



AUTHENTIC ECUADOR 9 DAY SAMPLE ITINERARY

Snow capped volcanoes, green valleys, the high Andes mountains, clear blue lakes and the Amazon Rain Forest, make Ecuador a country of astounding variety and beauty. Experience daily life in Old Town colonial Quito, visit quaint indigenous villages, stay in historic haciendas and experience the Ecuadorian Amazon, part of the largest rainforest on Earth - all the ingredients for the journey of a lifetime to "Authentic Ecuador."

Day 1: ARRIVE QUITO

On arrival in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, nestled between two snow-capped peaks in a geographic setting matched by few cities, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the Old City. Spend 4 nights here. Free for dinner this evening.

Day 2: QUITO

Breakfast, Lunch

Today you will enjoy a "Colonial Quito" city tour which will include Plaza San Francisco, the church of the Franciscan order, the Jesuit church *La Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesús* and El Panecillo, where you will view the enormous Virgin of Quito statue and look out over the length and breadth of the city of Quito.

Visit the Middle of the World & IntiÑan Museum.

Lunch at El Crater Restaurant

Return to your hotel. Free for dinner this evening.



Franciscan Monastery



Virgin of Quito (Photos by Judy Vos)

Day 3: QUITO

Breakfast, Lunch

Morning visit to the San Francisco Market where the locals shop and visit the fascinating La Ronda Street where you will find artisan workshops, hat makers and sweet confectioners.

Lunch today at Hotel Plaza Grande will include a Gastronomy Lesson.

Afternoon at leisure to explore this amazing city further on your own. Browse in the local shops, all within walking distance, relax at your hotel and definitely visit the Pacari Chocolate shop!

Day 4: FULL DAY MINDO CLOUD FOREST EXCURSION

Breakfast, Lunch

Early morning pick up for a special treat today: full day tour to the Mindo Cloud Forest - Pahuma Reserve. The El Pahuma Orchid Reserve directly benefits the conservation of orchids and other cloud forest species through protection of this threatened habitat. Cloud forest is well-known to support an exceptionally diverse biological community that includes numerous endemic species: plants or animals found nowhere else on earth. In fact, due to the varied topography creating many different micro-climates, Andean cloud forests harbour up to ten times more endemic species than lowland Amazon rainforests! Marvel at the incredible variety of hummingbirds in Refugee Aves de Paz and enjoy the Butterfly farm. Lunch at Sachatamia Restaurant.

Return to your hotel in Quito. Free for dinner this evening.

(Option to overnight at a lodge in the cloud forest.)

Day 5: QUITO – ANDEAN HIGHLANDS

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Depart Quito and head into the Andean Highlands where you will visit the famous Otavalo market, piled high with ponchos, woollen goods, tapestries, the original Panama hat, sweaters, Indian jewellery, many handicrafts - and nothing made in China! Try your bargaining skills with the local Otavaleños in their elegant and colourful clothing.

Lunch at La Marqueza Restaurant in the town of Cotacachi, famous for its leather products.

Another highlight to-day will be Cuicocha Lake, located inside a volcanic crater at the foot of the Cotacachi Volcano. The beautiful scenery of the bright blue lake is enhanced by the local flora of miniature orchids and other Andean flowers.

Check in to a local hacienda for 2 nights. Dinner at the hacienda this evening.



Cuicocha lake (Photo by Judy Vos)

Day 6: ANDEAN HIGHLANDS

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today will bring more visits to local artisans, starting with Ñanda Mañachi Andean instruments where you will learn about the many different musical instruments made and played in the Andes. On to Peguche to visit a weaving workshop and see how the old traditions have been maintained. There will be opportunity to buy some of their beautiful products.

Return to your hacienda for lunch. Afternoon at leisure to relax at the hacienda and explore the surroundings. Dinner at the hacienda this evening.



Otovalo Market



Weaving Workshop (Photos by Judy Vos)

Day 7: TRAIN TRIP – KARANKI MAGDALENA COMMUNITY

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Depart after breakfast for the train station at Ibarra to take the “*Tren de la Libertad*” (Liberty Train) on a 1½ hour journey to the town of Salinas. Travelling through some spectacular and contrasting scenery, the route includes a number of bridges and tunnels through the mountains, built by labourers with pickaxes and shovels. The difference in cultures between Ibarra and Salinas is noticeable, with the former being populated by indigenous and Mestizo groups and the latter being home to a vibrant Afro-Ecuadorian community. A lively dance display by the locals will welcome you to Salinas – perhaps you will be invited to join in!

Lunch at a local restaurant in Salinas.

Drive to the Karanki Magdalena Community high up in the Andean mountains for your overnight stay with a local indigenous family. At Magdalena, a rural highland village which is home to the Karanki culture, an interactive tourism experience has been put in place, where guests may participate in local everyday activities, outdoor excursions and overnight stays in family homes, an innovative combination of comfort and authentic living. These families are being trained in hostelry, cooking, hygiene & health and accounting and are receiving lessons in English. They will make you welcome as you experience their everyday lives during your stay.

Accommodation will be in a home in the Community. You may be invited to assist in the preparation of dinner which will be shared with your family this evening.

Day 8: KARANKI COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES – QUITO

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning you will have the opportunity to enjoy various activities on offer in the Community. The following “everyday life” activities are included: *(Photos courtesy of Magdalena Community)*



Roasting Corn



Make Canelazo – Cinnamon



Animal feeding



Knead & bake

alcoholic beverage

Optional activities, to be paid on the spot in cash: (make sure to have small US\$ notes with you)



Learn embroidery



Shepherding *



Mountain biking**



Horse Riding



Hiking

Shepherding on a nearby hill with local shepherds; **Mountain biking has a maximum of 12 people: *Horse riding can accommodate only 8 people and must be arranged with our guide a few days in advance - see crater formations, abandoned mines, flora & fauna.*

Lunch at the Karanki Community with your hosts. Drive back to Quito in the afternoon for overnight.

Day 9: DEPARTURE

Breakfast

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight, whether homeward bound or perhaps to the Amazon or Galapagos Islands to continue your South American adventure.



THIS ITINERARY CAN BE CUSTOMIZED TO SUIT YOUR PREFERENCES

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