

avenue of the volcanoes, ecuador



While being one of the smallest countries in area and population, Ecuador is also one of the richest in terms of geographical wonders, flora and fauna. Centre stage is the masterpiece of Ecuador's varied geography - the dramatic, beautiful and seemingly endless Andes, which bisect not only Ecuador from north to south but also the entire South American continent. These legendary mountains are the location for your challenging mountain trek - the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes'.

Beginning in the laid-back, multi-ethnic city of Quito - one of the highest capitals in the world - you will visit the equator and the amazing statue of the Virgin overlooking Quito before heading for the nearby volcanoes to start your trek in the beautiful Andes, gradually acclimatising to the thin air at an altitude of 10,000ft. Your challenge begins with trekking up several Volcanoes including rarely visited peaks such as the Corazon volcano, culminating in the magical mountain of Cotopaxi.

The varied but always beautiful landscape will entrance even the most seasoned traveller during this tough but exceptional trek. Cotopaxi, the highest active volcano in the world, standing a few metres higher than Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, is first seen on the horizon as a near perfect snow-capped cone rising out of the lush Andean cloud forest. The climb to its snow-capped summit is really tough and is open to those on the expedition who are exceptionally fit and prepared for the tough summit bid.

Much of the final Cotopaxi summit climb is on its glacier, and you will leave the refuge to start your climb at about midnight when the ice is hard and easier to trek on. It's only as the sun

slowly starts to rise, that you realise how high up you really are, as the clouds that for days have been so far up, are now way down below you. Through gaps in the cloud, there are spectacular views of the Andes in every direction. If the day is clear, you will be able to see the three other volcanoes that you have trekked on or reached the summit of.

Having descended to the refuge triumphant, you will return to Quito for a final celebration meal. The following day is a day to take in the sights of Quito or an optional day visit to Otavalo, the best market in South America, before leaving Ecuador for home.

Day 1: International Departure

You will depart from Dublin to London Heathrow for your flight to Quito. An Irish Red Cross representative will assist you in Dublin. Our Charity Challenge representative will be at Heathrow airport to assist you with the check-in and any last minute questions. On arrival in Quito (2800 m above sea level), you will be met at the airport by a Charity Challenge local agent who will transfer you to Mercure Accor hotel or similar.



Day 2: Acclimatisation day in Quito and its surroundings

Start the morning with a taxi ride up El Panecillo to the huge statue of La Virgen De Quito, from the summit there are marvellous views of the whole city stretching out below as well as views of the surrounding volcanoes. In the afternoon, visit Mitad Del Mundo, the Equatorial Monument marking the line dividing the northern and southern hemispheres as established by a French expedition in the 18th century. Nearby you will have a great lunch with the opportunity to try all the varieties of Ecuadorian food. Apart from the Ethnographic Museum that displays artefacts from all Ecuador's ethnic groups as well as a visual history of their way of life, the "Middle of the World" village provides a variety of attractions. You can even obtain a certificate for having crossed the Equator. The afternoon will be spent trying on boots and crampons in preparation for Cotopaxi. Overnight at Mercure Accor hotel or similar.

Day 3: Pasochoa Volcano (4,199m)

You will start the day with a 2 hour drive to the Pasochoa Volcano. You will then start a 6-7hr trek from the Ecology Reserve entrance to the summit. The trek will take you through cloud forest and upper grasslands. It's a challenging trek to the summit, along the ridge of the volcano, where you will hopefully see hummingbirds and smaller Ecuadorian birds. Drive to Machachi. Dinner and overnight at La Estacion lodge (3,200m).

Day 4: El Corazon Hike (4,788m)

El Corazon is located between the Ilinizas and the Atacazo in the Western Cordillera. El Corazon is Spanish for 'heart.' The old eroded volcano is thought to be so-named because some claim that two gullies form a heart shape. After breakfast you will enjoy a strenuous trek up the slopes of El Corazon to one of the two summits, Corazon West (4,523m) or Corazon Main summit (4,788m) which makes an ideal acclimatization climb. The climb will take approximately 6-7 hours up and 3 hours down. There will be a picnic lunch. Return to La Estacion lodge for overnight.

Day 5: Los Ilinizas Camp (4,000m)

After breakfast and a visit to Machachi to buy any necessary supplies we will drive along the Avenue of Volcanoes to reach our next point "Los Ilinizas". After a short drive we arrive at El Chaupi, the nearest town to the mountain. From here we will walk for approximately 2 hours to reach the Los Ilinizas camp at 4000m. We then rest for the afternoon and evening.



Day 6: Iliniza Norte (5,126m) / Cotopaxi National Park

From the camp, we set off between 2am and 3am to first reach the hut set at the base of the Ilinizas in between Iliniza Norte and Iliniza Sud (a technical ice climbing peak). Weather dependent, you can get awesome views of Cotopaxi and many other volcanoes including Pasochoa and Ruminahui. From the hut, a steep walk up the face of the mountain to reach the summit ridge at 5100m. dependent upon the weather, you walk along the mountain to its end and then summit via a rocky gully to stand on the main summit peak. Drive to the Cotopaxi National Park. Overnight at Tambopaxi Mountain Lodge. (3750m)

Day 7: Rumiñahui trek

Today after breakfast you will walk along an undulating trail, following the flanks of Ruminahui peak where you will see birds of prey and if the weather is good should allow spectacular views of your challenge ahead, Cotopaxi, overnight at Tambopaxi mountain (4,000m)

Day 8: Rest day – Cotopaxi National Park / Incan ruins-Glacier practice

Today there is the option of a gentle hike to the pre-Incan archaeological site, Pucara and an easy trek around el Manantial. Around midday you will have lunch and then do some ice climbing practice in the afternoon. Overnight at Tambopaxi lodge.

Day 9: Cotopaxi – Jose Refugio (4,800m) –

Your support vehicles will drive you for approximately 45 minutes to the Cotopaxi refuge car parking area at 4,550m and then you will make your way up the scree slope to the refuge at 4,800m, about 2 hours of hard walking as you will be acclimatised. The rest of the day is spent acclimatizing and preparing for the challenging night trek up Cotopaxi



Day 10: Summit Cotopaxi (5,897m)

You will leave the refuge at around midnight for Cotopaxi summit, which is a gruelling 8 hours of constant climbing up steep glaciers. Using crampons and ice axes, and roped up to professional guides, this climb is tough but with unbelievably rewarding views from the summit. After summiting, you will descend to the refuge for lunch time snacks and the opportunity to buy a t-shirt. You will then return to the vehicle stop at 4,550m and drive to

Quito where you will enjoy hot showers and a celebratory dinner.

NB: If you choose to climb Cotapaxi you can hire crampons and ice axes from the local supplier, speak to your guide on arrival. They will then be brought out to you for the summit and glacier practice by the climb support team.

Day 11 Leisure day in Quito or Otavalo

Today you will have the full day at leisure. You will have the opportunity to either explore the city, museums & points of interest or for an additional charge, go shopping in Otavalo. Today is not guided but your tour leader will give you some useful tips. Otavalo, is 2 hours from Quito. This holds the best and most famous authentic Indian market in the whole of South America. It is a shopper's paradise with incredible bargains to be had and an amazing atmosphere. Tonight you will have a farewell dinner. Overnight at Mercure Accor hotel or similar

Day 12: Quito to London

You have the morning to pack and buy any last minute bargains before an early afternoon transfer to the airport for the flight to London.

Day 13: Arrive UK

Transfer at Heathrow for your flight to Dublin.

N.B. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, the strength of the group and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

optional rafting extension

Day 12: White Water Rafting

After breakfast and an early morning start (approx 0700hrs) you will be transferred out of Quito and back through the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes'. You will descend down to the Taochi River. On arrival you will have a safety and familiarisation briefing and then off for some white water action! The Taochi River flows through the cloud forest and enters pure tropical rain forest. As you raft you will see small farming villages and impressive canyons. Today you should raft for approximately 3 hours on this Class 4 river. You will stop along the way to have a packed lunch before heading to your hotel for the night.

Day 13: Rio Blanco rafting

After breakfast you depart for Rio Blanco river. Today's trip takes you through pristine jungle canyons and over thrilling rapids before finally emerging at Valle Hermosa. You will enjoy lunch along the river bank on your way to this beautiful valley. You will be transferred back to Quito for overnight at hotel.

Day 14: Quito to London

You have the morning to pack and buy any last minute bargains before an early afternoon transfer to the airport for the flight to London.

Day 15: Arrive

Arrive in London.

Cost: Approximately £385 per person sharing (based on 4 or more people in twin accommodation)

Single Supp: £95

included

- Private guide (English speaking rafting specialist)
- Private transportation
- Accommodation and meals stated
- Rafting equipment
- Taxes

excluded

- Dinner on last night
- Personal expenses (i.e: gifts, extra soft drinks or alcohol, laundry etc)
- Discretionary tips for local team



NB: The organiser of the rafting extension will ask you to sign a 'release of responsibility' waiver before you are able to participate in the activity.

If you would like to book the above extension or have any extension enquiries please call the Charity Challenge office on 020 8557 0000 or email flights@charitychallenge.com. All bookings are subject to availability and group booking limitations. We therefore ask you to consider your travel plans as soon as possible and if you want to extend your challenge, please put in your request immediately.