a half-day hike through the salt-and-sand encased canyons of the Valley of the Moon. Give yourself two days to ascend into the thick of the volcanoes and towering sand dunes, before eventually reaching the red and green, salt-rimmed lakes of the Pujsa salt flat and the natural stone arches.

Courtesy Alto Atacama Desert Lodge & Spa



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5/8 Explora Patagonia, Chile

This [understated lodge](#) in the heart of Torres del Paine National Park is your gateway to Patagonia’s most stunning glaciers, granite spires, bright blue lakes, and fascinating fauna. When not exploring the surrounds by horseback, foot, or boat, grab a pisco sour at the lodge and enjoy the view: In the shadow of the park’s iconic *Cuernos del Paine* or “Horns of Paine,” this is arguably the most beautiful vista in all of [Patagonia](#).

Photo by Paul Rubio

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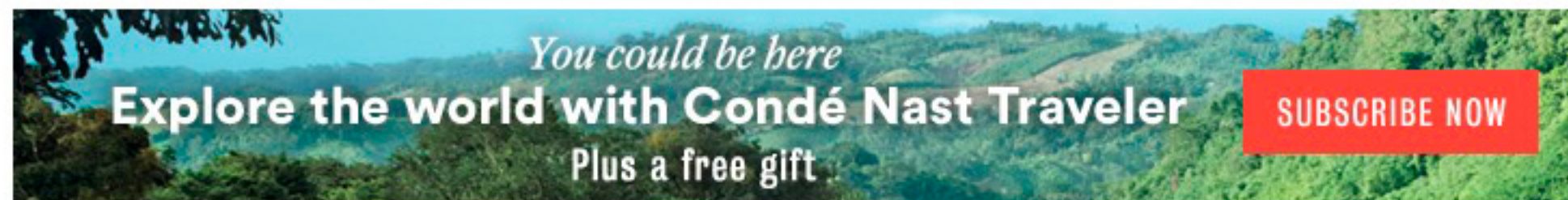
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## 6/8 Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica, Peru

Thanks to luxury vessels like the *Aria Amazon* and lodges [like this one](#), the [Peruvian Amazon](#) is getting plenty of buzz as one of the world's most unexpected five-star destinations. Expect enthralling wildlife adventures both by foot and by motorized canoe—have your cameras ready for sloths dangling from treetops and squirrel monkeys hamming it up for the lens—and count on having all the creature comforts you'd expect from a [top-tier safari lodge](#).

Courtesy Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica