

Utria Creek: Sanctuary of Fauna and Forest

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The Utria Creek is located on the Pacific coast of the Choco department (Republic of Colombia), which is part of the *Choco Biogeographical* and has an extension of 75,061 km² (6.2% of the country) and 339,500 square kilometers of territorial seas, with precipitations that oscillate between 3,200 and 10,000 mm./year (the largest rainy area in the country and the second in the world.)

The Utria Creek has an area of 54,300 ha and the biggest endemism (in km²) in the world. In the area of influence of the creek are located three indigenous preservations inhabited by four Embera communities.

The Utria Creek National Park is, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful and diverse places on Columbia's Pacific coast. The area is relatively small, and it is possible to encounter these ecosystems: Tropical jungle from 1,000 mts., down to sea level; many different littoral types. Coralline reefs; a big collection of mangrove trees singular in the region; a favorite place for whales in their migrations from the cold waters in the pole, and for the birth of their young and feeding — a big show at the end of the year. At the same time, this creek presents a great diversity in fishes and marine fauna in general.

The development of the tourism industry and the process of cultural discomposure of the indigenous communities necessitate the establishment of strategies of management that permit the sustained use of the resources that this area has available, with the objective of conservation of its biodiversity.