

5 days/4 nights

Departs Daily except Sundays and Fridays



Avenue of the Volcanoes:

Ecuador

Immerse yourself in a variety of stimulating activities in the scenic Avenue of the Volcanoes, in Ecuador. Hike along the rim of the Quilotoa volcano crater; take a tour of one of the local markets and learn the local culture of the indigenous people; admire the folkloric art in the community of Tigua. Head to Chimborazo, the highest mountain in Ecuador, known as the land of the Llamas. Experience an exhilarating train ride climbing gravity-defying slopes as you pass through the Andes, and marvel at Inca ruins at the best preserved archaeological complex in the country. *4 Day/ 3 Night Option also available*

ACCOMMODATIONS

- 1 Night Cotopaxi
 - 1 Night Riobamba
- 1 Night Alausi
- 1 Night Cuenca

INCLUSIONS

- All Private Ground Transfers
 - Excursion to Cotopaxi National Park
 - Indigenous Markets and Quilotoa Lake Tour
- Chimborazo: Land of Llamas Tour
 - Devils Nose Viewpoint and Ingapirca Ruins Tour
- Cuenca City Walking Tour
 - Daily Breakfast and Lunch
 - 3 Dinners



ARRIVE COTOPAXI:

Meet your driver for a private transfer from Quito (pre-night required) to Cotopaxi. Our first stop will be the Cotopaxi National Park where, weather permitting, you will be able to see the snow-capped summits of the Cotopaxi and Antisana volcanoes. We'll also visit the Interpretation center to learn about the history of this spectacular volcano's major eruptions, as well as the local flora and fauna. Our tour culminates with a visit to Lake Limpiopungo and we'll explore the surrounding area on foot. The trail is well maintained and practically flat, making it a perfect hike for those that aren't used to handling high altitude. You'll see a variety of shore birds in the many small ponds and marshy areas. After the tour, you'll have a transfer to your hotel, followed by dinner.

(Dinner & Accommodations, Cotopaxi)



COTOPAXI - RIOBAMBA:

Today we will visit Indigenous markets in the towns of either Saquisilí, Pujilí, Zumbahua or Latacunga, depending on the day of the week. These markets are as authentic and non-touristic as can be found today in Ecuador today. We will then visit the Quilotoa volcano crater, where we'll gaze at the crater's serenely mysterious green lake. When the Quilotoa volcano last erupted in 1280, it left behind a gaping caldera 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) across, which is now filled with brilliant turquoise water. We'll have the option of a short walk of about 1.7 km along the crater's rim. On the way back, we'll stop to visit some of the art galleries in the community of Tigua, viewing paintings representative of the folklore of this special part of the Andes. The brightly colored style of the area's painters, currently the third generation, has transcended local boundaries and is now internationally renowned. These days there are many artists in Tigua, but Julio Toaquiza was the first to gain recognition, and is still considered one of Ecuador's finest. We will visit Julio in his studio, to get a better understanding of this vivid style. After our tour, you'll be taken to your hotel in Riobamba, and the remainder of the day is at your leisure. It's a bustling town with quaint shops and cobblestone streets.

(Breakfast, Cotopaxi; Dinner & Accommodations, Riobamba)



RIOBAMBA - ALAUSI:

After breakfast and checking out of your hotel, you'll have an exciting excursion to Chimborazo, the tallest peak in Ecuador and ranking 17th in the world. It's also known as the Land of the Llamas. No picture of the Andes is complete without the graceful figures of the native llamas, alpacas, guanacos and vicuñas. The Reserve of Chimborazo (in Spanish: "Reserva de Produccion Faunistica Chimborazo") was established specifically to protect some of the last remaining wild herds of Llamas, Alpacas and Vicunas in the Andean region. These distant relatives of camels are prized for their soft fur, and native Ecuadorians have domesticated these gentle creatures for many centuries. Their natural habitats are the "paramos" or high grasslands. We'll join the local community of Palacio Real in their effort to preserve their "paramos" and honor their llamas by touring the Llama Museum and the handicraft shop of the community. Afterwards, you'll have a private transfer to your hotel in Alausi.

(Breakfast, Riobamba; Dinner & Accommodations, Alausi)



ALAUSI - CUENCA:

Today is a full day of exploring, beginning with an amazing view down to the 'Devil's Nose'. The railroad was originally built to connect the Andes with the coast, and the route climbs up steep slopes, rolls down into river valleys and negotiates a truly massive wall of rock. The biggest complication faced by the construction of the Trans-Andean railroad was the Devil's Nose, a mountain with almost perpendicular walls. To overcome this obstacle, a zigzag railroad was built that climbs more than 500 meters in less than 12 km with steep ascents and descents. While the train is not currently running, you can still appreciate this dramatic engineering feat at a spectacular lookout over the mountains and the train route. We'll take time for lunch before driving south to Ingapirca, an Inca observatory and fortress. This is the most important Inca site in Ecuador, where the Emperor and his entourage would rest during trips to this northern segment of the Empire. After the tour, we'll drive to Cuenca. Upon arriving, one of the first things to notice when entering the town is the magnificent skyline marked by brilliant church domes.

(Breakfast & Lunch, Alausi; Accommodations, Cuenca)



DEPART CUENCA:

After breakfast we will set out on a city tour whose highlight is the city's colonial architecture. Cuenca's winding rivers, graceful ironwork balconies and beautiful gardens are part of the pleasant atmosphere of this historic city, declared a Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO in December 1999. This is the perfect place to discover by walking and is ideal for those looking to blend into the relaxed setting of a truly romantic colonial city. Walking along Cuenca's cobblestone streets or watching the people go by in the town square dominated by the great cathedral is both peaceful and inspiring. With approximately 400,000 inhabitants, this city is considered by many to be the most beautiful city in the country due its architecture, surroundings and small town ambiance. After the tour, you'll have a private transfer to Cuenca's airport for your return flight home or on to your next Avanti destination!

(Breakfast, Cuenca)