



TRAVEL THE UNKNOWN

TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

CLASSIC ECUADOR

12 days



What's included

- Arrival & departure transfers
- Ground transport with driver
- Accommodation
- Meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)
- English-speaking guides
- Entrance fees to sites & parks

What's not included

- Meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Drinks
- Visa fees
- Tipping
- Camera / video camera fees
- Personal items (laundry, telephone, etc.)

CLASSIC ECUADOR





- Medical expenses
- Any services not mentioned in itinerary

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.

Your Itinerary Explained

Date	Place visited	Meals
	<p>The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>The part of the day's text in italics (and comes after the three dashes "---") is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.</i></p>	<p>B: Breakfast</p> <p>L: Lunch</p> <p>D: Dinner</p>

Tour Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive in Guayaquil	Meals
 <p>Flight</p>	<p>Arrive at the airport, where you will be met by a Travel The Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel. Overnight in Guayaquil.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>Overnight in Hotel del Parque, Guayaquil</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>
Day 2	Guayaquil - El Cajas National Park - Cuenca	Meals
 <p>El Cajas National Park</p>	<p>Tour the city of Guayaquil, where you will see Parque Centenario, before continuing to Guayaquil's original fire station to see some of the surviving wooden buildings from the beginning of the 20th century. Later, visit the river-front esplanade, the malecón, and see the old market hall, Las Peñas, which lies at the foothills of Santa Ana. Drive to El Cajas National Park, stopping for lunch at a local restaurant on the way. Explore the wetlands of El Cajas, spotting endemic flora and fauna. Continue the drive to El Turi viewpoint near Cuenca, then check in to your hotel and enjoy a welcome dinner. Overnight in Cuenca.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>The city of Guayaquil is located on the western bank of the Guayas River and is the largest, most populous city in Ecuador. The history of the city spans back to the early 1500s, when it was founded by the Spanish, although it was thought to have existed as a native village prior to this. Nowadays, the city is a vibrant, sprawling metropolis that is working to carve out its own identity; it boasts a charming historical centre and a growing theatre and arts scene.</i></p>	<p>B L D</p>

El Cajas National Park is situated in the highlands of Ecuador, over 3,000 metres above sea level. The striking mountains, forested valleys and lagoons of the national park provide scenic views and great hiking opportunities for trekkers of all abilities. El Cajas is home to a rich array of flora and fauna, including Andean condors and giant hummingbirds.

Overnight in Hotel Santa Lucia, Cuenca

Day 3	Cuenca - Pumapungo	Meals
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Cuenca

We start our day with a city tour in this colonial town. We visit the historical centre of Cuenca on foot, including the Old and New Cathedrals, the famed local flower market and a Panama hat workshop to see how these iconic hats are created. We visit the ruins of Pumapungo, which formed an important archaeological complex during the Inca Empire. After this, we have free time to enjoy the city. Overnight in Cuenca.

B

*The city of **Cuenca**, also known as Santa Ana de los Cuatro Rios de Cuenca, is known for its picturesque squares and cobbled streets. The highland city exudes charm, with its beautiful architecture a reminder of the region's Spanish colonial history. It is this rich history that has seen the city centre gain UNESCO World Heritage status, and Cuenca, as well as the villages surrounding it, is particularly renowned for the production of Panama hats.*

*The **Pumapungo Ruins** sit atop a hill that overlooks the Tomebamba River. The strategic position of the site offered the Incas an unrivalled defensive position. Analyses of the ruins indicate that they were mainly carved from stone and bricks, whilst the interiors of the huts were lined with terracotta. Excavations have led archaeologists to infer that the complex was designed for religious purposes. Remarkable fragments of pottery, shell, bone and metal have been recovered from the site and are now exhibited in the Pumapungo Museum.*

Overnight in Hotel Santa Lucia, Cuenca

Day 4	Gualaceo - Chordeleg	Meals
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Gualaceo

Today we head out of Cuenca to visit some of the smaller villages in the region. Our first stop is at a typical Ecuadorian home, where we will share herbal tea with a local family. Continue on to a guitar workshop, where we will see how these instruments are made from start to finish. Later, arrive at Chordeleg, renowned for its ceramics, gold and silver jewellery. We will visit a local jewellery workshop and spend time browsing in the shops. Drive to Gualaceo, where we will visit an orchid garden and wander through the market. A local artisan at a textiles workshop will show us the materials and plant-based dyes they use and how the shawls are woven. We will return to Cuenca where the evening is free. Overnight in Cuenca.

B L

***Gualaceo**, also called El Jardin del Azuay, is a territory that lies in the valleys of the Andes cordillera. Surrounded by scenic mountains and flowing rivers, Gualaceo is a great place to immerse yourself in the beautiful natural Ecuadorian landscape.*

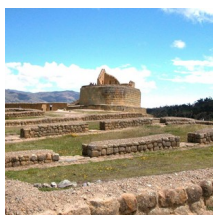
***Chordeleg** is a quaint town in the rolling valleys of the Azuay province. The picturesque terracotta-roofed houses are a reminder of the region's rich Spanish colonial past. The town is famed for its metal workshops and silversmiths - the streets are dotted with jewellers, all selling traditional pieces made by local craftsmen.*

Overnight in Hotel Santa Lucia, Cuenca

Day 5

Ingapirca Ruins - Chimborazo National Park - Riobamba

Meals



Ingapirca Ruins

Today we leave Cuenca and start our journey to the northern highlands. Our first stop is Ingapirca Ruins, the most important Inca ruins in Ecuador. Then we head north to Chimborazo province for lunch in a local restaurant. In the afternoon, we will visit the Chimborazo National Park to learn about the unique flora and fauna of this ecosystem (known as 'páramo', or moorland), which has adapted to extreme weather conditions and abrupt changes in temperature. Finally, we head to our hotel for a well-deserved rest. Overnight in Riobamba.

B L

*The **Ingapirca Ruins**, 80 km north of the colonial city of Cuenca, are the largest and best-preserved Inca ruins discovered in Ecuador. The site is thought to have been originally built by the Cañari people before the Incas continued their work - the two distinct styles of construction can be seen in the ruins. The most significant building is the Temple of the Sun, seemingly built at such an angle that the sun would have shone directly into the doorway during the solstices.*

***Riobamba**, also known by its full name of San Pedro de Riobamba, is the capital of the Chimborazo province and an important regional transport centre due to its strategic location on the Pan-American Highway. The region surrounding Riobamba has a rich history, and was once inhabited by both the Puruhá and Inca people.*

Overnight in Hacienda Abraspungo, Riobamba

Day 6

Devil's Nose Train - Baños

Meals



Devil's Nose Train

After breakfast, we travel to Alausí to catch the Devil's Nose train, one of the greatest feats of early 20th century engineering. In the afternoon, we head to Baños, check in to our hotel then have free time to enjoy the town with its central plaza, cathedral and verdant setting. Overnight in Baños.

B

*Situated in Ecuador's Chimborazo province, the sleepy town of **Alausí** is a picturesque stop-off point along the Avenue of Volcanoes. With century-old adobe buildings lining the cobblestone streets, Alausí feels like a step back in time.*

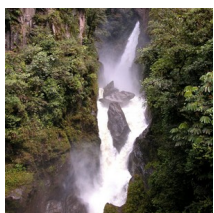
*The **Devil's Nose** (Nariz del Diablo in Spanish) is a mountain in Ecuador's southern Andes with almost perpendicular walls. At the beginning of the twentieth century, rail workers and engineers were tasked with building a railway line from Quito to Guayaquil, and this particularly impressive section of the railway remains. Crossing rocky ravines and fast-flowing rivers, the Devil's Nose railway encompasses a series of switchbacks, with the train climbing 500 metres up the mountain in less than 12 km. There are also scenic views to enjoy across the narrow gorge of the Chanchán River.*

Overnight in Hotel Volcano, Baños

Day 7

Baños - Pailón del Diablo Waterfall

Meals



Pailón del
Diablo

Today we drive out to the region's waterfalls, through the jungles and deep into the Pastaza River gorge. We visit the Parroquia Rio Verde, where we will walk for approximately 20 minutes across the cloud forest to see the magnificent Pailón del Diablo waterfall. After lunch, the afternoon is free for you to explore Baños, with its many adventure activities and walks, at your leisure.

B L

*Surrounded by lush forests, thermal springs and steep gorges, **Baños** is a nature and adventure lover's paradise. The active Volcán Tungurahua dominates the skyline and the beautiful natural setting lends itself to activities including biking, hiking and rafting.*

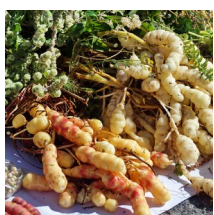
***Pailón del Diablo**, also known as the Devil's Cauldron, is a mighty waterfall in the foothills of the Ecuadorian Andes. Forested trails lead visitors around the dramatic, cascading waterfalls and those who make it to the top can enjoy panoramic views from a vantage point that overlooks the powerful rapids below.*

Overnight in Hotel Volcano, Baños

Day 8

Valle de Patate - Cotopaxi National Park

Meals



Valle de Patate

Today, we say goodbye to Baños and head to the nearby Valle de Patate, famous for its production of fruits and vegetables. Here we will visit a hacienda and board a carriage pulled by a tractor to visit the surroundings. In the hacienda's organic garden, we will have the opportunity to handpick ingredients in preparation for our next activity: a cooking lesson with an Ecuadorian chef, who will teach us how to prepare one or two traditional dishes. After lunch, which will include the dishes we have prepared, we will head to Cotopaxi National Park and visit the interpretation centre to learn about the region's flora and fauna, before checking in to our hotel.

B L

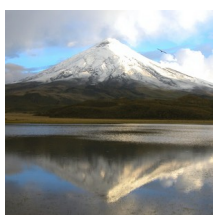
*Known as the "Valley of Eternal Spring", the **Valle de Patate** enjoys mild, warm weather all year round. With myriad waterfalls and rivers flowing through the valley, it is abundant in endemic flora and fauna, and hummingbirds are a particular draw for visitors. The Valle de Patate's fertile land also presents the perfect conditions for agriculture and farming.*

Overnight in Hosteria Tambopaxi, Cotopaxi National Park

Day 9

Cotopaxi National Park

Meals



Limpiopungo
Lagoon

In the morning we head deep into Cotopaxi National Park, visiting Limpiopungo Lagoon and the Inca ruins of Pucará de Salitre (a lookout fortress used to control the communication route between the highlands and the Amazon Rainforest). If the weather is good we will be treated to some beautiful views of the surrounding volcanoes: Cotopaxi, Sincholagua, Pasachoa and (if we're very lucky) Antisana. We will head north to have lunch at Hacienda El Porvenir then hike to see orchids in Santa Rita canyon.

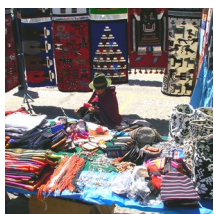
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Cotopaxi National Park is a protected area in Ecuador that spans across the Cotopaxi, Pichincha and Napo regions. The snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano is located within the park, along with the dormant Rumiñawi Volcano and the historical Sincholagua Volcano. Cotopaxi Volcano is among the most active volcanoes, with its last significant eruption in 1904. The park is also famed for the beautifully vast Limpiopungo Lake. Cotopaxi is home to an array of wildlife including hawks, condors and weasels.

The glistening waters of **Limpiopungo Lagoon** can be found in Cotopaxi National Park. The lagoon sits at an altitude of almost 4,000 metres above sea level, resulting in crisp temperatures and cold winds. The peaks of rolling mountains frame the great lagoon, where endemic plants and indigenous birds, such as Andean gulls and mountain ducks, can be found.

Overnight in *Hosteria Tambopaxi, Cotopaxi National Park*

Day 10	Saquisilí Market - Quilotoa Lagoon	Meals
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Saquisilí Market

Today we visit the traditional highland town of Saquisilí, located in the foothills of the Illinizas Volcano, which hosts a weekly market. We will continue on to the magnificent Quilotoa Lagoon to enjoy a gentle hike and the wonderful views. We will then head to Quito, the capital of Ecuador. We will check in to our hotel and then have free time.

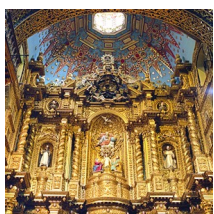
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Locals and visitors alike venture to the Cotopaxi Province to experience the bustle of **Saquisilí Market**. Vendors from the highlands come to the weekly market to sell their produce, including a colourful blend of textiles, livestock and homewares. Delicious traditional foods can be sampled as locals in authentic Andean clothing walk through the busy marketplace, selling homemade delicacies.

Quilotoa Lagoon sits in the crater of the most western volcano in the Ecuadorian Andes. The immense crater, known as a caldera, was formed by the volcano's collapse following an eruption around 600 years ago. The lake is a breath-taking emerald colour due to the dissolved volcanic minerals, whilst hot springs can be seen to the east of the lake.

Overnight in *La Casona de la Ronda, Quito*

Day 11	Quito	Meals
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Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesús

Spend the morning touring the historic city centre of Quito. Visit the Basilica del Voto Nacional and walk the iconic Inca street known as Calle de las Siete Cruces to the Plaza de la Independencia, where you will see La Catedral de Quito. Visit the Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesús, before reaching Plaza de San Francisco. Enjoy a traditional lunch then experience Ecuadorian chocolate at a tasting. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore Quito at your leisure. Overnight in Quito.

B L

Nestled high in the foothills of the Andes, with the magnificent Pichincha and Cotopaxi Volcanoes providing a dramatic backdrop, Ecuador's capital city, **Quito**, offers a unique balance between modernity and the preservation of fascinating indigenous cultures. Built on the foundations of an ancient Incan city, Quito's Old Town was the first urban area to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the capital boasts multiple 16th and 17th century buildings blending European, Moorish and indigenous styles.


Standing on San Juan Hill, the staggering 115-metre Catholic **Basilica del Voto Nacional** is the tallest church in Ecuador. Although construction began in 1892, it is technically unfinished, with local legend telling that if the church is ever completed then the world will end. It is a stunning example of Gothic architecture with an Ecuadorian twist; turtles, armadillos and iguanas replace the classic protruding gargoyles. Those with a head for heights can climb the basilica's towers for impressive views across the city below.

The main square of Quito, **Plaza de la Independencia** has always been a prominent meeting point in the city. Originally the site of a protected well in the 16th century, built by the Spanish amidst fears that the Incas were poisoning water supplies, it went on to serve as a central market place and bullfighting arena. Today, the square is still bustling with activity, with students, elders and street vendors all congregating. At the centre of the square stands a 20th century memorial to the Heroes of Independence, while 4 key buildings surround it: the Presidential Palace, Archbishop's Palace, Municipal Palace and Cathedral of Quito.

Considered Quito's most ornate church, **Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesús** showcases exquisite Spanish Baroque décor. Construction took 160 years before its completion in 1765, with the main altarpiece alone taking 20 years to build. The central nave is extravagantly decorated with gold leaf, gilded plaster and wood carvings, while impressive green and gold domes cap the outside. Indigenous features were utilised throughout the church in an attempt to entice more local people to the Jesuit religion, including volcanic Ecuadorian andesite in the façade, Ecuadorian faces and plants subtly hidden on the pillars, and iconic Inca sun symbols placed in the entryway and ceiling.

Built atop an ancient Incan temple, Quito's **Plaza de San Francisco** is steeped in history. A bustling centre for social gatherings, it has served as a marketplace since pre-Incan times and was a place of religious celebrations, political rallies and protests in the Republican era. Nowadays, it holds open-air music concerts. Featuring stunning 16th century architecture, the monumental Catholic Church of San Francisco is the plaza's centrepiece. Spanning almost two blocks of the Old Town, it is one of the largest ensembles of historic buildings in colonial Latin America.

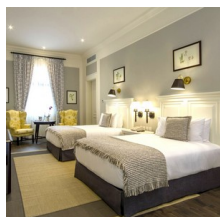
Overnight in La Casona de la Ronda, Quito

Day 12	Departure	Meals
 <p>Flight</p>	<p>Transfer to the airport for your departure flight or to continue your exploration of Ecuador.</p> <p>Please note: If you are interested in an extension to the Galápagos Islands, Amazon Rainforest or other places in Ecuador, please contact us for more information.</p> <p>---</p>	<p>B</p>

Accommodation

Guayaquil : Hotel del Parque (Hotel)

1 night



Guayaquil's first luxury boutique hotel, the Hotel del Parque is set within a restored 19th century property within the Parque Histórico. It overlooks the Daule River and is surrounded by beautiful botanical gardens. Each room is stylishly decorated in a colonial style and is equipped with modern amenities, including air-conditioning, flat-screen televisions and en suite bathrooms. Guests can enjoy Ecuadorian cuisine in the onsite restaurant overlooking the river.

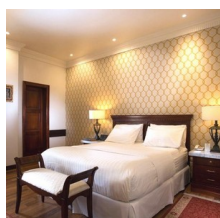
Phone : +593 450 001 11

Address : Parque Historico de Guayaquil Km 1½ vía a Samborondón, Av. Los Arcos s/n y Malta, Guayaquil 092301, Ecuador

Website : www.hoteldelparquehistorico.com

Cuenca : Hotel Santa Lucia (Hotel)

3 nights



Set in a grand 19th century house, Hotel Santa Lucia provides comfortable accommodation in the charming Old Town district of Cuenca. Each room is stylishly designed with opulent Baroque influences, finished with wooden floors, luxurious fabrics and period furnishing, while still equipped with modern amenities. Traditional and international dishes are available at the three restaurants, and many of the city's main historic attractions are just a short walk away.

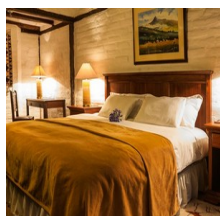
Phone : +593 728 280 00

Address : Borrero 8-44 y Sucre, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Website : www.santaluciahotel.com

Riobamba : Hacienda Abraspungo (Converted farmhouse)

1 night



Located just outside the centre of Riobamba and surrounded by the Andes, Hacienda Abraspungo provides peaceful accommodation in a beautiful countryside setting. Using a traditional 'mestizo' architectural style, the house features elegant colonial décor and is furnished with ancestral farming objects. Each room is stylishly finished, complete with flat-screen TVs, private bathrooms and garden views. Free Wi-Fi is available and the restaurant serves a variety of local and international dishes.

Phone : +593 997 683 45

Address : Vía Riobamba Guano, Guano, Ecuador

Website : www.haciendaabrapungo.com

Baños : Hotel Volcano (Hotel)

2 nights



Located nearby De La Virgen thermal, Hotel Volcano offers beautiful panoramic views over Baños. Each room has private en suite facilities and is equipped with modern amenities, including flat-screen TVs and free Wi-Fi. Guests are welcome to enjoy the outdoor swimming pool, relax in the garden and dine on regional dishes in the Restaurante Volcano.

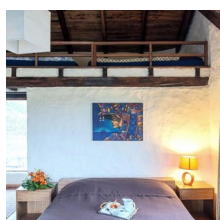
Phone : +593 327 421 40

Address : Rafael Vieira y Av Montalvo, Baños 180301, Ecuador

Website : www.volcano.com.ec

Cotopaxi National Park : Hosteria Tambopaxi (Lodge)

2 nights



Surrounded by the volcanoes of the Cordillera de los Andes, Hosteria Tambopaxi in Cotopaxi National Park is a comfortable mountain lodge that welcomes guests in search of adventure, well-being or relaxation. Hosteria Tambopaxi lies at an altitude of 3,750m, and offers a pleasant restaurant, cabins with private bathrooms and a camping area. It has a spectacular landscape, not only of the Andean páramo with its abundant flora and fauna, but also of the greatest volcanic region of Ecuador, making it the first choice for expert geologists, mountain climbers and visitors.

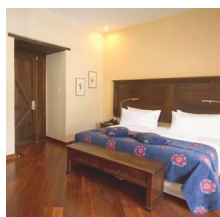
Phone : +593 260 003 65

Address : Parque Nacional Cotopaxi, Machachi 170350, Ecuador

Website : www.tambopaxi.com/en

Quito : La Casona de la Ronda (Hotel)

2 nights



Situated in Quito's historic centre and set within a renovated colonial house built in 1738, La Casona de la Ronda provides comfortable boutique accommodation. Each room is stylishly decorated with traditional wooden furniture and parquet floors, and equipped with modern amenities including plasma TVs and free Wi-Fi. Guests can relax with a drink in the garden or on the terrace, while a variety of dining options are available nearby.

Phone : +593 222 875 38

Address : Calle Morales OE1- 160, Quito 170104, Ecuador

Website : www.lacasonadelaronda.com

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.