

# EXPLORE!

**Ecuador - Andes to Amazon**

14 days

Ecuador - Trip code EC

## Ecuador - Andes to Amazon

This ambitious journey through the Ecuadorian Andes takes you on a discovery of the fascinating colonial cities of Quito and Cuenca, an exploration of the Amazonian wildlife along the Napo River, through thermal springs and along precarious railway tracks. The stunning scenery along the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes', the excitement of travelling on the Devil's Nose Railway and the wilderness of the Cajas National Park are just a few of the highlights of this trip.

No visit to Ecuador is complete without visiting the Galapagos. The 18 volcanic islands and 40 islets host an abundance of wildlife and natural wonders not found anywhere in the world. If you would like to extend your mainland Ecuador trip, we have a selection of cruises exploring the Galapagos from three to seven nights, with three different standards of boats available to suit your budget. Scroll down for more information.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Quito** - Discover Ecuador's colonial Andean capital, surrounded by snow-capped mountains
- ★ **Volcanoes** - Picturesque drives through the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes'
- ★ **Otavalo** - Visit the fascinating Indian market
- ★ **Banos** - Dramatic gateway to the jungles of the Orient
- ★ **Cuenca** - Explore this pretty city and visit a panama hat factory

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:****10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join tour in Quito

Arrive Quito and check into hotel.



**Accommodation: Hotel Plaza Sucre** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Tour of Quito's highlights including the Church of San Francisco

We begin with a walking tour of Quito, Ecuador's mountain capital and the second highest capital city in Latin America. One of South America's most beautiful cities, Quito lies in a narrow valley at the foot of Pichincha Volcano, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and extinct volcanoes. The fascinating UNESCO Heritage Site of the Old Town, with its rich blend of colonial architecture, imposing churches and bustling local markets, makes for a stunning introduction to Ecuador. We will visit some of the main sites, including the Plaza de la Independencia, the cultural heart of the colonial city, and La Compania church with its magnificent gilded altars, walls and ceilings. At the church of San Francisco we are introduced to Quito's largest and oldest colonial church, built in 1553. A climb to the top of nearby Cerro Panecillo affords us one of the best views across the city and the surrounding mountains, presenting us with an unparalleled vista of the encircling Andes from the viewing platform offered by the statue of the Virgen de Quito.



**Accommodation: Hotel Plaza Sucre** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Visit the Quitsato Equator Monument en route to Otavalo; visit Peguche Village

This morning we drive to Otavalo via the Equator line, stopping off at the Quitsato Equator monument, a huge sundial spanning 54 metres across, which celebrates the crossing of the equator line at zero degrees. From this huge clock face, a compass of stones allows you to not only read the time, but also the month, while other features indicate the solstices and equinoxes. The word 'Quitsato' comes from the language of the indigenous Tsachilas people from the Ecuadorian coast. 'Quitsa' means 'Middle', and 'To' means 'world; Quitsato therefore means Middle of the World, and it is from this word that Ecuador's capital city also derives its name. Following the Panamericana Highway, we then head north, towards San Pablo Lake, via the scenic route Cayambe - Zuleta, where we take a gentle walk. We will have lunch before continuing to the indigenous village of Peguche. This village is famed for its local families who make colourful weavings plus others who play traditional Andean music by using several types of panpipes made by themselves. We will stop and enjoy visiting one of the musician families before heading to Otavalo where we will overnight.



**Accommodation: Hostal Riviera Sucre** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Explore Otavalo Market and visit Laguna Cuicocha

This morning we explore the small market town of Otavalo. The town is one of South America's most important areas for ethno-tourism and its regular markets attract traders and artisans from as far away as Peru and Bolivia. The Otavalenos are an incredibly dignified and assured people, proudly displaying their cultural traditions and ancient heritage for all to see. The market is a rich confusion of goods and styles from right across the region, with jewellery, rugs, woven linen bags, woodcarvings and leather goods on display. Add to that the visual majesty of the setting and the colourful costumes of the protagonists and you have a truly remarkable cultural experience. This afternoon we take a drive out to the tranquil setting of Cuicocha, a turquoise crater-lake located at 3100m and approached through a wonderful landscape of alpine vegetation. Located in the Western Cordillera, at the foot of Cotocachi, this now dormant volcanic caldera is a prime spot to find the 'King of the Andes', wide-winged condors that soar high above the valleys in graceful flight. There may be the option to go for a walk along a segment of the trail that goes around the lake (1.5 hours) before returning to Otavalo for the evening.



**Accommodation: Hostal Riviera Sucre** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Visit Cotopaxi, drive via the Avenue of the Volcanoes to Quito

Our journey to Quito takes us south through some of the most impressive mountain scenery in the entire country, into the landscapes so aptly described by the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt as the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes'. We actually drive just past Quito this morning, into the spectacular Cotopaxi National Park, where we shall see one of the world's highest active volcanoes. Ecuador's second highest mountain, Cotopaxi is a classic volcanic cone, snow covered and rising an imposing 5897m from the valley floor below. We will take some time whilst we are here to walk around the Limpiopungo Plateau (1.5 hours), where a shallow glacial lake presents us with a perfect spot to explore something of the rich flora and fauna of the paramo (high altitude Andean grasslands). Set between the imposing masses of Cotopaxi and Ruminahui, the plateau is a haven for birdlife, as well as wild horses, the south american fox and the white tailed deer. After exploring this majestic place, we head back north to our overnight stop in Quito.



**Accommodation: Hotel Plaza Sucre** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Drive to the Amazon, our base for the next three nights

This morning we will drive north-east to Termas de Papallacta, this route was taken by the Spanish conquistador Francisco de Orellana in 1542 as he crossed the Andes mountain range upon discovering the Amazon and Amazon River. Termas de Papallacta Spa & Resort is located just 67 km (40 miles) from Ecuador's capital. With an altitude of 3300 meters (10,824 feet) above sea level and a cold wet climate we will enjoy a couple of hours at the thermoludic area, which consists of five hot thermal pools and one cold pool. We'll continue driving into the Amazon Region and will take a short walk around the lodge before dinner.



**Accommodation: Jardin Aleman** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 7 - Explore the Amazon by canoe searching for wildlife

After breakfast we will depart the lodge for a canoe trip on the Misahualli and Napo River to the protected forest of Misicocha where we will walk in the forest. We will admire the extraordinary flora and the exotic sounds of the primary rainforest. If we are lucky, we might see toucans, oropendolas, parrots and small monkeys. The local guide will explain the flora and fauna of the Amazon Region with special emphasis on medicinal plants. We will have lunch in a typical hut with a wonderful view over the Napo River. We will return to our canoe and ride upstream to visit the indigenous village of Muyuna and find out how to prepare 'chicha', a fermented yuca drink.



**Accommodation: Jardin Aleman** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 8 - Walk along the Misahualli River learning about local plants and visiting an Indian Community

Today we go for a walk with a native guide who will explain the typical plants of this area and their daily use. During the hike we will pass through a labyrinth of high rocks with caves and amazing vegetation. After lunch, we will walk along the Misahualli River to the small village of Pununo where we cross a suspended bridge and enter the territory of the indigenous community of 'Alto Pununo' where we will see how the local people live and work.



**Accommodation: Jardin Aleman** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 9 - Travel the Waterfall Route to Banos

Crossing from the Amazon Jungle to the Highlands we will drive through the 'Avenue of Waterfalls'. We'll stop to visit the Pailon del Diablo waterfall, and will continue to the town of Banos, sitting below the active Tungurahua volcano. If the level of activity of the volcano changes, the accommodation for tonight is subject to change, but we will keep you updated if that happens.



**Accommodation: Hostal Posada J Banos** (or similar)



Standard Hostel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Visit Chimborazo Forest Reserve, overnight in Alausi

Today we plan to see the highest peak in Ecuador in the Chimborazo Forest Reserve. Mt. Chimborazo, at 6310 mts is the most

distant point from the centre of the earth. The reserve is an important protected area that guards a wide variety of vegetation and animals, including alpacas and vicunas. Once in the reserve, we will drive up to the 'Hermanos Carrel Refuge' located at 4800m, a great place to take a rest and enjoy a fantastic view of the beautiful Ecuadorian Andes. From here we will descend to El Arenal at 4200m, here we will take a leisurely 1 hour walk observing the vegetation, fauna and landscapes of the reserve. Leaving this magnificent scenery behind, we will continue driving to Alausi, where we will stay overnight.



**Accommodation: Noris Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Travel on the 'Devil's Nose' Train before continuing to Cuenca

Today we take the train to Sibambe, which is inaccessible by road. This famous railway is a triumph of engineering. From Alausi the track drops 800m down a ridge and into the gorge of the Río Chanchan. This almost sheer descent, known as the 'Devil's Nose', was achieved by building a series of switch backs, making it one of the most exciting train rides in the world. The train returns to Alausi where we rejoin our bus. From here, our trip continues south along the scenic Panamerican Highway with a stop in Ingapirca, the main Inca complex in Ecuador where we will visit its principal archeological sites, before continuing to Cuenca.



**Accommodation: Hotel San Andres** (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Cuenca city tour, visit the Panama Hat Factory

Today, we'll visit the principal neighbourhoods and streets of Cuenca, a UNESCO World Heritage city. We will visit the downtown historical area, the central market, Abdon Calderon Park with its new and old cathedral. This city continues a proud intellectual tradition that has produced many notable writers, poets, artists, and philosophers. We continue the tour to the Homero Ortega Panama Hat factory to observe the complete process of manufacturing of the Panama hat which is undoubtedly most important to our country. Finally we will visit the tourist balcony of 'Turi' where we can see a panoramic view of the whole city of Cuenca.



**Accommodation: Hotel San Andres** (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Discover Cajas National Park before travelling to Guayaquil

We will drive to Guayaquil on the El Cajas route, stopping at the national park. Here, we'll visit Llaviuco lake for a one and a half hour walk, before travelling to Guayaquil for the night.



**Accommodation: Unipark Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



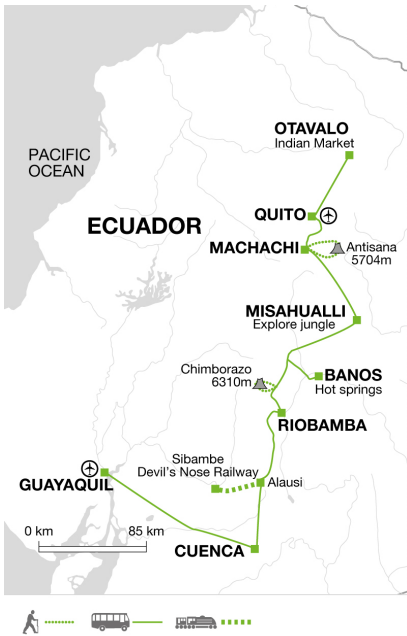
Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Morning city tour of Guayaquil city tour before the tour ends

This morning there is time for a tour of Guayaquil before the tour ends. We'll visit the administration square, where the local government buildings are located. Then we'll go Parque Seminario, also known as 'Parque de las Iguanas' due to the colonies of land iguanas that can be found there and visit the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guayaquil. We will walk to the Malecon 2000 to visit Torre Morisca and La Rotonda before our bus takes us to the bohemian neighbourhood of Las Penas, which was declared as a Cultural Heritage Site in 1982.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why not consider extending your trip with a 4-night Galapagos Islands cruise? We have two different options that will depend on how the dates match your main Ecuador trip. You can click [here](#) for information about our West and Central Islands itinerary, and [here](#) to read about the South and Eastern Islands itinerary.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 13  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 3



### Transport

Bus  
Train



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)



### Accommodation

2 nights standard guesthouse  
1 nights standard hostel  
7 nights standard hotel  
3 nights standard lodge

## Trip information

### Country information

#### Ecuador

#### Climate



Temperature ranges are similar all year round. In the highlands: the dry season lasts from June to mid-September. November and December are partially dry. The rainy months are October and from January to May, but showers are short and mostly in the afternoons. Temperatures range from 12°C to 24°C. Nights are cold at altitude (4°C - 10°C). The Coastal Region: from December to May it is hot and wet. From June to November it is generally cool and misty with sudden light showers. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. The Amazon Area: it is humid all year round. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. From April to August the rainfall is heavier. The Galapagos: On the Galapagos, the hot season is January to April with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers; the cool season runs from May to December and is generally more cloudy with much cooler seas. Please note that although it is windier from July to November the sea can be rough at any time of the year. On the mainland the dry season lasts from June to October, though September can be wet.

**Time difference to GMT**

-5

**Plugs**

2 Pin Flat

**Religion**

Roman Catholic

**Language**

Spanish

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Papallacta - Hummingbird garden US\$5

Banos - Thermal springs US\$3

### Clothing

Daytime clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting, but warmer clothing is needed at altitude, particularly at night. Long-sleeved lightweight clothes are useful for protection against sunburn. Bring a swimsuit, sunhat, sunglasses and a thick sweater or fleece. Lightweight waterproofs are essential. Remember that altitude can make places much colder, especially at night, so bring something to wrap up in, including a pair of gloves, hat and scarf and a fleece.

### Footwear

Comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals with a good grip.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage, plus a daypack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - don't overload yourself.

### Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, ear plugs, binoculars, camera memory card and an umbrella during the hot season may be useful.

### Tipping

**Explore leader**

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Local Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

**Local crew**

In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will still look to members of the group for personal recognition of

particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$80.

## Country Information

### Ecuador

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**  
£10

**Dinner price**  
£13

**Beer price**  
£1.7

**Water price**  
£1.3

#### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**  
USDollar.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollar Cash (NOT Sterling, which is almost impossible to change). The US dollar is the currency used in Ecuador. It is advisable to bring some US\$400 - \$500 of your total spending money in cash, in small denomination notes (in good condition). 100US\$ bills are very difficult to use.

**Where To Exchange**

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Train

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## **Price Guarantee**

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## **Visa and Passport Information**

Please note we require a photocopy of your passport 2 month pre departure.

It is essential that you provide Explore with a photo copy of your passport at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to confirm accommodation.

Ecuador: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. In order for your visa to be granted on arrival, you will be required to show proof of travel insurance valid for the duration of your trip. Please also ensure your passport is stamped with the T3 permit (for 30 or 90 days) on arrival in Ecuador. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done online - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.

If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit)

For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>  
Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## **Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## **Transfers**

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of

booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Ecuador

### Vaccinations

We recommend protection against malaria, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Yellow fever is only recommended for those travelling east of the Andes (Amazon Extension). Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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