



**ANDANDO^o
TOURS**
Mainland Ecuador &
Galápagos Islands

2011

Cotopaxi Volcano

Cuello de Luna (Neck of the moon)

As we make our way south, out of Quito, the true length of the city reveals itself as it stretches down the valley below Pichincha. Cloud fills the valleys like steaming cauldrons and the Avenue of Volcanoes opens up the way towards Cotopaxi, the neck of the moon (in an ancient indigenous language).



We cross over the tracks of the old 'Ferrocarril', Ecuadorian Train network that runs 965km across ten provinces to the coast and is in the process of being restored. On our way down the Avenue we stop in at the Hacienda La Alegría for a typical highland breakfast of humitas, fresh eggs, fruit juices of mora and naranjilla and cow's milk from the dairy.

We will take a walk around this old working hacienda and learn about Humboldt's expedition to the cordillera, the natural mineral waters of the region and the surrounding haciendas with Inca ruins. If it is a clear day there will be spectacular views of the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

Cotopaxi, at 5,898m.a.s.l, is one of the highest volcanoes in the world and easily the most visited summit in Ecuador due to its easy access for amateur climbers and experts alike. Our drive through the park brings us out onto the plain of Laguna de Limpiopungo, a lake fed by water from the volcano Rumiñahui which towers over it.

It is thought that the Incan Rumiñahui hid his gold up on the mountain and many search parties have set out to find it, some never to be seen again. At the water's edge the park wildlife gathers; ducks, swallows, frogs and toads, and you may spot an eagle or maybe a great Andean Condor.



Cotopaxi (CTX 01) One Day (Hiking)

From Lake Limpiopungo we will walk for about one hour over fairly flat terrain to the Incan ruins of Pucará, a lookout fortress used to control the communication route from the highlands into the Amazon Jungle.

If the sky is clear we can catch beautiful views of Cotopaxi and the surrounding volcanoes; Rumiñahui, Sincholagua, Pasachoa and with luck, the shy Antisana. As we walk across the páramo we might see hawks, foxes, llamas and maybe deer. At Pucará our guide will tell us the legends of these ruins and we will have a rest, a cup of tea and cucayo.

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We head down from the car park to begin our next walk to El Porvenir, a hacienda set in the foothills of Rumiñahui.

Combine our full day tours to create your own itinerary of two days or more staying at colonial haciendas and historic hotels.



Cotopaxi Volcano (CTX 02)

One Day (Biking)

Now the real adventure begins. With bike helmets on, we head toward Pucará del Salitre, a one hour ride over fairly flat terrain to the Incan ruins of a lookout fortress used to control the communication route from the highlands into the Amazon Jungle.

In the highland moors the llamas and curiquinges graze on vegetation that is reclaiming its volcanic scoria covered land.

At this height the flora consists mainly of lichen and moss covering the rocks but peeking out from amongst these rocks are chuquiraguas, the flower of the Andes, a low lying shrub with red-whitish flowers.

If the sky is clear we can catch beautiful views of Cotopaxi and the surrounding volcanoes; Rumiñahui, Sincholagua, Pasochoa and if we are lucky, the shy Antisana.

From the ruins we ride on to the Hacienda El Porvenir.

Cotopaxi Volcano (CTX 03)

One Day (Horse riding)

We drive up, over volcanic terrain, through the town of Machachi to the Hacienda, El Porvenir. The road runs between two ancient volcanoes: Pasochoa and Rumiñahui.

On arrival at the hacienda we will be welcomed with a hot beverage and take a moment to stretch our legs before starting our horse trek.

The guide will be happy to answer any questions whilst we prepare for our ride; dressing in true 'chagra' style, in chaps, ponchos and hats.

Our trek begins as we ride out over farmland toward the volcano, Rumiñahui, until we come to the moor. Our ride will take us over pastures where bulls graze, wild horses roam and Andean birds take flight. When we reach 4,200 metres above sea level we will stop for a rest and a hot cup of herbal tea.

Then on horseback we return to the Hacienda El Porvenir.



Here we will have a filling typical highland lunch and a real 'chagra' will meet us and talk about his traditions and customs; including the famous chagra festivals held in Machachi.

On our way back up the Avenue of the Volcanoes we will pass through Machachi where 'chagras', paramo cowboys, ride around the town on horseback.

Our last stop will be a visit to a saddlery, where they will show us how they make the leather saddles, reins and other chagra accessories.

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