



E C U A D O R:

MOUNTAIN BIKE ODYSSEY

Backroad Touring Through Andean Highlands & Cloud Forest

- DURATION** : 9 days / 8 nights
SEASON : May through December
DEPARTURES : Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 passengers
TRIP RATING : Moderate Mountain Bike Touring, Grade (II): This active, inn-to-inn program features 6 days of spectacular mountain bike touring, averaging 20 miles per day on unpaved and cobbled roads over varying terrain that includes 3 passes between 10,000-11,000'.
2007 DATES : On request for a minimum of 4 participants any week during the season

INTRODUCTION :

Ecuador's northern highlands feature some of the most beautiful countryside in South America. Often referred to as the Lake District, it is a region of fertile rolling hills, majestic glacier-clad volcanos and lush cloud forests, dotted with centuries-old colonial villages, alpine lakes and diverse ecological reserves. The area is home to a variety of birds, including hummingbirds, caracaras, condors, Andean snipes, waterfowl, barbets, mountain toucans, finches and many different jewel-colored tanagers, as well as unique mammal species such as the Andean spectacled bear. In addition to spectacular scenery and unusual wildlife, cottage industries abound, including wood carving, leather working, ornament making and weaving. Cross-cultural opportunities with the artists, local shop owners, farmers and craftsmen are exceptional.

Designed for the novice and experienced biker alike to enjoy some of the best mountain bike touring in South America, our group is supported by a fully-equipped sag wagon to transport gear, repair kits, and on occasion, riders themselves. We begin with a short tour of Quito, then drive northwest and continue to our cloud forest lodge by bike, enjoying the spectacular transition from the open expanses of the highlands to the dense vegetation of the cloud forest, as we follow centuries-old, switchbacked, cobbled and dirt roads. From our charming lodge, we bike in the morning and hike in the afternoon along wooded trails, watching brightly colored birds amongst the epiphytes and orchids. Driving back up to the highlands, we visit the equator monument, en route to a charming hacienda located at the foot of Cayambe (18,995'), Ecuador's third highest volcano. After riding through the surrounding countryside, we bike a 10,000-foot pass and head into the valleys and foothills below the Imbabura volcano. We peddle over cobbled streets and along backcountry dirt roads for a few days and have the chance to visit remote haciendas, Otavalo Indian villages and rural school houses. Our adventure concludes with a morning at the renowned Otavalo Indian market - one of South America's largest handicraft fairs, and a ride beside Lake Cuicocha before we drive back to Quito for a final evening together in the city.

Ecuador: Mountain Bike Odyssey

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01 (SAT): USA/QUITO

We arrive in **Quito** (9,350') this evening. Located in a high valley beneath rugged Andean peaks, Ecuador's charming capital is often referred to as the "City of Eternal Spring" because of its delightful year-round climate. We're met at the airport upon arrival and transferred to the comfortable Quito Hotel.

DAY 02 (SUN): QUITO/BELLAVISTA LODGE

After breakfast and a trip briefing at the hotel, we enjoy a short tour of colonial **Quito**. We stroll along cobbled streets beneath whitewashed adobe walls and ornate balconies on the way to the main square. We walk to the beautiful La Compañía or San Francisco churches with their ornate, gold-plated altars and collections of colonial paintings. Next, we drive northwest, out of the city, along the foothills of the Pichincha volcano to our starting point for a warm-up ride. By vehicle, we cross a pass at 10,825' on the dirt road to the village of Nono. Then, we mount our bikes for a gradual descent, with panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and rugged gorges. We notice, as the descent gets steeper, that the vegetation becomes more dense and subtropical and the weather warmer as we bike toward the cloud forest of the Tandayapa gorge. After a picnic lunch in this area and the chance to observe a variety of bird species, including Sword-billed hummingbirds, grass-green or the blue-winged mountain tanagers, toucan barbets, and toucanets, we finally arrive to the village of Tandayapa. From this meeting point, we ride the sag wagon over the remaining 4-mile, steep, uphill section to Bellavista Lodge. Upon arrival, we settle into our rooms, with time to watch the dozen or so species of hummingbirds that flock to the feeders at the lodge, before we eat dinner together. **Driving time:** 45 minutes; **Biking distance:** 21 miles or 4 hours

(B,L,D)

DAY 03 (MON): BELLAVISTA LODGE

Our lodge was created to educate guests about the importance and amazing bio-diversity of the Andean cloud forest and to advocate its protection. Today, we will fill the day with activities in the 1800 acre reserve (at elevations from 5,250' to 8,200') surrounding Bellavista Lodge. In the morning, we mount our bikes to peddle the backcountry roads (dirt and paved) leading toward Santa Rosa and Mindo, with lots of rolling terrain. Along the route, we savor views of the sharp, deeply forested mountain gorges, lush trees covered with ferns, orchids and mosses, rushing waterfalls, crystalline streams, and in the distance, the snow-capped volcanos. Stopping to catch our breath, we might spot a flock of tanagers, jays or finches, or watch the elusive Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. Since 320 species of birds have been identified in this area, a glimpse of a mountain toucan or masked trogon is also probable! We drive toward the community of Nanegalito in the afternoon, with an optional 7-mile bike ride on a scenic dirt road, completing the loop back to the lodge. Once at Bellavista, we have time to relax on the terraces, walk along the nature trails, or contemplate and listen to the melodies of the birds, as we watch the clouds rising in the nearby forest.

Biking distance: 20 miles or 5 hours

(B,L,D)

DAY 04 (TUE): BELLAVISTA/GUACHALA

After a last chance for an early morning walk near the lodge, we drive eastward, back into the Andes, following a different and quicker route, and visit the lookout point, Ventanilla Mirador, which offers an impressive view of Pululahua's crater. From here, we continue a short distance to the *Mitad del Mundo* Monument, marking the equator's path through the country, and visit the site museum which houses exhibits from Ecuador's various ethnic groups, and displays featuring typical clothing, housing styles and customs. We drive north to the town of Calderon, where we stop to visit the home and shop of a bread dough figure-maker, then head toward the fertile valleys of the Lake District. We check into the Hostería Guachalá and have lunch. This historic hacienda, the oldest farm in Ecuador, was established in 1580 and later converted to a charming country-inn. Situated exactly on the equator, Guachalá offers majestic views of snow-capped Cayambe Volcano (19,107'). Visitors are treated to lively bird activity in the nearby

Ecuador: Mountain Bike Odyssey

sanctuary and arboretum. This afternoon, we bike through the surrounding countryside, stopping to chat at local farms and with villagers we meet. Dinner is served at the hostería this evening. **Driving distance:** 79 miles or 3 ½ hours **Biking distance:** 15 miles or 3 1/2 hours (B,L,D)

DAY 05 (WED): CAYAMBE

Leaving Guachalá early this morning, we set out for a full day of riding. First, we drive a few miles north to the traditional dairy community of **Cayambe**, where we might buy a delicious ice cream cone flavored with one of the exotic local fruits like Chirimoya. We continue, by vehicle, to the town of Ayora (9,515'), where we mount our bikes and begin peddling. Our route passes huge haciendas and dozens of small farms lying in the shadow of Cayambe's ice-covered summit, and gradually gains altitude as it follows the course of the La Chimba River, up a fertile valley dotted with a patchwork of fields. This road was originally part of the Inca highway, linking Quito with the northern reaches of the Inca Empire. We continue gaining altitude as we ride toward our first high saddle, at an elevation of 10,170', on the southeastern flanks of this impressive mountain. From this high point, we descend slightly as we bike toward the communities of Olmedo and Pesillo (9,840'). Then, it's uphill again as we climb to the top of Tuqueres Alto Pass at 10,335'. Finally, in the afternoon, we descend toward **Lake San Pablo** and the charming Hacienda Cusin where we spend the night. This quaint inn was originally a farm, converted in the 1980's to accommodate guests. We enjoy dinner this evening in the cozy dining room. **Biking distance:** 30 miles or 6 hours (B,L,D)

DAY 06 (THU): OTAVALO VILLAGES

Today we bike near San Pablo Lake, focusing on the native culture as we visit several Otavalo communities, including **Agato**, **Peguche** and/or **San Juan de Ilumán**. Along our route, we can observe local Otavaleño Indians as they work their fields, wash their clothes in the river or walk into town. They are a handsome people who wear distinctive blue or grey homespun ponchos or skirts with brilliant white shirts or intricately embroidered blouses. Riding beneath the majestic Imbabura volcano (15,250'), we might also spot some of the many species of waterfowl that inhabit these highland regions, including the speckled teal, American coot or yellow-billed pintail. Later in the afternoon, we visit a family's home and enjoy a demonstration of their fine weaving skills. Otavalo weavers refined their craft during the Inca occupation and later, when they were forced by Spanish colonialists and Ecuadorian landlords to weave for up to 14 hours each day. Their superb talent, combined with a sharp business sense, has contributed to worldwide recognition of their proficiency as weavers, and they have become one of the most prosperous of all indigenous groups in South America. Many have traveled to the US, Europe and/or other Latin American destinations to promote their weavings. We return to Hacienda Cusin in the afternoon, eager for a delicious dinner there this evening. **Biking distance:** 20 miles or 4 1/2 hours (B,L,D)

DAY 07 (FRI): IMBABURA/CHORLAVI

Our route today is more challenging, as it takes us uphill from the hacienda, following a seldom used dirt track to reach the top of a 10,500-foot-high saddle between Imbabura and Cerro Cusin. From here, we descend a short distance to arrive to the traditional village of Zuleta. We visit the historic **Zuleta** hacienda with its small school and church, then continue biking along dirt and cobbled roads north toward Ibarra, stopping to visit with residents of some of the other small villages dotting the hillsides along the way. Near the quaint, colonial communities of Rumipamba and La Esperanza (located on the backside of the peak), we encounter bright green fields with crops irrigated by a maze of water canals. In the afternoon, we arrive to the Hostería Chorlaví, located in a wide valley outside **Ibarra** at a comfortable 7,200-foot-elevation. There should be time this afternoon to relax in the Jacuzzi and enjoy the inn's lovely tranquil setting before dinner. **Biking distance:** 25 miles or 5 hours (B,L,D)

DAY 08 (SAT): OTAVALO/QUITO

We return to **Otavalo** in the early morning to catch the weekly market, just as the trading is getting under way. Dating back to before the Inca occupation of the region, when Indians from the lowland jungles would visit the highlands to trade their products, this is now one of South America's largest and best markets. In

Ecuador: Mountain Bike Odyssey

the town center, we join dozens of locals and visitors wandering through the main plaza 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 are plenty of opportunities to purchase some of the exquisite woolen products or embroidery work for which the Otavalo weavers are renowned. Next we drive to the colonial town of Cotacachi. From here, we bike west into Cotacachi-Cayapas Reserve, whose centerpiece is **Lake Cuicocha** (10,500'), formed in the crater of one of the area's many extinct volcanos. Our route takes us through the Andean páramo, a unique ecological zone found only in the tropical Americas. Along the way, we have excellent views of green and gold valleys dominated by the glacier-clad Cayambe, Imbabura and Cotacachi volcanos. We may spot an Andean condor, mountain caracaras or other highland bird species. In the late afternoon, we load our bikes onto the sag wagon for the drive back to the familiar Quito Hotel, and time permitting, stop at Cochasqui to view this pre-Inca archaeological site featuring 15 pyramidal structures. This evening, we join our guide for a farewell dinner and folk music show. **Driving distance:** 110 miles or 3 ½ hours; **Biking distance:** 20 miles or 4 ½ hours (B,L,D)

DAY 09 (SUN): QUITO/USA

Our local guide picks us up at the hotel this morning for the drive to the airport and assists us with checking-in for our flight back to the US. (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 pace and acclimatization, weather, river/road/trail conditions and/or international flight schedules. Biking and driving distances as well as altitudes are approximate and times indicated are NET, not including lunch breaks, rest stops, time to visit communities, etc. This program is suitable for physically fit participants accustomed to outdoor activities, minimum 12 years old. A sag wagon will support the group by carrying personal clothing, repair kits and on occasion, bikers. Actual biking distances may vary according to each rider's ability, and those wishing to ride greater distances can arrange to do so. Due to their small size, either the Bellavista or Mindo Gardens lodge may be used for our stay in the cloud forest depending on availability at the time of placing your reservation. Both offer similar activities including biking, hiking, birding, etc.

2007 LAND COST:
\$2,975 p.p.d (4-5 participants)
\$2,775 p.p.d. (6-9 participants)
\$2,575 p.p.d. (10-12 participants)
\$ 375 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 (4 star) hotels and country inns** as listed (or at similar facilities) on a shared basis with private bath. Accommodations at the Bellavista or Mindo Gardens Lodge in double occupancy with private bath & hot showers. 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 at hotels & country inns. Due to the small size of the facilities, the number of singles available per group are limited to 2. If you require single accommodations, making reservations well in advance is recommended. Single accommodations at the Bellavista or Mindo Gardens Lodge may have a shared bath.

Ecuador: Mountain Bike Odyssey

- 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 mountain biking service** including:
 - Experienced and knowledgeable, English-speaking Andean guide & assistant guide (provided for groups with 8 or more participants).
 - Sag wagon or bus support for carrying equipment and repair kits. Also available for cyclists who want a break from peddling.
 - 21-speed, all-terrain Trek, Specialized, Raleigh, GT or similar mountain bikes with Shimano components, front shock absorbers and grip shifting (14, 16, 18, 19 and 20 inch frames are available and are reserved on a first-in basis once your deposit is received).
 - If you bring your own bike you'll receive \$150 credit towards your Land Cost.
- First Aid kit.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic nor International flights.
- Ecuadorian airport departure taxes (approx. \$32 per traveler).
- Tours or services not listed on the itinerary.
- Tips to local staff, including the biking guide.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, laundry & phone calls.
- Personal clothing or biking gear (helmet, gloves, shorts, shoes, etc.)
- 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.

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.

OPTIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS: Travelers with extra days may wish to extend their trip to the Galápagos Islands, Amazon rainforest, or Cuenca and the southern highlands. All extensions require a minimum of 2 participants. Call our office to request our **2007 Trip Extensions Summary** or view them on our website, click on *Trips>Mountain Bike Odyssey>Extend Your Trip*.

BELLAVISTA LODGE: This cloud forest lodge, in its unique and spectacular location, offers guests the opportunity to stay above the forest canopy in a four-story, thatch-roofed, glass-walled geodesic dome. The 360-degree view from the dome allows guests to gaze upon the rugged peaks of Pichincha and Cotacachi in the distance, watch the sun rise over Bellavista, and enjoy the mist lifting from the deep valleys below. Surrounded with balconies and hummingbird feeders, one can easily lose track of time observing the activity of the diminutive, but fascinating, birds. The Dome offers all the comforts of home: hot showers, comfortable beds, friendly staff, plenty of relaxation, and delicious food. Guests are accommodated in 5 double rooms with private baths and balconies. On the top two floors there are two single rooms and dormitory-style accommodations with a shared bath and large balcony. On the ground floor is the small library and bar. Another newly completed building has four rooms with private bathrooms, offering a bit more privacy.

Ecuador: Mountain Bike Odyssey

MINDO GARDEN LODGE: Located at the foot of the Mindo Nambillo Protected Cloud Forest, situated by a crystalline river, Mindo Garden, with more than 741 acres of private land, was the pioneer facility in this area. It is a delightful hotel for naturalists who want something extra in an intimate cloud forest lodge. Accommodations are in nine spacious bedrooms with plentiful windows opening onto the forest, each with private baths and hot showers. Designed to provide the feeling of being right in the cloud forest, while protecting guests from the mist and rain, it is surrounded by a lush private forest of sub-tropical vegetation that includes orchids, bromeliads, "anturios", giant ferns, and a variety of old trees. Furthermore, Mindo is privileged to have one of the most important Cock-of-the-Rock "leks" in the area. This bird, because of its bright appearance and interesting custom of meeting at the "lek" to display itself for the female, is one of the most interesting and sought-after birds of the Andes.

WEATHER: Overall, its equatorial location gives Ecuador a typically mild climate, with temperature 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 (particularly in the cloud forest). 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.

☞ Highland Ecuadorians are proud to point out that you can experience all four seasons in a single day. Cloud forest weather is typically damp, misty and/or rainy with cool nights and warm, humid days. Daytime high temperatures are in the 80's with nighttime lows falling into the 40's.

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.

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).

itin/07-mbo.wpdNov06