

Abercrombie & Kent



ECUADOR ADVENTURE

Discover a treasure trove of natural and cultural wonders in Ecuador, on South America's Pacific coast.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Ecuador & Galápagos Islands,
Latin America



12 days from AU\$17,385 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Discover a treasure trove of natural and cultural wonders in Ecuador, on South America's Pacific coast. Immerse yourself in its soaring capital city and stroll through the cobblestone plazas. Wander through nature's playground in the rainforest at Mashpi. Stay awhile to meet Andean villagers in markets and workshops, and delight in the traditional life of a hacienda. There's a whole world to explore in these Andean peaks.

Journey Highlights

- Discover nature's playground in Mashpi Rainforest Biodiversity Reserve
- Marvel at the snow-covered peak of the impressive Volcano Cotopaxi
- Spend a day in the life of Quito, Ecuador's enchanting and captivating capital
- Immerse yourself in the market town of Otavalo for a fascinating insight into some of the indigenous traditions and customs of Ecuador
- Visit the old colonial city of Cuenca, built on the site of a former Inca settlement



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Quito

Touchdown in Quito, the second highest capital in the world at 2,850 metres, after La Paz Bolivia, and one of the most endearing. Receive your A&K welcome and enjoy a private transfer to your boutique accommodation in the historic centre. After time to relax and refresh, take a short private visit to nearby Carmen Alto cloister, which dates to the 17th century. Spend time with the Carmelite nuns who still live there and sample their traditional sweet treats before returning to the hotel.

Casa Gangotena

Day 2: Quito

Delve deeper into Ecuador's captivating capital and learn first-hand how it earned its status as one of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites. Meander through colonial streets and cobblestone plazas amongst flowering balconies and intricate woodcarvings. Linger in the San Francisco Church, the bustling Independence Plaza and La Compañía, where seven tonnes of gilded shimmering walls will take your breath away. Spend the afternoon at leisure. Head to the hotel's terrace and enjoy a drink as you soak up the views across San Francisco square. Alternatively explore more of the city brimming with friendly locals, hearty foods, colonial architecture.

Casa Gangotena / Meals: B

Day 3: Quito - Mashpi Reserve

A private journey north to the Equator at the Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) and experience the bizarre sensation of standing in both hemispheres at once. Spend some time learning about the unique astrology and science of the Equator in the Intiñan Museum. Continue over the pass towards the Pacific Ocean and arrive at Mashpi Rainforest Biodiversity Reserve, one of the world's most important biodiversity hot spots, home to thousands of plant species and more than 500 species of bird. Be hypnotised by the lively flying machines at Hummingbird Viewpoint before arriving at your luxury hideaway. Following lunch, meet your expedition leader and discuss the menu of unique eco-adventures led by expert naturalist and local community guides. Pedal over gorges and treetops on a sky bike. Explore forest trails, or take a dip in the nearby waterfalls. Don't miss the opportunity to explore the wilderness by night on a guided walk.

Mashpi Lodge / Meals: BLD

Day 4: Mashpi Reserve

Discover, experience and cherish the wonders of Mashpi. Rise early to hear the choir of birds welcome the day. Venture into the forest and navigate trails of wondrous wildlife, with ferns towering above and a carpet of mushrooms underfoot. Seek out waterfalls and wade through refreshing rivers, all while learning the secrets of the forest. Visit the Life Centre to discover more about your surroundings, or simply laze in a hammock with a cup of locally-grown coffee, mesmerised by the vivid butterflies and birds. Climb the observation tower for a birds-eye vista.

Mashpi Lodge / Meals: BLD

Day 5: Mashpi Reserve - Otavalo

Enjoy a final activity this morning before leaving this secret wonderland and heading north into the dizzying heights of the Andes, to a family-run hacienda and your home for the next two nights. Hear stories of this 1600-hectare farm, which has been in the family of the late Galo Plaza Lasso, a former president of Ecuador, for more than 100 years. Then, seek out your favourite spot for a glass of wine before dinner.

Hacienda Zuleta / Meals: BLD

Day 6: Otavalo

Rise early to glimpse rare species of birds on a gentle walk around the property. Take a hike on any of the self-guided paths around your hacienda. Visit the Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation, which has set up a wild condor rehabilitation project on the estate, or you may enjoy exploring the hacienda's organic garden and cheese factory, with an opportunity to even try your hand at milking a cow.

Hacienda Zuleta / Meals: BLD

Day 7: Otavalo - Cotopaxi National Park

Depart for the bustling small town of Otavalo. Meet the friendly Otavaleños and discover strange-looking produce at the world-famous market (Saturday is the main market day) that's been gathering since pre-Incan times. Continue your morning filled with talent and artistry in the small mountain village of Peguche. Step inside a music-filled home where your talented hosts craft and play traditional instruments, then learn the ancient art of weaving. Enter a world of delicate colour in the rose plantation of Hacienda La Compañía which originally belonged to the Jesuit order and is now home to one of UNICEF's Flowers for Kids educational initiatives where you will enjoy a delicious local lunch. Continue your journey south along the aptly-named Avenue of Volcanoes to Cotopaxi, the highest of Ecuador's volcanoes at almost 6,000 metres. Arrive at your historic hacienda for an unforgettable stay.

Hacienda San Agustin del Callo / Meals: BLD

Day 8: Cotopaxi National Park

Spend time today in the park on a gentle walk to the beautiful Laguna Limpiopungo, at the base of Volcán Rumiñahui, home to local and migrating waterfowl. Return to the hacienda and enjoy the afternoon at leisure soaking up the splendid views of the perfectly cone-shaped Cotopaxi. For the more active, head out on a horse ride, explore by mountain bike or visit nearby rose plantations.

Hacienda San Agustin del Callo / Meals: BLD

Day 9: Cotopaxi National Park - Riobamba

Journey this morning along the mountainous spine dotted with villages and farms to the Andean crater lake of Laguna Quilotoa. Visit the nearby villages of Tigua and Pujili and browse artisan crafts. Continue to Riobamba, once the capital of Ecuador and now a vibrant town brimming with colonial treasures. Meander through the old town, enjoy religious art in the Concepción Convent and expand your knowledge in the Natural Science Museum.

Hacienda La Andaluza / Meals: BLD

Day 10: Riobamba - Cuenca

Head south stopping at the village of Guamote where you will visit a social project providing education and crafts workshops to assist underprivileged local people in the area, especially young girls and women. Their program includes computer classes, sewing courses, musical classes, pre-school and English classes. Get hands-on as you learn how to make traditional Andean snacks with your hosts.

Following a simple lunch at a local restaurant, head to the complex Inca ruins of Ingapirca, a place of extraordinary historical significance and a site that was originally used as a political and religious centre. Later continue your adventure to historic Cuenca, a UNESCO World Heritage site and your boutique colonial hotel.

Hotel Cruz del Vado / Meals: BL

Day 11: Cuenca

Immerse yourself in the “Athens of the Andes” and discover why it’s hailed the hidden treasure of Ecuador and considered the most beautiful city in the country. Meander along cobblestone streets and through flowery plazas to the striking cathedral with three blue domes. Be sure to peek inside at the jaw-dropping gold altar. Later, enjoy the quirky Homero Ortega Panama Hat factory before swapping the city charm for the creative villages of Santa Ana Valley. Meet the guitar-makers of San Bartolomé, visit jewellery workshops in Chordeleg and seek out gems in the colourful markets of Gualaceo.

Hotel Cruz del Vado / Meals: BL

Day 12: Cuenca - Depart Guayaquil

Begin the day with a private journey over the continental divide to the El Cajas National Park, a UNESCO-protected site on Cuenca's doorstep. Take some time to explore the park, with its rolling lakelands, ancient woods and sprawling cloud forest set against a jagged skyline of rocky peaks. Continue to Guayaquil, the nation's principal port and gateway to the Galapagos Islands. End your journey here or continue to the Galapagos Islands.

Meals: BL

Map



Accommodation

Casa Gangotena, Quito



Spanish chroniclers told of grand Inca palaces built around the Plaza San Francisco in Quito's historic quarter. This part of the city was once a huge marketplace where Andeans and Amazonians traded their wares and has recently taken on a new lease of life. The beautifully restored colonial mansion Casa Gangotena has been reborn as a chic 31 room hotel. Its sophisticated, contemporary interior embraces the building's many original features and the garden is ablaze with orchids, flowers and ornamental plants. The hotel's rooftop terrace affords wonderful panoramic views across the spires and towers of Quito's Old Town to Panecillo Hill. The property offers an Ecuadorian-style 'high tea' either in the patio or on the terrace every afternoon.

Why we like it

- Located in the ancient centre of Quito
- Rooftop terrace views offer a stunning view of the city
- One of the safest areas of the city
- Amazing breakfast provided - available as room service
- Afternoon tea is a mix of Local and European delicacies

Mashpi Lodge



Mashpi Lodge is set within a 1,200 hectare private reserve, part of a biodiversity 'hotspot' known as the Tumbez-Choco-Darien, particularly celebrated for its flora and avifauna, not to mention the thousands of insect species and amphibians.

Located on a plateau, the Mashpi's modern architecture of glass and steel 'cocoon' guests whilst also offering breath-taking views of the forest at all times and from all angles. Design and décor are contemporary-modern mixing earthy, calm tones with clean lines, simple woods and designer furniture and fittings. There are 23 rooms all with excellent forest views and the public areas are spacious with huge windows drawing the forest in all the time. Dining is of a high standard and chefs use locally grown produce such as guavas, plantains and chocolate where possible. There is also a small spa.

Away from the hotel, Mashpi offers exciting and innovative ideas for exploring and experiencing the forest from a canopy gondola (also known as an aerial tram) and sky bike, to dips in refreshing waterfall pools and numerous hiking trails, such as the Howler Monkey or Cucharillo Trail (named after an Oak). Naturalist and local guides are always on hand to explain the forest's secrets from the fox fire fungi to the tree trunks festooned with orchids, lichens, mosses and giant ferns. There is also a Life Centre conceived as a place for learning and an observation tower offering a birds eye vista of the surrounding forest.

Why we like it

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- Very accessible and close to Quito (under 3 hours drive)
 - Located within a highly bio-diverse area with different types of forest due to the Reserves altitudinal range of 500-1500m above sea level.
 - Surprisingly contemporary and eco-friendly architecture with minimalist interior design and decoration
 - High level of comfort and dining
 - Well guided activities include aerial bicycles, canopy gondola, observation tower and life centre

Hacienda Zuleta



Dating from the late XVI century, Hacienda Zuleta lies in the spectacular Andean mountain range, 9,600 feet (2,800 meters) above the sea level and only two hours north of Quito, the capital of Ecuador.

Zuleta is a colonial working farm of 4,000 acres and has been owned by the family of Mr. Galo Plaza Lasso, a former president of Ecuador, for more than 100 years. Incredibly friendly and inclusive, arriving at this hotel feels more like being welcomed into the home of a long lost friend.

As the structure of the original colonial building could not be drastically changed, every room has its different shape and charm. All are individually decorated with antiques, authentic family pictures and hand embroidered linens - again transmitting the feeling of a private home.

This working farm has recently opened to visitors for a minimum of three nights and there is plenty to do and see. Local workers are only too pleased to show guests the dairy and cheese factory, organic garden, tree nursery, trout farm, an embroidery workshop owned by the indigenous community, and the successful condor-recuperation and raising project.

Why we like it

- The rooms have garden and mountain views and some provide access to private gardens, terraces or a courtyard where hummingbirds feed
- Hacienda Zuleta is located in the Andean cloud forest about two and a half hours northeast of Quito
- Wonderful Ecuadorian cuisine is created from fresh ingredients from Zuleta's organic garden, and is carefully prepared by hand
- Other facilities include lovely gardens, cosy living and reading rooms, horse-riding,

mountain bikes and a horse drawn carriage rides

Hacienda San Agustin del Callo



The beautifully converted Hacienda San Agustin de Callo dates back to the 16th Century. The eleven cosy rooms spread across three buildings are all individually styled to reflect the family atmosphere and the hacienda's historical importance - with original Incan walls as well as touches of colonial and republican architecture.

The Callo Lodge, set apart from the Inca House, is made up of the Alexander von Humboldt Suite, filled with antique furniture, and two double rooms, Montufar and Bonpland, which offer fine views of Chimborazo and Tungurahua volcanoes.

Wonderfully atmospheric, with a sense of history emanating from every pore, this hotel is an excellent base from which to explore the surrounding highlands and volcanoes of the Andes Mountains.

Why we like it

- The hotel's eleven wonderfully rustic rooms have a lovely cosy feel, and open onto courtyards or gardens
- San Agustin de Callo is located one and a quarter hours by road from Quito, at the foot of Cotopaxi, the highest active volcano in the world
- Other facilities include a cosy drawing room with an open fire and large windows to open up views of Cotopaxi, an honour bar, a lovely, sunny courtyard and gardens, and an Inca Chapel with its 17th century ceiling and perfectly carved Inca volcanic stone walls (a real one-off setting for a wedding)

Hacienda La Andaluza



Declared a national cultural heritage site, Hacienda La Andaluza has a rich history dating back to 1555. Rooms are cosy and decorated with antiques and Ecuadorean crafts, some boast open fires and views are of the gardens or courtyards, and some look out towards Mt Chimborazo, the highest peak in the country. The rustic restaurant draws on both Ecuadorian and international traditions and uses local ingredients to create tasty, home-cooked cuisine, paired with wine from the cellar.

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