



COTOPAXI VOLCANO CLIMB

- DURATION** : 10 days / 09 nights (2 nights camping)
SEASON : July through February
DEPARTURES : Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants
TRIP RATING : Strenuous Climb, Grade (IV) - This adventurous program features a variety of activities including a 3-day acclimatization trek, averaging 7½ miles per day, plus the summit attempt on one of the world's highest active volcanos at 19,350'. Although the normal route up Cotopaxi is a nontechnical snow ascent, familiarity with mountaineering equipment and prior experience climbing to elevations over 14,000' is recommended. Very good fitness and endurance are required.
- 2007 DATES** : On request any week during the season for a minimum of 4 travelers

INTRODUCTION :

Ecuador has the earth's greatest concentration of volcanic peaks. In the central Sierra, eleven solitary peaks, discernable from many miles, form the backbone of the nation. Chimborazo (20,705'), the country's highest mountain, El Altar, Tungurahua, and Cotopaxi are some of the most impressive of these great volcanos. This outstanding program was designed for novice to intermediate climbers. It provides an exceptional opportunity, not only to improve high altitude glacier and ice climbing skills, but also to explore Ecuador's lovely countryside and meet some of the friendliest people in South America. Each trip could be timed to coincide with the full moon, giving our groups the greatest chance for good weather and the highest probability of success on the summit!

After a night in Quito, we drive south through the Avenue of the Volcanos to Riobamba. Here, we enjoy a 3-day acclimatization trek, through the páramo, to the foot of Ecuador's fifth highest peak, El Altar (17,450'). An impressive, extinct volcano, its jagged, ice-clad peaks form a ring around a central caldera. We explore the Collanes plains and view the mountain's glaciers and rugged crater before returning to the road and driving to the hot spring resort town of Baños. In this tropical, cloud-forest setting we test our legs with a full day's hike toward the climber's hut on Tungurahua. Heading back north to Cotopaxi National Park, we drive past Limpiopungo Lake and overnight at the Tambopaxi acclimatization center before continuing up to the José Ribas climber's hut (15,750') from where we stage our summit bid. (A glacier seminar is held before our climb). Starting well before dawn, we begin the 10-hour, demanding ascent following the normal route. After the climb, we return to Quito for a special celebration dinner. We fly home the next day.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01: USA/QUITO

We arrive to Ecuador's capital city, **Quito**, located at an invigorating 9,350' elevation, this evening. Our local guide meets us at the airport and transfers us to the comfortable Quito Hotel located in the city's modern section, about 20 minutes from the airport.

DAY 02: QUITO/RIOBAMBA

This morning we drive south through the *Avenue of the Volcanos* to **Riobamba**, a city fondly referred to by the locals as the "Sultan of the Andes." Along the way, we pass by the foot of Cotopaxi. At 19,350' this classic, cone-shaped volcano is Ecuador's second highest mountain and one of the tallest active volcanos in the world. We enjoy lunch en route, and catch the end of the weekly market in one of the central valley towns, like Latacunga. After driving through Ambato, we cross an 11,810' pass before descending to Riobamba. With excellent views of Chimborazo (20,705'), we take a short, acclimating hike in the nearby foothills. Chimborazo is a massive, glaciated mountain, first climbed by Edward Whymper in 1880. We check into the Hosteria Andaluza, located on the historic Hacienda Chuquipoggio, outside the city, and have the remainder of the afternoon and evening to prepare for our 3-day acclimatization trek to the base of El Altar. **Driving time:** 4 ½ hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 03: COLLANES PLAINS CAMP

After breakfast, we drive east toward the trailhead for our trek, near the **Hacienda Relache**. Driving through the winding Chambo River valley, we may stop in the weaving town of Guano, to admire its finely crafted rugs and carpets. Time permitting, we can observe the weavers first-hand and talk with some of the local artists. Arriving to the hacienda, we meet the handlers who, with their horses, will support our trek, and we begin hiking uphill. Our route takes us through scrubby woodlands. As this is a very humid region, we can expect to face muddy trails as we ascend to the point where we have our first view of El Altar's nine summits. Located within Sangay National Park (established in 1979 to protect nearly 670,000 acres of the central Ecuadorian Andes), El Altar is Ecuador's fifth highest peak, and its jagged ice-clad peaks are very impressive. The last section of the trail is fairly level as we reach the **Collanes Plains** where we set our basecamp. **Hiking distance:** 7½ miles or 6 hours; **Camp elevation:** 12,465' (B,L,D)

DAY 04: EL ALTAR

This morning we hike toward the mountain called *Cerro de Collanes*. Its name means Magnificent Peak in the local dialect. El Altar itself has an enormous caldera, nearly 2 miles across and almost completely surrounded by glaciers and vertical rock walls. Our route leads along the Collanes plain, then ascends steeply, over the lip of the crater and into the heart of the caldera itself. Here, in a vast, three-sided bowl, walls of rock and ice soar over 3,000' above us to the top of the massif's principal summits: *El Obispo*, the bishop, at 17,450'; and *El Canonigo*, the canon, at 17,260'. Massive hanging glaciers calve chunks of ice down into a central grey-green tarn called *Laguna Amarilla*, or Yellow Lake, located at an altitude of 13,650'. The effect of this magnificent spot is overpowering and unforgettable. We may spot a condor, the world's largest flying bird, with wingspans of up to 10 feet, soaring above the valley while we make our way back to camp on the Collanes Plains. If the weather is clear this evening, the sunset should be lovely on the mountain's western faces. **Hiking distance:** variable according to the group's interests and pace. (B,L,D)

DAY 05: BAÑOS

Backtracking along our approach route this morning, we have good views of the patchwork-quilt effect of the farms in the distance as we lose elevation. We return to the **Hacienda Relache** where our vehicle awaits us. Saying goodbye to our support staff, we drive northeast to the town of **Baños**. This charming community is located in the cloud-forest of the Río Pastaza Valley, at a comfortable 5,905-foot-elevation, in a densely vegetated transitional zone between the Andes and Amazon. After checking into the Sangay Hotel on the outskirts of town, we soak in the area's famous thermal waters, visit the Hard Rock Cafe for

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a beer, or shop for a variety of handicrafts, for which this region is noted. We enjoy dinner with our local guide before retiring for the night. **Hiking distance:** 7½ miles or 5 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 06: BAÑOS HIKE

Following an early breakfast this morning, we drive out of town for an optional hike, either up Tungurahua or through the lush cloud-forests at a lower elevation. The northernmost peak in Sangay National Park, Tungurahua stands alone, towering more than 10,000 feet above the town of Baños. At 16,460', this active volcano is Ecuador's ninth highest mountain. It was first climbed, in 1873, by the Germans, Wilhelm Reiss and Alfons Stubel. Although the climb is non-technical, in terms of the skills required, it is a long route that demands stamina. The trail leading toward the climber's refuge follows a steep, muddy track along the northwestern ridge of the mountain, passing through dense vegetation and bamboo thickets creating a green tunnel around us. Through scattered openings in the vegetation, we have views of the summit and surrounding countryside. This afternoon we return to the Sangay Hotel in **Baños** to make preparations for our ascent of Cotopaxi. (B,L,D)

DAY 07: TAMBOPAXI CENTER

We depart our hotel after breakfast and drive back through the *Avenue of the Volcanos* toward Cotopaxi. Approaching Ecuador's most popular mountain reserve, we turn at the entrance to **Cotopaxi National Park** and follow a dirt road up into the highlands. Passing several typical Indian villages, we reach the park ranger's station, then continue up through pine forest into the páramo. Near Limpiopungo Lake (12,785'), we turn onto a secondary road toward the Jose Ribas Climber's Hut at 15,750'. It is a steep, 30-minute hike from the parking lot to the refuge. The remainder of the afternoon is spent scrambling on the glaciers, learning self arrest and other climbing techniques in preparation for tomorrow's ascent. Returning to the parking lot, we drive down to the comforts of the Tambopaxi acclimatization center (12,305'). This is a newly opened, basic hostel with dormitory rooms, shared facilities with hot water showers, and a restaurant with excellent cuisine and panoramic views, created with the climbers' needs and the Páramo environment in mind. **Driving time:** 4 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 08: COTOPAXI CLIMB

We leave Tambopaxi well before dawn this morning (about 2:00 a.m.), first up to the Climber's Hut, then to the snowline, taking advantage of the firm snow conditions and avoiding the intense solar radiation of the afternoon, which can quickly sap a climber's energy at this altitude. Following the standard route, along Cotopaxi's north face, we first hike through a snow field and scree slopes to the base of the glacier. (Some of the lava has the consistency of sand, making the climb very strenuous.) At the glacier, we put on crampons and continue ascending. Here the crevasses are large and open, so they are easily avoided. After climbing the glacier for a couple of hours, we pass around the famous **Yanasacha**, or black rocks as the name translates in Quechua, before our final efforts to reach the summit. The last 700 feet of the climb are the steepest and most challenging, due to the effects of altitude and fatigue. On top, as we look into the impressive, one-third-mile wide crater, we see steam rising from the center vents. If the day is clear, we even see Chimborazo standing alone in the distance. We return to the refuge following the same route. The total climbing time should be approximately 10 hours, depending on both the group and weather conditions. Should the weather be adverse, or should group members need an additional day for acclimating or practicing glacier skills, another climbing seminar may be held on the glaciers near the hut, with the summit attempt tomorrow morning. (B,L,D)

DAY 09: COTOPAXI/QUITO

Today is the back-up day for our summit bid. In either case, we descend along the same route back to the hut and down to the parking lot where our vehicle is waiting for the return drive to Tambopaxi and **Quito**. We follow the central valley north past old haciendas and groves of eucalyptus trees. Upon arrival, either midday or late afternoon, according to whether we climbed today or not, we transfer to the Quito Hotel for the night and later join our local guide for a celebration dinner and folk music show at one of the city's finest restaurants. (B,L,D)

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DAY 10: QUITO/USA

Following breakfast, we transfer to the airport and have check-in assistance for the return flight home.
(B)

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY: Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including but not limited to weather, group members' physical condition/acclimatization, road/trail/snow conditions and/or the safety and well-being of the group members. Should changes be made to the itinerary prior to departure, we will attempt to notify all group members as far in advance as possible. If changes must be made in the field, the local climbing guide will be in charge of making the necessary suggestions and decisions. Finally, it is our policy to provide you with the safest and most satisfying climbing expedition possible. Considering the uncertainties inherent in this type of program, we cannot guarantee that any or all members of the trip will make the summit. Hiking distances and altitudes are approximate, and times indicated are NET. They do not include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore the area, etc. Systematic physical conditioning, as suggested in our pre-departure materials, and a strong, positive mental attitude are the most important factors to assure success of the climb. Prior climbing experience to elevations of at least 14,000', plus familiarity with the use of ice axe, crampons and self arrest techniques are also highly recommended.

Depending on the activity level and safety of the Tungurahua volcano, we may substitute a stay at Hacienda La Ciénega, in the Avenue of the Volcanos, for the overnight stay at Baños on **Days 05 & 06**.

2007 LAND COST:

\$3,065 p.p.d. (4-5 participants)
\$2,815 p.p.d. (6-9 participants)
\$2,615 p.p.d. (10-12 participants)
\$ 310 Single Supplement

p.p.d.= per person based on double occupancy

SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All **in-country transfers** as scheduled (transfers on different days are additional). Ground transportation in spacious and comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- All **accommodations in standard-class (3-4 star) hotels** as listed (or at similar hotels & hosterias) on a shared basis with private bath. Accommodations and baths at Tambopaxi center are shared. Double beds for couples (primarily queen-sized) can be requested in advance, but cannot be guaranteed, as most hotels offer few rooms with double beds.
- Single Supplement includes single room and single tent on trek. Due to the small size of the hotels in the Ecuadorian highlands, the number of singles available per group are limited to 2. Single accommodations at Tambopaxi center are not available as it features dormitory style sleeping arrangements with cots, linens and bunk beds. If you require single accommodations, making reservations well in advance is recommended.
- All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner); **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required).
- All **guided tours** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking local guides (includes applicable entrance fees).
- **First-class trekking service** to El Altar includes:
Experienced, licensed, English-speaking, Andean guide & assistant guide (provided for groups with 8 or more participants).

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Expert camp chef & kitchen assistant, camp assistant & local horse handlers with their pack animals (handlers are treated & compensated well, horses/mules carry a maximum of 45 lbs. of an individual trekker's personal gear).

All group camping equipment: spacious 3-person all season Eureka K-2 or North Face VE-25 tents (shared by just 2 members), Thermarest™ sleeping pads, kitchen & dining tents, folding tables & camp stools and an environmentally friendly toilet tent.

All meals: we serve a variety of healthy food with fresh & native ingredients. A cup of hot wake-up tea is brought to your tent door followed by a hot breakfast, box or picnic lunch, and a 3 course served dinner.

First-aid kit.

- **Summit attempt on Cotopaxi** conducted by an expert, English-speaking climbing guide includes hut fees/permits, an assistant guide for groups of 4 or more participants; communal climbing gear (ropes, ice stakes, a few carabineers) & a basic mountain first aid kit.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic nor International flights.
- Ecuadorian airport departure taxes (\$32 when leaving the country).
- One (1) meal at about \$15-20.
- Tours, excursions, accommodations or services not indicated on the itinerary.
- Tips to the tour guides & drivers, plus main trekking/climbing staff (guide, assistant, chefs & handlers).
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry & phone calls.
- Sleeping bag, climbing boots, crampons, ice axe & other personal gear.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, and additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

We strongly recommend all travelers take out some form of **Travel Insurance** —plan information and an application are sent upon receipt of your deposit (sooner if requested). Policies with **Travel Insured International** can be purchased online through our website at www.southwindadventures.com/insurance.html. **If you or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition**, you need to purchase this policy within 14 days of booking your trip to qualify for reimbursement of non-refundable trip costs in the event that a recurrence of the pre-existing condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). For more information or to purchase Southwind's recommended travel insurance plan, please visit our website.

☛ **Please note** that most Travel Insurance companies will provide Trip Cancellation Insurance, Emergency Evacuation Reimbursement and Medical Coverage for group members prior to leaving the USA and during the warm-up trek (DAYS 01-07 and DAYS 09-10). Due to policy restrictions, no coverage is available for the actual climb itself - DAYS 07-09

OPTIONAL CHIMBORAZO CLIMBING EXTENSION (4 days/3 nights):

DAY 09 : Following our climb on Cotopaxi, we meet our vehicle and drive back through the central valley to Riobamba and the familiar Andaluza Hotel. (B,L,D)

DAY 10: After an early breakfast, we drive to the Carrel refuge (15,750') at the base of Chimborazo, Ecuador's highest peak at 20,705'. This massive mountain was considered the world's highest peak until the 19th-century, and it remains the furthest point from the earth's center, due to its location near the equator. Local Indians, retaining traditions passed down by their Puruhua and Inca ancestors still regard Chimborazo, with its 5 summits and 14 glaciers, as a god. An hour hike takes up to the Whympfer Hut (16,405'), where we begin preparations for our climb. (B,L,D)

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DAY 11: Leaving at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., we follow the normal route for our summit attempt, via the Jamapa Glacier up the steep northwestern glaciated slopes of the mountain. The Whymper route, first pioneered by Edward Whymper in 1880, which traverses the southwest ridge and Thielmann glacier to the main summit, hasn't been in good condition. From the top of the mountain, we enjoy a spectacular view, toward the Pacific Ocean to the west and over the central valley to the east. If weather is adverse, we can practice our snow and ice techniques and make final climbing preparations for the next day. (B,L,D)

DAY 12 : Back-up day for the summit bid and descent to the hut. Return to Quito and check-in to the Quito Hotel for the night. Later this evening, we join our local guide for a celebration dinner at one of Quito's finest restaurants. (B,L,D)

DAY 13: Transfer to the airport with check-in assistance for our return flight to the USA. (B)

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY: Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, the day-by-day activities on this itinerary are subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including group members' physical condition, weather, trail, snow and/or road conditions. For these reasons, reaching the summit cannot be guaranteed. A minimum of 2 participants are required to operate the extension.

2007 EXTENSION LAND COST: \$900-\$1,100 p.p.d. depending on extension group size (please call our office for details)

SERVICES INCLUDED: Ground transportation in private vehicles with professional drivers • Return flight reconfirmation and airport assistance • Accommodations on a shared basis with private baths in standard 3-4 star hotels as listed (or similar) • All meals as indicated on the itinerary. (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) • Summit attempt on Chimborazo conducted by an experienced, English-speaking climbing guide, an assistant guide for groups of 4 or more participants, including hut fees & climbing permits, all meals prepared by the guide, and communal climbing gear (ropes, ice stakes, some carabineers).

NOT INCLUDED: As for the main program.

A \$500 per person, per extension deposit, in addition to the deposit made for the main program, is required for extensions that are 4 days or longer. Requests for extensions or extra services must be submitted in writing (faxed/emailed requests are fine). Trip cancellation fees as described under *Terms & Conditions* in Southwind's website apply in the case of canceling any extension.

ADDITIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS: For those who wish to visit other areas of South America including Machu Picchu, the Amazon Rainforests or Galápagos Islands, we have several optional extensions available. All extensions require a minimum of 2 participants and an additional deposit. Extensions must be reserved and prepaid at least 30 days prior to departure. Contact our office for details.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING: A big climb involves strenuous activity at high altitudes and demands as much from one's capacity for performance as an Olympic event. Being in top physical condition, as well as being sufficiently acclimated, can make the difference between success or failure of the climb. Our program has been designed to help all group members systematically acclimate, but your physical preparation for your trip should begin several weeks before your departure. You should participate in exercises such as long distance running, biking and swimming, in a regular program, for at least 8 weeks prior to the climb. Bear in mind that the most important factor in your training is aerobic endurance, as aerobic strength enables you to breathe more strongly when hiking uphill. You should do at least 2 or 3 long hiking trips of 8 hours per day (with overnight stays, if feasible), gaining at least 4,000 feet in elevation, at as high an elevation as is practical to test your fitness level (12,000'-14,000' is ideal). Our pre-departure packet contains more detailed training advice.

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CLIMBING GUIDE: **Juan Gabriel Carrasco** - This Ecuadorian is a seasoned mountaineer who has been leading adventure groups (trekking, biking and climbing) throughout his country for the past 18 years. He has traveled and climbed around the world and is one of Ecuador's top guides. He speaks fluent English, having lived in Montana for 5 years. In addition to his mountain experience, he has studied biology and enjoys birdwatching, as well as learning about the native cultures of his country. His enthusiastic personality combined with knowledge on a variety of subjects ranging from politics to rainforest wildlife and conservation, makes him one of our most popular and most frequently requested guides.

WEATHER: Overall, its equatorial location gives Ecuador a typically mild climate, with temperature varying more by altitude than by season. The country has "wet" and "dry" seasons which change by region. Quito and the Central Valley's "dry" season is generally from June-September with another spell of "dry" weather from November-January. Temperatures in the capital range from 40°F at night to 68-75°F during the day. Sangay Park (El Altar and Tungurahua) has an average daytime temperature (above 10,000') of 40-50°F with nighttime lows ranging from 23-34°F. The El Altar region experiences rainfall year round. Cotopaxi Park has an average temperature of 45°F all year with daily variations ranging from below freezing at night to 68°F midday at lower elevations. The area receives approximately 42" of rain per year with most occurring between March & May, and the least between June & September.

ESTIMATED AIRFARE: The Land Cost for this trip DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY FLIGHTS. Round-trip airfare from a US gateway city to Quito is about \$700-\$950. Flights to Quito are currently serviced by American Airlines (from Miami), Continental (from Newark and Houston) and LAN (from Miami and JFK and Delta (from Atlanta). Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind will send you more information about booking your flights to match your land itinerary.

✉ Southwind will need your flight schedule within 45 days of your departure to arrange your transfers. We recommended that you **DO NOT** purchase any airline tickets until your trip is guaranteed to operate. Southwind sends out a trip confirmation letter once a trip is guaranteed or you may call to check the status of your departure.

HOW TO SIGN UP: Submit Southwind's Trip Reservation form along with a \$500 per person per trip deposit (payable by check or credit card) to make a reservation. Both the form and deposit may be completed securely online at www.southwindadventures.com by clicking on "Book a Trip" at the top of our homepage. Or you may print the Trip Reservation Form and mail/fax it to our office with your deposit. If you prefer, you may call us at 1-800-377-9463 to make payment arrangements (**your deposit will be charged and your reservation confirmed once we receive your Trip Reservation Form**).

Due to Ecuador's highlands popularity, we recommend making reservations at least 4 months in advance. Once your trip is guaranteed to operate, you will receive a comprehensive pre-departure packet.

Land Balance: Final payment is due at 60 days by Visa, Mastercard, Discover or check. American Express balance payments are due 90 days in advance. An invoice is sent with your pre-departure packet. Rush Service: A rush fee of \$150 per person will be applied to your invoice for reservations placed 45 to 21 days before departure.

Cancellation Fees and other policies are outlined under Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click [Book a Trip>Terms & Conditions](#)).

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