

## Highlights of Ecuador



*Discover colonial cities and traditional towns, spectacular mountainous landscapes and search for exotic wildlife in the Amazon – this action-packed 13-day tour visits all of Ecuador's highlights*

### **Day 1: Arrive Quito**

You will be met on arrival in Quito and transferred to your hotel.

The remainder of the day is at leisure for you to explore the rich heritage of Quito: its museums, monasteries and its many churches.

During the 13<sup>th</sup>-century, Quito served as the capital of the Kingdom of Quitus, which would later be incorporated into the Inca Empire. Traces of this era are still visible the city's architecture, though more immediately obvious is its 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial-era legacy, apparent in its many Catholic churches, monasteries and mansions. Today central Quito is recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.



### ***Your Financial Protection***

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

*Overnight: Hotel Casona de la Ronda*



**Day 2: Quito city tour, free afternoon (B)**

This morning, embark on a private tour of Quito in the company of an experienced local guide. You'll visit Quito's colonial quarter, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the best preserved colonial cities in South America. Highlights will include the Presidential and Archbishop's Palaces, Quito Cathedral, and the Municipal Building, all of which overlook Independence Plaza, the heart of Quito. There will also be time to explore the Church of the Society of Jesus, famous for its gilded interiors, and the Monastery of San Francisco.

In the afternoon, head north out of the city centre to the Equatorial Monument and the Ethnographic Museum, where you can learn more about Ecuador's pre-colonial history.

Return to your hotel in Quito early this evening.

*Overnight: Hotel Casona de la Ronda*

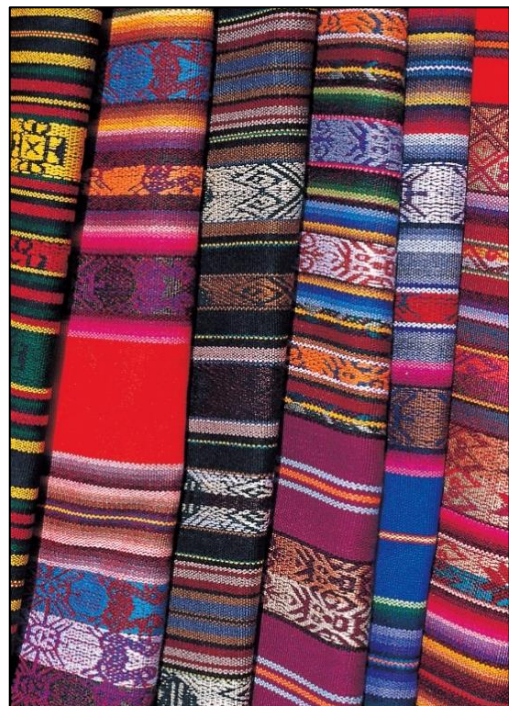
**Day 3: Otavalo (B, D)**

Leaving Quito this morning, you journey two hours north to Otavalo, a beautiful town set against a backdrop of mountains in the high Andes.

Famed for its indigenous market, Otavalo is a fascinating town brimming with culture and history. The Otavaleño people have become synonymous with Ecuador, their distinctive dress, including the embroidered white blouses (*camisas*) worn by Otavaleño women and the bright ponchos, or *ruwanas*, worn by men, regularly featuring in depictions of Ecuador overseas. The history of Otavalo predates both the arrival of the European colonists to Ecuador and the formation of the Inca Empire.

It is possible to visit Otavalo as a daytrip from Quito, but it is recommended to spend at least one night here, so you can get to the market early the next day and enjoy a quiet exploration of the town before the crowds form.

On arrival in Otavalo, you will be transferred to your hotel, a restored 17<sup>th</sup>-century hacienda, where the rest of your day is free. The hacienda has lovely gardens where you can relax. Alternatively, you might like to explore the town on foot or by rental bicycle.



Dinner is included this evening at the hacienda.



*Overnight: Hacienda Cusin*

**Day 4: Otavalo Market (B)**

This morning, visit the Otavalo Market to see the local men in their colourful ponchos and women in their intricately woven blouses and beaded jewellery. Otavaleños have worked with textiles since before the formation of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Incan empire. In the 16<sup>th</sup>-century, the industry developed under the Spanish colonists, with the introduction of new tools and fibres such as silk. Today locals from the town and 75 surrounding villages continue to sell their colourful textiles at the sprawling central market.

Afterwards continue to the small, nearby town of Peguche to visit a textile workshop. Here you'll have the opportunity to meet the artisan weavers and learn about their traditional methods.

Later this afternoon you'll transfer back along the Pan-American Highway to Quito for the night.

*Overnight: Hotel Casona de la Ronda*

**Day 5: Fly to the Amazon (B, L, D)**

This morning you have a 30-minute flight over the eastern Andes to Coca in the Amazon basin. On arrival you will transfer a short distance to the port and board a motor canoe along the Napo River to your lodge in Yasuni National Park.



Napo Lodge is located deep in the Amazonian jungle, two hours by boat from Coca. On arrival at the lodge you'll have time to check-in and refresh before returning to the river, this time in a dugout canoe. The rest of the afternoon will be spent exploring the quiet creeks that connect the lodge to Angangucocha Lake, looking for toucans overhead and monkeys in the tree canopy.

Return to the lodge for dinner, then once the sun has gone down, join a caiman observation trip around the lake to experience the jungle at night.

*Overnight: Napo Wildlife Centre*

**Day 6: Clay lick visits (B, L, D)**

An early start this morning, as you depart the lodge at 6.30am for an hour-long journey ending at a fabulous clay lick, where parrots, parakeets and macaws gather in a fabulous profusion of colour. The birds are most active first thing in the morning; however, sightings do depend on the weather and which predators happen to be lurking in the trees.



Continue your hike along a forest trail to visit to the Kichwa community of Añangu. The Kichwa are an indigenous Amazonian tribe, with an intimate knowledge of the rainforest – they lead many of the wildlife activities in this region, and their distinctive architectural style and vibrant décor is visible in the design of Napa Lodge. *(If you are interested in finding out more about the Kichwa you could combine your stay at the Napo Wildlife Centre with a night at the Napo Cultural Center – contact us for more information).*

Continue to the creek and hike through a forest of tall hardwood trees. After a short walk you reach the second parrot clay lick, where peccary are sometimes sighted. Stop for a picnic lunch, before returning to the lodge late afternoon.

*Overnight: Napo Wildlife Centre*

#### **Day 7: Canopy tower and giant otter search (B, L, D)**

After breakfast, continue your exploration of the forest. This morning will see you climb a 36m high tower within the tree canopy. This is a fantastic way to see the forest from a different perspective, and spot species that may not be so easily spotted from the forest floor.



You will climb 12 stories, passing different levels of the forest. From the top level, built into a huge ceiba tree, you may see colourful tangers, macaws and toucans as they fly through the canopy and past the platforms. Look out too for monkeys, which are often seen swinging energetically from tree to tree.

Back at the lodge you will have time for rest and lunch. Afterwards, walk along one of the terra firme trails through primary forest looking for lizards, boldly coloured manakins and the endemic

golden mantle tamarin monkey. Smaller species can also be found here – insects, frogs, butterflies and snakes. The day ends with a tour of the lake by dugout canoe; with luck, you may run into a giant otter family!

*Overnight: Napo Wildlife Centre*

**Day 8: Final day in the Amazon, return to Quito (B)**

There will be time this morning for one last excursion on the river to seek out giant otters, monkeys, sloths and birdlife. Back at the lodge, you will transfer by motorboat to Coca and connect with your flight to Quito.

On arrival in Quito, transfer to your hotel.

*Overnight: Hotel Casona de la Ronda*

**Day 9: Cotopaxi National Park (B, L, D)**

Depart Quito early this morning and journey along the Pan-American Highway to Cotopaxi National Park. It is a short and scenic drive to the park entrance (approx. 90 minutes), and then a further hour's drive uphill along a dirt track to a viewpoint, where on a clear day you'll be greeted with a stunning view of Cotopaxi Volcano, the highest peak in Ecuador at 5,897m.



The morning will continue with a driven tour of the park, stopping at various viewpoints along the way. Among the highlights will be the Limpiopungo Lagoon, where, at the right time of day, Cotopaxi can be seen reflected in the lagoon's still waters. Wildlife including deer, rabbit, wild horses and llamas are also often spotted around the lagoon.

Early afternoon, head down to the foothills of the park for lunch at a hacienda with original Incan walls. There will be time to relax, explore the hacienda's grounds, acquaint yourself with the local llama herd, and visit the rose plantation – one of Ecuador's top three exports.

Your journey then continues along the Avenue of the Volcanoes for another two hours to Patate, known as the Valley of Eternal Spring. Here you will stay at a 300-year old hacienda, built and decorated in a colonial style, and set within well-manicured gardens. The hacienda is positioned with fantastic views of the surrounding hills and mountains. There is a spa should you fancy a dip in the pool.

*Overnight: Hacienda Leito*

**Day 10: Drive via Banos to Rio Bamba (B, L, D)**

Today your journey continues along the Pastaza River gorge to Banos.





Meaning 'baths' in Spanish, Banos is located at the foot of Tungurahua Volcano, from where the thermal waters originate. Travelling the Route of the Cascades to El Pailon del Diablo (the Devil's Cauldron), you will have the opportunity to hike a series of winding stairs to view the impressive 100ft waterfall from above.

Stop for lunch at a local restaurant in Banos and a stroll around town before setting off in the afternoon for Riobamba.

The capital of Chimborazo province, Riobamba is a colonial-era city with cobbled streets, traditional Spanish architecture and pretty plazas. It is located at 2,754m and is overlooked by Chimborazo Volcano, the highest peak in Ecuador.

*Overnight: Hacienda Abraspungo*

### **Day 11: Devil's Nose Train and Cuenca (B, L, D)**

Depart early this morning and follow a winding course along the edge of the Andes, via ravines and gorges, through Indian villages and past quinoa fields. After a scenic two-hour drive, you arrive at Alausi, a small town where you will find the train station for journeys up the Nariz del Diablo, or Devil's Nose.

When creating the railway from Quito to Guayaquil the biggest obstacle for construction was the Devil's Nose mountain, a virtually sheer mountain face. Thus, a series of switchbacks were constructed, allowing the train to climb over 500m in under 12km, creating a dramatic mountain railway route. Setting off from Alausi, the train descends to Sibambe station, where you can visit the local museum, Condor Pununa, built and run by the Nizag community, and housing displays of local handicrafts, fruit and medicinal plants used by the native Andeans. Returning to the train at the sound of the whistle, you'll make the return journey to Alausi.



From Alausi, your journey continues to Ingapirca, a hilltop fortress, religious and administrative complex built by the Incas and the most important archaeological site in Ecuador. Take the time to explore Ingapirca's still-intact temple, and the foundations of its ruined fortress walls, before continuing to Cuenca.

Expect to arrive in Cuenca early evening, in time for dinner.

*Overnight: Hotel Santa Lucia*

**Day 12: Cuenca (B, L)**

Cuenca is one of Ecuador’s most beautiful cities, a colonial-era jewel and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today you have a full day to discover its charms at a relaxed pace. Your guided tour will take in flower-strewn plazas, religious monuments, handicraft shops, cobbled backstreets and an artisan’s market. In the morning, you’ll visit the Museum of Modern Art, located in the ‘House of Temperance’ – where alcoholics were once kept in an effort to cure them of their addiction – as well as the main square, where you can see the iconic blue-domed Cathedral, the Municipal and Governor’s Palaces, and the Church of El Sagrario.



After the morning tour, stop for lunch at a local restaurant before continuing to Turi Hill for a wonderful view of the city.

In the afternoon, there will be time to visit a ceramic gallery and Panama hat workshop, where you may like to pick up some souvenirs before returning to your hotel.

*Overnight: Hotel Santa Lucia*

**Day 13: Via El Cajas National Park to Guayaquil (B)**

This morning you leave Cuenca and travel west for one hour to El Cajas National Park. This 29,000 hectare park is home to over 230 lakes. Explore the walking trails around the lakes and soak up the remarkable scenery. There are small forests of quinoa which in turn attract multiple species of birds, including hummingbirds and toucans.

Early afternoon, continue to Guayaquil, on the Pacific Coast, where you transfer to the airport for your international flight home.

**Price Guide:**

*The cost of this itinerary is **£3,450 per person**, based on two travellers in shared twin accommodation. For more information, or to enquire about a tailor-made holiday incorporating part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

**Includes:**

- Accommodation (twin basis) as outlined in itinerary
- Meals as described
- Entrance fees to all sights mentioned in itinerary
- Airport transfers
- Quito-Coca-Quito flights
- Privately guided excursions where mentioned

**Excludes:**

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Drinks