

# Avenue of the Volcanoes

13 days | Quito to Guayaquil



*Discover the heart of the Ecuadorian Andes with this adventure from colonial Quito to coastal Guayaquil taking in the market town of Otavalo, impressive Cotopaxi National Park and its snow-capped volcanoes, the glittering Quilotoa crater, gorgeous Cuenca and a thrilling ride on the 'Devil's Nose' train.*

## HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

### Trip Highlights

- Quito and the Centre of the World – touring of the UNESCO-listed colonial city and a visit to the Equatorial Monument
- Otavalo – rich cultural heritage and excellent handicrafts market full of artisan goods
- Cotopaxi National Park – the Avenue of the Volcanoes with visits to the Quilotoa crater and Limpiopungo Lagoon
- Indian markets in the Cotopaxi region
- Baños – enjoy a stroll in the spa town
- Route of the Cascades – the impressive Devil's Cauldron
- Alausí and the Devil's Nose – ride the 100-year old train along its dramatic zig-zag mountain route

- Cuenca – the colonial jewel of the south with overhanging houses along the Tomebamba River and a visit to a Panama Hat factory
- Gualaceo Valley – local handicrafts and scenic villages
- El Cajas National Park – glacial lakes and small forests of quinoa trees

### What's Included

- 12 nights STANDARD accommodation. Upgrading to SUPERIOR or DELUXE accommodation options are also available upon request. Accommodation rating – See Trip Notes for details
- 12 breakfasts, 9 lunches and 5 dinners
- Airport arrival and departure transfer on day 1 and day 13
- Services of local English-speaking specialist guides
- Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary
- Tour of Quito, Cotopaxi National Park, Gualaceo Valley, Otavalo Market and El Cajas National Park on a private basis
- Return train journey from Alausí along the Devil's Nose
- All relevant transfers and transportation on a private basis unless otherwise stated
- Spirit of the Andes Express train excursion (departs Fridays)

### What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Laundry, drinks and items of a personal nature
- Tipping – an entirely personal gesture

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 : Quito

¡Bienvenidos a Ecuador! Upon arrival you will be met at the international airport and transferred to your hotel in Quito where the rest of the day is free. **Overnight - Quito**

### Day 2 : Quito and the Centre of the World

This morning visit downtown Quito and its architectural treasures. Quito's UNESCO-listed colonial quarter is one of the largest and best-preserved in South America. Your stroll takes you through Independence Plaza, past the Cathedral and the Presidential Palace, and on to the temple of La Compañía de Jesús with its dazzling gilded interior and the impressive façade of the Monastery of San Francisco. Touring continues with the Equatorial Monument that marks the exact point of the Middle of the World. With a latitude of 0°, you can stand with a foot in each hemisphere and collect a certificate for having crossed the Equator. Next visit the Ethnographic Museum to learn about the different Native American groups living in

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Ecuador. Lunch is served at a local restaurant.  
**Overnight - Quito** (B, L)

## Day 3 : Otavalo Market



Quito – Otavalo – Quito. Enjoy an excursion to the market town of Otavalo today. Rich in ancestral cultural heritage and set amongst stunning Andean scenery of mountains, waterfalls and lakes, Otavalo is one of Ecuador's most popular destinations. Arriving in time to fully appreciate the activity of Otavalo market, peruse the stalls of ponchos, scarves, blankets, handbags and much more. Here you can practice your bartering skills and pick up a bargain. Unlike other Ecuadorian markets and their raucous noise, Otavaleños barter in silence. Then visit the Indian village of Peguche where artisans weave in their own homes, before returning to Quito. **Overnight - Quito** (B, L)

## Days 4-5 : Cotopaxi National Park



Quito – Cotopaxi. Travelling south on the Pan-American Highway arrive at the Cotopaxi National Park, an ecological sanctuary centred around the soaring Cotopaxi Volcano. An introductory briefing at the Interpretation Centre will introduce you to the flora and fauna of the Andean paramo or moorlands. Put this knowledge into practice with a walk around the Limpiopungo Lagoon where you can observe a variety of birds and

occasionally wild horses. On clear days the Cotopaxi Volcano provides a stunning backdrop. Enjoy lunch high up in the Cotopaxi before heading down to the cosy Hacienda La Cienega – home for the next two nights.

On day 5 enjoy a scenic journey to the rim of the Quilotoa crater lake. Formed by the collapse of the Quilotoa Volcano after several catastrophic eruptions some 800 years ago, the crater lake is a vivid turquoise-green colour due to the dissolved minerals in the water. Spend time walking around the rim with a lunch box provided for a picturesque picnic  
**Overnight - Cotopaxi National Park** (B:2, L:2, D:2)

## Day 6 : Indian markets

Today visit one of the colourful Indian markets in the area where men and women in native dress sell their wares from neatly piled fresh produce to brightly woven sweaters. Indian markets have changed very little in 500 years and each plaza has its own product to sell. Here you'll find everything from livestock to esteras (straw mats), sugar cane cakes to clay-pot pans. Later in the afternoon head down into the valley to your cosy hacienda - home for the night. **Overnight - Cotopaxi** (B, L, D)

## Day 7 : Route of the Cascades



Cotopaxi – Baños – Riobamba. This morning embark on a spectacular journey to the handsome town of Riobamba. The Devil's Cauldron is the first stop, an impressive cascade surrounded by subtropical vegetation and colourful orchids. The adventurous can descend down to the cascade bottom for a closer look whilst others can appreciate the overwhelming force and sound of the rushing waters from a lookout point. After lunch continue to the town of Baños, famed for its hot

springs and thermal waters. The drive finishes alongside Chimborazo, the highest mountain in Ecuador, where photo opportunities abound. **Overnight - Riobamba** (B, L, D)

## Day 8 : The Devil's Nose



Riobamba – Alausí – Cuenca. Depart early this morning for a dramatically scenic journey along ravines and river gorges, and Indian villages and cultivated fields, arriving to the small town of Alausí. Here you will board a train following the Devil's Nose route, an 800-metre descent along zig-zagging railway line culminating at the Condor Puñuna museum run by the local Nizag community. The round trip brings you back to Alausí where you continue by coach to the Inca Fortress of Ingapirca. Enjoy lunch in the area before proceeding to Cuenca, the colonial jewel of the south. **Overnight - Cuenca** (B, L, D)

## Days 9-10 : Cuenca



Set above the grassy banks of the Río Tomebamba, Cuenca is an attractive mix of cobblestone streets, whitewashed buildings and handsome plazas. Today enjoy a tour of Plaza of San Sebastian, a colourful artisans market where you can pick up local handicrafts. The Museum of Modern Art features an impressive collection of contemporary fine art whilst nearby the main square is home to the imposing blue-domed Cathedral. Admire the city's overhanging houses before stopping for lunch. In the

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afternoon visit a ceramics handicraft shop and the production of Panama hats at a local factory before transferring to your hotel in Cuenca. The following day is a free day for you to explore Cuenca independently. **Overnight - Cuenca (B:2)**

## Day 11 : Gualaceo Valley

Today you will discover the artistry of local communities in the picturesque Gualaceo Valley. Starting at San Bartolome where guitars are made by hand and artistically finished, continue to the small town of Chordeleg and its gold and silver jewellery stalls. Chordeleg is also known for its green and yellow pottery. Lunch is taken at a very pleasant country inn, surrounded by flowering gardens close to the Santa Barbara River. Continue to the village of Gualaceo, famous for its Sunday market, and on to the weaving village of Bulcay. The day concludes with a visit to an orchid garden before returning to Cuenca. **Overnight - Cuenca (B, L)**

## Day 12 : El Cajas National Park



Cuenca – Guayaquil. Departing Cuenca this morning journey through the El Cajas National Park, an expanse of glacial lakes, Andean cloud forests and volcanic peaks. Stop for a stroll at Llaviucu Lake and to admire the views at La Toreadora Lake. Later continue to the coastal city of Guayaquil. The rest of the day is free for you to explore the numerous barrios, each with their own distinct flavour. **Overnight - Guayaquil (B, L)**

## Day 13 : Guayaquil

Today marks the end of your adventure through the heart of Ecuador. Consider extending your stay with a Galapagos cruise. Departure airport transfer included. (B)

### PRICES / DATES INFO

Prices shown are 'per person' based on a travelling party of at least 2 adults in twin/double occupancy. The 'Single supplement' applies for single travellers who require their own room and needs to be added to the per person price.

### PRICES / DATES 2021

Date	Twin Share	Single
19 Jan	USD 5,395	USD 6,045

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