



ECUADOR

ANDEAN HACIENDAS TOUR

An insider's look at the culture and history of the highlands



DURATION: 9 days / 8 nights
SEASON: Year-round
DEPARTURES: Guaranteed with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 12 participants
TRIP RATING: Moderate Cultural Tour, Grade (II) - A superb, country-inn-based adventure, ideal for families, photographers and any traveler who wants an in-depth introduction to the incredible cultural diversity and history of the Ecuadorian Andes. It is an active program that features optional day hikes of 2-3 hours in duration at elevations up to 12,600'.

2012 DATES : On request any week throughout the year for a minimum of 2 travelers.

INTRODUCTION:

Ecuador's highlands feature some of the most beautiful countryside vistas in South America. In this majestic region, we encounter old farms or "haciendas", dating back centuries. Their proprietors still work the fertile rolling hills, and have opened their doors to visitors interested in traditional Andean culture. In this setting, we are swept away to a land where time stands still. The tranquility, here at the center of the world, is arrayed with patchwork fields, awe-inspiring glaciated volcanoes, lush cloud forests and centuries-old colonial villages. Handicrafts flourish, including wood carving, leather working, ornament making and intricate weaving. In addition to exceptional cross-cultural opportunities, we find unique species of flora and fauna in well-protected ecological reserves.

Our first night is spent in Quito or in a hacienda outside the city, then we head south along the Avenue of the Volcanoes to hike the bamboo forested paths of Pasocha Nature Preserve, and further up to the slopes of Cotopaxi National Park, an extinct volcano. Continuing north to the fertile valleys and rolling hills of the Lake District we stop en route to visit the intriguing Chochasqui ruins. We have plenty of time to explore and enjoy the colorful, well-known Otavalo Indian Market, to watch the trading and meet some of the local residents. Staying in comfortable haciendas along the way, our days are filled with hiking, horseback riding, birding and mountain biking, always learning more about the fascinating history of the area from our native guide. Many of the haciendas date back to the 17th century, with some even remaining in the same families, passed down from generation to generation. We are enriched by the friendliness and warm hospitality of our hosts and are reluctant to end this relaxing sojourn. We return to the capital where we have a brief tour of colonial Quito before going on to our next adventure, or returning home.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01 (SAT): USA/QUITO

We arrive this evening to Ecuador's Andean capital, **Quito**, set in a narrow valley between rugged volcanic peaks, at an invigorating 9,350-foot elevation. We are met at the airport and transferred to the comfortable **Hostería La Carriona**, a former hacienda built over 200 years ago and located just 30 minutes outside the city in the beautiful valley of Los Chillos. If arriving late to Quito, you may prefer staying at the boutique-style Patio Andaluz hotel, located in the historic city center.

DAY 02 (SUN): PASOCHOA/HACIENDA LA CIENEGA

Following breakfast in the Spanish Colonial-style restaurant, we drive through the fertile Los Chillos Valley, once the breadbasket for Quito. We head south for a 2-3 hour hike in the **Pasochoa Protected Forest**. This nearly 1,000-acre Andean forest is administered by the nonprofit Fundación Natura (a World Wildlife Fund affiliate) and is located at a brisk 9,000'-elevation in a steep, untouched gorge. It is the only remaining primary Andean forest in Ecuador's central valley, and home to orchids and an abundance of birds, including partridges, turtledoves and some of the more than 120 species of hummingbirds recorded in Ecuador. We have lunch at the nearby **Hacienda Hualilahua**, known for its colonial paintings dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. The hacienda is landscaped with lush gardens and is involved in organic farming and raising cattle. We continue driving through patchwork countryside to the **Hostería La Ciénega**, belonging to the descendants of the Marquis of Maenza of the 17th century, and one of the valley's nicest inns. There may be time for strolling the quiet country lanes before dinner. **Driving time: 2 Hours** (B,L,D)

DAY 03 (MON): COTOPAXI NATIONAL PARK/HACIENDA LA CIENEGA

After breakfast we cross the valley to **Cotopaxi National Park**, home of the world's highest active volcano. Cotopaxi's cone-shaped peak (19,350') dominates the landscape for miles around. We walk near Limpiopungo Lake, enjoying an abundance of birds and scenic vistas of nearby Ruminahui Peak. The dominant ecosystem in this area is the *humid páramo*, a zone unique to the tropical Americas and found only between 10° North latitude in Costa Rica and 10° South in northern Peru. We can observe typical grasses such as stipa-ichu and pajonal, as well as unusual species of flora like the puya, senecio (rabbit ears) and chuquiragua, and alpine-like wild flowers such as gentians and lupines. As we hike there should be nice opportunities to photograph Cotopaxi's summit. Then, we continue to the nearby Tambopaxi Hostel where we have lunch. In the afternoon, weather permitting, we may drive up to the base of the mountain and approach the glaciers near the Jose Ribas Hut. Later in the afternoon we return to the valley and stop at the **San Agustín de Callo**, one of the oldest haciendas in the Andes, built on the foundations of an Inca fortress. Ruins dating back over 500 years can be found nearby. A short drive brings us back to the **Hostería La Ciénega** and its country house, built in 1580 and preserved in its original state and now considered an historical monument. A delicious 4-course dinner is served this evening in the Hostería's dining room. **Driving time: 2.5 Hours** (B,L,D)

DAY 04 (TUE): LAKE DISTRICT

Today we drive north along the *Avenue of the Volcanoes*, named for the eleven snow-capped, volcanic peaks that line either side of the central valley. We head north through the twisted canyons of the Guayabamba River toward the fertile valleys of the Lake District and Lake San Pablo. Near the town of Tabacundo, we stop at Cochasqui ruins to visit this pre-Inca astronomic observatory and ceremonial center featuring 15 pyramidal structures. It is believed that the complex was constructed by the Cara Indians starting around 950 AD, and in 1979 was named a Cultural Patrimony of Mankind. After a local style lunch we find the charming **Hacienda Cusin**, a renowned farmstead that will be our home for the next two nights. We enjoy dinner together this evening in the cozy dining room. **Driving time: 3.5 Hours** (B,L,D)

DAY 05 (WED): HACIENDA CUSIN

Today we can relax and enjoy the amenities of the Hacienda Cusin. There are a variety of guided activities like hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking, where we can discover the charm of the backcountry. There is great birding and unique flora to discover or you may prefer to get to know the local residents in nearby villages. Some guests may prefer to simply read or relax in the library by the fire or enjoy a soothing massage. This quaint inn is one of the oldest haciendas in the country, dating back to 1602. Seven guesthouses with private baths offer views of the beautiful gardens. Situated just 12 miles north of the equator, this area is known for sunny days and a climate described as an "ever-blooming spring." This evening we enjoy the Cusin's delicious menu of Ecuadorian and European food. (B,L,D)

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DAY 06 (THU): CUICOCHA LAKE/HACIENDA PINSAQUI

Following a hearty breakfast, we drive northwest into the **Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve** for an easy and scenic 2-3 hour hike above **Lake Cuicocha** (10,500'), formed in the crater of an ancient volcano. Along the way we have good views of the snow-capped Cayambe (18,995'), Imbabura and Cotacachi volcanoes. High altitude bird species such as the carunculated caracara, cordillera snipe, Andean hillstar, páramo pipit, and Andean lapwing may be seen, as well as hawks and hummingbirds. At Cuicocha's edge, we might spot some of the waterfowl which inhabit the region's many lakes, including the speckled teal, American coot, or yellow-billed pintail. In the afternoon, we drive to the lovely **Hacienda Pinsaquí**, where we spend the night. There should be ample time to stroll about the grounds or go for a horseback ride before sunset and dinner. **Driving time: 1.5 Hours** (B,L,D)

DAY 07 (FRI): HACIENDA PINSAQUI

There is time today to explore the nearby farmlands or to learn about the unique history of this hacienda, in the Freile family since 1888. Simón Bolívar stayed here when the famous South American liberator traveled between Ecuador and Colombia. It is also here that one of Ecuador's most important friendship treaties, between these same two countries, was signed. High draped windows channel late day sun on ornate furnishings and chandeliers. Tiled floors and masonry walls reverberate the sounds of a working hacienda, with the peaceful ambience that can only be found in the countryside. We lunch today at the nearby **Hostería Chorlaví**, located in a wide valley outside **Ibarra** at a comfortable 7,200-foot-elevation, with time to explore the area. We return to Hacienda Pinsaquí in the late afternoon. (B,L,D)

DAY 08 (SAT): OTAVALO/QUITO

Today is market day. We get an early start to arrive in the village of **Otavalo** just as trading is getting under way. This famous weekly market dates back to before the Inca occupation when Indians from the lowland jungles would visit the highlands to trade their products. It is now one of South America's largest and best markets. We join dozens of locals and visitors wandering through the 4 main plazas where the handicraft and produce stalls are set up. We find a multitude of crafts such as wood carvings and leather goods from all over the country. There will be plenty of opportunities to purchase some of the exquisite woolen products or embroidery work for which the Otavalo weavers are renowned. Following a chance to browse through the stalls, we enjoy lunch at the oldest farm in Ecuador, **Hacienda Guachala**. Situated exactly on the equator, Guachala offers majestic views of snow-capped Cayambe Volcano (19,107'). Visitors are treated to lively bird activity in the nearby sanctuary and arboretum. In the late afternoon, we arrive back to Quito and enjoy a brief guided tour of the colonial capital. Strolling along cobbled streets, beneath whitewashed adobe walls and ornate balconies, we visit the beautiful La Compañía or San Francisco churches with their ornate, gold-plated altars and collections of colonial paintings. We check-in at the **Patio Andaluz**, a colonial mansion and one of the city's original buildings, now a beautiful and charming hotel. A national treasure, this hotel holds centuries of history within its walls. In the heart of the city's culture, travelers are treated to culinary delights of fine restaurants and nearby churches, museums, libraries, and folklore shops. This evening we join our guide for a congenial farewell dinner. **Driving time: 2.5 Hours** (B,L,D)

DAY 09 (SUN): QUITO/USA

Transfer to the airport this morning with check-in assistance for your return flight home. (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 considerations, weather, trail/road conditions or flight delays and plane schedule changes. This program is suitable for physically fit participants accustomed to outdoor activities age 7 and older. Driving times and altitudes are approximate and times indicated are NET. They don't include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore villages or the forest, etc.

2012 LAND COST: \$3,965 p.p.d. (2-3 participants)
\$3,685 p.p.d. (4-6 participants)
\$3,465 p.p.d. (7-12 participants)
\$ 965 Single Supplement

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

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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 first-class (4 star)** hosterías & unique haciendas as listed (or at similar boutique style facilities) on a shared basis with private bath. Double beds for couples (primarily queen or king-sized) can be requested in advance, but cannot be guaranteed, as most hotels offer few rooms with double beds.
- All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your travel specialist before making a reservation.
- All **guided tours** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking native guides specializing in the local culture and natural history of the Andes (includes applicable entrance fees).
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodations in all hosterías & haciendas. Due to the limited number of rooms at these facilities, there is a maximum of 2 singles allowed per group. If you require single accommodations, making reservations several months in advance is recommended.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic nor International flights.
- Ecuadorian airport departure taxes at approx. \$41 per person.
- Tours or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry & phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, nor additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: We strongly recommend purchasing a plan to protect your trip investment. Travel insurance helps to cover unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates. Weather, geologic events, local strikes, a personal injury/illness to you, family member or your traveling companion could cause interruption or changes to your itinerary, missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage or need for medical attention on the trip or evacuation which is why coverage is important. We recommend the *Worldwide Trip Protector (WTP)* plan offered by Travel Insured International (TII). **Kids 17 and under are free with related adult on the WTP plan.** Information and an application are sent upon receipt of your deposit (sooner if requested). Policies can be purchased securely online at: www.southwindadventures.com/insurance.html. If you, your traveling companion or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition, you should purchase the WTP policy within 21 days of your deposit in order to be reimbursed for non-refundable costs if a recurrence of the condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). Please call our office or visit our website for more information.

GUIDES: Roberto Aguilar - Owner/manager of Southwind's partner office in Quito, Roberto has worked over 20 years in the tourism industry. Trained as a cultural and natural history guide (including certification by the Charles Darwin Research Station in the Galápagos) he has led groups throughout his country. A native of Quito, he received his high school diploma in the USA, earned a degree in Social Sciences at the Catholic University and studied law. Roberto is knowledgeable on a variety of topics including an in-depth understanding of the various indigenous cultures in the Andes. His charming personality, dedication to service and attention to detail make him an ideal host for any visit to Ecuador!

Carlos Ordoñez - Roberto's partner, Carlos, also finished high school in the USA. He grew up in Quito and lived for 4 years in the Washington, DC area before returning to Ecuador. He has been involved in the travel industry for more than 15 years, and is a very enthusiastic, caring and knowledgeable guide.

OPTIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS: Guests with extra days may wish to extend their trip to the Galápagos Islands, Amazon rainforest, Cuenca and the southern highlands or the Western Cloud forest. All extensions require a minimum of 2 participants. Call our office to request our **Ecuador: 2012 Trip Extensions Summary** or view them on our website, click on *Trips>Andean Haciendas Tour>Extend Your Trip*.

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WEATHER: Overall, its equatorial location gives Ecuador a typically mild climate, with temperatures varying more by altitude than by season. Although literature describes the country as having a wet and dry season with the latter occurring in the highlands from June to September and November to January, the likelihood for rain exists year-round. Temperatures in **Quito** range from the low 40's at night to the low to mid 70's during the day (daytime temps may be as low as 50-55°F on overcast days).

Highland weather can change suddenly so one should expect variable weather patterns and should be prepared for any type of condition including intense sunshine, heat, cold, rain, snow or sleet. A typical weather pattern involves a general build up of clouds midday and short, often intense, rain showers in the afternoons. These showers seldom last all day, especially during the dry season, but it can be overcast for an entire day or two.

☞ Ecuadorians are proud to point out that in the highlands you can experience all four seasons in a day.

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 \$800-\$1,000. Flights to Quito are currently serviced by American Airlines (Miami), United/Continental (Houston), Delta (Atlanta) and LAN Airlines (Miami or JFK). 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 45 days prior to departure to arrange transfers.

HOW TO SIGN UP: Submit Southwind's Trip Reservation Form along with a \$1,000 per person per trip deposit (payable by check or credit card). The form and deposit can be completed securely online at www.southwindadventures.com by clicking on "Book a Trip" at the top of our homepage. If you prefer, you can print the Trip Reservation Form and mail/fax it to our office with your deposit. You can also 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 90 days by Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express or check. You will receive a trip invoice indicating your balance due. Provided services and space are available, reservations can be accepted up to 21 days before departure.

Cancellation Fees and other policies are outlined under the 2012 Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click [Book a Trip](#)>2012 Terms & Conditions).

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