Experience the natural wonders and culture of the Andes Mountains and Amazon Jungles of Ecuador. This active multisport journey explores the best of more than 5 different ecosystems. Mountain bike through cloud forests, navigate the rivers of the rainforest, sooth in natural hot springs, learn from ancient cultures and much more. Top-notch guides accompany you on an unforgettable journey whitewater rafting, mountain biking, horseback riding, and trekking through one of the world’s most diverse countries.

**Effort:** Moderate  
**Activities:** Mountain Biking, Whitewater Rafting, Hiking, Horseback Riding, Indigenous Community Encounters, Wildlife Seeking  
**Accommodations:** First Class and Tourist Superior Hotels & Lodges

**Trip highlights:**
- Explore an Andean hacienda on horseback, chagra style!  
- Mountain bike on the slopes of the world’s highest active volcano  
- Visit an Amazon indigenous community and participate in cultural activities  
- Exhilarating Amazon jungle rafting on the best one-day river run (class III+)  
- Relax in the rejuvenating natural hot springs  
- Learn the ancient meaning of the equator  
- Learn the secrets of textile weaving  
- Hike around the Cuicocha Crater and Lake  
- Top-notch bilingual adventure guides lead every step of your journey  
- Accommodations in quality hotels, historic haciendas, and eco lodges
DAY 1: HIKE IN THE PASOCHOA WILDLIFE RESERVE AND HORSEBACK RIDING IN COTOPAXI NATIONAL PARK

We depart in the morning from Quito due south through the famed Avenue of the Volcanoes. On the way, we enjoy spectacular views of the Pita Canyon River Gorge in the foothills of the Pasochoa Volcano. We reach the entrance of Pasochoa Forest within the collapsed crater just 30 Km south of Quito. This lively forest boasts a wide range of highland trees and shrubs, as well as orchids, bromeliads, lichens, and ferns. Prolific birdlife includes at least 11 species of hummingbirds, and many birds endemic to Ecuador are easily spotted along the trails. If the skies are clear, the hike is made even more magical by the stunning backdrop of snow-capped peaks in the distance.

We continue on to Hacienda El Porvenir, a 3000-hectare, family-owned hacienda rich in history and representative of the Chagra (Ecuadorian cowboy) culture. El Porvenir has been in the same family for 7 generations, and was the first hacienda in Ecuador to raise fighting bulls. After a traditional welcome tea, our lunch features gourmet, locally-produced Andean foods. In the afternoon we gear up Chagra style, and don ponchos, chaps, and cowboy hats to explore the expansive grounds of the hacienda on horseback (hiking is optional). The hacienda produces potatoes, lima beans, quinoa, and other crops that grow at altitudes over 10,000 feet (3,000 meters), all with a backdrop of spectacular volcano scenery. Our Chagra guide share his knowledge of local plants, birds, and fauna, and help us to safely admire the brave fighting bulls. We spend a relaxing evening at the hacienda. (L, D)

DAY 2: MOUNTAIN BIKING AT COTOPAXI VOLCANO & EXPLORE BAÑOS

Today we drive towards the base of the Cotopaxi Volcano, where we begin our mountain biking adventure. After a safety briefing, we explore the park’s highland plateaus as we observe typical highland vegetation and fauna with stunning volcano scenery as a backdrop. We visit Limpiopungo Glacier Lake and exiting the park through the south entrance. We continue our journey driving through the Avenue of the Volcanoes up to the town of Baños for a delicious lunch. We enjoy spectacular views of the Tungurahua Volcano and the Pastaza River Gorge. After lunch, we explore the town of Baños, a colorful colonial town at an altitude of 5,000 feet (1,500 meters) surrounded by tropical cloud forest. In the late afternoon, we reach a cozy Andean Hacienda, where we dine and relax for the evening. (B, L, D)

DAY 3: BIKING TO THE AMAZON & VISIT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

In the morning, we drive to the edge of Llanganates National Park, gaining altitude until we reach an area with one of the best views of the – often fuming – Tungurahua Volcano. Here, we set up our mountain bikes for a scenic ride through highland paramo, which gradually melds into mountain cloud forest, and then lowland rainforest. We pass through a dry basaltic gorge that is a great spot to look for wild orchids. We continue our ride along the Pastaza River Gorge, one of the principal waterways that feed into the Amazon Basin. This is an especially scenic route, with high rock walls giving way to deep cloud forest canyons. We stop to admire some of the spectacular waterfalls in the area, such as
Pailón del Diablo (Devil’s Cauldron) and Manto de la Novia (Bride’s Veil). Switching from 2 wheels to 4, we drive until we reach Puyo, an Amazon frontier town where we learn about the manufacture of products made from Balsa wood, bamboo, ceramics, and other local materials. We enjoy lunch in Puyo before setting out along the Amazon highway to reach our Jungle Lodge. Once we settle into our lodge, we embark on a visit to an indigenous community. Here, we learn about the way of life, culture, traditions, and customs of the Amazon. At the end of the day, we settle into our jungle lodge ready for a peaceful evening surrounded by rainforest sounds. (B, L, D)

**DAY 4: JUNGLE RAFTING ON THE JATUNYACU RIVER**

After enjoying breakfast in our lodge, we drive to Llanganates National Park, which extends from the high Andes down into the Amazon basin and is part of an area declared a Biosphere Zone by the United Nations. The water that collects in this area forms the Jatunyacu River, which is considered Ecuador’s best one-day river run. We begin the day with a walk in the jungle to reach naturally-formed swimming pools. Upon our return and after a safety briefing, our whitewater rafting adventure begins. A trip down the Jatunyacu River offers spectacular jungle scenery, crystal-clear water, and glimpses into indigenous communities that live along the shores in small bamboo and wood houses. The Jatunyacu is also famed for its big waves, fun holes, and high volume of water (Class III - III+). We’ll spend the rest of the day navigating the Jatunyacu, whose waters carry us through breathtaking landscapes with abundant bird life. In the afternoon, we drive back up into the Andes, climbing from 1,500 to 10,000 feet (500 to 3,000 meters) in altitude and passing through a national park and nature reserve until we reach the Papallacta Hotsprings Resort & Spa. In the evening, we relax in the therapeutic alkaline-rich natural thermal waters of Papallacta while nestled in fantastic cloud forest scenery. Spa services such as massages, aromatherapy, and other optional treatments can also be arranged in advance. Lodgings at Papallacta Resort. (B, L, D)

**DAY 5: PARAMO HIKE, CATEQUILLA MONUMENT, & OTAVALO INDIGENOUS MARKET**

In the early morning, we visit the highland interpretation center and go for a guided nature hike in a private cloud forest and paramo reserve, where we seek out birds, highland plants, and other Andean wildlife species. Afterwards, we drive to a Middle of the World monument shaped as a star of eight points, representing pre-colonial and Incan indigenous beliefs that 0° latitude was the center of time and measurement. Here we learn about Ecuador’s geographic position and how its location on the equator influences its many cultures, climates, and biological diversity. After this visit, we enjoy lunch on the waterfront of San Pablo Lake. We spend the rest of the afternoon exploring the towns of Otavalo and Peguche, where Ecuador’s indigenous culture and heritage is visible in their famous markets full of colorful textiles, traditional handicrafts, and more. We spend time one-on-one with local weavers who share the secrets of their craft that have been passed down for generations. If there is enough time we may also visit the Andean Music Museum to hear the traditional instrumental and vocal sounds of the Andes. The evening is spent at a traditional colonial hacienda. (B, L, D)
DAY 6: HIKING AROUND CUICOCHA CRATER LAKE

After breakfast, we drive up to Cuicocha Crater Lake, located 10,000 feet (3,068 meters) above sea level within the Cayapas-Cotacachi national park. Cuicochoa Lake is the freshwater-filled caldera of a dormant volcano, located at the foot of a volcano of the same name, and surrounded by stunning cloud forest scenery. We hike around the shore of the crater lake, admiring the lava dome islands in the center and keeping an eye out for birds and other interesting wildlife. We enjoy lunch before departing for Quito in the afternoon. Upon our return, we have the evening free to explore the landmarks and night life of Ecuador’s capital city. (B, L)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

TRAVEL TIME: 1 to 5 hours per day

SEASON: All year

ALTITUDE: 1,500 to 15,500 feet (500 to 4,800 meters)

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE – ANDES: Day 46 to 75°F / 8 to 24°C, night 41 to 53°F / 5 to 12°C

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE – CLOUDFOREST: Day 60 to 86°F /16 to 30°C, night 60 to 68°F /16 to 20°C

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE – AMAZON: Day 68 to 95°F / 20 to 35°C, Night 64 to 71°F / 18-22°C

SUGGESTED ITEMS TO PACK: Sun block, bathing suit, and repellent.

INCLUDED

Accommodations in first class and tourist superior hotels; private land transportation; all meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily); all adventure and protective equipment (including front-suspended Deore mountain bikes, rafting equipment, gloves, helmets, water bottles, and dry bags); and professional English-speaking guide.

NOT INCLUDED

National Park entrance fees; hotel & restaurant beverages, tips.