



## **The Best of Ecuador - 7 Days (#20170)**

**Note:** Price printed on this PDF is valid until **15-01-2025** and is subject to change without notice due to Partner changes and currency fluctuations

### **Overview**

Discover the beauty of the Ecuadorian Andes and cloud forest regions. Enjoy extreme biodiversity such as butterflies and bird watching. Experience the cloud rain forest with beautiful waterfalls and witness chocolate making at its source in the tropical paradise of Mindo. Venture back to the highlands to visit Cuicocha crater-lake and the famous indigenous market of Otavalo; and then, live a unique experience sharing an organic lunch prepared, side by side, with local people in the heart of the Andes. Relax and acclimatize at a luxury hot springs resort before you visit the Cotopaxi National Park and admire the highest active volcano in the world. Immerse yourself in the cultural and natural wonders that make Ecuador one of the most unique countries in South America. We promise you will never want to leave!

Departure on Mondays.

### **Trip Highlights**

Quito-Mindo-Otavalo-Papallacta-Quito

### **Detailed Itinerary**



**Day 01****Day 01: Arrive Quito**

Meet your trip leader and group at 6:00pm.

Welcome to Quito! The largest, best-preserved colonial city of America – declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. The city is considered the Cultural Capital of South America and is located on the equator in a valley at the foothills of the Pichincha volcano. Depending on arrival time, you can spend your day exploring the old town of Quito and the surrounding area. GGTS can help you to organize a day trip (please request in advance). In the evening, one of our trip leaders will meet you at the hotel's lobby for a welcome briefing at 18:00 hours. At this time, we will discuss the details and questions you may have regarding the adventure. Our first day is an acclimation and information day.

**Hotel:** Sheraton Quito Hotel or similar.

**Meal:** No Meal

**Day 02****Day 02: Equator, Crater and Chocolate**

On the first day of our adventure, we will drive north of Quito to witness the equator monument complex. Visiting the middle of the world is a mandatory stop once you are in Ecuador, you'll have the opportunity to be able to stand on both sides of the hemispheres, north and south, at the same time and feel the neutral forces of the equator.

On our way, we will also stop for a view of the Pululahua crater, the third largest inhabited volcano crater in the world, hosting more than 400 people.

After, we will reach the little town of Mindo, nestled into the cloud forest. This area is filled with a wide variety of plants and animal life – perfect for a nice introduction to the diversity of Ecuador. Mindo and its surrounding cloud forest are a birdwatcher's paradise, especially for hummingbirds!

In the afternoon we will visit a chocolate distributor, where you can take a tour of the process of the cocoa, from harvesting the seed to the final product, like a delicious brownie or a cup of real hot cocoa.

**Hotel:** Séptimo Paraíso or similar.

**Meal:** Breakfast

**Day 03****Day 03: Mundo, Cloud Forest**

We will explore the pristine cloud rain forest of Mindo, crossing cable cars and hiking along waterfalls, surrounded by a lush green forest filled with toucans, hummingbirds and colourful birds. In the afternoon, you will have some free time to enjoy the several optional outdoor activities offered in this area.

You can go whitewater rafting or “tubing” (several large inner-tubes tied together) as our steely-nerved guides steer you through thrilling rapids. Or try a canopy zip-line (sailing along one of 13 zip-lines over the beautiful canopy of the cloud forest).

One of the highlights of today is the visit to the butterfly nursery, where we watch gargantuan butterflies dry their wings after emerging from their jewel-like cocoons. You can dip your fingers into a banana concoction and then be thrilled as butterflies the size of bird’s land on your hands for a snack.

**Hotel:** Séptimo Paraíso or similar.

**Meal:** Breakfast

#### Day 04

#### Day 04: Otavalo Market

Drive back up into the highlands and reach the Pan-American Highway heading north on the way to the famous indigenous town of Otavalo. Here, admire the endless number of handicrafts from the local people. Take time to stroll along the narrow cobblestone streets, which are filled with Otavalo indigenous people wearing the traditional blue ponchos. Visit their handicraft market, with its wonderful textiles, native paintings, ceramics, jewellery, tapestries and more at bargain prices. In Otavalo, there will be enough time for shopping and cultural interaction.

In the afternoon, we will drive to Cotacachi to witness the impressive leather goods of the town and enjoy the beauty of this small village. There will be some free time for you to explore the shops or simply relax while sipping on one of the best coffees in Ecuador in the main plaza.

Later we will arrive at the beautiful and comfortable Las Palmeras Inn where we will stay overnight.

**Hotel:** Las Palmeras Inn or similar.

**Meal:** Breakfast

#### Day 05

#### Day 05: Cuicocha Crater Lake and Papallacta Hot Springs

Today we will first visit Cotacachi Cayapas ecological reserve to see the breathtaking scenery of the crystalline-clear waters of this active volcano and the amazing surrounding landscapes. At the end of an hour-long hike along the rim of the



Cuicocha Crater Lake, we will take a boat ride to the centre of the crater to observe the activity of this volcano, watching bubbles coming up from the centre of the caldera.

Hands on cultural experience – AJ Sustainable Sacha WarmiKuna women project.

For lunch, we will head to Pijal, a small village located in the heart of the Andes to visit one of the AJ sustainable projects called Sacha WarmiKuna (women from the mountain). This is one fantastic effort developed by the local women with the main purpose to support their families and encourage the position of the women in the local society, providing them an alternative side work beside housekeeping, as a new option for an in-come. Once at the project you will experience an unforgettable cultural encounter, immersing yourself in the true spirit of the South American woman and their skills for textiles and a deep culinary knowledge coming from the past generations. You will be part of the preparation of “Aji”, a local spicy salsa which is part of their identity, you will also share precious time with them and a tasty traditional lunch in which local women have used the fresh products harvested the same day from the surrounding organic fields. Later we will learn more about the weaving process of their textiles. Don’t miss the amazing opportunity to have the chance to give back, by buying handmade scarfs here. Later we will arrive at the beautiful, historical hacienda of Pinsaqui where we will stay overnight. Enjoy a typical Andean cocktail as welcome and learn about the history of this place.

In the late afternoon, we will reach the luxury volcanic hot-springs resort of Papallacta, where you will have the chance to relax at the spa resort surrounded by the view of the majestic Andean mountains.

**Hotel:** Papallacta Spa Resort.

**Meal:** Breakfast and Lunch

#### Day 06

#### Day 06: Cotopaxi-Quito

After breakfast, following a last dip in the open-air hot springs, we will drive south on the Pan-American Highway to the highest active volcano in the world, Cotopaxi. The snow-capped volcano is surrounded by the national park, home to abundant plant life, rich fauna, and Inca ruins. We will begin our visit at the interpretation centre at the entrance of the park, before continuing our drive across the páramo to the Limpiopungo Lake. During a short walk around the lake, we can observe a variety of birds and enjoy the stunning views of the almost symmetrical cone of the Cotopaxi volcano. Afterward, drive back to Quito for our last dinner.

**Hotel:** Sheraton Quito Hotel

**Meal:** Breakfast



#### Day 07

#### Day 07: Departure

Today our trip will end and you will have your International departures. Take with you your memories and photos and leave a piece of your heart, as you will want to return to Ecuador soon to experience more of this enchanted land. We wish you a “buen viaje”!

**Meal:** Breakfast

## Inclusions

Transportation: Private and comfortable land transportation.

Accommodation based in double occupancy: 5\* hotel in Quito, cloud forest lodge in Mindo, hacienda in Otavalo, 4 star spa resort in Papallacta.

Meals: 6 breakfasts and 1 lunch.

Activities: Equator Line museum tour, Hiking to waterfalls in the cloud forest, Visit Butterfly farm and chocolate factory, Organic fair-trade coffee tasting in Intag Valley, Visit Otavalo indigenous market, Organic lunch cooking with local people, Hike and boat ride at Cuicocha crater lake, Volcanic hot springs, Visit Cotopaxi National Park.

Out-door gear: Hiking sticks.

Trip Leader: Certified expert English-speaking adventure leader and local guides.

## Exclusions

International flights.

Travel insurance (suggested).

Airport transfer (international flights).

Meals not described in the itinerary (Budget for not included meals AUD 414).

Personal expenses.

Tips.

## Note

Unique Experiences: Organic cooking lesson with traditional fresh ingredients, side by side with local people in the heart of the Andes.



Departure on Mondays.

Please note that the prices are starting from and that upon sending a new request with specific date we will send the applicable rate and availability.

## Program Touring / Guide

Small group tour

## Periodic Departure

**22 Nov, 2024 to 31 Dec, 2025**

2-3 pax

AUD 3,088 P P twin share

AUD 4,051 P P single

ON REQUEST

4-5 pax

AUD 2,752 P P twin share

AUD 3,714 P P single

ON REQUEST

6 plus

AUD 2,347 P P twin share

AUD 3,309 P P single

ON REQUEST

