



Volcanoes of Ecuador 13-days

TRIP ITINERARY

Imagine an area roughly 100 miles by 100 miles that stretches from the ocean to snow-capped mountains. Now fill it with Earth's greatest diversity of life per square mile. Add layers of forest and jungle, then sprinkle it with volcanoes. Mix in nearly a dozen distinct languages and cultures. And now connect many of these attractions with trails and lodges that combine scenery, culture and comfort. This is adventure travel in Ecuador.

On this trip, we will summit five volcanic peaks above 13,000' in elevation, one of them above 16,000'. These are non-technical- but challenging- climbs, giving trekkers in good condition access to high alpine adventure while sleeping in wonderful lodges and exploring fascinating ancient cultures.

We will also climb the volcano Cotopaxi and you will be able to glimpse breathtaking views of Ecuador from this 19,347' peak.

Trekking and climbing in Ecuador is a window into a high, historic and beautiful place. It mixes adventure with modern comfort in a destination that is a little off the usual travel routes, meaning this special Embark adventure is one you won't want to miss.





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JANUARY 11

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Lodging: Patio Andaluz

Ecuador's capital city bears two interesting distinctions: it is the highest above sea level (9,350') and also the closest to the Equator. Upon arrival, you will be met by our representatives and escorted to your hotel in the historic center of Quito. The rest of the day is free to explore the city.

JANUARY 12

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Lodging: Patio Andaluz

Our journey begins in Colonial Quito, a city of narrow cobblestone streets lined with whitewashed walls and, rising above, the steeples and cupolas of the city's many historic churches.

Quito has one of the best preserved colonial centers in all of South America; its integrity was assured in 1978 when Quito became one of the first two cities in the world (along with Krakow, Poland) to be declared a UNESCO World Culture Heritage Site.

We walk through the Main Plaza, where you will see the Government Palace, the Cathedral, and some of the most important churches built around the 16th and 17th Centuries, including the monastery of San Francisco, which started five days after the founding of the city in 1534. We will also visit La Ronda Street, where we will learn about the traditional jobs in Colonial Quito.

We will also sample one of the country's most famous exports: chocolate. Ecuador's unique equatorial climate provides the perfect environment for growing the world's finest cocoa- Cacao Arriba. Cacao has been revered in Latin America for over 5,000 years. Spanish explorers loved it so much



they called it the “Food of the Gods.” We will explore the history of Ecuadorian cacao and have a chocolate tasting to top off our day.

JANUARY 13

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Elevation (ft) 12,943ft to 15,696ft

Distance 6mi

Hiking Time 4-6 hours

Lodging: Casa Mojanda- Otavalo

After a brief ride on a Teleferico (cable car) from Quito to an elevation of 12,900’, we take a straightforward climb of 4-6 hours to Rucu Pichincha, a 15,696-foot volcano visible from Quito. This will be a good acclimatization day to prepare us for our coming adventures in the Andes, and if the weather is clear we will have world-class views of the famous “Avenue of Volcanoes”, a stretch of seven peaks above 17,000 feet in elevation. We overnight in a lodge just outside Otavalo, a small town around 8,000 feet elevation, famous for the textiles made by the indigenous people and sold at a local market we will visit.

JANUARY 14

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Elevation (ft) 12,253ft to 13,986ft

Distance 3mi

Hiking Time 3 hours

Lodging: Casa Mojanda- Otavalo

We start with a scenic 20-minute drive from the lodge to the trailhead, located at the beautiful Mojanda Lakes, a caldera of three lakes formed by the collapse of two ancient volcanoes some 165,000 years ago. The climb from the lakes up to Fuya Fuya (13,986’) is a straightforward 1.5-2hr ascent. After the hike, we return to the lodge for the afternoon and evening.

JANUARY 15

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Elevation (ft) 9,655ft to 8,500ft to 9,200 ft

Distance 9mi

Hiking Time 6-7 hours

Lodging: Medina del Lago- San Pablo

We descend from our lodge with views of surrounding peaks, past the Mojanda community and make our first stop at the local food market, where our expert guides will inspire us with information on the colorful, tasteful fruits and vegetables produced in the surrounding farmlands we will be exploring over the next few days.

Next, we explore Plaza de Ponchos at the Otavalo market, the large Andean market famous for its craft work. Our guides will be there to assist you in your exploration, but mainly we explore on our own, diving into whichever section of the market intrigues us. After shopping in the market, we hike away from the crowded city and hike through the small community of Peguche before arriving at a beautiful 50-foot waterfall, which is also an Indigenous ceremonial site due to the purification baths held here every year prior to Inti Rami celebration. Our hike continues up to the small town of Agato, where we will be hosted by a family that preserves the tradition of weaving on a backstrap loom- an art form which is sadly dying. The quality of the items produced at the workshop is clearly superior to many of the machine-woven products you will find in the market.

In the afternoon, we continue our hike toward San Pablo Lake, hiking through sparsely populated rural communities and small farms, in the shadow of the imposing Imbaura Volcano. We overnight at a wellness lodge overlooking San Pablo lake and dine on local ingredients.



JANUARY 16

Elevation (ft) 9,986 to 10,220ft

Distance 10mi

Hiking Time 5 hours

Lodging: La Alegria- Cotopaxi

After a short vehicle transfer to the beginning of the trail, we will trek through the community of Zuleta, an area famed for its traditional embroidery, dairy products, alpaca farming and highland crops such as wheat, maize, potatoes, lentils and quinoa. “Zuletenos” and “Zuletenas” are known to keep their culture and traditions; keep an eye out for the way the locals dress here and how different it is from the traditional Otavalo clothing. After our morning hike, we learn to cook Zuleta-style in the home of a local chef who worked for many years at one of the best haciendas in Ecuador. After enjoying the fruits of our labors, we depart Zuleta and Otavalo for the Cotopaxi region and our next three 4K summits!

JANUARY 17

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Elevation (ft) 11,152 to 13,776ft

Distance 6mi

Hiking Time 6 hours

Lodging: Chilcabamba- Cotopaxi

We take on our next peak today, the 13,776’ extinct volcano of Pasachoa. Our hike through virgin highland cloud forests and paramo grasslands will take approximately three hours to the summit. This is one of the best places to see the endangered Andean condor, soaring high above. From the summit, if it is clear, we will have a spectacular view of the mountains surrounding Quito, the inspiring scenery of the Pasachoa crater, as well as the impressive surrounding mountain peaks : Antisana,

Sincholagua, Quilindana, Cotopaxi, Ruminahui, Corazon and the twin Iliniza peaks.

After our summit, our descent takes us to the Pita river canyon, a downhill walk of about 3 hours through grasslands and low ‘Chaparro’ forests, ending at a mountain lodge situated at about 10,500 feet above sea level.

JANUARY 18

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Elevation (ft) 10,500 to 12,300ft

Distance 5.5mi

Hiking Time 5 hours

Lodging: Chilcabamba- Cotopaxi

Today we head to Cotopaxi National Park, one of the most beautiful protected areas of Ecuador. On a clear day, you might see Cotopaxi’s peak from parts of Quito, but its majesty is only clearly revealed from within the borders of the park. When the weather cooperates, views of its snow-capped, nearly symmetrical summit cone are awe-inspiring.

We start at the Pita River, which gives life to hundreds of thousands of Quitenios (as Ecuador capital city residents are known). Its source is the pristine glacial meltwater of Cotopaxi, and its rushing waters will guide us throughout much of our adventure. Following the river, the hike enters the Cotopaxi National Park towards an ancient Inca archaeological site called Pucara de Salitre. Along the way, we may spot a variety of wildlife and birds, including the Andean condor, wild horses, deer or llamas that make the park their home, as well as gorgeous seasonal mountain wildflowers and breathtaking scenery. We will spend time at the water’s edge of the Pita and the natural springs at the park, admiring classic views of Cotopaxi or perhaps the reflection of Ruminahui, tomorrow’s peak, in its waters. During our adventure, we will stop to enjoy a picnic in the crisp alpine



environment before returning to our lodge in the afternoon.



fields and rock face below the summit. The climb highlights the grandeur of the Andes, offering views of the nearby peaks of Sincholagua as well as Cotopaxi and even Illinzas Norte.

On our descent we will pass through ‘the silent valley’ that follows the course of a number of small streams before returning to the stunning Limpiopungo Lake.

JANUARY 20

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Elevation (ft) 16,732ft

Hiking Time 4 hours

Lodging: Chilcabamba- Cotopaxi

From the lodge we will drive in our private vehicle to the parking area of the Cotopaxi mountain refuge. We will then walk for approximately an hour before reaching the mountaineers’ lodge, and hike from there to the edge of the glacier, a walk of approximately two hours. From here, the northern side of the mountain offers a spectacular panorama. You will be able to identify (with the help of our guide) all of the ground we have covered since the first day of our adventure. The glacier school is indispensable if we are going to get to our goal: the summit of this mountain giant. As well as acclimatization, getting to the high point of the volcano involves getting to know our high mountain equipment and learning to use it safely. We will also learn techniques for displacement and progression on a glacier, which include the use of the pick, crampons and rope. The expert guides that will go with us to the peak will be on hand to answer questions and provide support.

JANUARY 19

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Elevation (ft) 12,464ft to 15,189ft

Distance 10mi

Hiking Time 6 hours

Lodging: Chilcabamba- Cotopaxi

The hike to the summit of triple-peaked Ruminahui (named after a famous Inca general and known as the park’s sentr) starts at the crystal clear Limpiopungo Lagoon, which often reflects Cotopaxi towering above. This hike will take us right into the heart of the paramo grasslands, passing small waterfalls before arriving at the scree



JANUARY 21



Elevation (ft) 15,750ft

Hiking Time 2 hours

Lodging: Regugio Rivas- Cotopaxi

The day before climbing a mountain such as Cotopaxi it is important to rest, plan the ascent and pack exactly what we need to take onto the mountain. Now we focus on getting to the refuge and the certainty of reaching our objective: the mountain summit. After a light but sustaining lunch we will once again make our way to the refuge by vehicle and walking. The total time assigned for the activity is no more than 2 hours, after which we will eat a light supper and rest after 6pm in order to conserve energy for the night and early morning activities. In the evening we will make our way to Refuge Number 2, the Jose F. Ribas Refuge, at an altitude of 15,750ft above sea level. Tonight we stay at the refuge.

JANUARY 22



Elevation (ft) 19,347ft

Hiking Time 9 hours

Lodging: Chilcabamba- Cotopaxi

The climb begins at midnight after a quick 'breakfast' and final equipment check. The average time needed to reach the summit is between 5 and 7 hours, offering us a good chance to see the sun

come up from our position high on the mountain. The climb is not complicated, but the conditions can change with the weather. The degree of difficulty is medium and, though a little mountain climbing experience is recommended, most people that attempt the climb reach the summit and its impressive vaporous crater. With the experience we have accumulated so far there should be no problem. The maximum inclination is 50 degrees and the reward for our efforts will be a truly phenomenal view of the Avenue of the Volcanoes, a panorama which includes Chimborazo to the South, Imbabura to the North and all the magnificent peaks in between. The descent, which will take approximately 3 hours, follows the same route as the initial climb. After a short celebration at the Refuge we will collect our equipment and depart.

JANUARY 23



Elevation (ft) 9,350ft

Our adventure ends with private vehicle transfer from Cotopaxi National Park to Quito and departure home.



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10-DAY VOLCANO ADVENTURE | 13 DAYS IN ECUADOR

4+ persons \$4,395 USD per person double occupancy.

7+ persons \$3,795 per person double occupancy.

10+ persons \$3,595 per person double occupancy.

Single Supplement \$650

ABOVE COST INCLUDES

- All international and domestic airport transfers as per the program by private vehicle
- Accommodations for two nights in Quito
- Cultural immersion tour in Otavalo
- All park fees
- All meals and accommodations outside of Quito
- Accommodation, meals, insurance, equipment, transportation and allowances of guide and staff.
- All applicable government taxes

COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Lunch and dinner in Quito.
- International airfare
- Bottled drinks (mineral water, any cold drinks, and alcoholic drinks).
- Your travel insurance and overseas medical insurance coverage
- Expenses of personal nature such as tips for guide, porter and driver, laundry, bar bill, telephone calls etc.
- Liability for expenses against sickness, flight cancellation, road blockage, accidents and other occurrence beyond our control
- Any other expenses not mentioned above



