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# Tour Notes

**Ecuador – Astride the Equator**

**Tour Duration – 14 Days**



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●○○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

## Tour Pace

Moderate/Busy

## Tour Highlights

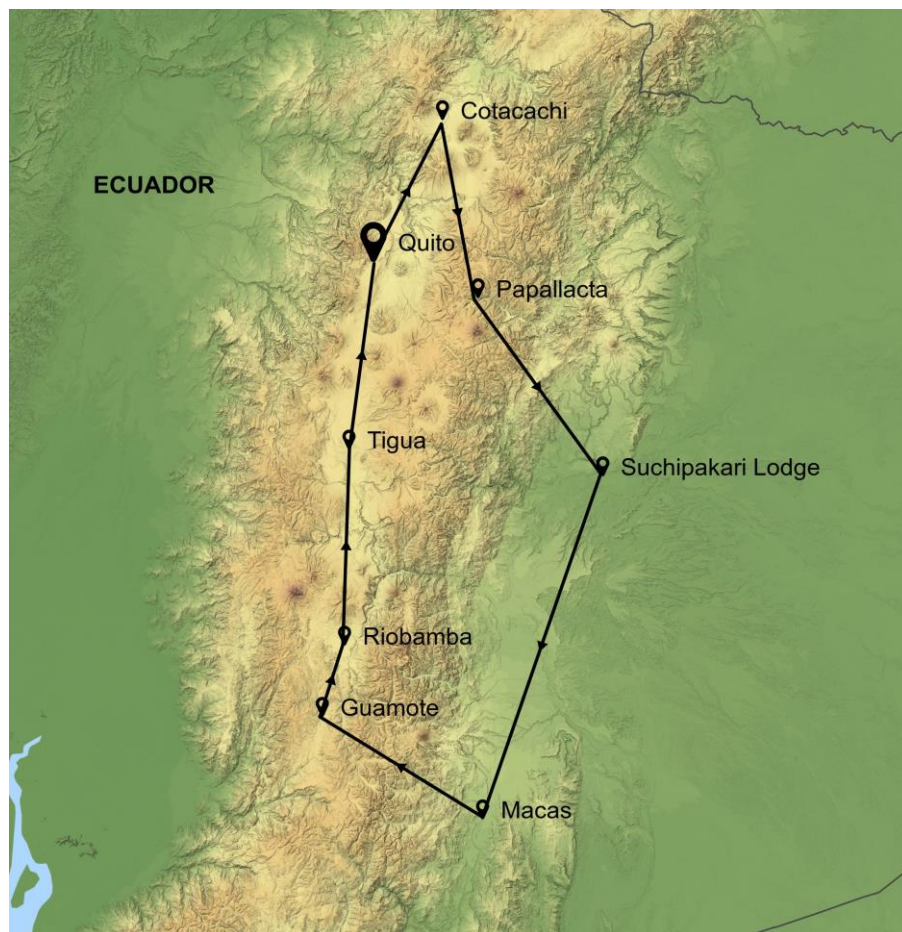
- Explore the colonial capital of Quito
- Enjoy the atmospheric and vibrant highland market of Otavalo
- Enjoy walks in magnificent Andean scenery and the Avenue of the Volcanoes
- Observe the practices and customs of indigenous communities
- Relax in a rainforest lodge and observe tropical flora and fauna





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## Tour Map



## Tour Essentials

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Mix of comfortable hotels, lodges and guest houses
<b>Included Meals:</b>	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary.
<b>Group Size:</b>	12 – Note you may be joined by clients from other tour operators
<b>Start Point:</b>	Quito – you can arrive any time on Day 1
<b>End Point:</b>	Quito – you can depart after 1500 hours on Day 14
<b>Transport:</b>	4WD or Minivans depending on the size of the group
<b>Country Visited:</b>	Ecuador





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## Ecuador – Astride the Equator

Take an exciting journey astride the equator through the rugged landscapes of the Andes Mountains and the lush rainforest. Observe the diversity of cultures from the Otavaleños and Afro-Ecuadorians in the north, to the Quichua and Shuar in the rainforest, and finally to the Kichwa in the central Andes at the foothills of the mighty volcano Chimborazo. On our journey visit vibrant markets, marvel at the impressive highland scenery on leisurely walks and enjoy the flora and fauna of the jungle.

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

On this tour, we have a combined driver/guide for groups of three or less.

# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrival in Quito

(approx. 1 hr driving)

Arrive in Quito and transfer to the hotel. Depending on your time of arrival, you may have time to explore the city. Overnight Patio Andaluz or similar. No meals are included today.

### Quito

Quito has long been a city of two halves. Occupying a highland valley flanked by volcanoes, the setting of its historic centre and adjoining modern quarters is breathtaking. The formerly dark and run-down colonial heart has been magnificently restored. Cobbled lanes and whitewashed façades, scrubbed up churches and renovated theatres now gleam and echo with the sounds of the everyday life of its traditional inhabitants. Beyond are the skyscrapers and broad avenues of the contemporary commercial city, with flashy shops, offices and restaurants, where busy young workers flock to the many bars and nightclubs.

## Day 2: Quito – Cotacachi

(approx. 3hrs driving)

This morning explore the colonial old town of Quito (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Visit the major colonial churches and monasteries including La Catedral, El Sagrario, La Compañía and San Francisco. Later, visit Independence Plaza flanked by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building and the Archbishop's Palace. Continue to the Church of San Francisco, one of the greatest religious buildings in South America. Its impressive façade and atrium lead to an opulent gold interior, a Baroque influence with the



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winged Virgin of Quito at its main altar. Visit the historic colonial quarter of Quito, resplendent with its churches, gilded altars and religious sculptures and paintings dating from the 17th 18th and 19th centuries. The tour continues through narrow streets, ancient colonial houses with Moorish-style arches and mysterious patios to El Panecillo, a vantage point for a stunning view of the city. This afternoon, drive from Quito north to Mitad del Mundo (literally middle of the world) where the Equatorial Line Monument is located. Here you can stand with one foot in the Northern, and one in the Southern hemisphere. Leaving Quito behind, continue to Cotacachi where you are welcomed by a local family. Overnight at Runa Tupari or similar (BLD)

### **Day 3: Cuicocha Lagoon**

*(approx. 2hrs driving)*

Today we explore the surroundings of the Cuicocha Crater Lagoon during an easy to moderate grade 4-5 hour hike through the flora of the Andean highlands. We also visit Cotacachi, known for its handmade leather articles. Overnight Runa Tupari similar (BLD)

**Note – Alternatively it is possible for clients to take a boat tour of the lagoon instead of doing the hike. This is subject to availability and cannot be booked in advance.**

### **Day 4: Otavalo – Peguche Cascades – Papallacta**

*(approx. 3hrs driving)*

Today visit Otavalo market and meet skilful native merchants that create colourful pieces using the same techniques as their ancestors, such as alpaca sweaters, ponchos, hammocks and pan flutes. We then visit a house of a respected maestro in rondador, a small panpipe producing a distinctive sweet sound. After the visit we continue to Peguche waterfall, an important place for the local people, where we take a short walk and be educated about the importance of this sacred place. We then make our way to Papallacta, a first-class hot springs resort, located in the Amazon region. Overnight Termas Papallacta or similar (BD)

### **Day 5: Amazon Adventure**

*(approx. 5hrs driving)*

This morning, we head to the upper Amazon along a scenic stretch of road that takes us out of the Andes highlands and into the Amazon. We stop at Wayra Reserve, where you can find a large variety of flora and fauna, and home to some amazing birdlife such as the Rufous-Breasted Wood Quail. After the visit we head to our lodge where we will spend the next 3 nights. Overnight Suchipakari Lodge or similar (BLD)

### **Day 6: Amazon Experience**

Today explore the jungle with your native guide, observing the variety of flora and fauna. We also visit the famous animal refuge known as AmaZoonico, founded to protect the native and wild animals of the area that have been injured, mistreated or confiscated due to smuggling. After lunch we visit a native Quichua family where we will learn how 'chicha', their local alcoholic drink, is prepared. You can also experience using the blowgun – an important weapon used by the people of the jungle when hunting food. After the family visit, explore the caiman lagoon where you can view the reptiles that live here. Overnight at the lodge (BLD)

### **Day 7: Amazon Experience**

This morning take a hike through the protected rainforest of the lodge. Your nature guide will point out interesting medicinal plants and talk about the wildlife in the area. After the walk and lunch, we discover why Ecuador is the best place to enjoy chocolate. Learn how to make delicious chocolate from the local cocoa beans. After returning to the lodge, enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Overnight at the same lodge (BLD)

### **Day 8: Macas**

*(approx. 4hrs driving)*





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After breakfast, travel through the rainforest to Puno where we visit an Animal Rescue Centre to observe tropical animals of the Amazon region and meet some monkeys face to face. From here, continue deeper into the rainforest to the small jungle town of Macas. Here there will be some time to relax at leisure in the afternoon. Overnight Hosteria Piedra Amazónica or similar (B)

### **Day 9: Macas - Shuar Waterfall – Lagoons of Atillo – Guamote**

*(approx. 3hrs driving)*

A short drive, takes us to Shuar territory. Take a round trip of walk of around 3 hours through the forest to a sacred waterfall, where we participate in the spiritual waterfall ceremony of the Shuar, after which enjoy a soak in the waterfall and taste the typical food of the Shuar. Later, continue to the Atillo Lakes, crossing the Andean highlands to Guamote. Overnight Inti Sisa Hotel or similar. (BD)

### **Day 10: Guamote – Riobamba**

*(approx. 1hr driving)*

Our day begins with a visit to the Church of La Balbanera on the outskirts of Riobamba, first built by the Spaniards, making it the first catholica church in the region. Continue to Colta Lagoon and explore the area before driving to the community of La Moya, formed of 68 families. Experience the man's relationship with the sacred mountain Chimborazo with their legends and traditions rooted in the community, and visit the mountain museum 'Urkukunapak Wasi' where the myths and legends are on display. Our final destination is Riobamba, Ecuador's first capital city. Spend the evening at leisure. Overnight Mansion Santa Isabella or similar (BL)

### **Day 11: Chimborazo Wildlife Reserve - Tigua**

*(approx. 5hrs driving)*

Today we visit the Chimborazo Wildlife Reserve, located on the slopes of the highest mountain in Ecuador. We begin at the reserve's interpretation centre (starting at 4630m) where you will hear about the flora and fauna of the reserve, before heading to the mountaineer's refuge. After we continue to Tigua, a small village close to Quilotoa. Overnight Posada de Tigua or similar (BD)

### **Avenue of the Volcanoes**

The aptly named Avenue of the Volcanoes is flanked by eight dizzyingly-high snow-mantled mountains striding south of Quito down the Andean spine. It passes through a valley rich with a landscape of dense forest and tiny fields plastering impossibly steep slopes. Dotted around is a mix of deeply traditional indigenous and colonial settlements with horticultural and artisan markets and cottage industries. There's also a clutch of old estates gifted to conquistadores where the grandiose buildings are now countryside hotels. This is supreme hiking country, with trails leading to craters harbouring turquoise volcanic lakes, usually with views of the biggest peaks, Chimborazo and Cotopaxi.

### **Day 12: Quilotoa Lagoon**

*(approx. 3hrs driving)*

This morning visit the Andean market of Zumbahua and experience the noisy and chaotic market before heading to the beautiful crater lagoon, Quilotoa. On a short hike, enjoy the changing views of the lagoon and the surrounding Andes Mountains. Overnight Mama Hilda Hotel or similar (BLD)

### **Day 13: Cotopaxi National Park**

*(approx. 4hrs driving)*

This morning we travel south to the central Ecuadorian Andes and Cotopaxi National Park. and enjoy an easy walk around Limpiopungo Lagoon, learning about the typical vegetation of the Andes and, with good weather, enjoy superb views of the impressive Cotopaxi. Lunch is taken in the mountain refuge Tambopaxi surrounded by the impressive peaks of Sincholagua and Cotopaxi. Overnight El Porvenir or similar (BLD)



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### **Day 14: Departure from Quito**

*(approx. 2hrs driving)*

Time at leisure until your transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

*Please book a flight after 1500 hours.*

## *Inclusions/exclusions*

### **Inclusions:**

Arrival and departure transfers

All accommodation

All ground transportation

Amazon experience on a shared basis for the excursions

Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader - we have a combined driver/guide for groups of three or less

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

### **Excluded:**

International flights

Any airport taxes

Travel Insurance

Visas if applicable

Drinks

Items of a personal nature & tips (discretionary)

## *Important Information*

### **Foreign Office Travel Warnings**

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the areas of Ecuador that we visit. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

### **Accommodation and Meals**

#### **Hotel Check-in Times**

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.







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It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### **Accommodation Rating**

On this tour you will be staying in mid-range standard tourist class hotels. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### **Food & Drinks**

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### **Budgeting for your Tour**

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### **Food**

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 £10  
Dinner £13

### **Drink**

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £1.70  
Water £1.30

### **Tipping – Guide and Drivers**

Tipping is common practise in Latin America. If your guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. If you are travelling in a group tour, then around \$10 per person, per day for a guide and around \$5 per person, per day, for a driver is reasonable. If you are travelling privately, then roughly double these amounts are reasonable. In restaurants a service tax of 10% may be included, if not a tip will always be appreciated. It should also be noted that a sales tax of 12% may be added to your bill.



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## Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** ATM's can be found in most cities

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Widely accepted

**Local Currency:** US Dollar

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Not Applicable

**Where to Exchange:** Not Applicable

## Joining your Tour

### Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations 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 and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday. It is now a condition of entry to for Ecuador that all visitors have a valid health insurance policy, so you should ensure you travel with the appropriate documentation.

Please note that your tour involves some walking/trekking at altitude. Some travel insurance policies may exclude walking and trekking above a certain altitude. Please ensure that your travel insurance is valid for walking at altitude and if you have any doubts please contact your insurance provider.

### Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Ecuador.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites.

British Nationals - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - [www.smartraveller.gov.au/](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/)





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Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

### Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Latin America, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. A yellow fever vaccination may also be advised. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended, and we recommend that you take professional advice about malaria prophylactics.

## Preparing for your tour

### Climate

The absolute best time of the year to visit Ecuador and The Galápagos Islands are the months January (the Pacific coast, the Galápagos islands and the rainforest), February (the Pacific coast, the Galápagos islands and the rainforest) and June, July and August (the highlands and Quito).

However, it is important to note that Ecuador is a year-round travel destination. Expect temperatures to be in the early 30's centigrade by day and low 20's centigrade by night on average.

### Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

### Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared and to be adequately immunized with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must – please ensure you bring enough as it may not be available locally. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is a good idea to bring a torch or head-lamp for poorly lit areas or in case of any electricity outages.







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The altitude of Ecuador in some parts can often cause headaches – we recommend that you bring some tablets to deal with this and drink plenty of water. Please consult a doctor before you travel to assess your suitability for travelling at altitude. When at altitude move slower than your usual pace and allow time for acclimatisation.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. Sandals are fine whilst on the road.

### **Luggage on tour**

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

### **Driving times**

The driving times stated in the itinerary are given in the best of faith. Driving times may on occasion be longer due to unforeseen circumstances such as poor weather, road construction activity, mechanical problems etc. We ask for your patience and understanding if journey times take longer than anticipated.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

The electrical supply in Ecuador is 120v, and plugs tend to have either two flat parallel pins (type A), or two flat parallel pins with a grounding pin (type B). We recommend that you bring a multi-adapter.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were prepared 15 April 2024.