



# Hacienda La Danesa

## Activities and Excursions

### Local Experiences

Included in your stay

#### Tree to Bar Chocolate Making

Are you a chocolate lover? Then you are in good company, and in the right place. Seeing as we are in the new wave of artisan chocolatiers, you can experience how we try new things with high quality cacao beans, production options and indulgent fillings. The best place to begin is inside the cacao plantation, where you find out about the history of cacao in Ecuador and interesting details on the process of tree to bar chocolatero. Diana, our local chocolatier, exhibits the tempering of the chocolate, and you can even get personally involved in this process. In case you didn't know, you will learn from the experts about the health benefits and social aspects of chocolate.

This is a hands-on chocolate making experience with the hacienda chocolatier where chocolate tasting is included. For guests looking for a Chocolate Workshop with a **Professional** Chocolatier we recommend booking the [Chocolate Making Workshop](#).

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
2 hours	Everyday	Easy	Interpretation

#### Lazy River Tubing

A known favorite among our guests at the farm is the experience of floating down the lazy river. We'll provide the footwear for the wet part of the fun, all you need do is enjoy the walk or cycle through the cacao trail to the river. The choice of river will depend on the time of year. Kids and adults alike enjoy this chance to have fun or simply unwind after a day of activities.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
1 to 2 hours	Everyday	Easy	Water shoes, tubes

#### Biking and Hiking

A great way to explore the 500-hectare hacienda is by following the trails on bikes. Our biking and hiking trails are between 3 to 10 kilometers long and can be combined to form trails extending over 20 kilometers. Some are designed for the more adventurous bike riders while others are perfect for joggers. Trails at the hacienda are self-guided.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
1 to 4 hours	Everyday	Easy and Intermediate	Regular and Electric Fat Bikes

#### Milking

At Hacienda La Danesa we produce over 1200 liters of milk per day, courtesy of our Brown Swiss cattle. The first milking begins at 5:30am and the second at 3:30pm. Guests are welcome to join in and get on-the-job milking experience.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
30 minutes	Everyday	Easy	NA



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### Optional Local Experiences

#### Horse Riding

The local riding instructor will determine your riding ability and grade you as beginner, intermediate, or experienced. You will love the chance to get to know our gentle breed of pinto Quarter horses, loved for their good-nature and renowned for short distance sprints. The local vaquero will give you the necessary low down before you hop into the saddle. Beginners are safely eased into the experience under close supervision of the instructor. You have the choice of 1.5 to 5-hour long trail rides, depending on rider ability. Beginners get to enjoy a slow ride across pleasant terrain, while more experienced equestrians get to choose their pace along more challenging routes. Your instructor is at your discretion as to pace while you simply immerse yourself in the moment, crossing rivers where possible, and traversing open fields of flowers and plantations, to the call of tropical birds.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
1.5 to 5 hours	Everyday	Easy, Intermediate and Advanced	Safety Equipment and Local Guide

#### In Room Massage

Need to unwind after a day of activities or a long day of travel? Perhaps you need a break after visiting the Galápagos Islands. Our massage therapists can soothe away the stress and tension with in-room spa treatments so that you get the rest you need. This experience is available in all but the Heritage Bedrooms.

#### Hobby Workshops

##### Chocolate Making Workshop with a Professional Chocolatier

Meet Daniel. He is an influential chocolatier in Ecuador, featured in international publications such as National Geographic. His passion for chocolate has seen him work with Mr. Higachi in México, Belgium and the United Arab Emirates. Lucky for us, Daniel is back in Ecuador and has been sharing his cacao and chocolate knowledge to our team of locals. This workshop allows you the opportunity to learn how to sort the cacao beans, discern between perfectly fermented cacao beans and non-fermented beans and realize the acceptable standard of beans for high quality chocolate. We are passionate about our chocolate and this experience gives us the time to chat about the origin of our beans and what to look for when buying sustainable chocolate. You will learn about our unique method of roasting cacao beans and the best temperatures to extract the finest flavors. You'll get a hands-on experience crushing and winnowing the beans through traditional techniques using wood and stone and finding the perfect balance of energy exertion so as to not turn the beans to dust. We'll show you how to operate our mélanges to turn the cacao nibs into cocoa paste and why we grind for 80+ hours straight at slow speed.

Students then get to temper their own chocolate on cold marble before selecting a mold of their own to keep.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
3 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Cookware and Ingredients



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### A Tribute to Ecuadorian Cuisine

Alexis, Hacienda's very own chef invites you into his kitchen where he divulges the tricks and secrets known only to a chef. Prepare his three favorite dishes using local ingredients. In what is typically a fast paced and demanding place, Alexis takes you under wing for a fun workshop.

The workshop runs according to kitchen availability and includes ingredients and equipment. The sparkling wine, too!

Most food allergies/preferences can be accommodated. Please email [reservas@haciendaladanesa.com](mailto:reservas@haciendaladanesa.com) with dietary restrictions and queries.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Cookware and Ingredients

### Buzzing Beehive Workshop

Foodies, gardeners, adventurers, would-be apiarists and all those interested in the wonderful world of bees – this is for you. After an introductory briefing on beekeeping, you will don your protective gear and experience the hands-on apiary tour. This is where the bees live and where you get to see the inner workings of the hives, even light a bee smoker to calm the many thousands of buzzing honeybees. Once inside the apiary, the honey bees are passive and absorbed in doing their jobs in the best interests of the colony. This is when you get to feed the bees and get an up-close look at them. The workshop provides an enhanced understanding of beekeeping, honey-making by honey bees, and how these strong buzzers sweeten our lives through their hard work. Honey tasting from across Ecuador, including samples of our very own produce, ends off the workshop. Please note that this experience is weather dependent. If it rains, we will have to reschedule.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Safety Equipment, Honey Tasting

### Home Cheesemaker

Mario, your friendly cheesemonger enthusiastically shares his knowledge of cheese making gained over more than 2 decades, from within our cheese making facilities. Once your hands are washed and you have accessed the raw milk from the day's milking, you're set for a fun learning experience. The workshop will have you ready to make your very own traditional fresh cheese once you're back home. The workshop includes the added bonus of a traditional farm cheese and Ecuadorian wine tasting.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Cookware and Ingredients



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### Optional Excursions

#### Cloud-forest and Waterfalls Hike

The Esperanza Cloud Forest Reserve astounds visitors with its beauty, bounty and abundant biodiversity. Wind-sculpted elfin woodlands give way to rainforests rising high into the sky. Tall trees (Guayacán, Matapalos, Laurel, Balsa, Vegetable Ivory (Tagua) are festooned with orchids, bromeliads, ferns, vines and moss. The variable climate and large altitudinal gradient have helped produce amazingly heterogeneous resident creatures. The jaguar shares the forests with ocelot, tapir, three-wattled bellbird, bare-necked umbrellabird, and the famously elusive yet resplendent Cock of the Rock.

Early morning between sunrise and mid-morning is typically the time of day when birds are most active. We will depart from Hacienda La Danesa at 6:00am (8:30am not including bird watching) to arrive at Bucay at 8:30am. After a 30-minute drive up the mountain, we arrive at the starting point of the hike. The 1.5-hour hike includes three waterfalls of varying heights, where you may take a plunge. If adventure and adrenaline is your thing, you may descend the waterfall using safety equipment provided by the instructor. A visit to a local farmer teaches about artisan sugar cane juice and liquor production and includes a hands-on chance to make your own sugar cane juice. We will return to Hacienda La Danesa in time for lunch.

Duration	Operates	Physical Fitness	Included
6 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Good Condition	Snacks and Transportation

#### Horse Riding with Water Buffaloes

Visit Hacienda La Victoria, just a 15-minute drive from Hacienda La Danesa. Hacienda La Victoria is also owned by the Olsen family and boasts 1200 hectares of excellence in Brahman and Water Buffalo farming. Upon arrival we will be greeted by a member of the Olsen family to partake in coffee and fresh buffalo cheese. After a brief on the horse-riding trail and the hacienda operations, we hit the trail for a two-hour horse-riding experience, getting up close to the water buffalo and a chance for bird watchers to view over 50 different types of birds.

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Intermediate to Advanced	Transportation, Safety Equipment, Horses and Snack

#### Behind the Scenes of a Banana Plantation

Hacienda La Danesa sits among banana and cacao plantations, which means we are perfectly situated for visiting the Lara's family banana plantation. As among the world's top banana producers, Ecuador is ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, producing 8 million tons or 6% of world production. Chances are that you have had an Ecuadorian banana for breakfast back home! The half day excursion starts with a 15 minute drive, culminating in removing buds, washing, cutting, labeling, quality control, weighing, packing and loading the bananas. One of Lara's brothers then shares his knowledge on the automated process, explaining the time it takes to harvest, the processing time, the average age and size of the banana, average weight per box and the percentage of bananas which failed inspection. You can also have your fill of bananas!

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
2 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Transportation



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### Guayaquil Art Scene

Meet your host, Eliana, an art historian from Guayaquil and an Olsen family friend. Eliana has worked in Sotheby's and Guggenheim in New York City, and owned a contemporary art gallery. She currently works as an art advisor, produces 2 to 3 art exhibitions a year, has her own editorial, EACHEVE, and gives art history lessons. Right in the heart of Guayaquil you'll find the historic neighborhood 'Las Peñas', home of famous Ecuadorian visual artist Juan Pablo Toral. Toral's home is a piece of art in itself, boasting over 100 years of historic value. This is where you will get to experience the creative space of this artist, benefiting from Eliana's interpretation.

We will continue onto Roberto Noboa's studio, where he will talk to us about his artistic process and allow us to view his art. We meet Rodolfo Kronfle, a private art collector and independent curator (contemporary and modern art) and see works by several established, mid-career and emerging artists. This excursion is great for travelers interested in investing in art and who might want a unique and local perspective of Guayaquil .

Duration	Operates	Difficulty Level	Included
6 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Easy	Transportation and snack

### DISCOVER GUAYAQUIL

On this Half Day excursion you will discover Guayaquil like a local and visit Parque de las Iguanas, Parque Histórico, Malecón, Cerro Santa Ana, Mercado de Artesanías and enjoy a gastronomic tasting lunch experience at one of our favorite restaurants paired with a local beer or wine. This experience is tailor-made and we will be happy to accommodate to any special requirements. We recommend having this experience when arriving or departing to Guayaquil.

Duration	Operates	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Transportation, bilingual guide, Tasting lunch, one alcoholic beverage

### Churute Mangroves Ecological Reserve

Thousands of countless types of plants, insects, colorful birds, monkeys, and other wildlife make their home in the rainforests, cloud forests, tropical dry forests, and other ecosystems that occur in Ecuador. One such ecosystem is the mangrove forest and one of the best places to experience this important habitat is at the Manglares-Churute Ecological Reserve just an hour away drive from Hacienda La Danesa.

The mangroves at Churute are a haven for picturesque egrets, herons, ibis, and other waterbirds, screeching flocks of parakeets, troops of Howler Monkeys, Boa Constrictors, and other tropical wildlife. See exotic, tropical animals and learn about the essential importance of these mangroves for commercial fishing on a day excursion to this exciting site. Travel by car and boat makes this an easy eco-adventure for guests of all ages on a trip to Ecuador, some of whom see crocodiles!

Duration	Operates	Included
4 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Transportation, bilingual naturalist guide, snack, entrance fees, binoculars



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### CUENCA & CAJAS NATIONAL PARK

Cuenca is Ecuador's one of the most important and beautiful colonial cities. But don't tell that to the locals, who insist that their laid-back culture, cleaner streets and more agreeable weather outclass the capital.

Dating from the 16th century, Cuenca's historic center, a Unesco World Heritage Site with its trademark skyline of massive rotundas and soaring steeples, is a place time keeps forgetting; nuns march along cobblestone streets, kids in Catholic-school uniforms skip past historic churches, and old ladies spy on promenading lovers from their geranium-filled balconies. The city is the center of many craft traditions, including ceramics, metalwork and the internationally famous panama hat. After visiting the cathedral and other important and rich landmarks we will have lunch at a traditional restaurant favorite of ours before we head back to Hacienda La Danesa. Only 30 minutes from Cuenca, Cajas National Park will be one of the highlights of your travel in Ecuador and is a paradise for both birdwatchers and hikers alike. This section is particularly abundant in birds.

Duration	Operates	Included
8 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Transportation, bilingual guide, lunch, city tour
Please note that this experience starts at 6:30am and arrives back to Hacienda La Danesa at 6:00pm		

### DEVIL'S NOSE TRAIN EXPEDITION

The biggest complication faced by the construction of the Trans-Andean railroad was the Devil's Nose, a mountain with almost perpendicular walls. To overcome this obstacle a zigzag railroad was built that climbs more than 500 meters in less than 12 km with steep ascents and descents. It today remains an impressive piece of engineering.

While recovering from the mind-blowing descent you will enjoy the views of the narrow gorge of river Chanchán and will have the chance to learn a bit about the traditions and worldview of the Puruhuas in Sibambe.

This excursion starts early in the morning at 6:00am with a fresh healthy breakfast as you'll be driving from 30 meters above sea level to 2500 through breathtaking sceneries of the mountains and volcanoes. We will arrive at 9:00am and check in at the Train Station to start the journey up to the Devil's Nose at 10:30am. At about 1:30pm lunch will be served before we return to Hacienda La Danesa at 6:00pm

Duration	Operates	Included
8 hours	Everyday except Monday	Transportation, bilingual naturalist guide, box lunch, train tickets

### GUAMOTE MARKET

Hundreds of campesinos inch their way through the streets, with the largest swell of crowds between 10am and noon every thursday. Experience the chaotic and authentic animal market up in the field behind the Iglesia de San Vicente, where ducks, chickens, sheep, piglets and guinea pigs (ranked among the most delicious in the country) change hands, while, all around, loudspeakers compete in volume to advertise the latest miracle cures.

This excursion starts at 6:30am to visit this off the beaten path and unique market. After serving a fresh and healthy breakfast, you'll be driving from 30 meters above sea level to 2500 through breathtaking scenarios of the mountains. We will arrive at 10:00am to experience the frenzy Guamote market and live an unforgettable genuine experience. A box lunch will be served at noon before returning to Hacienda La Danesa. Estimated time of arrival at Hacienda La Danesa is at 4:00pm.

Duration	Operates	Included
8 hours	Thursdays	Transportation, bilingual naturalist guide, box lunch



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### NGAPIRCA RUINS

Ingapirca is a town in Cañar Province, Ecuador, and the name of the older Inca ruins and archeological site nearby. These are the largest known Inca ruins in Ecuador. The most significant building is the Temple of the Sun, an elliptically shaped building constructed around a large rock.

This excursion starts at 6:30am to visit the largest Inca ruins in Ecuador. After serving a fresh and healthy breakfast as you'll be driving from 30 meters above sea level to 2500 through breath taking scenarios of the mountains. We will arrive at 10:00am and share the history of the inca empire with you. A box lunch (or if you rather try local cuisine like guinea pigs we may include it on the itinerary) will be served at noon before return to Hacienda La Danesa. Estimated time of arrival at Hacienda La Danesa is at 6:00pm.

Duration	Operates	Included
8 hours	Everyday with previous reservation	Transportation, bilingual naturalist guide, box lunch