

Essence of Ecuador Tour

Day 1: Arrival in Quito

Arrive in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, which is 2800m (9,600ft) in altitude in the middle of the Andes Mountains. Assistance and transfer from the airport to your hotel is included. Spend your first night near the equator and rest after the long journey. *Hotel Dann Carlton*

Day 2: City tour of Quito 8-12

In the morning we will meet you at your hotel in Quito and start a city tour. This city tour covers the major colonial churches such as La Catedral, La Compañía and San Francisco. During this tour you will learn about the history and architecture of Quito. The tour continues through narrow streets, ancient colonial houses with Moorish-style arches and mysterious patios to El Panecillo, that is a neutral vantage point for an overwhelming view of the city. Here we will have lunch.

Guided Cultural Tour of Quito/Free afternoon to Explore on your own

After lunch you will have an opportunity to explore the city on your own with tips from your guide or you can experience a guided cultural tour. Your guide will take you around to places not always seen on a typical Quito tour, for example: La Ronda, Las Colaciones, Casa de Antonio Jose de Sucre, Museo de la ciudad, just to name a few. Let your guide know what you are interested in and he/she will take you on a custom cultural tour. *Breakfast and Lunch are included in the price.

**Hotel Dann Carlton*

Day 3: Quito-Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World)

We will pick you up from your hotel in the morning and head towards the equator. There we will visit the museum Intiñan, where you will have the chance to experience the Coriolis Effect and you can stand in two places at once-the Northern and Southern hemisphere! You will have a guided tour where you will learn more about the country of the four worlds (highlands/mountains, coast, rain forest, and the Galapagos Islands). From the equator we will head towards

the cloud forest in Míndo, and on the way we will see the difference in vegetation between the highlands and the subtropical region. Once in Míndo we will have a typical Ecuadorean lunch and then head to the hotel. Once settled, we will visit the butterfly house, explore around the town of Míndo, and learn about the daily lives of Ecuadorean people in this area. You will then have the rest of the day to relax or maybe do some bird watching. Míndo is home to over 500 different species of birds!

*Breakfast and Lunch included in the price.

**Hotel Séptimo Paraíso*

Day 4: Míndo

In the morning we will start our hike (2-3 hours) and then ride the cable car to the waterfalls where the guide will teach you about the different flora and fauna in the area. After the hike, we will return to Míndo to have lunch and then you will have a free afternoon to relax or explore. *Breakfast and Lunch included in the price.

**Hotel Séptimo Paraíso*

Day 5: Travel Machachi and Cotopaxi

In the morning we will leave Míndo and travel towards the South, where we will have the opportunity to see the different kinds of landscapes as we head towards the Avenue of the Volcanoes on the way to Machachi located 3000m above sea level (9900ft). We will stop in Machachi to visit the local market where we can experience the different fruits and vegetables that Ecuador produces. From Machachi, we travel on to the Cotopaxi National Park where we will have lunch. We will stay the night in the Hotel Tambopaxi. After lunch we will go on a short hike around the area. The rest of the day will be free to explore or relax.

*Breakfast and Lunch included in this price.

**Hotel Tambopaxi*

Day 6: Latacunga, Amabato, Baños

We will leave Cotopaxi in the morning and take a short hike around Lake Limpiopungo before we leave the national park. We will travel the Panamerican Highway and reach Latacunga, which is the capital of the Cotopaxi Province. In Latacunga we will stop to see the local food market where we will learn about the

diet of the indigenous and local peoples of Ecuador. We will pass through Salcedo where we will stop for a quick lunch and ice cream, pass Ambato, which is the capital of the Tungurahua Province. We will stop to see the Salasaca market where you can purchase handicrafts from Ecuadorean indigenous group of Salasaca. Finally, we will finish our day by traveling to Baños. You will have the rest of the day to explore around the city of Baños, which is a popular religious destination for Ecuadoreans. *Breakfast and Lunch included in this price.

**Hotel Sangay*

Day 7: Baños

We will have breakfast then continue driving east through the Avenue of the Waterfalls that follows the Río Pastaza. In the village, Río Verde, we will stop in different places to see waterfalls and to take the cable car to see El Manto de la Novia Waterfall. We will visit the well-known waterfall El Pailón del Diablo by hiking. We will return to the town of Baños and have lunch, then you will have the afternoon free to explore or relax. *Breakfast and lunch included in this price.

**Hotel Sangay*

Day 8: Chimborazo and Riobamba

In the morning we will have breakfast and leave Baños and travel through the capital of the Tungurahua province, Ambato. We will drive towards the highest volcano in Ecuador, the Chimborazo, which is 6310m (21,000ft). Through a picturesque landscape we will pass fields, valleys, and the Volcano Carihuayrazo, to the wide, high plain at the slopes of the Chimborazo. You might get to see llamas, which are still common working animals in this region. With luck, you may also see alpacas and even vicuñas, which live in a reserve near the Chimborazo. We will drive to the entrance of the national park where we will then have a short hike to the second refuge where climbers usually come to spend the night before they start the long trek up the mountain. We will also have a quick lunch here. After our hike, we will keep going onto Riobamba, the capital of the Chimborazo province. If we have time, we will do a small city tour driving. Then we will spend the night in Riobamba. *Breakfast and lunch included in this price.

**Hotel Mansión Santa Isabella*

Day 9: Alausí (Nariz del Diablo), Ingapirca

We will leave Riobamba early in the morning after breakfast, driving south on the Panamerican highway. On the way we will see the farming landscapes of the indigenous peoples of the highland area. We will see fields of carrots, broccoli, potatoes, barley, and the famous grain of the Andes, quinoa. Our first stop will be by the Church of Balbanera, which was the first Catholic Church in all of Ecuador. We will continue to travel the Panamericana and our next stop will be the small town of Guamate, where we will see the town. Our next stop will be Alausí, where we will take a train to La Nariz del Diablo (The Devil's Nose). It was one of the most difficult train track routes to build in South America. We will have lunch before going on to Ingapirca, which is one of the most famous archaeological sites in Ecuador of the Inca Empire. After we visit Ingapirca, we will travel on to Cuenca where we will spend the night. *Breakfast and lunch included in the price.

**Hotel Carvallo*

Day 10: Cuenca

Today you will explore the colonial part of Cuenca; the third largest city in Ecuador, which offers you fantastic possibilities to admire great colonial and republican architecture, archaeological and ethnographical sites, sacred art museums, and markets. Churches, many art and craft shops and a flower market can be visited. All this is located amongst beautiful old houses, ornately painted and decorated, in an area that was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. Cuenca is considered Ecuador's cultural metropolis, and also the arts and crafts center of the country. The city and the surrounding countryside are fantastic places to buy ceramics, embroidery, leather goods, and baskets. You can explore the city and might take the opportunity to look for a unique souvenir. Depending on flight home, you will either spend the rest of the day and night in Cuenca and fly to Quito in the morning or you will fly to Quito in the afternoon to travel home.

*Breakfast included in price.

**Hotel Carvallo*

Optional Extensions:

- 1) Guayaquil
- 2) Galapagos Islands