



**ANDANDO<sup>o</sup>  
TOURS**  
Mainland Ecuador &  
Galápagos Islands

2011

# Antisana

Following Humboldt's Footsteps

We head out from the capital city of Quito and down into the valley with stunning views of the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Once out of the city we will pass through the Valle de los Chillos named for the 'Chillo' trees (Guaba fruit) that grow in this temperate valley. On to the highland town of El Tingo, famous locally for its therapeutic thermal waters and 'Hornado', a typical Ecuadorean highland dish of roast pork. We continue our journey passing through Alangasi, where the central plaza, church and park are the stage for many religious festivals.



As we pass through the main square in Pintag, your guide will tell you the story of the fight between the Inca Huayna Capac and the Caranqui Chief, Pintag. After a taste of the exotic local fruits including the chirimoya when in season, we arrive at some of the best preserved páramo, highland moor, in the world. As we wind our way up through the páramo, a giant path of broken rocks from a relatively young lava flow will lead us up to Humboldt's sleeping place and Hacienda Antisana (at 4120m). Here we will stop for a short break and try the 'sunfo' tea, a herb locally renowned for its medicinal benefits, especially in alleviating the symptoms of altitude sickness.

The flora and fauna of the zone is sparse in comparison to other regions due to the extreme conditions of life on the páramo. The herbaceous plants and shrubs have adapted to their environment, to the cold temperatures and strong sunlight. Some plants have extra thick hairy leaves to protect them from the icy wind and the animals have full coats of dark coloured fur to keep them warm.

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**Antisana (ATS 01)**  
One day (Hiking)

The bus will drop us off at the Antisana River gorge, a small stream at this altitude, of melt water from the Antisana glacier. From here we will walk one hour north to the base of the old Chuzalongos, three peaks formed by an ancient horseshoe shaped crater sitting to the west of Antisana. The name of these three peaks, Chuzalongos, comes from an indigenous legend that speaks of mountain goblins.

We will walk through a cove to the seasonal lake of Santa Lucia where many highland animals come to the water. A beautiful path winds its way through the cold, humid, lichen covered cove crossed by a system of very small streams from glacial melt water.

In Los Chuzalongos look out for the great Andean Condor and curiquinges sheltering in these three rocky peaks.

We will stop for a short break and an energizing snack before heading back to the Hacienda Antisana.

For lunch we will have a páramo picnic of warming soup, stunning views, homemade sandwiches and dessert with a steaming hot cup of tea. We head back down towards Quito; the landscape of the highlands all the more stunning under the late afternoon sky; or onto to your next adventure in the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

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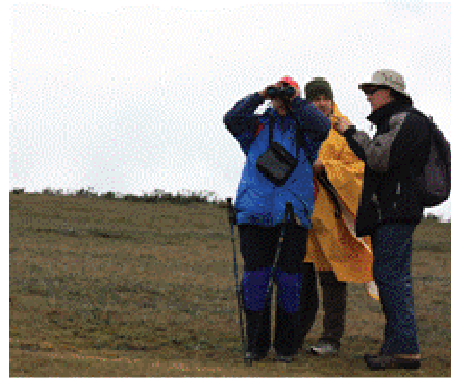
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### Antisana (ATS 02)

One day (Horseback Riding)

Once the horses are saddled up we head north to Los Chuzalongos, three peaks formed by an ancient crater sitting to the west of Antisana and onward to Santa Lucia lake. As you ride across the silent moor with the cool wind rushing past you, you really feel as though you are on top of the world.

The name of the three peaks, Chuzalongos, comes from an indigenous legend that speaks about mountain goblins. We will ride across the highlands, Andean Condor territory and home to the endangered seasonal Black-faced Ibis, curiquinges and hummingbirds.



Take a breath of fresh mountain air before we leave to lake Micacocha we stop for a páramo picnic of warming soup, stunning views, homemade sandwiches and dessert with a steaming hot cup of tea.

We head back down toward Quito, the landscape of the highlands all the more stunning under the late afternoon sky; or onto to your next adventure in the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

### Antisana (ATS 03)

One day (Biking)

Our bike ride starts at the Antisana River gorge, a small stream at this altitude, of melt water from the Antisana glacier.

As the bikes are prepared our guide will describe the route, a downhill ride suitable for all levels, and take us through a safety briefing. After a short warm up and final check we begin cycling through the silent landscapes where the only sounds are your breath on the wind and the sound of the wheels.

The animals of the paramo tend to ignore the bikes allowing us uninterrupted

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observation and the downhill path allows us to enjoy the unequalled beauty of Antisana.

As we make our way down we can enjoy the changes in vegetation and can stop at will to take a closer look at the paramo flora and fauna.

Our ride ends at the Lagunas de Secas where refreshing drinks await us. After a short rest we will begin our journey back to Quito, stopping at the restaurant, Mucki's, a rustic hideaway that serves exquisite gourmet food, German style.

### **Antisana (ATS 04)** One day (Glacier)

Our hike starts at a sandy quarry at the foot of Antisana, next to the ravine of the Antisana River. We head east across a shallow incline, for about an hour, through the foothills up toward the tree line where the only sign of life at this altitude is the occasional rabbit, rodent or paramo wolf.

At these heights it is easier to observe birdlife such as the great Andean condor and eagles. A one hour walk further up we arrive at the glacier's edge, 4700 metres above sea level. Here the glacial water cycle begins where the rain falls as hail or snow, melts and freezes again forming a solid block of ice.

Whilst we stop for a snack you can observe the peculiar irregular shapes and wave formations of ice on the glacier sculpted by the wind and snow.

For our glacial walk we will be fitted out with crampons, ice picks and rope. Our guide will teach us the basic techniques used by mountain climbers on any frozen peak in the world.

We will learn how to walk with crampons, how to stop on the icy slopes and how to use ropes on the frozen land. This is definitely a unique experience and a great way to explore the Andean peaks and truly experience mountaineering on a glacier!

We head back down towards Quito, the landscape of the highlands all the more stunning under the late afternoon sky; or onto to your next adventure in the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

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