

Tapir (Ecuador)



Bike down Cotopaxi volcano • Explore the Amazon jungle • Go reverse canyoning and caving • Hike Antisana Highlands • Visit a local Amazon community • Free time in Baños • Visit a traditional hacienda • Soak in hot springs • Explore Quito

7 days: Quito–Quito

Fare: US\$1799

Season: Year round

The Tapir is an extraordinary way to see Ecuador. It's packed with exciting and varied activities, wonderful scenery, and the chance to meet the local people. You'll hike through virgin Amazon jungle, around high volcanic plateaus and the fertile highlands surrounded by 'The Valley of Volcanoes'. You'll cycle down Cotopaxi, one of the world's highest active volcanoes, visit a local rainforest community, and soak in hot springs in an incredible Ecuadorian highland setting. You'll go reverse canyoning and caving in the Amazon jungle, and explore Quito – Ecuador's cosmopolitan and colonial highland capital city – it's all here!

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

SUNDAY

Arrive Quito, explore Ecuadorian ranch

Your trip begins in Ecuador's capital city, Quito. If you're flying in on day one of the trip, your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip leader will meet you at the airport or your accommodation in the morning. This afternoon we'll head to Cotopaxi, one of Ecuador's most spectacular mountains in the heart of the Valley of the Volcanoes. Here we'll make ourselves at home at Hacienda La Alegria, a typical, family-run Ecuadorian ranch, and meet our hosts, locals Gabriel and Patty. Try your hand at milking the cows, wander around and check out the amazing scenery, or just relax inside this beautiful home and enjoy Patty's incredible cooking!

ACCOMMODATION: Hacienda La Alegria, Cotopaxi (L,D)

MONDAY

Cycle Cotopaxi volcano, Baños

Today is definitely a highlight of the Tapir trip as we head into Cotopaxi National Park. The centrepiece of the park is the perfect cone-like, snow-capped peak of Cotopaxi (19,347 feet). Here we begin our cycling adventure down one of the world's highest active volcanoes! Ride downhill at your own pace through the lunar landscape and beautiful lakes that encircle Cotopaxi, ending your ride at 10,000 feet. The scenery is magical. If you're game, we'll hike up to the snowline of this majestic volcano for some of the best views in Ecuador. Later, we'll drive through the "Valley of the Volcanoes" to Baños – a beautiful mountain village in the Rio Pastaza Valley.

ACCOMMODATION: El Marques Posada, Baños (B,L,D)

TUESDAY

Free time in Baños

Baños, nestled between the Rio Pastaza canyon and Tungurahua volcano, is a playground for adventure activities. There are lots of optional activities here, including canyoning, biking, rafting, horse riding and even salsa dancing lessons! The magnificent, subtropical cloud forest environment of Baños offers incredible hikes too, and the town itself is charming. There are hot springs, great cafés, a beautiful town square and rows of little stores along the sidewalk where the locals weave melocha (toffee).

ACCOMMODATION: El Marques Posada, Baños (B,D)

WEDNESDAY

Amazon Jungle, Hike to a local community, caving

Today we'll head east out of Baños, down the Rio Pastaza Valley. The high cloud forest gives way to lush rainforest, sweeping all the way down the canyon walls into the river below as we descend into Ecuador's Amazon jungle lowlands. We'll get straight into the action when we arrive at our rain forest lodge, with a hike to a community of indigenous people living in the rainforest. We'll take a dugout canoe across the Napo River, then hike two hours into the jungle to the village. This is a real highlight of the trip – you'll learn how these small indigenous communities maintain their traditional ways of life and get some sense of the important role the rainforest plays in their lives. This afternoon we're back into the action with a hike into pristine virgin jungle and we'll venture deep into an elaborate canyon system. These canyons become a series of caves and limestone cliffs. With bats as spectators, we'll hike through the canyons back to Amarongachi Lodge.

ACCOMMODATION: Amarongachi Lodge, Upper Napo River (B,L,D)

"For outdoorsy, active fun – this is the company for you. ACTIVE makes it possible to finish a fabulous hike, have the bikes magically appear, finish the ride and wind up next to an idyllic swimming hole. The itineraries are superb! The support is well orchestrated. This is a fun vacation."

Sandra Shewry (California, USA)

THURSDAY

Jungle hike and reverse canyoning, soak in hot springs

Using 4x4 trucks, we'll travel deeper into the rainforest where we'll take a short hike along a jungle trail to our first waterfall climb. The climb up these waterfalls is a lot of fun, even for absolute beginners at the art of reverse canyoning – which is typically everyone! Once we climb above the waterfalls, we traverse a rainforest ridge to rustic Amarongachi Lodge, where we'll have lunch. If there's time later, we'll hike to a beautiful lagoon for a swim before we head back into the highlands to Papallacta. Here we'll soak in glorious hot springs that sit right outside our rooms, and take in the cloud forest and mountain views before dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: *Termas Papallacta, Ecuadorian Cloud Forest (B,L,D)*

FRIDAY

Hike Santa Lucia Highlands, Quito

This morning we'll hike up into the Santa Lucia Highlands Plateau, on the northwestern side of Antizana volcano, standing at 13,800 feet. It's a heart pumping hike to reach the plateau, passing llamas and alpacas on the trail, but the views of the Antisana, several other snow-capped peaks and the surrounding rugged Paramo area are magnificent. We'll also get amazing views of the massive Antisana

Glacier that drops down the side of the volcano. Keep an eye out for condors too, as they're often seen in the area. Later we'll take a short drive back to Quito where we'll have the afternoon free to explore the city. We'll meet again this evening for our final dinner in Ecuador.

ACCOMMODATION: *Quito hotel, Quito*

(B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Quito, depart for home

Today is the last day of your 7 day trip around Ecuador with ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA. If you have time to spare, we're happy to help with some ideas for what you can do for the rest of your time here. You'll return home relaxed and refreshed from all the great activities, fine food and friendly people you've met while travelling with us in Ecuador!

Andrew: "Ecuador isn't exactly crowded with travellers, which is great for us! But I can't understand why it isn't a renowned adventure destination yet – places like Shangri La Lodge offer truly unique activities, an amazing setting and is a must for any adventure lover!"

SPECIFIC INFORMATION – TAPIR

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: You can fly into Quito first thing in the morning on the first day of the trip, but we recommend you arrive anytime the day before. On the last day of the trip you can fly out any time. If you need to fly out earlier, you can fly out of Quito anytime after 7pm on day 6. If you want to arrive earlier or leave later, we're happy to help you out with extra hotel accommodation bookings.

TRIP START: If you arrive on the first day of the trip, an ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA representative will meet you at the airport at 10 am. If you're already in Quito, you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group in the lobby of our joining hotel at 11am.

TRIP END: You can fly out at any time on the last day of the trip. ^(B)

ACCOMMODATION: The Tapir is an active, adventure-oriented trip that takes you to some wild and remote areas of Ecuador. We've chosen accommodations for their comfort, cleanliness and charm – not the number of channels available on the television. Having said that, even the remote jungle lodges have private rooms with mosquito nets, a hammock outside and great views!

For more information on accommodation, fitness and experience requirements and what's included in the trip fare, see 'General Information' on the last page.

General Information

We've included trip-specific details in the Specific Information section at the end of each itinerary. This is also where you can find details on recommended flights for the start and the end of your trip.

ACCOMMODATION: Our trips focus on getting you outside for the best adventure activities in the most stunning parts of South America. The accommodation we choose is clean and comfortable, but it's not a tour of the fanciest hotels in South America! Some of the places we stay are quite luxurious and other places – like the mountain lodges in Patagonia – are very basic, but truly spectacular.

From time to time, we might stay in places other than those specified in the itinerary - but we'll let you know before you go.

FITNESS: We've designed our trips to be challenging, fun and outdoor oriented – none of our trips are passive scenic tours – so you'll need a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself. Age and experience are not important; you don't have to be young or extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some regular exercise. Getting in a few short hikes with a day pack or a gym class before your trip is always a good idea.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need lots of outdoor experience to take our trips. Our trips allow you to make the most of South America's outdoor environment, culture and history regardless of your experience. Our trip leaders are highly trained and experienced outdoor guides and they'll look after you. Experience is not as important as having a 'can do' attitude and being willing to give things a go. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and have an impeccable safety record.

FLEXIBILITY: South America is a developing part of the world and we won't tell you that everything runs like clockwork. What we can say is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders and we know how to keep things operating smoothly, even when conditions are challenging. That's why we're here! You'll find your trip even more enjoyable if you remember to bring flexibility, an open mind and a sense of humour with you.

INCLUDED: Our trip fares are all shown in US dollars so our

guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can join us for shorter periods of time for most trips. The fares quoted on each itinerary include taxes. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have an experienced trip leader with every trip and have a specialist local guide on many of our excursions for extra local knowledge.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire trip. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- Breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D), except on our *Tortuga* trip where some dinners are not included, and during your free days on our *Jaguar* and *Tapir* trips when most people like to check out the local restaurants on their own.
- All drinking water. (Alcohol and other drinks are not included.)
- All hiking, snorkelling, rafting, canoeing, sea kayaking, hiking, biking and jungle activities as described in the itinerary, excluding optional activities as noted. No activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip be less awesome if you choose to sit out any of the activities.
- Tips for local activity guides, drivers and boat captains are taken care of by ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA, except for Inca Trail guides and porters on our *Jaguar* trip.
- Transport including buses, boats, trains and some flights.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you. On a couple of the trips you'll have one or two meals to cover, drinks and the cost of extra activities if you choose them. In some destinations you may have to cover your departure tax when you leave the airport. You'll probably feel like tipping your guide at the end of a fabulous time too. Other than that, everything's taken care of – you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip!

ITINERARY UPDATES: We update our printed itineraries each year. Please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing (this one is valid to April 2013).

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