

# Andes & Amazon Trekking Tour



## Highlights

Spend 7 days discovering the stunning parks and reserves of Ecuador on this Andes and Amazon trekking tour. Hike along some of Ecuador's most interesting and isolated nature trails, explore archaeological sites and encounter indigenous communities and stay in fine historic haciendas and jungle lodges.

The Andean highlands of Ecuador have a rich cultural and natural diversity that spans grassy highlands, cloudforests, mountain lakes, active volcanoes, thermal baths, Indian markets, colonial towns and traditional haciendas. Lush forests of acacia and myrtle hold rare species like the spectacle bear and white-tailed deer while toucans and condors fly in the skies above.

On volcanic slopes and in the gorges of this mountainous area lie the ruins of old civilizations of the Incas and still-inhabited villages of other indigenous communities, such as the Kichwa, whose customs and culture still prevail today. In one of these gorges runs the Pastaza River, one of the Amazon's main tributaries, with incredible waterfalls.

Your certified naturalists-cum-guides will lead you on a 7-day route through the best of six different national parks and nature reserves. Their intimate knowledge of their surroundings will give you insight into the delicate ecology of the area and access to incredible wildlife and archaeological sites out of the reach of most tourists.

You will see equatorial Andean lakes, dozens of active volcanoes, rainforest gorges and valleys and walk the ancient trails of the Yumbos and Panzaleo cultures as well as visit an indigenous community, the Waira Churis (Wind Dancers). After a satisfying day's trekking you will be put up in some of the best historic haciendas and ecolodges of Ecuador.

## Is it for me?

The route covers a lot of ground - expect to walk more than 10km on most days. You should be fit enough to cope with mountain altitudes and valley descents. Ideally, this trip would suit couples and retired people who are looking for an Amazonian adventure with a difference, whilst not scrimping on luxury.

If you have a green conscience this tour, with its mix of ecolodge accommodation, geographical exploration and environmental discovery, is highly recommended.

## Accommodation

You will spend 4 nights at various traditional haciendas in the heart of Ecuador's lake district, including the venerable Hacienda Pinaquí which was constructed in 1790 as a colonial textile outpost. The suites are well-appointed with bathrooms and there are 200-year old grounds with ponds, palms and pathways, as well as a terrace snack bar and a restaurant featuring the finest Ecuadorian and international cuisine.

You will spend 1 night at a spa resort enjoying the medicinal thermal waters of the Andes while another night is spent getting back to nature at a jungle lodge, where spacious bungalows are set in harmony with the surrounding rainforest.

Prices from

**1,205** GBP (7 days) per person

## Why book with Tourdust?

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**Day One: Pululahua Volcano**

Walking Time: 5 hours

Distance: 11 km

Accommodation: Historic Hacienda Hotel Pinsaquí

You will be driven north from Quito towards the equatorial line monument. Continue until you reach the Pululahua Volcano whose crater is crossed by Latitude 0. Within the crater, encounter the geo-botanical reserve where you'll find diverse environments including a montane cloud forest, a myrtle forest and a dry acacia forest. This reserve is home to a large diversity of birds including hummingbirds, mountain tanagers, eagles and hawks. Your Amazon trekking begins through a dry forest full of sulphur deposits. As the path winds upwards, your surroundings change to a verdant primary cloud forest with fascinating birdlife and myrtles. After reaching the summit of the old crater rim, lunch is at an archaeological site located in a neighboring private hacienda. This archaeological platform is a solar calendar built 2000 years ago by the pre Inca indigenous people known as the Yumbos which means Toucan Barbet. Your guide will explain how these remarkable people marked the equator line with impressive accuracy and how they used this calendar to plan their agricultural labours. Continue walking on a trail east of the Pululahua volcano with breath taking views of the valleys beneath us. Overnight at the beautiful historic hacienda Pinsaquí. (L D)

**Day Two: Cuicocha Crater Lake**

Walking Time: 4 hours

Distance: 10 km

Accommodation: Historic Hacienda Hotel Pinsaqui

Early in the morning drive to nearby Cuicocha Crater Lake at 3,070 meters which is a nature reserve located on the slopes of the larger Cotacachi Volcano. The Cuicocha Lake is surrounded by rim walls and its name translates as Lake of the Guinea Pigs due to the shape of its two center islets. This ecosystem is a combination of paramo and Andean forest where you find species such as Pumamaqui, Quishuar, chilca, bromarea, fushia, lupins, calcalaria, and colorful flowers of the Andes. This hike, known as the Trail of the Orchids, runs around the crater rim with stunning views to the lake and the Cotacachi, Mojanda and Imbabura volcanoes. You will be watching for rodents, mammals, marsupials and birdlife such as guans, hummingbirds, tanagers, wild turkeys, ducks, buzzard eagle and the great Andean Condor. A healthy and appetizing picnic lunch will be served along the trail. In the afternoon you will have some time to visit the town of Cotacachi and its leather market. You will also visit the Otavalo Indian Market, one of Ecuador's most important indigenous bazaars filled with handmade arts, clothes, tapestries, jewelry, ceramics and wood carvings. Overnight in Hacienda Pinsaqui. (B L D)

**Day Three: Continental Divide**

Walking Time: 4 hours

Distance: 10.6 km

Accommodation: Papallacta Hotsprings Resort

Drive in the early morning through the Inter-Andean valleys and gain elevation through a stunning canyon until we reach the Atlantic - Pacific continental divide at 4,100 meters. You'll begin your hike through the Cayambe-Coca Reserve, which offers some of the best scenery in the country. This reserve is part of a larger United Nations Biosphere Reserve that encompasses two other national reserves. The environment here is endemic highland paramo (moorlands) with patches of cloud forest. This area of the Andes retains great amounts of water as it is the source of the largest water system in the world. It features a great number of lakes, possibly the highest concentrations in the Andes range. You walk mostly downhill towards the Amazon side seeking out three different species of deer, the elusive spectacle bear and birdlife including the Andean Condor. End this hike in the Papallacta hot springs where you enjoy the medicinal and mineral rich thermal waters. The spa service is highly recommended. Spend the evening in the Papallacta Resort. (B L D)

**Day Four: Sumaco National Park**

Walking Time: 7.5 hours

Distance: 12 km

Accommodation: Cotococha Jungle Lodge

After breakfast you drive through a scenic road that descends further into the Amazon basin through the Papallacta river gorge. You reach the Sumaco National Park: a large tropical area which features the Sumaco Volcano, one of the few active volcanoes that arise from the Amazon Basin. You'll arrive at the Guacamayos (Macaw) range at 2200 meters where there are spectacular views over the Amazon flatlands below. The environment here is a montane cloudforest where many species from the jungle and the highlands coexist, as well as many species that only live here. There is a great opportunity to see the cock of the rock, toucans, caciques, oropendolas, manakins, military macaws and many other species. Walk along a spectacular trail enjoying the many sounds of nature and see the transition from cloud forest to rainforest at the end of the trail. It can get a bit muddy as this trail includes several stream crossings following down to the swamplands of the blue Urcusiqui River. A delicious and healthy picnic lunch will be served along this hike. In the afternoon continue by vehicle to visit an indigenous Kichwa family that lives in the town of Archidona. Here you will have the opportunity to interact and learn about jungle life through the Waira Churis (Wind Dancers). You'll continue to the river front jungle lodge for a well deserved rest amidst jungle sounds. (B L D)

**Day Five: Pastaza Gorge**

Walking Time: 2 hours

Distance: 3 kilometers

Accommodation: Hacienda Manteles

This day involves less walking and more time to enjoy and recover at a lower altitude. After breakfast in your river front jungle lodge walk in the nearby reserve at the 500 meter level in search for species particular the tropical lowland rainforest. Explore under a 40 meter canopy for trees such as balsa, cedar, rubber, kapok and cinnamon, as well as many bromeliads, orchids, vines, ferns, insects and reptiles. This area has a long history of indigenous cultures and you will learn about the traditional use of plants for daily living and medicinal purposes. You will also visit a local Kichwa community to learn about their way of life, culture, traditions, and customs. After

lunch you will head south and climb up back the Andes through the Pastaza River Gorge, one of the principal waterways that feed into the Amazon Basin. This is an especially scenic route, with high rock walls giving way to deep cloud forest canyons. Stop to admire some of the spectacular waterfalls in the area, such as Pailón del Diablo (Devil's Cauldron) and Manto de la Novia (Bride's Veil). Continue to Baños de Agua Santa a quaint colorful subtropical town on the slopes of the erupting Tungurahua volcano. Get some fantastic views of the Tungurahua before arriving at Hacienda Manteles. (B L D)

#### Day Six: Llanganates

Walking Time: 4 to 5 hours

Distance: 10.7 km

Accommodation: Historic Hacienda La Cienega

The Llanganates is considered one of the world's most mystical mountain ranges. Perhaps this is due to those who have gone and never returned, stories of failing compasses or why Atahualpa (the last Inca Emperor) decided to hide here the world's most impressive treasure. The Llanganati as it is known by the locals means Beautiful Mount and it is a vast 200,000 hectare reserve on the eastern Andes with altitudes that fluctuate between 4,500 and 1,200 meters. Hike at about 3,500 meters in a combination of cloud forest, Andean forest and paramo. This trail offers a great variety of birds and animals including the hard to see species such as the spectacled bear that is likely to be found at Laguna San Borja in the early morning. During the day you'll get great views of the surrounding volcanoes and can see many species of humming birds, mountain tangers and deer. At the end of the trek you descend into the Patate Valley through the ancient Panzaleo Trail. Overnight will be spent at La Cienega, a hacienda with 300 year of history. (B L D)

#### Day Seven: Cotopaxi National Park

Walking Time: 2 to 3 hours

Distance: 4,5 km

Accommodation: Quito

The Cotopaxi National Park is a 36,000 hectare nature and wildlife sanctuary established around the highest active volcano in the world. Its unique paramo ecosystem is a spectacular place to hike, explore for wildlife and get stunning volcano scenery. Begin your hike on the Rumiñahui volcano slopes with views directly across to the snow capped Cotopaxi volcano. Along this trail you can find hares, fox, Andean falcon, white tail deer and even the great condor flying overhead. You'll explore this dramatic area all the way to Limpiopungo Glacier Lake where it is common to see Andean gulls, ducks, Andean teal, lapwing, shore birds and even an occasional high altitude flamingo. Have lunch at a local hacienda. In the afternoon visit the Pucara ruins which were used by the Inca's up until the Spanish conquest. In this area of the park it is common to see llamas and wild horses. Return to Quito in the afternoon. (B L)

## Details

### Getting there

Flying from the UK...Major airlines flying to Ecuador are Iberia, Intercontinental, British Airways and LAN Ecuador. All flights require at least one stop over in José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport - Guayaquil (GYE), and often two, possibly in Madrid or Houston. Fly to Mariscal Sucre International Airport - Quito (SEQU).

The trip departs from Quito.

### Price includes

The price is per person for a private departure for 2 people (price reduces for larger groups). Includes pick up and drop off at Quito; all transport to and from trails and accommodation; naturalist certified guides; picnic lunches; accommodation and meals.

### When is best

Quito is 2,820m above sea level. The altitude causes cold temperatures (despite being on the equator) and more intense UV radiation. Average temperatures in Quito are 15°C, with highs reaching 26°C and lows 7°C. The wet season is from October to May, while the dry season is from June to September. The weather is by nature very changeable in Ecuador - so be aware of what is forecast for your visit and be sure to pack accordingly.

### Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

### Travellers should bring

Trekking poles; trekking boots; trekking shoes; gaiters; water bottle/Camelback; backpack (15/30L); camera; flashlight; knife (optional); sunscreen; rubber boots (can be provided up to size 12); binoculars (optional); carabiners (optional); dry bag (optional).

Non-cotton shirts (3-5); non-cotton long sleeve shirts (2); non-cotton socks; sun glasses; hat/cap; wool hat; shorts and swimming costume; long non-cotton pants (zip-off legs recommended); rainjacket/water poncho/Gore Tex jacket; non-cotton sweaters/fleeces (2-3); cotton clothing when not walking.