

Trip Dossier for Ecuador – Volcanoes & Andes

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In wonderfully varied Ecuador, Inca culture and bustling markets are combined with dense jungle and snow-capped volcanoes, such as Cotopaxi. From colonial Quito's grace and charm, to the bustle of the market in Otavalo with its distinctive Indians in their traditional dress and the lofty peaks of the Andean volcanoes, Ecuador has much to offer. You'll visit Cotopaxi Volcano, walk in a cloud forest, pass along the aptly named "Avenue of Volcanoes", take a train over the Devil's Nose and get a feeling for the Inca civilization. Known for their 'artesanía' the local people produce a wealth of handicrafts, in particular of course the Panama hat. To round off your trip, why not consider taking the short trip to the jungles of the Amazon or combine with a week in the Galapagos islands.

Day 1 Fly to Quito via Madrid

Depart from London to Quito via Madrid. On arrival in Quito (2800 metres) in the early evening you'll be met and transferred to your hotel in the city. **Hotel 2 nights (breakfast)**

Day 2 Tour of Quito

This morning you start the trip with a visit to the old city centre to see something of Quito's colonial history. After its founding by the Spanish *conquistadores* in 1534 it rapidly became one of the most important cities in South America - as a result it is endowed with a fine collection of colonial architecture that includes some richly decorated churches. The well-preserved colonial centre is now a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. You'll also visit the Water Museum, an interesting place for children and adults alike. After lunch, you'll venture a short distance outside the city to visit the Equator (22 kilometres north of the city centre). Here you can stand with one foot in the northern hemisphere and the other in the southern hemisphere - it makes a rather curious photo! During the course of the day you'll learn about Ecuador's history as well as its different ethnic groups and cultures. **(breakfast & lunch)**

Day 3 Drive to Otavalo via Cochasqui ruins & Cuicocha Lake

Today's route leads northward out of Quito into the Andean highlands, along a winding road through wild scenery. The first stop, at the pre-Inca ruins of Cochasqui, is only sixty or so kilometres from the city. A group of low grass-covered pyramids was built here by the Cara Indians some time before the Incas conquered the area, and a short walk with your guide will reveal the Cara tribe's way of life. You may also see llamas and vicuñas - two of the four members of the camel family that are well adapted to life at high altitude. Passing Otavalo, you continue further north through lovely countryside to Laguna de Cuicocha, a deep lake that sits inside the crater of an ancient volcano, that itself lies on the lower flanks of steep-sided Volcán Cotacachi (4939 metres). You'll have time for a boat ride on the lake. Finally you return to Otavalo (2550 metres) to stay overnight. **Hotel 1 night (breakfast)**

Day 4 Drive to Machachi via Cotopaxi National Park. Visit Pasochoa Forest Reserve

After breakfast you set off heading south towards Cotopaxi National Park. The four-hour drive will take you along Cayambe town, el Quinche village and then Sangolqu - a town famous for the "hornado" a typical dish prepared with roasted pork meat. Further south, a short walk into Pasochoa Volcano Cloud Forest Reserve provides an opportunity to see the luxuriant cloud forest of the Ecuadorian Andes. This is an ideal habitat for birdlife, and with any luck you'll be able to see the tiny, brightly-coloured hummingbirds - in all, 11 species can be seen here - and several other tropical highland species and Andean native plants. From here we head south towards the Machachi town where you will stay in a small local hacienda. **Hacienda 1 night (breakfast)**

Day 5 Drive to Cotopaxi Volcano; continue to Riobamba

In the morning we drive towards the highlands of the impressive Cotopaxi Volcano (5897 metres), Ecuador's second highest peak. Located in the National Park of the same name, this volcano is considered one of the highest active volcanoes in the world, and its beautiful cone shape competes in beauty with the Fuji volcano in Japan. You will be able to have a short walk on the high *paramos* and see the tiny flowers typical of the area while enjoying fantastic views of the snow-capped peak. If you wish you can carry on and walk to the glaciers of Cotopaxi. In the afternoon you'll continue your drive towards the city of Riobamba. On the way you will be able to admire the enormous Mount Chimborazo (6310m), which was once considered the highest mountain in the world. (In fact, if you measure it from the centre of earth, it is the highest mountain in the world because of the ellipsoidal nature of the terrestrial globe!)

Hotel, with swimming pool, 1 night (breakfast, lunch box)

Day 6 Train through Devil's Nose; drive to Cuenca

Today, you'll take the train from Riobamba to Alausi. Enroute you make an exciting ride through the famous "Devil's Nose", where the railway line cuts into an almost perpendicular wall of rock. Many lives were shed in the building of what is now called a masterpiece of railway engineering: a zig-zag carved out of the rock, which allows the train, by advancing and backing up, to reach the necessary height to the town of Alausí.

From Alausi you'll travel south by bus to the city of Cuenca, visiting en route the ruins of the Inca fortress of Ingapirca, the largest Inca site in Ecuador, and important because of its strategic position on the route from Cuzco to Quito. Then you'll continue your drive to the enchanting colonial city of Cuenca where you will stay the night. Enjoy exploring the city with its whitewashed buildings, squares and cobblestoned streets, and see if you also think it is Ecuador's most attractive city. **Hotel, with swimming pool, 1 night (breakfast)**

Day 7 Las Cajas National Park; visit Cuenca; fly to Quito

Your last day begins with an early morning visit to the beautiful Las Cajas National Park, a high elevation forest dotted with hundreds of lakes and amazing landscapes. Enjoy the beautiful flora of the Andes and with luck you'll spot some fauna too (Andean deer, rabbits, condors, etc.). You'll return to Cuenca and will be able to visit the immense Cathedral, the Flower Market and then it's off to see how they make the world famous "Panama Hats". Cuenca is a centre for crafts and so you will also be able to pick up leather, gold and silver jewellery and basketwork along with embroidered shirts. This afternoon you'll take a flight back to Quito and when you arrive at the airport you'll be met and transferred to your hotel in the city. **Hotel 1 night (breakfast)**

Day 8 Fly to London

There may be time for some last-minute shopping before your transfer to Quito airport for your international overnight return flight back to London (via Madrid).

Day 9 Arrive London

Your flight arrives in London

Amazon Extension

Days 1 – 7 As above

Day 8 Private bus transfer to Tena/Amazon (5 hrs drive)

Starting from Quito you'll be driven in a private bus to the city of Tena where your guide will be waiting to transport you to the small Indigenous village of San Pedro deep in the Amazon. You'll board a canoe and navigate about 30 minutes downstream along the Napo River, arriving at Yacuma Lodge in the early afternoon. Here you will be welcomed with a typical cold drink and there will be time to settle into the lodge's typical Quechua bungalows. After lunch and a short rest, accompanied by one of the expert Indian guides, you'll go by canoe to Birds Island; here you will be able to walk in the forest around the Laguna Escondida (Hidden Lagoon), and observe different species of jungle birds: river Garzas (great egret), Great Blue Herons, Kingfishers, Garrapatero, and Oropendolas. One of the most interesting birds is the Hoatzin, one of the Amazon's weirdest birds; it's rather shy except in breeding season and has a punk hair-do and a bright blue face. On top of it all, it smells horrible, so it's also called the "Stink-bird." As it only eats leaves it's rather heavy and consequently is a clumsy flyer. Later on you'll return to the lodge by canoe for a well deserved dinner. This evening, weather permitting, you will go for a night canoe ride on the nearby lagoon looking for wildlife. **Lodge 3 nights (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 9 Walk through rainforest; visit an indigenous community

After breakfast in the lodge, we'll set out on a 3-4 hour walk through the deep primary rainforest. Along the way an indigenous guide will show you the many species of plants and trees and describe their medicinal uses. With any luck you will see monkeys and birds such as oropendolas and parrots. Lunch will be served back at the lodge, and after a short siesta you'll return to the forest, this time looking at the different kind of trees cultivated by the locals, such as bananas, papaya trees, pineapple and orange trees, and sugar cane. Then you'll continue to a small settlement where you can observe pottery being made by the locals and there will be an opportunity to buy some if you wish. From here you'll carry on to visit to the Quechua indigenous community of Chontayacu, where you will be able to learn about local customs and the way of life of the native people of the jungle. Later in the afternoon return to the lodge for dinner. **(breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 10 Walk in primary forest; gold panning in river

This morning, your walk will take you deep into the primary rainforest. Crossing small streams and different kinds of terrain observing several species of trees and plants along the way, we will arrive at la Cueva de los Tutapishco (Amazon Bat Cave). This is a special place and considered by the locals as a sacred spot where the

shamans (medicine men) come to enter into contact with the spirits. You'll carry on with the walk for about another two hours until you meet up with your canoes on the shores of the Napo River. Canoe back to the lodge for lunch and a siesta. This afternoon you'll navigate up the Napo River where you can try your hand panning for gold on the shores of the river – perhaps you will be the one to find that precious nugget! You can then cool off with a swim in a perfect spot for bathing beside one of the sandy shores of the Napo or Chontayacu Rivers. You'll return to the lodge late in the afternoon, and after dinner there is an informal farewell party. **(breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 11 Private bus back to Quito

After breakfast you say goodbye to your Indian friends and then you'll begin your return journey in the canoes along the Napo River to San Pedro Village from where you travel back to Tena and from there back to Quito.

Hotel 1 night (breakfast)

Day 12 Fly to London

There may be time for some last-minute shopping before your transfer to Quito airport for your international overnight return flight back to London (via Madrid).

Day 13 Arrive London

Your flight arrives in London

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.

Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Climate Ecuador lies on the Equator, so temperature depends largely on altitude but remains fairly constant year round. In the highlands the dry season lasts from June to September, and again from mid-December to mid-January, the rest of the year it can rain at almost any time. The Galápagos Islands are influenced by ocean currents; it's generally hot, rainy and humid from January to April, whereas between May and December it's cool, cloudy and grey most of the time, although it rarely rains.

The average monthly climate in Quito.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	22	22	22	21	21	22	22	23	23	22	22	22
Min °C	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	8	7	8
Rainfall (mm)	99	112	142	175	137	43	20	31	69	112	97	79

Is this right for your family? From Otavalo's busy market to the beauty of the Andes mountains Ecuador is relatively compact and extraordinarily diverse. Although you'll reach quite a high altitude at Cotopaxi volcano, this trip really does keep travel to a minimum and interest to a maximum, so it is suitable for children from five and up. You'll stay in hotels and a hacienda, and travel is mostly by minibus. If you extend your trip to the Amazon you will be travelling by canoe.

Altitude

Please note that Quito is located at 2800 metres while much of the central highlands is at a similar height or above. At such altitudes some visitors may experience, headaches, breathlessness and possibly even nausea, dizziness or palpitations. In almost all cases these effects subside over a period of 24hrs as your body adjusts, indeed most visitors recover almost completely after one night's sleep at altitude. During this initial period we recommend you don't over-exert yourself, but take things gently - even climbing stairs should be taken at a slower pace than normal to give your body the best chance of adjusting to these new conditions. Unfortunately, there is no way of predicting how altitude sickness may affect the individual and if you suffer from any special condition that may be exacerbated by the relative lack of oxygen then we recommend you consult your doctor before travelling.

Lone Parents

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Accommodation The hotels are 3 star standard. All hotels have private facilities and are a on twin share basis; most of them are air-conditioned. All hotels are modern, clean and comfortable and provide a friendly service. The Amazon lodge has cabins with two twin-bedded rooms with private facilities. The indication of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Food and Drink The cuisine varies with each region; seafood is very good on the coast. Ecuadorian food tends not to be too spicy; however the meals are often accompanied with a small bowl of *aji* (hot pepper sauce). The most economical way to eat is to order the set menu in restaurants. This is called *almuerzo* at lunch time and *merienda* in the evening. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled water during your trip.

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.85
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£1.50
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.85
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.15
A bottle of beer	£2.30
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£1.75
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£2.50
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£3.50

*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Currency The unit of currency is the US Dollar (Ecuador no longer has its own currency but started using US dollars in late 2000). At the time of writing UK £1 = US\$1.65 (Nov 2009). US Dollar Travellers' Cheques are still accepted in banks, large hotels and some upmarket souvenir shops however we increasingly recommend that you use ATMs and credit cards. We also recommend that you take US dollars from the UK.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousies in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service.

Please also remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person, per day. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour.

Language The official language in Ecuador is Spanish, although English is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and cell phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Time Mainland Ecuador is GMT -5 hours; the Galápagos Islands are GMT -6 hours. There is no daylight saving time.

Visa/Passports

A visa is not required for British Nationals to enter Ecuador as a tourist. Other nationalities should check with their embassy for current requirements. Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after your arrival in Ecuador. If you are travelling via the U.S. please see the separate US Visa Waiver information sheet.

Departure tax

There is a departure tax payable locally in cash for international departures from Quito Airport – currently US\$ 40.80 per person.

Clothing & Equipment List for Ecuador – Volcanoes & Andes

In general clothing in the lowlands is less formal and shorts are worn on the coast and in the highlands if you are walking. Light-weight cotton clothing is recommended in this climate with a wrap or sweater for the cooler evenings. Sweaters and colourful wool shawls can easily be purchased in Ecuador.

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3 +		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2 +		Insect Repellent	
Short Trousers	2		Torch and Batteries	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Washing Kit	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Guide Book & map	
Warm jacket	1		Dry anti-bacterial handwash + wet wipes are useful	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Toilet kit - tissues	
Warm hat, scarf and gloves	Woolly or fleece (winter)			

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa		Universal travelling adapter	
Air Tickets		Binoculars – optional	
Money/Travellers Cheques/Credit Cards		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Cash Cards/Visa			
Travel Insurance Documents			
Trip Information and Itinerary			
Money Security Belt/Pouch			

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com