



## ECUADOR

Epic Treks of the Andes and Amazon



# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



## ITINERARY

Ecuador • Epic Treks of the Andes and Amazon

**7 DAYS • 6 NIGHTS**

Quito – Otavalo – Papallacta – Cotundo – Patate – Cotopaxi – Quito

*This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike through a variety of unique environments such as paramo, cloud forest rainforest and dry forest systems
- Encounter a vast array of native wildlife and plants
- Discover the spiritual world of the Kichwa Indians
- Relax and rejuvenate in the mineral-rich, curative Papallacta hot springs
- Hike along the slopes of the highest active volcano in the world

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Trekking Adventure
Tour Start	Quito
Tour End	Quito
Accommodation	Tourist-superior Hotels, Historical Haciendas & Eco Lodges
Included Meals	7 Breakfasts, 7 Lunches, 6 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Moderate

## WORLD CLASS HIKING TRAILS AT YOUR FEET



This epic adventure follows some of Ecuador's best hiking trails through national parks and nature reserves while you enjoy quality accommodations and authentic cuisine in colonial haciendas and rustic eco-lodges. Discover an extraordinary array of environments as you hike through vast landscapes full of wildlife and wonder, experiencing seven ecosystems in seven days. Learn about the rich history and culture of Ecuador's indigenous tribes during fascinating Kichwa community visits. Only in Ecuador you can experience this level of natural and cultural diversity while hiking world-class trails through unique, remote landscapes.

# ECUADOR, *an overview*

Located on the North West coast of South America, Ecuador, is boarded by the Pacific Ocean, Colombia and Peru. The country is a patchwork of ethnic identities due to its indigenous and colonial past. With several geographical zones including the Andean peaks, Amazon rainforest and the Galapagos Islands there are many experiences to be had, especially those that are off the beaten track. Along with the beautiful scenery we will see much of the unique flora and fauna on this great tour.

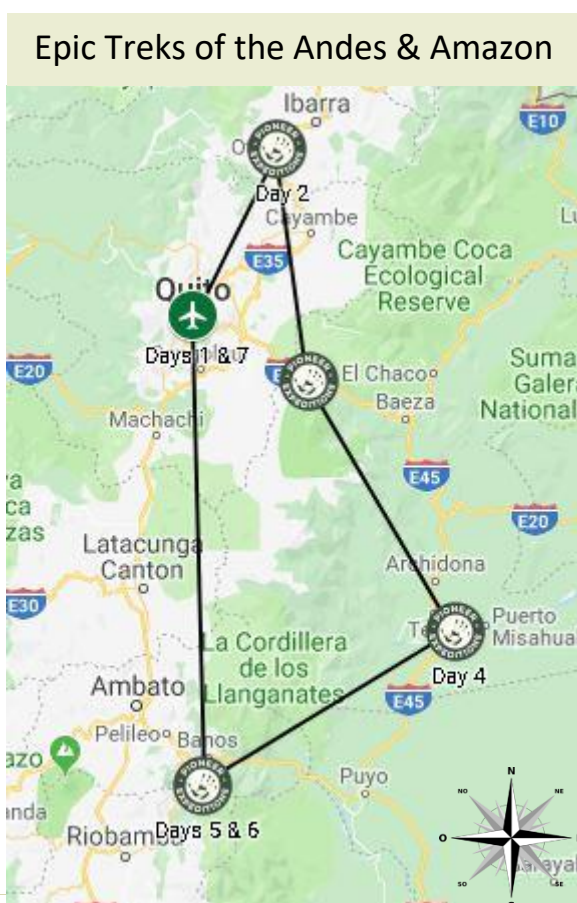
## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

Pioneer Expeditions are one of the few specialists that really *do* off the beaten track and unique adventures. The team have a real passion for wildlife and adventure travel which we love to share with our clients. We delight in searching the world for new destinations, new experiences and creating the most incredible adventures.

We like to introduce our clients to unique, the different, and the incredible. Whether it is through wildlife tracking, sea kayaking, snorkelling, trekking, rafting, cycling or observing wildlife in its natural environment, we want to give you the real Pioneer experience.

From the moment you choose to travel with Pioneer Expeditions until you return back home, you are supported by our dedicated team. We listen to what you want and can create an itinerary around your specific needs, working with your budget and with a commitment to responsible travel.

## ITINERARY



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ECU05



## DAY 1: Latitude Zero on Volcan Pululahua

Our adventure starts with heading north out of Quito. After a quick stop at the equatorial monument we continue north until we reach Volcan Pululahua, an extinct volcano surrounded by a geobotanical reserve. Pululahua's crater is directly crossed by Latitude 0°. As we hike into the reserve and toward the crater, we pass through a series of unique ecosystems, including montane cloud forest, myrtle forest and dry acacia forest. This reserve is also home to a huge number of bird species including hummingbirds, mountain tanagers, eagles and hawks. After arriving at the crater, we continue on toward Rio Blanco where we cross the river to find an otherworldly landscape called Infiernillo (Little Hell), an arid patch of sulfur deposits within a dry forest. After our hike, we drive to the beautiful, historic Hacienda Pinsaqui, where we enjoy a delicious meal and deluxe accommodations to finish the day.

*Volcan Pululahua is a volcanic crater of the extinct Pululahua. The crater lies in the 3383 hectare Reserva Geobotanica which is approximately 4km north west of La Mitad del Mundo. It is believed that the crater was formed in ancient times when the cone of the volcano collapsed leaving which stands today a 400m deep by 5km diameter crater which is used for agricultural purposes because of its fertile soils.*



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**11 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking**

## Day 2: Cuicocha Crater Lake



This morning we drive to Cuicocha, a crater lake collected in a secondary caldera of the extinct Cotacachi Volcano. Cuicocha translates as 'lake of the guinea pigs', named after the shape of its two central islets. The lake and surrounding slopes are protected as a nature reserve. At around 3,000 meters, Cuicocha's ecosystem is a combination of two ecosystems. Our path circumvents the crater rim, revealing stunning views of the lake and the volcanoes Cotacachi, Mojanda and Imbabura. We keep our eyes open for native wildlife and if we are lucky we might even catch a glimpse of the rare Andean Condor. After lunch, we stop to visit Cotacachi's leather market and Otavalo's famous indigenous handicraft market. In the late afternoon, we head back to Hacienda Pinsaqui for another gourmet dinner and relaxing evening.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**9 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**



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### DAY 3: Continental Divide to Papallacta

Today we drive east through the inter-Andean valley, gaining elevation as we climb into the heights of Ecuador's eastern Andes. At 4,100 meters, we reach the continental divide, a high pass that separates the Pacific and Atlantic watersheds. We begin our hike through the Cayambe-Coca nature reserve, home to some of the best highland paramo scenery in the country. This humid area is part of the largest hydrological system in the world, and features one of the highest concentrations of lakes in the Andean range. The high altitude and humidity of the paramo create a very unique ecosystem with a host of endemic species. We hike mostly downhill, heading toward the Amazon lowlands on the other side of the eastern Andes. As we walk, we seek out three native deer species and the elusive spectacled bear, and of course we continue our search for the Andean Condor! Our hike ends in Termas de Papallacta Spa & Resort, where we spend the evening relaxing in the mineral-rich, curative waters of the local natural hot springs. The highly recommended spa treatments are booked separately.



Overnight:  
**Spa & Resort**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**11 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**

### DAY 4: Macaw Jungle Trail

After breakfast at Termas de Papallacta, we drive along a scenic road that descends further into the Amazon basin until we reach Sumaco National Park. The local ecosystem is montane cloud forest, where many species from the jungle and the highlands coexist, in addition to endemic mammals, birds and insects. We will see cock of the rocks, toucans, macaws, monkeys, and more. As we descend along a remote trail through dense vegetation, we can observe the gradual change from cloud forest to rainforest. We continue to descend until reaching a good spot for a healthy picnic lunch. In the afternoon, we continue by vehicle to Archidona to visit an indigenous community, where we learn about the Kichwa culture and jungle life. After our visit, we head to Cotococha Lodge. After a delightful dinner, we prepare our flashlights for a jungle night walk in the nature reserve next to our lodge.



*Sumaco National Park is a natural shelter with an assortment of ecosystems and wildlife. Although the area is protected and mostly undiscovered, it is home to 280 bird species and has important geological sites.*



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**12 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**

### DAY 5: Rainforest Walk – Explore the Pastaza George

This is our most relaxed hike, with plenty of time to enjoy the jungle wildlife at an easy pace and recover at a lower altitude. The forest displays a great variety of trees like balsa, cedar, rubber and cinnamon. As we hike, our guide identifies countless species of orchids, vines, ferns, insects, and reptiles, teaching us the traditional ways indigenous tribes use many of these plants. After lunch, we drive south and start climbing back into the Andes through the Pastaza River Gorge. This scenic route, with rocky cliffs in a deep cloud forest canyon, is known for its many waterfalls. We stop to admire some of the largest, including Pailon del Diablo (Devil's Cauldron) and Manto de la Novia (Bride's Veil). We



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pass through Baños, an attractive subtropical town set on the slopes of the very active Volcan Tungurahua, and enjoy some fantastic views of Tungurahua before arriving to an Andean Hacienda, where we will spend the night.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**4 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**

## DAY 6: Mysteries of the Llanganates

The Llanganates mountain range has a long history of mystical events and legends. To this day, it is one of the few places in the world that remains largely unexplored and uncharted. Locals relive stories of failing compasses and disappearances, and the most famous legend tells how Inca general Rumiñahui hid a vast fortune of gold in one of the range's lakes. The Llanganates is protected as a vast, 220,000 hectare national park, it covers four provinces and the altitude in the park varies between 4,500 and 1,200 meters.

Our hike starts around 3,500 meters and takes us through cloud forest, Andean forest, and paramo ecosystems. This picturesque and remote trail gives us the chance to enjoy great views of the surrounding volcanoes and spot an abundance of hummingbirds, mountain tanagers, and deer. We continue our hike to Laguna San Borja seeking for the elusive spectacled bear, looking up for evidence of its presence, following its prints and traces. If we are very lucky we may see one! In the afternoon we continue the journey through the avenue of the Volcanoes to the Cotopaxi area for dinner and overnight at an Andean Hacienda.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**4 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**

## DAY 7: Cotopaxi National Park

Cotopaxi Volcano, with its symmetrical, glaciated cone and imposing presence, is one of Ecuador's most enduring images. The wild paramo that surrounds this 5,897 meter giant is designated as Cotopaxi National Park, and is a spectacular place to hike while searching for highland wildlife and admiring incredible volcanic scenery. We begin our adventure on the slopes of Volcan Rumiñahui, where we get stunning views of Cotopaxi rising over 2,000 meters above the high plain. As we hike, we spot hares, foxes, falcons, deer, and with luck, condors flying overhead. We descend the slopes of Rumiñahui all the way to Limpiopungo Glacier Lake, home to scores of aquatic birds. It is common to see gulls, ducks, teals, lapwings, shore birds, and even the occasional high-altitude flamingo on the banks of Limpiopungo. After stopping for lunch at a local hacienda, we return to Quito to rest and celebrate an Epic Adventure!



Overnight:  
**N/A**



Meals:  
**B, L**



Distance:  
**4 Km**



Activity:  
**Trekking & Wildlife**



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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)</li> <li>■ Accommodation as described</li> <li>■ Private land transportation</li> <li>■ High quality adventure and protective equipment</li> <li>■ English speaking adventure guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Meals other than mentioned</li> <li>➤ International flights</li> <li>➤ Tips</li> <li>➤ Personal expenses</li> <li>➤ Alcohol and soft drinks</li> </ul>

## ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
<b>Night 1 &amp; 2</b>	San Pablo de Lago Otavalo	Hotel	<i>Hacienda Cusin</i>
<b>Night 3</b>	Papallacta	Spa & Resort	<i>Termas De Papallacta Spa &amp; Resort</i>
<b>Night 4</b>	Cotundo – Napo	Lodge	<i>Huasquila Amazon Lodge</i>
<b>Night 5</b>	Via Ecologica Banos, Patate	Hotel	<i>Haciendo Leito Los Llangantes</i>
<b>Night 6</b>	Lasso, Cotopaxi	Hotel	<i>Hacienda La Cienega</i>



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	3 – 7 hours per day
Season	All Year
Travel Time	1 or 2 hours drive time per day
Altitude	500 to 400 meters (1600 to 13,000 feet)
Average Temperature: Andes	Day 46°F to 75°F / 8°C to 24°C, Night 41°F to 53°F / 5°C to 12°C
Average Temperature: Amazon	Day 68°F to 95°F / 20°C to 30°C, Night 64°F to 71°F / 18°C to 22°C
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Moderate level (3 – 7 hours of activities per day). This means that you will need an average level of fitness.

## THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at [info@pioneerexpeditions.com](mailto:info@pioneerexpeditions.com) if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website [www.pioneerexpeditions.com](http://www.pioneerexpeditions.com) to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

### 1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

### 2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

### 3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

