

'NAVIDAD' SPECIAL 23rd-' \$th DECEMBER 2012

**COLONIAL HACIENDAS, a journey between Ecuador's Historic Haciendas riding through the verdant valleys & across the arid plains below the snow-capped peaks of the Andes
7 days riding, 7 nights accommodation. Departure from/return to Quito.**

CHRISTMAS Specials: moonlit ride, Quito city tour & a mid tour overnight at an Hacienda with swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna and massages.

'Just three days ago I returned from your Ecuador Colonial Hacienda Tour and would like to say a few comments about it: fantastic, fantastic, fantastic!!!! The whole trip was well organised ... nothing was too much trouble. The horses were in superb condition, every day was very well planned with a great variety of sights. My favourite day? I couldn't possibly say they were all excellent...' YW.

'Words really can't express my feelings about this ride: the horses were top-notch (Sally does a great job training and caring for her horses); the food was nourishing and delicious; the haciendas beyond belief (I'm trying to figure out how I can add a fireplace to my bedroom at home); Sally's knowledge of the history of Ecuador and the Quito area is outstanding; the scenery was spectacular (Cotopaxi is my favorite).... ' JH,



A journey back in time through areas made for riding including routes and lodgings exclusive to Hidden Trails. Guests canter along ancient Inca highways and Spanish colonial routes, between the best preserved 'haciendas' (grand colonial farming estates) of South America, in two stunningly beautiful, yet very distinct areas of the Andean highlands. Breath-taking views as we cross vast plains and ride through pastoral valleys in a fascinating region dramatically sculptured by both glacial and volcanic activity. A picture postcard as we turn every corner: hanging valleys, perfectly

conical hills, wild flower covered grassy slopes, crater lakes and rocky summits. We follow the 'Avenue of Volcanoes', skirting the towering, snow-capped peaks of Cayambe and Cotopaxi (the highest active volcano in the world) and wandering through the maze of patchwork fields below.

The days are packed with rides varied in both pace and scenery and with visits along the way to local indigenous markets and craft villages where the customs and rhythm of life have changed little over the centuries. As well as seeing an array of exotic Andean fruits, we meet the very friendly locals in vibrant traditional dress going about their daily tasks, the children shepherding the unruly pigs and



sheep, the farmers working the land in much the same way as their forefathers did – a fascinating insight into Andean country life.

Nights are spent in haciendas – historic country houses & working farms, some dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Warmly greeted by the owners, guests can relax in front of open fireplaces and enjoy the fine period detail, atmospheric courtyards and flowering gardens. The colonial haciendas that open their doors to us are unique and hold an important place in the history of Ecuador. Hundreds of years after they were first built, the haciendas continue to welcome visitors to Ecuador as they once did to such famous guests as Simon Bolivar.

“ THANK YOU FOR A FABULOUS HOLIDAY ON THE HACIENDAS RIDING TOUR!!!

It gets an A+ rating - based on experiences with 16 other riding holidays on four continents over the past 17 years.” Luis.

“The best of 16 rides I have taken. Truly a dream come true.” Jeff.

“We want to thank you again for such a perfect riding experience! Your attention to every detail made the ride an unforgettably wonderful experience!” Shari.



ITINERARY:

DAY 1: OTAVALO MARKET & INTRODUCTORY RIDE.

Guests are met at Quito airport/Quito hotel by the guide and driven into the northern area of Ecuador. We drive through an arid valley with avocado orchards then into Imbabura province 'the land of the lakes'.



Visit to the famous, very colourful Otavalo market.

Then a short drive to a hacienda frequented by the great South American liberator, Simon Bolivar.

Members of the charming family (horse fanatics themselves!) that have owned the hacienda for several centuries greet us warmly. With its courtyards, ornate fountains, terraces and gardens graced with citrus, palm and monkey puzzle trees it is an ideal location to leisurely drift into the relaxing Andean surroundings.

Introductory ride (3-4hrs) along the tracks and through the tiny fields on the slopes of the Imbabura Volcano. We often see the very friendly but dignified locals in their immaculate traditional dress working in the fields

using hand tools or cattle to work the land. These tiny fields are surrounded by stone walls and earth banks topped with sisal plants and an array of wild flowers.

Guests first try their horses in an enclosed area before we ride out and the guides and grooms are always at hand to help.

After a welcome drink in the cozy bar accompanied by the music of an excellent Andean band and a delicious, traditional dinner (a la carte) overnight at this 18th century hacienda, fireplaces in most rooms. PL, D.

DAY 2: SACRED IMBABURA & SAN PABLO LAKE.

We leave this historic hacienda - once a very important weaving centre, on horseback and ride on to another colonial hacienda built in 1602 (5 hrs). We ride past tiny hamlets of adobe huts, through woodlands, cross rocky gorges and wind our way around the patchwork fields of quinoa, potatoes, maize and tree tomato orchards. Magnificent



views of the San Pablo lake and the jagged Mojanda summit as we ride across the slopes of the sacred Imbabura Volcano (extinct) - the focus of many Inca legends. As well as seeing a great variety of exotic Andean fruits and other crops, we meet the locals in vibrant traditional dress going about their daily tasks, the children shepherding the unruly pigs and sheep - trying to keep them off the crops.

Late PM: wander through the beautiful flowering gardens admiring the avocado trees, bromeliads, orchids and kitchen garden with passion fruit, tree tomato and a host of other interesting plants.

And a very special visit: drive through small villages with thriving cottage industries, to visit a family of local weavers. This family still produces exceptionally fine, unique rugs using the ancient pre-Inca backstrap loom that most weavers have abandoned in favor of more modern looms. The wool is still dyed using plants and then hand

spun as the family sticks rigidly to the traditional weaving processes. Overnight at this early 17th Century (1602) hacienda adorned with local crafts and antiques. Fireplaces in most rooms. Special Christmas dinner, entertainment & festivities. AB, PL, D.

DAY 3: PASTORAL ZULETA VALLEY

A stunning ride into the beautiful pastoral Zuleta Valley (6-7hrs). Along country lanes then through eucalyptus forests, we rise out of San Pablo Valley enjoying wonderful views across the lake and also of Imbabura volcano, riding onto the plains beyond for some fast-pace riding. Views of Zuleta valley, the verdant gorges and the 'paramo' (the unique Andean habitat of high grasslands) as we pass dewponds and hedges of aloe vera and spikey agave (sisal) atop mud walls. Following sandy tracks, we then descend into the Zuleta valley with dramatic views across to the hanging valleys and rocky ridges above. With views of the ancient tumuli and earth pyramids erected by the pre-Inca population we ride on to a working farm in the middle of this tranquil valley seldom visited by tourists. A chance of seeing the mighty Andean Condor as well as other species such as hummingbirds and bright scarlet flycatchers. Andalusian horses, fighting bulls and a dairy herd are among the farm inhabitants.

PM: Guests can walk into the tiny village and see examples of the hand embroidery that has made the valley famous and also enjoy exploring and observing the activities on the working farm. Overnight at the Hacienda. Fireplaces in most rooms. AB, PL, T, D.

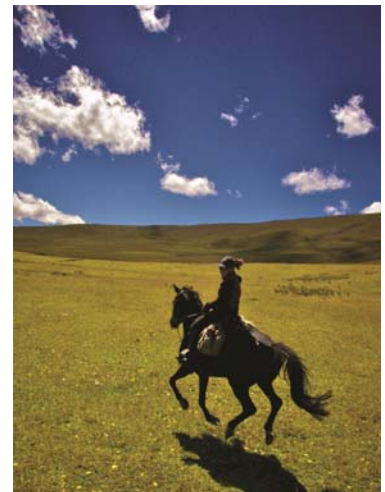


DAY 4: THE SNOWS OF CAYAMBE & THE EQUATOR LINE.

A chance to get to know about the Andalusian breed, the farm owners will chat with you about their champion horses. We then ride out into another section of the farm along grass tracks, soon gaining height, leaving the valley floor there are spectacular views: north down the Zuleta valley to three peaks on the horizon, in Columbia and west across the array of patchwork fields every imaginable shade of green to Imbabura peak. Here, condors are seen close up more and more frequently. Then leaving the farm we ride up out of the valley through a large eucalyptus forest. A different experience to the previous rides - cantering along the shady tracks between the rows of tall eucalyptus. We often meet the locals with small herds of sheep, goats, pigs and cattle.



Emerging from the forest onto the plains, snow-capped Cayambe comes into view. We ride onto the Pesillo plains and arriving in the Cayambe Valley dominated by this Volcano, which straddles the Equator Line we leave the horses at a typical village square complete with ornate gardens, church and school. A short drive brings



us to a beautiful old hacienda for a delicious home cooked 3 course lunch traditional dishes. The hacienda, as well as the fine furniture is packed with arrangements of fresh roses – 1000s of roses: we also visit a nearby rose plantation (time permitting). We then cross the Equator Line, and travel by vehicle (2hrs), bypassing Quito, to a Hacienda with a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, Turkish bath and the possibility of massages (extra charge for massages). Overnight at the Hacienda. AB, PL, D.

DAY 5: THE REMOTE FOOTHILLS OF SINCHOLAGUA .

The day can start with an optional early morning visit to a fascinating local market visit, then we drive to meet the horses. Leaving the farmlands behind, a spectacular ride awaits (7hrs), across the Sincholagua foothills to the northern edge of the Cotopaxi national park. We start by traversing huge gorges on narrow tracks and riding across the remote 'paramo' wilderness then descend and, taking to grassy fields, we enjoy some exhilarating canters across the pastures and ride towards Cotopaxi National Park approaching the perfectly conical shape of the snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano (the highest active volcano in the world). Sincholagua, a rocky summit that dominates the skyline, clearly marks the continental divide – the precipitation that falls the western side runs down and ends up on the Ecuadorian coast, in the Pacific Ocean, while that of the eastern sides eventually joins the Amazon and goes on to the Atlantic Ocean, via Brazil. Having avoided the fighting bulls (the hacienda we cross is famous for it's feisty Spanish bulls!), we turn westwards, cross a river and arrive for the night at a very cozy, thatched roof mountain inn, surrounded by mighty Andean peaks -an absolutely stunning location. AB, PL, D.

DAY 6 –INCA RUINS & WILD HORSES

A ride into Cotopaxi national park to canter across the wide, barren plains at the base of the Cotopaxi Volcano. Several herds of wild horses inhabit the park and to ride along side these long-mane horses galloping freely across the rugged terrain is an unique experience. Part of this ride follows the main Inca highway which linked Quito with Cusco, Peru as well as the Inca route going to the Amazon. We ride to the old Inca fort that guarded this supply route. The ground is covered with tiny pumice stones and lichen on this arid plain created by lava and ash from Cotopaxi volcano. We then ride across a very surprising 'luna landscape' – huge boulders and hard baked ocre-colored mud and onto rolling grassy hills for some more fast paced riding. -A day riding in the wild open expanses of the Andean highlands enjoying the open terrain, no sign of habitation and spectacular views of the close



by Cotopaxi snow-capped volcano.

After a picnic lunch, we ride out of the national park to an old Jesuit Hacienda recently converted and now a very comfortable highland hacienda. For those that wish, to enjoy the full moon in the Andes there is a moonlit ride (weather permitting!). AB, PL, D.



DAY 7: VALLEY DESCENT

Guests ride out along dirt tracks, ford a river and head down the valley northwards towards civilization and Quito (5hrs). A chance of a final canter across the pastures, avoiding encounters with the fighting bulls. We often meet the local horsemen (chagras) checking the cattle and have also frequently seen Andean Condors on this route as well as eagles, hawks, kestrel, fox and deer. Descending into the valley along a lane bordered with native trees & shrubs, we meet the cobbled roads. Guests say goodbye to the horses and are driven back into Quito (75 minutes). On the way to the hotel we will take a tour of Colonial Quito. Overnight in a comfortable hotel in Quito. AB, PL.



DAY 8: DEPARTURE.

Following breakfast, guests are accompanied to the airport in time for their outward flights, or are picked up at their hotel to continue on extensions. BB. End of services.

Cost of ride: US Dollars 2845 per person (with 4 riders or more)

- **NOTE if less than 4 riders one month prior to ride we offer to MAINTAIN the 4 or more rider price & provide an excellent alternative itinerary that reduces our operating costs.**

Single supplement, for single room: USD245 (a special price – 50% discount).

NOTES: We advise arriving the day before the ride begins, we meet you at the airport and also arrange hotels in Quito for you. Tour length: 8 days, 7 days riding. Riding ability on scheduled rides: Intermediate and above. Meeting point is Quito, where the international airport is. We meet you at the airport and can arrange hotels and city tours etc for you – take care of all your travel



arrangements throughout your stay.

With prior agreement, riders 85-95kg can be accepted, there may be a supplement to pay (normal weight limit 85kg).

Following a confirmed booking detailed travel advice and equipment and clothing lists will be available.

Key: AB= cooked breakfast, L= lunch, PL= picnic lunch (different menus, never just a sandwich), T = tea, D=dinner.

A variety of snacks and also bottled water all provided each day.

Ponchos and saddlebags for each guest.

Please refer to general notes for further details about equipment, clothing lists, horses, pace, climate etc.

The 'cut off' point is one month prior to the start date –i.e the itinerary (and/or cost) will be determined depending on numbers booked one month prior to the tour start date. Any reduction in cost that we may be able to offer after one month prior to the tour start date will be returned to clients minus any bank fees/money transfer costs etc paid by Ride Andes both receiving or returning payments.

Guests are strongly advised to bring and use their own riding helmets.

A booking is confirmed only upon receipt of the corresponding deposit.

We reserve the right to alter the itinerary due to circumstances beyond our control.

Appropriate medical insurance is mandatory and the responsibility of each guest/booking agent.

It is the responsibility of the individual guest/booking agent to ensure that participants have the necessary riding skills to take part in the tour chosen.

Guests will be required to sign a responsibility release before starting a tour.