



HIKING THE HACIENDAS OF ECUADOR

Inn-to-inn Hiking in the Highlands of Ecuador

ECUADOR ~ HIKING ~ 9 DAYS

TRIP DETAILS

6 days easy to moderate
hiking at medium elevation
(maximum 12,464')

6 nights haciendas
2 nights hotel

DATES

Dec 20–Dec 28, '03
Dec 27, '03–Jan 4, '04
Jan 10–Jan 18, '04
Jul 24–Aug 1, '04
Aug 7–Aug 15, '04
Sep 4–Sep 12, '04
Oct 23–Oct 31, '04

LAND COST

\$2590 per person
(11-15 members)

\$2890 per person
(2-10 members)

LEVEL
3

Ecuador is a country of great singular beauty, blessed by nature's considerable gifts: snowcapped volcanoes cradling sparkling blue lakes, lush emerald valleys, and cool cloud forests harboring a multitude of extraordinary birds and plant life.

Nestled in the fertile highlands are exquisite haciendas, most dating back to the 16th century. These historic retreats were once large farming estates (and some are still actively working); they have now been converted to gracious country inns that exude the flavor of colonial Ecuador with all the amenities of a fine hotel.

By day you'll hike and explore the countryside, soaking up the beautiful scenery, appreciating nature's bounty, and meeting the colorful kaleidoscope of Ecuador's friendly, welcoming people. You'll hike in Pasocha Reserve and Cotopaxi National Park (both rich bird sanctuaries), walk around Laguna de Cuicocha, a crater lake on the flanks of Volcán Cotacachi, hike an old "hacienda trail" in the high Andean grasslands, and visit the famous Indian market at Otavalo. By night you'll prop your feet before a roaring log fire, sense long-gone eras steeped in history, and dine on delicious cuisine fit for a baron. The old saying, *Mi casa es su casa*, has never been truer.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 ~ Fly to Ecuador

Leave your hometown and fly to Quito, Ecuador (your air itinerary will be coordinated by the Mountain Travel Sobek Air Desk). Upon arrival in the late afternoon or evening, you'll be met by a Mountain Travel Sobek representative and transferred to the hotel. Dinner on your own.

Swissotel

DAY 2 ~ Hacienda Chillo Jijon

After breakfast we'll have an orientation with the trip leader, then drive about 90 minutes to Chaupi, one of the most fertile valleys of the Andes. Here a variety of vegetables are cultivated, including potatoes, quinoa, and lima beans. Our six-mile morning hike is in a small pastoral valley with impressive views of Cotopaxi and the Illinizas, two peaks more than 16,000 feet in height.

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During the hike we'll be able to see a diversity of birds and learn more about the various past eruptions of Cotopaxi Volcano based on the sediments of ash and stone. After arriving at our highest point we descend to Pastocalle, a small town in the high Ecuadorian Andes. Here we'll have our lunch before heading to Hacienda Chillo Jijon, a luxurious property set on 20 acres of gardens and woods. It was originally built around 1730 and once housed one of the oldest and largest textiles mills in the Andes. Tennis, horseback riding, and bicycling are available at the hacienda.

B,L,D...Hacienda Chillo Jijon

DAY 3 ~ Cotopaxi National Park

Today we travel to Cotopaxi National Park, stopping along the way to visit a herd of llamas and a small museum about the park. From the camping and picnicking area at Laguna de Limpiopungo (12,464'), we'll enjoy incredible views of Cotopaxi (19,347'), the world's highest active volcano and celebrated for the symmetrical perfection of its cone. Then we'll hike three to four hours to the stone remains of some ancient Inca structures, enjoying lunch and more birding along the way (Andean lapwings, caracululated caracara, the endemic Ecuadorian hillstar, and possibly condors) and may see wild horses, llamas, and deer. Continue to the elegant Hacienda La Ciénega, one of Ecuador's oldest colonial haciendas, beautifully situated near the foot of Cotopaxi. Among its noted past guests are the famous geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (the suite he stayed in has reputedly changed little since he occupied it in 1802) and Charles Marie de la Condamine, the French scientist who determined the true shape of the earth.

B,L,D...Hacienda La Ciénega

DAY 4 ~ Pasochoa Reserve

Morning departure for a four-hour hike in the temperate forest of Pasochoa Reserve (elevation about 10,000'). Located on the flanks of Volcán Pasochoa, this small, private reserve protects the last remaining undisturbed area of cloud forest in Ecuador's central valley (the famed "Avenue of the Volcanoes"). It's known for its great bird life, with many small flocks of colorful scarlet-bellied mountain tanagers and sword-billed hummingbirds. Within the volcano's two-kilometer-wide caldera lies a horseshoe-shaped basin of montane cloud forest sheltering many species of native vegetation. Picnic lunch.

After lunch we'll drive north about 3½ hours to Hacienda Guachala in the Cayambe Valley. In the late afternoon we arrive at Guachala, which was established in 1580 and is the oldest farm in Ecuador. We'll be entertained by a group of local folkloric dancers who will present a program of music and dances from the region, then learn about the history of the hacienda from the present owner.

B,L,D...Hacienda Guachala

DAY 5 ~ Hike to Hacienda Zuleta

In the morning we hike one hour to visit a rose plantation near Guachala before departing for Hacienda Zuleta. Our route takes us by way of Pesillo, a small village about an hour's drive from Guachala, where we'll have lunch. Afterward, we begin our three-hour hike through the high Andean grasslands (elevation about 9,800') along an old "hacienda trail" linking Guachala with Zuleta. There are more than eight old haciendas that lie along the route, and we'll arrive in the afternoon at Zuleta, a 4,000-acre working hacienda with general agriculture, forestation, and dairy farming operations. The remainder of the day is free to relax or visit the beautiful environs of the hacienda.

B,L,D...Hacienda Zuleta

DAY 6 ~ Hacienda Zuleta

Hike two hours to the hacienda's condor reintroduction project, stopping along the way to see some pre-Inca mounds. In the afternoon we'll hike an hour back to the hacienda and visit the cheese factory and embroidery workshop and learn about the farm's purebred horses. (Optional horseback riding is available.)

B,L,D...Hacienda Zuleta

DAY 7 ~ Laguna de Cuicocha

After breakfast, we hike three hours from Zuleta to the village of Angla near Lago San Pablo. Following a picnic lunch, we'll drive to nearby Cotacachi-Cayapas ecological reserve for a three-hour hike at Laguna de Cuicocha (10,200'), a deep-blue crater lake on the lower southern flanks of Volcán Cotacachi. We'll be able to enjoy views of several nearby volcanoes, including Imbabura, Cayambe, and Cotacachi, and do some more bird-watching (ruddy ducks, giant hummingbirds, silvery grebes, and more). After the hike we'll stop at the picturesque colonial town of Cotacachi, famous for its leatherwork, and perhaps make some purchases before continuing to historic Hacienda Pinsaqui, a lovely inn that was originally built as a textile workshop. We'll take a tour of the house and grounds (which some have likened to a set from a Fellini movie!) before dinner.

B,L,D...Hacienda Pinsaqui

DAY 8 ~ Otavalo

We'll spend the morning at the famous Indian crafts market at Otavalo, the most important market in Ecuador. Many items are for sale: Otavaleños are most famous for their weavings; woolen goods include sweaters, blankets, gloves, and ponchos. Panama hats are also a good buy as are jewelry and colorfully embroidered blouses and shirts. We'll have a chance to do some good-natured bargaining (it's expected) for some terrific souvenirs. In addition to the crafts market, there is also an animal market and produce fair. After the excitement of the market, we'll go to Hacienda Cuisin, one of the oldest in Ecuador and noted for its fine Ecuadorian cuisine, for a relaxing lunch. In the afternoon we'll drive about two hours to our hotel in Quito. Festive farewell dinner with the group.

B,L,D...Swissotel

DAY 9 ~ Fly home

Transfer to the airport and depart on homeward-bound flights.

B...

Stay a Little Longer!

If you like to explore on your own, plan to arrive a day or two early or extend your trip after the tour. We also offer the following great extensions. Some departures also combine with our Galápagos Islands cruises. Call us for all the details.

Sacha Jungle Lodge, Ecuador. A visit to the upper Amazon Basin at Sacha Lodge is a perfect complement to your hiking adventure. Canoe down jungle rivers and hike forest paths with a naturalist/guide and a native guide, observing the unique flora and fauna of the Amazon rain forest. Our base is a charming and comfortable lodge located on a beautiful jungle lagoon near the Napo River in one of the most ecologically rich areas in the world. The lodge's 135-foot birding tower in a huge kapok tree affords great views over the jungle treetops and allows fantastic sightings of canopy activity. Sacha is renowned for its service and great food. *4 or 5 days.*

Cuzco & Machu Picchu, Peru. See the sights of Cuzco, Peru, including the nearby Inca ruins of Puka Pukara, Kenko, Tambo Machay, and the famous fortress of Sacsayhuaman, and enjoy an excursion to Machu Picchu by

train (an overnight at Machu Picchu is included). Pre- or post-trip additional nights in Lima are required for due to flight schedules between Quito and Lima. *4 or 5 days.*

LAND COST

\$2590 per person (11-15 members)

\$2890 per person (2-10 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$400 for “requested” singles; \$200 for “forced” singles.

If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you’re traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we’ll try our best to find you a roommate. If that’s not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What’s Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ airport transfers
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ additional guides where necessary
- ◆ entrance fees and permits
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What’s Not

International airfare; meals not noted on itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; visas (if required); excess baggage charges; airport taxes; cost of medical immunizations; items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

International Airfares

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. As part of our commitment to total customer service, our team of professional air travel consultants will be happy to assist you with your international air travel plans and tickets once you sign up for the trip. (You may call our sales staff at 1-888-MTSOBK [687-6235] for a ballpark airfare.)

Since our goal is to facilitate your flights and save you money, we have negotiated special rates with some of the major air carriers. But you must book early. Space is limited on competitive fares, so be sure to contact us immediately after you sign up. If you are making your own airline reservations please check with our staff before purchasing your tickets. We need to verify your schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

Although trip leader assignments are subject to change, **Andrés de la Torre** regularly leads this trip. Andrés is a native of Quito, Ecuador, and has worked as a naturalist guide since his college days when he studied biology. He is well informed about his country's culture, history, and spectacular natural places, and loves sharing his knowledge with our guests. Andrés has guiding experience in the rainforest, highlands, and the Galápagos Islands of Ecuador, and when not guiding, enjoys mountain biking, running, and climbing. In addition to his native Spanish, he speaks English and French.

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. On a scale from 1 to 5, we rate this trip as a 3 (moderate in nature). The hikes are easy to moderate and range from three to six hours, but do take place at higher elevations, from about 10,000-12,000 feet (maximum elevation is 12,464') and you may feel the effects of high altitude a bit until you get acclimatized. You may have trouble catching your breath or have a slight headache the first day or so, but taking it easy and drinking plenty of water helps alleviate these symptoms.

The level of fitness and endurance needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise at least one hour 3-4 times per week, performing moderate intensity walking, cycling, swimming, or other forms of aerobic exercise. You must be able to hike four to six hours a day for at least two consecutive days and comfortable walking on rough trails.

If you are not optimally conditioned, we recommend that you start a training program *at least three months* before departure, gradually increasing the intensity and duration. If your health is questionable or your physical capacity is limited, please discuss other trip options with us.

Minimum age for participation is 12.

Seasonal Considerations

The dry season of Ecuador's highlands is between mid-June and September and around Christmas, but even the mountains' wet season (January through May) is not usually that rainy. The central valley is generally spring-like all year, with temperatures no higher than 24°C (66°F).

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve a space with your credit card or use the enclosed reservation card. You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance. Frequent flyers with mileage-earning credit cards take note: you also have the option to make all your payments by credit card so you can rack up even more mileage for your next trip!

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

With Mountain Travel Sobek, you'll see the Ecuadorian Highlands as only an insider can, with friendly, hospitable guides who know the region intimately. They'll accompany you throughout the day, lending support and insights about where you are and what you see. Their close familiarity with the local geography, history, culture and traditions (plus their entertaining stories and great jokes) are the key to a superb, informative experience—one you just can't get on your own.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control. Please read the Limitations of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a Mountain Travel Sobek trip is subject to the conditions stated in the four-page Participant Information Form, which includes the Agreement and Release from Liability and the Booking Conditions. We urge you to read this information carefully, and to call us if you have any questions.

Note on Services

We often use local suppliers who provide services that may include transportation, equipment, logistic support, and other services (hotels, restaurants, etc.). We do not own or operate these independent suppliers. We work with service providers who share our commitment to safety and quality, and work closely with them to develop itineraries unique to Mountain Travel Sobek.

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