

Ecuador's volcanoes



Cotopaxi 5897m
Chimborazo 6310m

On foot (or by ski, on request)

DURATION 20 days maximum

Only the high volcanoes, such as Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, are skiable

Open to all, no need to have already been on a glacier, or have used crampons (except for Chimborazo); we will give you an introduction in the Alps beforehand.

This trip to Ecuador (ideal for couples), combining tourism and mountaineering, may seem too easy technically, but its interest lies also in the extraordinary discovery of active volcanoes, including visits to their craters.

Expédition : 'Volcano Avenue' is a 400km long valley in the north of the tropical Andes, (more precisely, in Ecuador), in which we can count more than 30 volcanoes, 8 of which are still active. The colourfully-clad rural population cultivates terraced fields on the slopes of the white mountains dominating the equatorial forest.

Edward Whymper, famous in Europe for his ascent of the Matterhorn, is equally so in Ecuador for having been the first person to climb its highest summit, Chimborazo. This was considered, until 1820, to be the highest point on earth. Only Cotopaxi, which erupted in 1877, was not climbed by Whymper.

We follow in the prestigious footsteps of this great English mountaineer on these exotic mountains, from Chimborazo's multiple summits to the icy chaos of Cotopaxi.

The locations of the different volcanoes, the country's geography, and the need to acclimatise gradually mean that :

- this is not a big trek, as in Nepal or Pakistan...we don't walk for 15 to 20 days running.
- neither is it an expedition.....we don't stay on the mountain for several weeks
- the ascents can be compared to alpine climbing : 1st day - up to a camp or a hut; 2nd day - summit and return to the valley (or 3rd day : Chimborazo).



GALAPAGOS : 7 day extension for 5 days in the Galapagos : 1300 dollars, all inclusive

CLIMATE : The summits in Ecuador can be climbed all the year round, as can all the Central and Tropical Andean mountains ; however, the best periods are from June to September and from November to February : subject to the reservations specific to Ecuador (very changeable and unpredictable climate, violent winds, sometimes even during the favourable periods)

TECHNICAL AND PHYSICAL LEVEL : you must be comfortable walking in crampons

- More than 5000m : glacial summits whose 'normal routes' present no major difficulties. (Normal route on Mont-Blanc, with the same possible risks from crevasses, and deep powder snow).

The summits in Ecuador can be divided into two categories :

- Less than 5000 m : dry, no snow or ice, grassy or stony terrain.

The physical difficulty is that associated with high altitude. The height of the peaks climbed is progressively increased : those less than 5000m, climbed in a few hours, are similar to trekking, those more than 5000 m demand good physical fitness (height gain of 1000-1300m, sometimes in one day).

TOTAL PRICE :

2890 euros (with 4 to 6 participants) or 2590 euros (minimum of 7 participants) (1100 EUROS of which are for air and land travel, cheque payable to the agency of our choice).

DATES : possibly beginning of July, on request!

Departures 16th, 23rd and 25th OCTOBER (2890 euros) ! . AND ONLY 2600 euros at CHRISTMAS 2003 : departure 20th DECEMBER 2003 (Chimborazo not included) : 16 days!



We will send you the OTHER dates later!

CHIMBORAZO included: 2nd - 23rd February 2003 and 10th - 31st March 2003 et 2004 !

OUR PRICE INCLUDES :

- * Travel Paris-Paris (payable to the travel agency of our choice).
- * Accommodation and food (payable to the agency of our choice).
- * Supervision and training by **a high mountain guide**
- * Mule and minibus hire.
- * Expedition equipment.

OUR PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE :

- (allow 100 to 200 euros)
- * DRINKS
- * **Meals, breakfasts in Banos and Quito.**
- * **Airport taxes.**
- * Personal extras not connected with the expedition.
- * 3% mandatory insurance (repatriation-assistance-illness-accident-cancellation or interruption of travel, loss or theft of luggage, rescue expenses). Details of this policy will be sent to you on booking.
- * Sight seeing or museums.

SUPERVISION AND TRAINING:

A French 'accompagnateur' and a high mountain guide. On the summit day, the guide is in charge of organising the ascent. He will take a limited number of participants (variable, according to conditions) on his rope. The rest will follow as independent roped parties, but with technical assistance from the guide. We only use a French mountain guide and a cook when there are more than 6 participants.

DAY BY DAY PROGRAMME:

Day 1 : PARIS-QUITO (Capital of l'Ecuador).

Departure from Paris-Roissy airport at around midday : arrival in Quito in the evening. Stay at hotel.

Day 2 : QUITO :

Rest and passive acclimatisation day at altitude. Day for visiting the town. Quito is, with La Paz, one of the most pleasant, beautiful towns in America : there are many churches and colonial palaces, reminders of its rich past.

The cathedral and the Sacré Coeur, the church of the Compagnie and the church of San-Francisco with its cloisters, are all masterpieces of the baroque style. Continue strolling through the markets and side streets, to the steps up the Panecillo - a small hill overlooking the town, with an immense religious statue : beautiful view. Night spent in hotel.

Day 3 : QUITO : Pichincha mountain hut:

In the morning, the vehicle takes us to the suburbs of Quito, then takes our luggage to the mountain hut. We leave on foot for a pleasant ascent on a path which is sometimes steep (acclimatisation...), and leads us at first through gardens, then across the high altitude prairies, and round the east side of Ruccu Pichincha (extinct volcano). Very beautiful view over Quito. After crossing a col, we face a different direction. A steep descent and some rough terrain brings us to the Pichincha mountain hut. Night in the hut, which is simple but in good condition. 4 – 8 hrs of easy walking.

Day 4 : VOLCANO: PICHINCHA (4794 m) :

Before or after Fuya Fuya : Guagua Pinchincha.

We explore the vast crater, which shows signs of activity : smoke and gas emanations, sulphur deposits, boiling water. This crater is 1,5km in diameter and 700m deep, and the climb back out is quite tough, but the chance to observe such out-of-the-ordinary phenomena makes the trip worthwhile. (if access to the crater is dangerous due to volcanic activity, we will climb the summit of Pichincha 4794 m). Return to the hut to eat, then down to the bus, which takes us back to Quito in the afternoon. Hotel. 3 – 7 hours walk, depending on the options chosen (or imposed by the volcano). Foxes, known here as 'lobos del paramo', can sometimes be seen prowling round the hut.

Day 3 or 4 : Saturday : OTAVALO-QUITO : The unforgettable Saturday market :

The population have succeeded in conserving their way of life and traditions ; large scale craft production, especially weaving, which the men distribute, travelling all over the country and the world. On the way, we stop on the Equator, close to the crater of Pululagua... the biggest in America... Night spent in hotel.

Day 5 : Tour of the CUICOCHA lagoon

Day 6 : OTAVALO - LAGUNA MOJANDA (magnificent scenery).

Transfer to Otavalo then up to the Laguna Mojanda. The region is very beautiful, with two lagoons between rocky cliffs. Ascent of Fuya Fuya (4250 m) via a path which first traverses a high steppe, then steepens ; 3 hour walk. If we are lucky, we will see mountain deer (venados), foxes and spectacled black bears. Hotel (Otavalo is close by).

Day 7 and 8 : ILLINIZAS HUT.

Leave in the morning for the Illinizas. After an hour, the track becomes impracticable for vehicles. We set up camp : acclimatisation walks possible in the afternoon , at the foot of the Illinizas.

Day 8 : ASCENT OF NORTH ILLINIZA (5126 m) : final acclimatisation summit (normal route via the East ridge and the North-east face).

Route with no particular technical difficulties. Necessary to use handholds in several places to reach the summit of Illiniza (panoramic view). Return to the vehicles, then descent to Latacunga. Hotel ; or better still, second night at the ILLINIZA hut for acclimatisation. 5 to 7 heures walk.

Day 9 : QUILOTOA

Long car trip to the lake in the Quilotoa crater. Traverse of the western mountain range, wonderful scenery. Descent to the edge of the emerald green lake. Climb out of the bottom of the crater. Night in the same hotel as yesterday. 3 hour walk

Day 10 : COTOPAXI : by the normal route on the south side ; or the classic north side.

Transfer north by local bus to the Cotopaxi national park. Meeting with the local guide at the entry to the park. After retrieving our rucksacks, an hour's walk brings us to the José Ribas mountain hut, (4930 m), which is more comfortable than the previous ones. (The vehicle can reach the foot of the glacier (4800m) and the normal route leading to the summit). Night spent in hut.

Day 11 : ASCENT OF COTOPAXI (5897 m)

Leave during the night, for the ascent of the glacier : easy, but the snow is often deep and powdery. The crevasses are often large, and make route finding difficult. The final slopes, 40° for 150m, demand care. Count on about 7 – 8 hours to reach the imposing crater of the highest active volcano in the world. Return to the hut, then to the cars. Transfer to Banos. Hotel. 7 – 10 hour walk.

GRADE: AD (assez difficile) on snow and at altitude.

Day 12 : BANOS

Relaxation day in Banos, famous for its swimming pools filled with hot spring water at more than 40° and the view of the beautiful Tungurahua volcano. A place where time appears to stand still - the perfect place to relax. There is also a small zoo where you can learn about the Amazonian wildlife. Same hotel as yesterday.

Day 13 : TREK TO CHIMBORAZO

Transfer to Urbina (1H30), starting point for the trek from Carihuairazo to Chimborazo. (5020m et 6310m. respectively). The first day is spent at the foot of "Cari", which, although a mere shadow of its close neighbour, is nonetheless a very spectacular mountain (numerous glaciers). Luggage carried on mules. Camp at around 3900m. 3 hour walk.

Day 14 : TREK :

5 hour walk facing the glaciers, over a col at 4250m, with llamas and vicuñas along the way. Camp.



Day 15 : CHIMBORAZO MOUNTAIN HUT :

Transfer by car to the end of the road at 4800m.; from here it is just 1 hour's walk to the Edward Whymper hut. At 5000m, it is the highest hut in the world offering a degree of comfort. Depending on the weather, we climb up to the "Aiguilles de Chamonix" to admire tomorrow's route. 1 hour walk (or more in the afternoon).

Days 16 et 17 : if the participants are capable : ASCENT OF CHIMBORAZO :

Very early departure (around 1 o'clock in the morning) ; you must be fit to attempt the ascent of Chimborazo (1300m height gain above 5000m). It is not that easy, as two thirds of the route are on snow and ice, but worth the effort as you finish on the highest point in the country. The route follows a long, regular hilltop all the way to the summit and its main difficulties are a result of the altitude, the quality of the snow and the steep, exposed summit slopes. The steady winds in this part of Ecuador blow away the snow, so these summit slopes may be bare ice, making movement more difficult.

GRADE:A D+ (difficile) on snow and at altitude.

Day 17 : ANDES TRAIN :(if running), in the south of the country ; or AUTOFERRO, north of QUITO.

We catch the famous 'Andes train', early in the morning, for an unforgettable journey. A long, very spectacular descent through the western cordillera, via Nariz del Diablo, leads to the coastal plain, where banana trees and giant bamboos grow. At Bucay, a vehicle takes us back to Riobamba via a completely different valley from that taken by the train. Hotel.

Day 18 : RIOBAMBA-SAQUISILI-QUITO

Thursday is market day in Saquisili, a confusion of souvenirs, sensations, colours, smells...the ideal place to buy some last-minute souvenirs. Return to Quito in the afternoon (capital city of Ecuador). Hotel.

Note that the 17th and 18th days can be used for a second attempt on Cotopaxi or Chimborazo if the first one has failed.

Day 19 : QUITO

Return flight to Paris, in the morning.

Day 19 or 20 : PARIS

...Arrival in Paris around 10 am.

OTHER INFORMATION :

This programme has been specially designed (overall duration, progression of ascents and altitudes attained) to allow optimum acclimatisation. Moreover, although it is mainly orientated towards climbing the summits, this programme will give you a very good overall view of Ecuador.

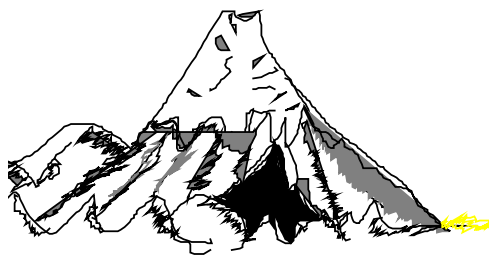
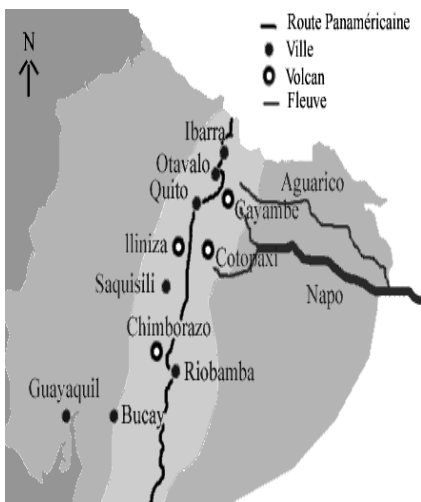
NB : Timing of stages is given for information only.

FOOD :

For a small group, the guide prepares meals whilst trekking or in mountain huts; we only employ a cook for larger groups. Meals are not included in Quito or Banos (free choice).

LUGGAGE AND PORTERAGE :

When going up to huts, you will be expected to carry your own personal gear and part of the group equipment (food, ropes...)



This superb view made such an impression on us that it was several seconds before we realised what we had just seen. Before the next sunset we hoped to rest on an even higher peak. The clouds rose then fell, like a huge curtain,

*giving us a glimpse from time to time of a series of grandiose views; then disappeared completely to reveal the glacier and the immense walls surrounding it, against the backdrop of an exquisite cloudless, pale-blue sky.
Edward Whymper*

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

WE CAN HIRE YOU ALL THIS EQUIPMENT! ! Your rucksack should be big enough to carry all the gear up to the huts (minimum 60L).

Very warm SLEEPING BAG (- 15°!) and inflatable mattress (or Karrimat) ; waterproof or rain cape with sleeves ; an ARVA, (Appareil de Recherche de Victime d'Avalanche)- Ortovox
- modern synthetic undergarments (dunova, capilene) SNC
- a warm shirt (in dunova, or dermosta, from SNC)
- a good-quality mountain jacket with hood , (ex : SNC; or SANGAR or SUPER SANGAR by LAFUMA ; or VERMONT)
- mountain (or ski) salopettes SNC or LAFUMA or VERMONT
- gaiters or "stop tout" adapted for your boots (BH ou LAFUMA)
- overtrousers in nylon or goretex ; a pair of silk or, better, fleece, gloves, (BH SPORT)
- pair of overmitts in nylon or goretex..... **small personal first aid kit**, 3 flat batteries, head torch.

- pair of trekking boots, for walking days, going up to huts.....
- **plastic shell mountaineering boots**
- 65 or 70 cm ice axe (SIMOND) pair of crampons with anti-balling plates, a lightweight harness : SIMOND or PETZL.
- Two carabiners (one screwgate) and a rope loop (2m long), ski goggles.
- + telescopic poles, 1litre (min) thermos flask + MICROPUR water purification tablets.

NOTE :

It is possible to hire mountaineering equipment in Quito :
Some prices, for information only, per day, payable on the spot :
- plastic shelled mountaineering boots : 16\$;
- sleeping bag : 9\$;
- harness : 6\$
- Quick-fit crampons: 6 \$; crampons with straps : 2\$; head torch: 1,5\$ etc...

Alpamayo, bureau des guides

B.P 18 38250 Villard de Lans Tel : 04 76 94 18 75 and 06 07 78 52 44

Mail : Y.ASTIER@wanadoo.fr

Web site : perso.wanadoo.fr/yves.astier/