

Tucan Ecuador



*Bike down Cotopaxi volcano • Explore the Amazon jungle • Go reverse canyoning, caving and river tubing
Hike Bellavista Cloud Forest • Whitewater raft Rio Napo • Visit Otavalo markets • Hike Lake Cuicocha • Visit a
traditional Hacienda • Soak in hot springs • Bike Rio Pastaza canyon • Hike Pailon del Diablo waterfall*

12 days: Quito–Quito

Fare: US\$2999

Season: Year Round

The Tucan 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, the mystical Bellavista cloud forest and the fertile highlands surrounded by 'The Valley of Volcanoes'. You'll paddle down the stunning Rio Napo and climb up waterfalls that feed this mighty river in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon basin. You'll cycle down Cotopaxi, one of the world's highest active volcanoes and through the lush, green Pastaza river canyon flowing down to the jungle. You'll visit a local rainforest community, and have the chance to try out a wealth of optional adrenalin activities in Baños – a beautiful little town at the foot of the immense Tungurahua Volcano – and visit one of the most culturally significant markets in South America. Ecuador is a country full of secrets waiting to be discovered!

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

SATURDAY

Arrive Quito

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 at 2pm and take you to your accommodation. You'll have a couple of hours to explore the sprawling parks, old colonial buildings, winding cobbled alleyways and local markets of this amazing city. Ecuador is also known for its awesome coffee and fresh juice, so if you have time, pop into a café and try some. Quito sits in a beautiful valley surrounded by towering volcanoes just 14 miles from the Equator, giving it a mild spring-like climate all year round. In the evening you'll meet up with the rest of your group for a full briefing before our first dinner together.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Reina Isabel, Quito (D)*

SUNDAY

Hike Bellavista Cloud Forest

It's an early start today as we head out of the city limits to the lush Bellavista Cloud Forest. This place is only a couple of hours away from Quito, but you'll feel like you're in the middle of nowhere. It's quiet and off the beaten track and you'll be amazed by the diversity of the bird and plant life that thrive in this verdant area. We'll spend the day hiking along steeply-forested slopes to look and listen for native birds. Bellavista is a hummingbird paradise and a stunningly beautiful retreat, whether you want to get your heart pumping on the hills or would rather stop and absorb the symphony of sounds in the misty forest. This evening, we'll stay in a charming lodge surrounded by forest. The view from your room is so beautiful you won't want to close your eyes!

ACCOMMODATION: *Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge, Bellavista (B,L,D)*

MONDAY

Hike Peguche waterfall, visit Otavalo markets

From the peaceful retreat of Bellavista, we head north-east to explore

Otavalo, a lovely town surrounded by volcanoes and fertile green hills. Otavalo is home to the Otavaleño people and their market is an experience not to be missed. It dates back to pre-Inca times and you can find all manner of things here as you walk through the stalls manned by locals in traditional embroidered blouses, long flowing skirts and brightly coloured ponchos. This is one of the most famous markets in South America and the economic cornerstone of this proud community, which has been exporting its fine textiles to the world for decades. After lunch, we'll hike to La Cascada de Peguche, a beautiful waterfall above town. If you prefer not to hike today, you can continue to explore the market.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Coraza, Otavalo (B,L,D)*

TUESDAY

Hike Lake Cuicocha, explore Ecuadorian ranch

This morning we'll hike around Lake Cuicocha, an extinct volcanic crater known as 'The Lake of the Gods'. This beautifully coloured lake lies at the foot of the immense Cotacachi Volcano, with views that will take your breath away! In the 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 (B,L,D)*

"It was a wonderful experience to see Ecuador through the eyes of our local guide. The ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip was the perfect itinerary. I am now going to make it my mission to get more people to visit this spectacularly beautiful country!"

Sue Manuel (Pennsylvania, USA) November 2007

WEDNESDAY

Cycle Cotopaxi volcano

Today is definitely a highlight of the *Tucan* 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 to Baños, a beautiful mountain town in the Rio Pastaza Valley.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel El Marquez Posada, Baños (B,L,D)*

THURSDAY

Free day 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 where the locals weave melocha (toffee) on the sidewalk.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel El Marquez Posada, Baños (B)*

FRIDAY

Cycle Rio Pastaza Valley, hike Pailon del Diablo waterfall

Today we'll bike east out of Baños, riding down the Rio Pastaza Valley. This is some of the most unforgettable cycling you'll ever do. 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. Along the way, we'll stop for a cable car ride over the canyon and hike down to Pailón del Diablo waterfall. Our day ends at the idyllic Shangri La Jungle Lodge, overlooking the Upper Napo River in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

ACCOMMODATION: *Shangri La Jungle Lodge, Upper Napo River (B,L,D)*

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

SATURDAY

Caving, river tubing and hiking on the upper Napo River

Launch straight into the action with a hike into pristine virgin jungle, where 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 Shangri La Lodge. After lunch, we'll head out on to the Upper Napo for river tubing. This involves floating down the river on inflated rubber tubes - all you have to do is kick back and enjoy the ride. Using your arms and feet as paddles, we'll float eight miles downriver to the take-out point before heading back to the lodge.

ACCOMMODATION: *Shangri La Jungle Lodge (B,L,D)*

SUNDAY

Jungle hike and reverse canyoning

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. Later we'll hike to a beautiful lagoon for a swim.

ACCOMMODATION: *Shangri La Jungle Lodge (B,L,D)*

MONDAY

Hike to local Amazon community

Today we visit 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. After this unique visit, we'll head to the Amazon frontier town of Tena.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Travelers Lodging, Tena (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) March 2008

TUESDAY

Raft Rio Napo

We have another exciting day today, rafting the Rio Napo. We leave Tena for a short drive into the jungle to the put-in, where you'll get a familiarisation and safety briefing. Then we're off! We'll be descending Grade III and IV rapids, interspersed with calm stretches to catch our breath and take in the scenery. In between paddling the rapids, sit back and take in the magnificent rainforest environment - it's hard to beat.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Travelers Lodging, Tena (B,L,D)*

WEDNESDAY

Return to Quito, depart for home

Today is the last day of your 12-day trip around Ecuador with ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA. We'll get back to Quito around lunchtime, and 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. If you have a flight this evening, we'll be sure to get you back to the airport on time. 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! (B)

We'll see you soon!

Specific Information – *Tucan*

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: You can fly into Quito any time on the first day of the trip, but we recommend you arrive before noon. On the last day of the trip you can fly out any time after 3pm. 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 SOUTHAMERICA representative will meet you at the airport at 2pm and take you to your accommodation. If you're already in Quito, you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group in the lobby of Hotel Reina Isabel at 6pm.

TRIP END: You'll be arriving back in Quito in time for flights departing after 3pm on Wednesday, the last day of your trip. We'll be happy to drop you off at the airport, or at your hotel if you're staying on in Quito..



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 – such as Hotel Celaje in Costa Rica – 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 *Tucan* 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 2011).

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