



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

2011

Southern Markets

Saquisilí, Pujilí y La Victoria: authentic
Andean markets full of flavours and colours

To the north-west of Quito the landscape becomes dry and sandy and in this desert like place we come to the Mitad del Mundo, the middle of the earth as calculated and measured by the French Geodesics Mission.

We leave Quito travelling south following the city as it peters out into the surrounding valley. The clouds sit beneath us and before us sits the magnificent Avenue of the Volcanoes. We head down the valley towards one of the highest active volcanoes in the world: Cotopaxi, which means neck of the moon in an ancient indigenous language.

In the Andean town of Tambillo we cross over the train tracks of the 'Ferrocarril' currently under restoration, the Ecuadorian Train Network runs over 965 km all the way to the Pacific Coast.

We will make a stop for breakfast at the Hacienda La Alegría where fresh farm produce are used to prepare a traditional highland 'desayuno'. Before heading on we will take a stroll around the hacienda's grounds and the guide will tell us about Humboldt's expedition in the Avenue of the Volcanoes and the history of the Incan ruins in the surrounding area.

On a fair day the majestic volcanic peaks create a stunning panorama of the Ecuadorian Andes. From here we go to Saquisilí, a truly traditional highland market with a great variety of colourful products situated in an arid valley in the foothills of the Illinizas.

The market sells everything from the local produce of farming haciendas to shampoo, guinea pigs and objects made from cabuya (from the penca plant). The locals speak amongst themselves in their mother tongue of Quichua and in the centre of the market they have their own cafeteria serving typical dishes of chanco (pig), sancocho (yucca and plantain soup) and mote (hominy).

We continue our journey south past the town of Latacunga; its name comes from Llacta Kunka which means God of the lake. Latacunga is famous for its Mama Negra festival in which the virgin of Las Mercedes is honoured for giving the people their fertile land.



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We travel on through the beautiful highland landscape to La Victoria and Pujilí; Andean towns of potters where the family tradition of pottery lives on. Here we will visit the pottery of Don Gustavo where they make vases and pots using a potter's wheel. Passengers can have a go at creating their own clay pot. We move on to the Association of Potters where we will be given a detailed talk on how they prepare the clay, dry and fire the pots and vases and the methods they use to paint them.

We head on to the hacienda Hato Verde for lunch. After lunch we will take a walk in the countryside surrounding the hacienda.

On the way back to Quito we will pass through, Machachi, where `Chagras`, páramo 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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