



Excelsior Travel & Tours

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Ecuador | Suggested Itineraries | Ecuador Best Hidden Secrets



Destinations: Quito, Papallacta, Cotopaxi, Quilotoa, Región Amazónica, Otavalo, Cuenca, Loja & Podocarpus

Length: 16 Days / 15 Nights

Only for adventurous and explorers Ecuador Best Hidden secrets offers a combination of cultures and nature while visiting some the newest destinations in the country.

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 01

Arrival to Quito (-)

Arrival in Quito, assistance and transfer from airport Mariscal Sucre to hotel. After your check in, time to relax and adapt to the attitude. Quito is located at 2800 mts. above sea level.

In the night, a wonderful display of lights and architectural beauty, a magical world of domes and histories that venerate the city of Quito declared by the UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage.

A visit to the Church and Convent of Santo Domingo is part of this spectacular visit; this convent has the best exhibition of architectural and religious art in the colonial city. The Convent of Santo Domingo displays colossal doors and ceilings covered with oil paintings and gold leaf; it takes us back in time and dazzled us with its supreme beauty.

Overnight in Quito



Day 2

Quito / Papallacta (B,L,D)

Perched on a high Andean valley, at the entrance route to the Amazon jungle, this new resort and spa offers visitors any share of their preferred choice: health and relaxation, recreation, nature watching or adventure filled excursions. Pamper yourself with a spa treatment or indulge into the delicious gastronomy of its restaurants; embark on adventure walks at the Canyon Ranch or the Cayambe-Coca Ecological Reserve. Excellent accommodations in hotel rooms or luxury cabins complement the range of services to make the Papallacta experience, one to enjoy all the way...

Overnight at Papallacta Thermal Springs Resort

Day 3

Papallacta / The Antisana Ecological Reserve / Cotopaxi (B,L)

The Antisana Ecological Reserve lies in the Central Highlands, on the foothills of the 5705 meter glacier covered peak of the volcano Antisana. This reserve is privately owned and regulated, but its goal is the preservation of the native flora and fauna of the Andean moorlands. Below approximately 3000 meters, the native flora is shrubs, orchids and other specially adapted plants. Above an altitude of 4800 meters very little vegetation exists, as this area is covered with snow year-round. Between 3600 & 4800 meters, however, we entered a habitat called the moorlands, in which the plant and animal life are both highly adapted to the extreme conditions which are the norm here. Due to the high winds that regularly sweep this habitat, nothing taller than the grass and low lying succulents are found in the open. Even hardy, high altitude shrubs are found only in crevices and stream beds hidden from the wind. Plants in this habitat are pollinated by beetles or by birds, as the winds are too strong for flying insects.

The trip to the Antisana Ecological Reserve includes a ride to approximately 4000 meters above the sea level where rolling meadows, occasional ravines with taller vegetation, and a meadow/marsh of pillow moss bordering a highland lake is found. The pillow moss is so named because it forms unbroken hump-like pillows of vegetation that may cover acres of land. Its bird life includes the Andean gull, Caracaras, ducks, several species of hummingbirds and if lucky, the Andean condor.

Lunch will be served on a restaurant of the area.

After lunch continue through La Avenida de los Volcanes to the Cotopaxi Province.

Overnight in Cotopaxi.



Day 4

Full day excursion to the Quilotoa Volcano (B,L)

This day excursion will show you one of the best kept secrets of the central Andean region in Ecuador. The Quilotoa is one of the less visit areas in the central highlands. The Quilotoa lake is a turquoise mirror that merges from an inactive volcano. The town of Tigua is home of indigenous artists whose paints are a representation of the Andean panoramic view. In the route to el Quilotoa, you will see indigenous communities that life from agriculture and handicrafts. Multicolor mountain, llamas and sheep are part of this fantastic Andean scenery.

Box lunch at the Quilotoa Volcano.

Overnight in Cotopaxi.

Day 5

Full day visit to El Cotopaxi National Park – Quito (B,L)

South of Quito, we find the Cotopaxi National Park, an ecological sanctuary of 36,000 hectares (88,920 acres) surrounding the highest active volcano in the world, with special attractions for nature lovers. We can observe the treeless vegetation of the Andean meadows or “paramo”, its bird life includes the Andean gull, ducks, several species of hummingbirds and if lucky, the Andean condor. Your will have the opportunity to see wild horses and perhaps a deer.

Visit the National Park, for those who want to take the chance and climb up to the refuge (climb from 4500 to 4800 meters) will have a magnificent view of the area, or hike around Limpiopungo. Lunch in a nearby restaurant.

Overnight in Quito

Day 6 - 9

Quito – 4 days / 3 nights Program at the Amazon Basin (B,L,D)

Sacha Lodge, is located in the heart of Ecuador’s Amazon Basin. A heaven for nature lovers, birdwatchers, scientists and adventure seekers, Sacha Lodge provides comfortable accommodations, first-class meals and expert guides in order for you to fully enjoy the wonders of the tropical rainforest.

The lodging at Sacha was carefully designed to offer comfort to the traveler yet preserve the environment and rainforest ambience. Each of their 10 double cabins, with high thatched roofs and private shaded terraces, is constructed with



traditional materials and nestles well concealed in the lush surroundings. In their rooms, visitors may overlook the jungle from hammocks.

Itineraries at the Lodge are flexible depending the number of days and passengers preferences.

Overnight at Sacha Lodge.

Day 9

The Amazon Basin – Quito (B)

Check-out and transfer to the airport to take flight back to Quito. Once in Quito, assistance and transfer to your hotel.

Overnight in Quito

Day 10

Quito – The Northern Highlands (B,L)

Located at 2530 meter above sea level we find the everlasting fertile, Province of Imbabura, these magical lands surrounded by lakes are cradle of artists, histories and living pre-Inca cultures.

We will visit Peguche, a picturesque and messy little town whose habitants are famous for their weaving abilities on hand made looms in vivid colors representing figures of the Andean Region. Together with the weaving industry, the community of Peguche, is well known for the manufacture of wind instruments like the Sikus, Kenas and charangos.

In the area, we also find the strong and artistic hands of the people of San Antonio. Art studios with wood, stone and ceramic sculptures that represents the Quito school of art that transmit us the spirit of the indigenous villages whom had kept this Spanish cultural manifestation within a lot of generations.

All this artistic towns, commercialize their art in the Otavalo Market, beyond a shopping tour this tour teach us the work, traditions and customs of our indigenous communities.

Lunch will be at a colonial Hacienda of the area.

Overnight in Quito



Day 11

Quito – Cuenca (B,L)

Depart at an appropriate time by plane to the city of Cuenca, at your arrival assistance and transfer to your hotel. After your check in city tour of the city.

Cuenca, known as well as “Santa Ana of the 4 rivers”, was specifically built to satisfy the demands of the Spanish elite during the conquest period; today this city displays with glamour a French Neoclassic architecture represented in its nicely decorated balconies with colorful geraniums, main squares and colossal churches that exalt the monumental beauty of this old colonial city.

Our excursion is an encounter with traditions, emblematic shields, culture, art and religiousness, is a walking stroll through the city historic center, a special path that will allow us to admire the magnificence art and cultural diversity of the city exploring some the most unusual angles and perspectives.

Overnight in Cuenca

Day 12

Overland excursion from Cuenca – Loja (visiting Saraguro) (B,L)

Located four hours away from Cuenca, we can find one of the most rustic and indigenous towns in Ecuador “Saraguro”. The Saraguros are an ethnically distinctive native people of South America whose "traditional" homeland for the last few hundred years has been centered in the temperate mid-altitude (1800-2800 meters) Andean highlands of southern Ecuador.

The Saraguros are originally from the Lake Titicaca, but were force to colonize the southern area of Ecuador by the Inca Empire. Most Saraguros had enough privately held land, in widely scattered parcels, to be able to provide most of their food needs (maize, potatoes, beans, squash, oca, melloco, etc.).

In the afternoon continue your trip to the city of Loja. With an interesting history the city of Loja was founded in two times in 1546 and 1548. Named “La ciudad Castellana”, Loja have a rich colonial heritage that can be appreciate in the city architecture as in the art pieces collections that can be found at different museum between them the Convent of “Las Madres Conceptas” and the Central Bank Museum. The area also counts with a great natural resource of impressive beauty like the Vilcambamba Valley, the Podocarpus National Park and the Petrified Forest of Puyango.

Overnight in Loja



Day 13

Full day excursion to the Podocarpus National Park (B,L)

Visit to The Podocarpus National Park. Located in the southernmost Andes of Ecuador, Podocarpus National Park straddles a mountain range called, "El Nudo de Sabanilla", between the cities of Loja and Zamora. Comprising 146,280 hectares the Park ranges in altitude from 950 meters to 3,700 meters and includes a diversity of natural habitats, from upper tropical rainforest to alpine Paramo. The National Park was named after Podocarpus or Romerillo tree, Ecuador's only native species of conifer tree.

The diverse ecosystems protected within the Podocarpus National park support a rich and varied avifauna. To date over 500 bird species have been recorded in and around the park. Since only the Cajanuma and Las Palmas areas have been adequately surveyed, the list could rise to somewhere between 600 to 800 species, making the Podocarpus National Park one of the most species rich national parks in the world.

Box lunch Turing the visit

Overnight in Loja

Day 14

Full the Visit to the Valley of Vilcabamba (B,L)

Early in the morning depart by car from the city of Loja to the town of Vilcabamba.

Tucked away deep in southern Ecuador is Vilcabamba, in the heart of the country's southern province of Loja, bordering Perú. In Quechua, ancient language of the Incas still spoken today by Quechua Indians throughout the Andes, "vilca" translates as "sacred" and "bamba" means "valley."

Vilcabamba's biggest claim to fame is its reputation as the "Valley of Longevity." This reputation was perpetuated in the 1970s when a series of magazine reports, among them one by National Geographic, claimed that an unusual number of this valley's inhabitants were reported to be 100 to 120 years old. Although those tales turn out to have been exaggerated, there are a number of very healthy, energetic people in their 80s and 90s bounding around this hilly countryside like nimble but wizened mountain goats.

Lunch in one of the restaurants of the area

Overnight in Loja



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Day 15

Loja – Quito (B)

At an appropriate time transfer from your hotel to the airport to get your flight back to the city of Quito.

At leisure in Quito

Overnight at selected hotel in Quito

Day 16

International Departure (B)

At an appropriate time transfer to the airport to get your international flight.

End of our Services