

Excursions and visits

Quinshul, Chical, Prov. Carchi, Ecuador

Public transport

Buses leave from Quinshul and mainly from Chical. They serve the two main routes in the valley (Maldonado, Páramo, Tufiño, Tulcán) and the cross connection to the Mira Valley (Gualchán, Gualupe, Salinas, Ibarra).

Local transport is handled by the taxi company «Trans. Chical S. A.», which operates with 4x4 all-terrain vehicles. The vans (camionetas) can be ordered by phone directly from Casa Drácula. For longer trips, a prior consultation is recommended. Prices are \$ 1 per km or about \$ 20 per hour. For fixed routes prices are fixed. The others must be negotiated.

Companion

Sometimes it is possible to accompany a park ranger, a biologist or another person in the field for free. The dates and costs of guided tours with the park rangers of the Dracula Reserve should be organized in advance. The prices for a half day are around \$ 20, for a full day (including lunch) around \$ 50.

Chical

In Chical there are shops, pharmacies, a health center, the police, two Internet cafes and a swimming pool. There is no bank or money exchange facility. The weekly market on Friday, where local people from a wide area get together, is highly recommended.

Weekly market (Fería) in Chical

Farmers offer local products. Traveling dealers complete the offer. Starting at noon, Ecuavolley will be played in the town square in front of big crowd.

Sugarcane (Panela) & coffee

Sugarcane is processed in small factories, which are usually in operation one day a week. The cane is squeezed and the juice is boiled into a so-called panela (caramel-like blocks). Coffee cultivation and processing exists in Chical and Maldonado. Visits of these facilities can be arranged in the Casa Dracula.

Premontane forest

These rainforests on an altitude of 800-1500 meters are located below the daily fog line. It's raining a lot and strongly, but warm (25° C). In the lowest zone, which is accessible from Casa Drácula, red tropical soils are dominating which can be very slippery. Boots are therefore indispensable. The Dracula Reserve has some well maintained trails in this area. The vegetation is extremely lush and richly structured. The river (Río Pailón) in this area has some quiet places which are suitable for swimming.

Cloud forest

The highest forests in the reserve (1500-2300 m) are completely wet throughout the year. Fog usually arises in the afternoon, followed by rain until late at night. Therefore, a visit in the morning is recommended. Cloud forests are darker and denser than premontane forests. The ubiquitous moss cover of trunks, branches, leaves and aerial roots give them a special look. The reserve also has well developed trails at this area.

Páramo

Daytime temperatures here are typically 5-10° C. It can be windy, rainy or even snowy. However, it's absolutely worth visiting the páramo (not part of the Dracula Reserve).

The bus runs twice a day to Tulcán, passing through the famous Espeletia plants. It is possible to get out on the road, but you may not be able to continue later. Therefore, there is more or less only the option of a day trip with taxis (camionetas). They can stop as many times and wherever you want. The trip lasts 2 times approximately 3 hours (with 3000 meters of difference in altitude!). Price per taxi (1-10 people) around \$ 120.