



Ecuador Highlights

Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 2

Lima – Quito – Papallacta – Riobamba – Cuenca - Guayaquil

This tour ventures through contrasting landscapes of the Andes and the coast. See beautiful mountain scenery, enjoy time in thermal baths and marvel at ancient Inca ruins and stunning colonial architecture.

- Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Quito
- Enjoy a day at the thermal springs of Papallacta
- Visit the Ingapirca ruins
- Stroll through the famous markets of Otavalo
- Stay at local haciendas
- Visit a cacao plantation



Ecuador Highlights inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive Travel Guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Latin America on an excellent value group tour travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis so you will travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Physical Level 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Ecuador Highlights' is rated 2 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it is more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You will be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- A number of destinations on this tour are at altitude. Quito sits at 2,856m, Otavalo sits at 3,068m, and Cotapoxi National Park sits at 3,900m above sea level – activity at these altitudes will be at an easy pace.
- There will be several days of sightseeing on foot for an extended period of time and in some cases for several hours.

Of course, our National Escort will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Country Profile: Ecuador

Ecuador may be small, but it certainly packs some punch. With a bit of mountains, bit of jungle, bit of colonial history and some colourful indigenous culture, this is a destination that brings together the best bits of the continent. Throw in the ability to straddle the hemispheres with a visit to the equator and the unique and incredible biodiversity of the renowned Galapagos Islands, and Ecuador earns its place on any self-respecting travel bucket list.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Quito and end the tour on Day 12 in Guayaquil. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Itinerary – Ecuador Highlights

Day 1: Fly to Lima

Fly to Lima, Peru's historical capital, arriving the same day due to crossing the International Date Line. On arrival, you will be welcomed at the airport by your Wendy Wu Tours representative and escorted to the check in desk at Lima's premier airport hotel. The hotel is linked directly to the airport by a bridge. Remainder of the evening is at leisure.

Day 2: Quito

This morning fly to Ecuador's historic capital Quito. You will be welcomed at the airport by your Wendy Wu Tours representative and transferred to your hotel. Transfer time will take approximately one hour and 30 minutes. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before a welcome dinner this evening.



Destination Information

Quito – Ecuador's enchanting capital city proudly possesses one of the most extensive and best-preserved historic centres and is a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Spend time exploring this beautiful city that sits at a height of 2850 metres above sea level.

Day 3: Quito

Today, enjoy a tour of Ecuador's capital and its surrounds. Stroll through the colonial quarter, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and visit some of South America's most ornate churches and cathedrals including San Francisco and La Compañía. From the church domes take advantage of the open, 360° panoramic views of the Historic Centre and its surrounding mountains. Later continue to the Equatorial Monument, which marks the exact Middle of the World latitude 0°. Visit the Ethnographic Museum located inside the monument. Continue to a nearby colonial-style town, complete with main square, church, post office & bullring. End the tour with a traditional Ecuadorian lunch while overlooking the Andean landscape. This day will be at altitude.



Destination Information

La Compañía Church - one of Quito's most well-known Jesuit churches that was built in 1605 and a magnificent example of the extraordinary artistic ability of Ecuadorian artisans. The large central nave is decorated almost completely with gold leaf, gilded plaster, and wooden carvings, above which are two green and gold domes in the vaulted ceiling.

San Francisco Church & Convent - construction commenced in 1535 over an Inca Empire and was the first built in Quito. It forms part of the city of Quito World Heritage Site.

Day 4: Otavalo

Travel through dramatic mountain scenery to Otavalo, home to one of South America's most famous Indian textile markets. Visit an Indian village community and learn the techniques of weaving from a local family before heading to lunch at a local hacienda.



Continue to the town of Cotacachi, famous for its natural and cultural beauty. Before heading back to Quito, stop at Cuicocha Lagoon, a crater lake located in the Cotacachi Cayapa ecological reserve and enjoy a short boat ride to learn about the local flora and fauna.

Destination Information

Otavalo Markets – one of the largest indigenous markets in Latin America located in the small town of Otavalo. Famous worldwide for the textiles and handmade artisan products on sale, It dates back to the 16th century when the indigenous merchants played a crucial role as traders and travelling salesmen.

Cuicocha Lagoon – located on the slopes of the mountain of the same name. It offers several different possibilities when it comes to appreciating its natural and cultural beauty. Known throughout all of Ecuador for its leather work, visitors can learn more about the production process behind some of its most popular goods, such as belts, purses, jackets and shoes.

Day 5: Papallacta Thermal Springs

Travel on the Cinnamon Trail, the route the Spanish Conquistador Francisco de Orellana took in 1542 when he crossed the Andean mountain range in search of spices and gold, only to discover the Amazon River. Here, at the entrance of the Amazonian jungle find Papallacta, home to several thermal spring pools where you can relax and revitalise your body. Please ensure you pack your swimsuits in your day packs and not in your suitcases. In the afternoon enjoy a nature walk along the marked paths alongside pristine mountain streams.



Destination Information

Papallacta Thermal Springs - Nestled high in the Andean Cordillera at the entrance of the Amazonian jungle, Papallacta features several hot thermal spring pools of different sizes and temperatures, with hydro-massage and bubble jets. Private pools are used by Wendy Wu Tours group members but you also have access to the public pools if you wish. The hydrothermal value of Termas de Papallacta's Hot Springs (hot springs? (no capital letters, unless a place name?)) is thanks to Papallacta's location between two volcanoes, Volcano Cayambe and Volcano Antisana.

Day 6: Cotopaxi – Riobamba

Travel along the Avenue of the Volcanoes and admire the colourful fields that cover the Ecuadorian highlands to reach Cotopaxi National Park, an ecological sanctuary. There, the guide will provide an overview of the Andean habitat. Continue to Limpiopungo Lagoon for a short walk where a variety of birds and occasional wild horses can be spotted. On clear days, the Cotopaxi Volcano is a magnificent backdrop. Before continuing to Riobamba stop for lunch at a local hacienda



Destination Information

Avenue of the Volcanoes - Follow the footsteps of the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt and discover what in 1802 he called the Avenue of the Volcanoes. This route is surrounded by snow-capped summits and the mystical beauty that, in times past, nourished the mythology of early cultures and later provided incentive to the conquering Spanish to settle here.

Day 7: Inca Fortress of Ingapirca

This morning spend time visiting the Inca fortress of Ingapirca, an important remnant of a Cañari site later occupied by the Incas. There are very few pre-Hispanic remains as impressive as these ancient ruins, which in Kichwa mean “wall of the Inca”. Later, continue to the city of Cuenca.



Destination Information

Ingapirca - Built atop a Cañari adobe base, the Incas brought in andesite stone to build the unusual elliptically shaped ceremonial space, as well as the homes, roads and terraces that comprise this amazing archaeological site.

Day 8: Cuenca

Spend a full day discovering the city of Cuenca. Visit a colourful artisan market followed by a visit to the Museum of Modern Art. Next visit a flower market on the small plaza in front of the carved stone entrance to the Church of El Carmen de la Asuncion. Stroll on the cobble stone streets of the old town main square, surrounded by the imposing blue domed cathedral. Later travel along the city’s riverbank admiring the historic houses. After lunch take a short drive to a ceramics handcraft shop, followed by a visit to a Panama Hat factory to observe the manufacturing process of this famous toquilla straw hat. Later this evening travel to Turi Hill lookout and enjoy a local beverage while overlooking the city.



Destination Information

Cuenca - Ecuador’s third largest city, yet it still retains its pleasant provincial air. Its red tiled roofs, cobblestone streets, flowery plazas and museums make it very special.

Day 9: Cajas National Park

Travel to Cajas National Park, located in the western part of the Andes and home to 235 lakes of glacial origin. Stop and stroll around for views of LLaviucu Lake and La Toreadora Lake. Later this afternoon, descend to the vibrant coastal city of Guayaquil.



Destination Information

Cajas National Park - El Cajas National Park has an area of 28, 544 hectares, , with 235 lakes of glacial origin (Mesozoic and Quaternary Periods). It sits in the western Cordillera of the Andes at an altitude of 3200 to 4000 meters above sea level with humid Andean cloud forests which act like a sponge by soaking up water and it's also home to a large variety of animals including the condor, pumas and birds of prey.

Day 10: Cacao Plantation

Travel along Ecuador's fertile tropical coast to a cacao plantation. Learn about the history of the family owned property along with the process they use to obtain the best cacao powder in the world. Enjoy lunch at the plantation before returning to Guayaquil.



Destination Information

Cacao – the magical ingredient that captivates the world just as it did thousands of years ago when it was served only to the highest dignitaries in Ancient American tribes during sacred rituals. Today, Ecuador produces less than 10% of the world's cacao but 70% of the world's highest quality cacao.

Day 11: Guayaquil

Enjoy a day sightseeing in Guayaquil, admiring colonial and modern architecture. Also visit the popular "Iguana Park". Here, iguanas roam undisturbed and perch on the treetops, blending perfectly with the green leaves. Beside the park is the neo-gothic Metropolitan Cathedral. Continue to Guayaquil's ravishing Malecon 2000 to see the Crystal Palace, the Integration Square, the Plaza of the Flags and the Plaza Olmedo, which are together at the beginning of a 2.5km waterfront, running parallel to the River Guayas and featuring historical, cultural and entertainment areas. Then on to Barrio Las Peñas, one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Guayaquil, whose wooden constructions have been beautifully restored, housing many art galleries. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Later this evening, enjoy a farewell dinner.



Destination Information

Guayaquil - Guayaquil, known as the 'Pacific Pearl', is Ecuador's main port city. Founded in 1538, this coastal town is known for its rich culture, architecture, and growing economy. Given its tropical climate, street activities are a big part of everyday life. Guayaquil is also known for having the most flavourful gastronomy of the coastal region.

Days 12 - 14: Depart Guayaquil for New Zealand

Today you will transfer to the airport for your return flight to New Zealand via Santiago, Chile. Arrive home in two days due to crossing the International Date Line once again.

Ecuador Highlights Travel Information

Visas

New Zealand passport holders currently do not require a visa to enter Ecuador. Your passport needs to be valid for at least six months beyond your intended return date to New Zealand. At the time of booking Visa conditions may have changed, currently no visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

Altitude

On this tour you will be spending several nights at altitude – in Quito at 2,8560m on Days 2-3, Otavalo at 3,068m on Day 4 and Cotapoxi National Park at 3,900m on Day 6. At these sort of altitudes, Altitude Sickness is a risk. Symptoms may include dizziness, fatigue, nausea and shortness of breath. It is recommended that travellers utilize their first day in high-altitude destinations to acclimatise. To help you acclimatise we have designed our tours to be at a slower pace with more convenience stops and more free time, during the first few days. Staying hydrated, eating light meals and following a very light schedule will all help. We recommend that any symptoms that are unusual should be brought to the attention of your National Escort. Your National Escort will be extremely well-trained in dealing with its effects – taking it easy and taking some time to acclimatise are the best ways to prevent and combat it. Serious cases, meaning that you must descend immediately, are rare. We have adapted the itinerary to make sure that your time at these heights is as relaxed and easy as possible.

There are no specific factors, such as age or fitness, that can cause you to suffer from altitude sickness. This can affect anyone at any time and symptoms may vary. All the hotels that we have selected to use on our programmes provide oxygen free of charge, please ask to use this. There is medication - that can help treat and prevent symptoms. Consult a doctor before taking any of these medications, before engaging in strenuous activity at high altitude and regarding any necessary vaccinations in plenty of time before travelling.

Eating in Ecuador

The diversity of the landscape provides Ecuador a tremendous amount of produce, meat and seafood. The unique environments are well represented in Ecuadorian cuisine, being equally as varied. Typical dishes are hearty and filling, containing a combination of meat or seafood and vegetables. Some examples of Ecuadorian cuisine in general include patacones (unripe plantains fried in oil, mashed up, and then refried), llapingachos (a pan-seared potato ball), and seco de chivo (a type of stew made from goat). A wide variety of fresh fruit is available, particularly at lower altitudes, including granadilla, passionfruit, naranjilla, several types of banana, uvilla, taxo, and tree tomato.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your group's arrival until breakfast on your day of departure.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

All the restaurants we visit will be researched and inspected regularly to ensure that they follow the strictest health, cleanliness, and safety guidelines. All waiting staff will wear face masks and gloves and self-service buffets will be avoided in favour of à la carte dining, waiter-served meals, or waiter-assisted buffets. Hand sanitiser will be provided to the group before and after every food and beverage service.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from corporate hotels to rainforest lodges. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between New Zealand and South America. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities and air conditioning where needed. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers between destinations. Roads in Ecuador have generally been improved over recent years, but please be aware traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. There may be sections of road where the surface may be comparatively bumpy, but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Within Latin America flights are often changed multiple times before departure, both timings and flight numbers. The utmost care will be taken to ensure that your final documents will have the latest information, however your local guide will confirm this in destination. Boarding passes can be collected directly at the airport. The flights booked as part of your itinerary will always reflect the best timings to suit the touring itinerary, with direct flights wherever possible, however due to limited schedules some flights may require an early departure or late arrival.

Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in Ecuador, such as indigenous textiles, handicrafts, artworks, chocolate, coffee, Panama Hats and leather. There will be some opportunities during your tour to pick up souvenirs.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by National Escorts. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Latin America. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognise that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each, a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Exchanging Cash

The unit of currency in Ecuador is the United States Dollar (USD). We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Try and keep some small notes and coins on you, as on street stalls and in small shops they may not have the chance to break up a high denomination note. If you decide to use US dollars, make sure they are in a good state (not ripped, etc.) or they will not be accepted. ATMs are common across Ecuador and we recommend using an ATM inside a bank where possible. Most major credit cards are widely accepted across the continent, though please bear in mind the charges of your provider. Debit cards are also widely accepted but may have a limit to the amount of cash you can withdraw so consult your bank about this before travelling.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of NZ\$250 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or Health Center for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Holiday Health has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.holidayhealth.co.nz

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure

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