



Hidden Trails

Ph. 1-888-9-TRAILS

*Equestrian Vacations
- on & with Hidden Trails*

About Hidden Trails



Hidden Trails is owned and operated by nature enthusiasts who love horses and adventure activities. We have been involved with riding and other outdoor vacations for over 20 years.

With our partners Voyage du Cheval (France), Pegasus (Germany) as well as Equitour (Switzerland and France) we have collected the best riding destinations all over the world in some hidden places we would like to share with you.

These rides are about galloping on endless beaches, forging rivers, cantering through forests, trotting along age-old trails, gazing at beautiful vistas and encountering foreign cultures. But most of all, these trips are about getting away from the cycle of too much work and never enough free time.

Escape from the rituals, which long ago froze our nights and days into little more than routine and away from the worries of our new tense times. It is so satisfying when we take the plunge of adventure - it's unfortunate that we invent so many reasons to put aside living our dreams of adventure. It is sometimes a tangled web that we weave through life. Some of the threads reveal a work-a-day world of commitments, duties and obligations. Other threads are of a quiet fabric of hope, responsibility and refreshment.

On our adventures you see the real country, its back country and meet the locals. The love for horses has no boundaries but possesses a common language we all speak and understand. The majority of the overseas rides are from inn to inn, some from castle to castle and a few are camping rides.

You will experience new countries and their customs and make new friends. The Hidden Trails trips are the best you can find.

They have been tested by our staff or associates and received our stamp of approval. If you are considering a special riding vacation anywhere in the world, call us first and let our experienced consultants match the perfect trip with your dream.

We will listen to you and give you objective advice to help you choose the best destination and adventure.

Your vacation is the most precious time of the year and we are committed to making it the most memorable time of your life. Wherever you go, have a great time and bring back some peace of mind.

Thank you for your continued support.

Hidden Trails

Phone: 604-323-1141

Fax: 604-323-1148

Toll Free: 1-888-9-TRAILS

from within the USA or Canada or

E-mail: info@hiddentrails.com

Website: www.hiddentrails.com

Address:

659A Moberly Road, Vancouver BC Canada V5Z 4B3 or

4406 Tennyson Road, Wilmington, DE 19802 USA

Toll Free from the U.K.:

Ph: 0-808 189-0420

Fax: 0-808-280-1860

Toll Free Worldwide:

Skype: hiddentrails

Cotopaxi Adventure Ride - Ecuador, South America

Tour Code: IT-ECRT04
8 days / 7 nights ~\$3,425.00
Dates: Available all Year

Trip Rating: ●●●●●
Difficulty: ●●●●●
Lodging: ●●●

Tack: McClellan western style saddles with s...
Horses: Local criollo crossed with Andalusian,...
Pace: Pace is varied due to the terrain with...
Walk,Trot,Canter,

Airport: Quito



Introduction

Highlands Riding Tours, Ecuador

A route that takes riders into the remote Andes in the eastern foothills of the perfectly conical, snowcapped Cotopaxi volcano, across the seldom-visited plains in the National Park and also through the stunning verdant valleys of the Cayambe-Zuleta-Imbabura area north of Quito. A very good chance of seeing the mighty Andean condor as well as a host of other birds while traversing the pastoral valleys and then the open plains. We cross a huge variety of scenic terrain, firstly riding across the patchwork of tiny fields on dirt tracks then riding through luna-like landscapes, picking up speed on vast grassy plains. The pace is varied, including plenty of chances for long canter across rolling hills mixed with a steadier pace over more challenging surfaces. Where there is a break in the sea of high Andean grasslands, the ground is carpeted with wild flowers and we pass through primary woodland with native trees and shrubs and also eucalyptus forests. We cross old lava flows dotted with rocks catapulted out from the erupting volcano, where only lichens grow and ride through rivers fed by snowmelt. As well as being surrounded by majestic Andean peaks, the glacial retreat -followed by the volcanic activity, have helped sculpt the area producing intriguing landscapes.

Nights are spent in a wonderful mixture of haciendas, inns & isolated farmhouses, built of a variety of materials including adobe with thatched roofs and original Inca stone. One night is spent in little cottages in a hamlet, supporting a truly excellent local community project. Due to the varying weather conditions in the mountains (seasonal changes east & west of Cotopaxi Volcano), flexibility is needed. We have several other excellent alternatives if a change to the itinerary below needs to be made.

A ride for experienced riders capable of riding over a multitude of challenging terrains and spending long days in the saddle (maximum 7-8 hours). We strongly advise a few days acclimatization prior to the tour and, to this effect, can arrange activities such as few days 'de-rust' riding or a variety of 'non riding' activities such as a visit to the famous Otavalo market.

Accommodation

Accommodations

This is a progressive ride, so nights will be spent in different locations.

Description

At the end of each day's riding adventure, we overnight in a wonderful mixture of haciendas and farmhouses selected especially for your cultural enjoyment.

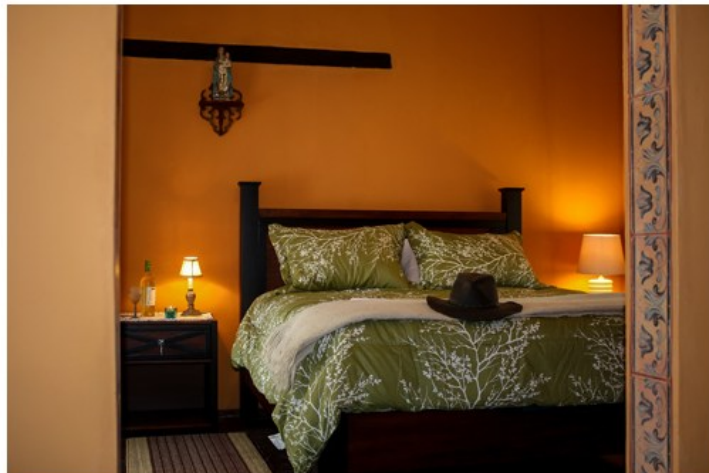
Wi-Fi is available at almost all lodgings and while coverage is usually very good, we cannot guarantee it.

Accommodation Itinerary for Cotopaxi Adventure Ride - subject to changes based on availability

- Night 1: Hacienda in Zuleta valley
- Night 2: Indigenous Community near Ibarra
- Night 3: Lodge on Pasachoa foothills
- Night 4: Country Inn in Cotopaxi NP
- Night 5 & 6: Hacienda in Quilindana
- Night 7: Hotel in Quito

Accommodation Itinerary for Volcanoes & Vistas Ride - subject to changes based on availability

- Nights 1 & 2: Hacienda in Zuleta valley
- Night 3: Indigenous Community (San Clemente) near Ibarra
- Night 4 & 5: Hosteria in Pinan
- Night 6: Lodge in Puelo
- Night 7: Lodge on Pasachoa foothills
- Night 8 & 9: Country Inn in Cotopaxi NP
- Night 10: Hotel in Quito



Hacienda in Zuleta Valley

This Hacienda belonged to the Order of the Mercedaries, until the late nineteenth century. The Guest House is located in the heart of the farm's productive activities; so that one can see from a window or from the garden daily tasks and if desired can be part of them.



The old rooming house of the farm's employees has been restored to welcome our guests, with emphasis on comfort. As a fitting tribute to those characters who have made the history of mountain farms and have been part of everyday life of this estate until today, we wanted to identify each room with the name of each of these workers. Each of the 5 rooms is furnished with older wooden furniture and comes with private facilities. Fireplaces are available in most rooms. Wi-Fi is available in public areas and is free of charge.



Indigenous Community near Ibarra

Following the desire of local families to welcome travelers, some families have decided to host travelers into their home. The village is located at an altitude of 2,800 m (approx. 9,200 ft) above sea level.

Hotel in Otavalo

This charming colonial style hotel offers 12 uniquely decorated rooms with private bathroom and balcony overlooking the green inner-courtyard, with wooden floors and wooden beds. The inner patio filled with plants gives you a colonial feeling and lets you escape from the busy streets. There is free Wi-Fi access at this property.



Lodge on Pasachoa foothills

Built from local materials, this lodge is located at 3480 meters above sea level. It accommodates guests in comfortable rooms with rustic-style décor, equipped with private bathrooms as well as a wood burning stove, along with cozy ponchos and thick duvets to keep off the mountain chill. The main lodge is welcoming, with cozy nooks to relax, books to curl up with, and stunning views of Cotopaxi on a clear day. At night, you can sit by the campfire and gaze at the stars. There is free Wi-Fi access at this property.



Hacienda in Pedregal

The Hacienda offers 14 rooms, each with a unique decor and equipped with a heating system (stove or electric heaters), private facilities with hot shower and free Wi-Fi. Another accommodation type at the Hacienda are the machai rooms which are designed to simulate sleeping on



an Andean hut, but with all the comfort you need. Each of these 8 machai rooms have estera walls and doors and can accommodate two people and share 4 bathrooms and 3 showers (hot water).

Hacienda in Quilindana

This Hacienda is located inside the Cotopaxi National Park and is part of a major conservation program that aims to protect local endangered wildlife. It sits on the slope of the Cotopaxi Volcano, at an altitude of 3,600m. The main house dates back to Inca times, when it was used as a Tambo (sort of Inn). Although the original building was destroyed by the Spaniards, it was rebuilt following the same ancestral methods. Here, you will be accommodated in one of 6 machai room with thatched roofs and matting made estera walls and curtains as doors. The Machais share 3 bathrooms and 3 showers (hot water).



Country Inn in Cotopaxi NP

This lodging offers bright and spacious rooms with large windows overlooking the mountains. Each room has its own bathroom, free Wi-Fi access and a stove to keep you warm on chilly nights.

Hotel in Quito

This hotel is housed in a Spanish-style villa that keeps its colonial charm. The decor combines Ecuadorian handicrafts and furniture, hand carved in fine local woods. The 20 guestrooms all come with private bathroom, telephone, television, Wi-Fi access and a digital safe.

Refuge in Piñán

This refuge, located at an altitude of 3112m high, was built with ancestral techniques meant to respect the environment. Its adobe walls and thatched roof keep the heat of the stoves and the fireplace in the circular room overlooking the Piñán River. There are 4 rooms with a total capacity of 20 people. Bathrooms are shared and include hot water. There is no Wi-Fi available at this lodging.

Lodge in Puelo

The lodge is located at 1890m high and is surrounded by a 7 hectares farm on the shores of Cristopamba river. It consist in a three floor house with 8 bedrooms with shared facilities (6 showers) and two extra rooms in a little wooden cabin with another toilet facility. There are also common rooms where guest can relax and enjoy the view. The lodge's garden is full of beautiful flowers and attracts many birds. There is no Wi-Fi access at this property.

Room Occupancy

Single occupancy is possible, but is limited in availability. If you are willing to share but we are unable to find a roommate for you, a single supplement fee usually applies. Only a few of the accommodations have triple occupancy rooms available. If requested, we will confirm with you at time of booking what is possible.



Meals

On the Cotopaxi Adventure Ride, all meals are included except for dinner on Day 7. On the Volcanoes & Vistas Ride, all meals are included except for dinner on Day 10.

Whether staying in a hacienda, hotel or rural ranch, the food will be hearty, filling and not over-spiced. Guests are offered a mixture of traditional Western food alongside local dishes (such as empanadas - tasty savory turnovers stuffed with meat or chicken). Delicious local produce such as cheese from Ecuador's Zuleta Valley and delicious tropical fruits (papaya, mango and custard apple) are often available.

Picnic lunches are freshly cooked and never consist of just a sandwich.

At dinner, the starter is often a tasty highland soup made with prime local ingredients including beans, pulses and vegetables.

Typical al fresco lunch includes:

- 2 meats
- 2 cheeses
- salads
- fruits
- bread and breadsticks
- savory snacks
- award-winning Ecuadorian chocolate
- raisins, biscuits (cookies) and sweets (candies)
- tea & coffee
- salt & pepper, olive oil & balsamic vinegar, mayonnaise, spicy sauce

Beverages

Extra snacks and bottled water also provided each day. Guests must buy their own soft drinks & alcoholic beverages.

Special Diets

We can easily cater for vegetarians or any other dietary requirements as long as we are warned in advance.

Riding



Riding Experience

This trip has been designed for good intermediate riders and above. You need to be able to canter in open spaces and also be prepared to ride on steep slopes and tricky terrain. Guests need to be riding fit – long days in the saddle with some tough riding. At various points, guests may be leading their horses (but not normally over long distances).

Enjoyment from the rides can be greatly increased if you are physically fit and your riding muscles are toned.

Rider responsibility

It is understood that guests booking this trip, are in a suitable condition to participate, not riding against any physician's advice and that guests know of no reason why they should not be participating in such a tour. Guests will be required to sign a waiver of liability at the start of the tour.

Guests are strongly advised to bring and use their own helmet.

Pace

The pace is very varied due to the great variety of terrain. Each day there are opportunities for fast-paced riding and on the last few days of the scheduled departure itineraries, there is ample opportunity for long canters, depending on the guests' wishes. The rides in Ecuador - due to the altitude - are not suitable for guests wanting to 'gallop flat out' for most of the day.

All rides of more than 2 hours include regular breaks and all-day rides normally include a lunch break of approximately one hour.

Horses

The horses are mainly 'Criollo'. These horses are ideal for the terrain we ask them to ride over and often crossed with warm/hot blood lines (English, Spanish, Arab, Pasos) for a taller, more responsive horse. They are specially selected, well trained and good natured. Our horses are usually between 14.2 and 15.2hh. Riders normally change to fresh horses at least once during the trip.

It is incredibly important that you provide us accurate riding ability details – we try to put a lot of work into selecting suitable horses for each rider.

Tack

We use McClellan saddles, a Western type saddle with low rounded pommel (no horn) and a thick sheepskin atop. It is easy to ride 'English style' on these saddles, as well as Western. The horses are used to neck reining and English style '2 hands'. English and western style bridles available (let us know your preference: direct rein or neck reining).

Guides

Guests are always accompanied by a guide (bilingual: English/Spanish) who has many years' experience of riding. In addition, at least one 'groom' is present – usually a skilled local horseman. Both guides and grooms have excellent local knowledge and are good riders. There is also additional ground staff. Professional guides speaking other languages are available on prior request.

Emergencies

In case of accident, our guides carry a mobile phone so that they can contact assistance (local emergency services/backup vehicle/our Doctor in Quito) – the mobile phone coverage is generally excellent but very limited on a few days; the backup vehicle will be in the vicinity.

Weight restriction

Due to the altitude & difficult terrain a weight supplement applies to provide riders of 85-100kg (185-220lbs) and over with two horses. Agreement prior to booking is necessary.

Altitude

We strongly advise a few days acclimatization prior to the ride. We recommend at least 24 hours in Quito/at same altitude as Quito prior to day 1 of the tour as the riding portion of the trip starts at 2800 meters high (same altitude as Quito).

Guests rarely experience any problems, but please note that we ride above 3000 meters and sometimes even above 4000 meters. Guests must seek medical advice if they have any doubt as to whether they are able to be at these altitudes.

Insurance

Guests are responsible for having an adequate, valid insurance policy including cover for all the sporting activities that they are likely to participate in. This is mandatory.



Itinerary



Please, note that the sample itineraries below are subject to changes at the tour operator's discretion due to unforeseen reasons such as weather, track conditions...

Sample Itinerary: Cotopaxi Adventure Ride - subject to changes

Day 1 (Saturday): Northern Highlands Heritage

An early morning departure from Quito sees us heading northwards through a dry valley filled with acacia and cactus, as well as avocado groves. Passing the snow-capped Cayambe volcano straddling the equator line, we meet the horses and – once guests are comfortable – ride into the beautiful meadow-filled Zuleta Valley. This fertile glacial valley was chosen centuries ago by early settlers and riders can see the earthworks the pre-Inca groups left behind and, at the working Hacienda we are riding to, view their pottery excavated on site. This valley and the Hacienda have been firm favourites with guests for many years. The English-speaking owners are delightful and informative as they open their farm to us and show guests their Andalusian horses and the dairy herd.

Riding approx. 4-5 hours

Meals included: Tea, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Hacienda in Zuleta Valley

Day 2 (Sunday): Sacred Imbabura & Cultural Experience

This morning, we ride out through another part of the picturesque valley. Along agave-lined tracks, we pass fields of lupines, quinoa and beans. Then, we climb out the valley: stunning views in every direction of this landscape sculpted at the end of the Ice Age by retreating glaciers. We continue onto the slopes of Imbabura and enjoy a delicious picnic in a breathtaking location looking out over the ridges of mountains hiding the Amazon beyond.

We eventually arrive at charming cottages with beautifully kept fruit, herb and medicine gardens. This is an example of a very well managed community project; an enchanting local indigenous family hosts us and, for those that wish, there is an opportunity to learn about the local culture – including shamans, the Andean calendar & fiestas, and their cuisine.

Riding approx. 6-7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Indigenous Community near Ibarra

Day 3 (Monday): Ride to San Pablo Valley

After a delicious breakfast, including a variety of fruits and local flatbread freshly baked in an outside oven, we ride out of the hamlet along cobbles and narrow dirt tracks. Negotiating several steep gorges, passing herds of animals and locals cultivating the fields in traditional dress, we leave the valley behind us. Emerging from woodlands, we glimpse the San Pablo Lake below. The land flattens out and riders have the chance of cantering along the tracks as well as enjoying the impressive views of the surrounding peaks: snow-capped Cavambe, the

rugged summit of Imbabura and, on the horizon, Mojanda. We say goodbye to the horses as we will meet fresh ones tomorrow and exchanging hooves for wheels we cross the equator line, by-pass Quito and arrive at the trail head just north of Cotopaxi National Park, ready for another adventure tomorrow.

Riding approx. 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Inn on Pasachoa foothills

Day 4 (Tuesday): Cotopaxi National Park & Wild Horses

A complete change of scenery as we ride along a wide riverbed and onto the plains of Cotopaxi National Park. Riders find themselves amongst fascinating geological features produced by both glacial activity at the end of the Ice Age and following volcanic activity. There is now some fast-paced riding across the open grasslands between drumlins and volcanic cones as we approach the impressive Cotopaxi Volcano. As we speed through the rolling hills, there is an almost guaranteed chance of meeting several herds of the wild horses that roam the park – the bold colts often running alongside us, long manes and tails flowing. We then follow the main Cusco-Quito Inca route and ride on to a very comfortable modern Hacienda in an idyllic location -surrounded by four magnificent Andean peaks: Rumiñahui, Pasachoa, Sincholagua and the snow-capped Cotopaxi.

Riding approx. 5-6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Mountain Lodge in Cotopaxi National Park

Day 5 (Wednesday): Inca Trails in the Andes

The longest ride of the trip – covering 45km (30 miles) through the northern section of the national park and to the remote eastern flanks of Cotopaxi Volcano, far off the beaten track. We often spot deer and foxes as well as eagles, hawks, falcons, harriers and caracaras overhead. Plains, wetlands, volcanic rock fields and rough grasslands are some of the distinct terrains we traverse and, for part of the way, we follow an Inca route that led down to the Amazon. Emerging into another river valley, the Hacienda we are heading to comes into view amongst the hills. The log fires and delightful staff ensure a warm welcome at this outpost built with Inca stone. Guests can enjoy the tranquility of this unique location and, as night descends, the Equator-line sky fills with stars, including the Southern Cross.

Riding approx. 7-8 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at a remote Hacienda

Day 6 (Thursday): Chagra Life in the Paramo

A ride into the 'paramo' vegetation of Quilindaña mountain – the area between the farmed land and the snow – accompanied by the Chagras, who are the local Andean horsemen. We are going to ride high up into the hills to try and spot the Andean Spectacled Bear that has been seen in this area more and more frequently. Often, we come across this omnivore's favourite plant and excitement builds as we realise a bear was eating here recently. We may end up searching for cattle the Chagras have been unable to locate in the far reaches of the Hacienda lands, or helping herd cows down off the hills into the corral. The climate can be quite harsh certain times of the year and the Chagras have a specific dress – wool ponchos and goatskin chaps, ideal for the conditions and also hard-wearing tack including intricate, plaited bridles and clog-like stirrups. Since the Spaniards first brought horses to South America the local 'Criollo' breed has developed into a resilient and determined horse suited to the tough conditions.

Riding approx. 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at a remote Hacienda

Day 7 (Friday): In the Volcanoes Shadow

Riders often awake to stunning views of the close-by Cotopaxi & Quilindaña Volcanoes, as well as the Antisana glacier on the horizon. Having had a chance to inspect the Hacienda walls of Inca stone and turf corrals used to contain the feisty bulls, we set off through another part of this wilderness – most likely encountering some of these bulls, deer and foxes along the way. The route is about 40km (25 miles) long, and takes us close to the foot of Cotopaxi Volcano via a wide, glacier formed valley. The contrast in terrain is incredible: across rough 'paramo' grassland, fording rivers, traversing pumice and boulder fields and wetlands; then back onto the plains for some long canters across the huge expanses of open terrain of the national park. En route, we pass a restored hilltop Inca fort. Arriving at the Hacienda close to the national park exit, guests leave the horses and are driven back to Quito for an overnight stay.

Riding approx. 7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast & Lunch

Overnight at Hotel in Quito

Day 8 (Saturday): Departure

Following breakfast, end of services. Guests can book transport with us to the airport or we can arrange extensions for them, for example Amazon lodges & Galapagos Island cruises.

Meals included: Breakfast



This is a longer tour, combining the first part of Colonial Haciendas route and a visit to the famous Otavalo market then linking into the Cotopaxi Adventure Ride itinerary.

In case of adverse weather conditions, the Volcano & Vistas remote section (days 4 to 6) will be 'swapped out' for days 5 to 7 of the Cotopaxi Adventure, which will become days 8,9,10 of the Volcanoes & Vistas itinerary.

These two areas have completely opposing rainy seasons therefore ideal substitutes.

Sample Itinerary: Volcanoes & Vistas Ride - subject to changes

Day 1 (Saturday): Across the Equator Line to Cayambe Volcano

After an early breakfast, we depart across the equator line for the Cayambe Valley where we meet the horses. Once guests are comfortable with their mounts, we ride onto the Pesillo plains below the magnificent Cayambe Volcano, then descend through forests into another valley. Encircled by meadows, we cross the valley to arrive at a working Hacienda (ranch), usually having to wait on the dairy cows ambling back to their fields before being able to ride into the courtyard.

Riding approx. 4 hours

Meals included: Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Hacienda in Zuleta Valley

Day 2 (Sunday): Zuleta Valley

Today's ride is varied in pace and terrain as we tour another part of the valley. Along dirt tracks, passing 16th century Haciendas first established by the Mercedian and Jesuit religious orders, we canter along agave-lined avenues and climb up narrow tracks with outstanding views out across this valley carved out at the end of the Ice Age. As always, the 'chagras' that work alongside the guide are there to look after guests' horses as we stop and spread out a colourful tablecloth beneath the branches that is soon filled with all manner of local delicacies. Returning to the Hacienda via a different route, guests can take a tour of farm with the owners or wander into the nearby village to view the embroidery that has made this valley famous.

Riding approx. 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Hacienda in Zuleta Valley

Day 3 (Monday): Ride to Indigenous Community

Both the dairy herd and Andalusian horses are just outside the six guest rooms – what a sight upon opening the curtains! Time to visit the collection of Inca and pre-Inca pottery excavated on site before we depart for a very different overnight stay. Riding out the valley to the north, passing Adobe houses and also pondering the pre-Inca earthworks in evidence, guests are treated to yet more dramatic views, the skies often adorned by an Andean Condor. We reach the Imbabura Volcano foothills, arriving at charming cottages – our home for the night. This is an example of a beautifully managed local Indigenous project and, for those that wish, there is the opportunity to learn about the local culture from our hosts – shamans, the Andean calendar, fiestas and also the cuisine.

Riding approx. 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight in Indigenous Community near Ibarra

Day 4 (Tuesday): Into the Wild Paramo

We leave our trusty steeds for a few days and head out by vehicle to meet fresh horses at a trail head that will lead us into a very remote hamlet midst acres and acres of rolling hills and wild grasslands. Few venture across the 'paramo' (high Andean vegetation, above the cultivated areas) to this outpost little changed over the centuries but the journey is well-rewarded – not a dwelling in sight for miles around, a tranquility seldom found in this century and an unpolluted night sky filled with stars.

Riding approx. 7-8 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Hosteria in Piñan

Day 5 (Wednesday): Piñan Lake & Paramo

Setting out through a sea of 'paramo' grasses, we ride to a hidden lake. We pass native trees, branches laden with bromeliad and orchids, as we follow narrow tracks to the water's edge. The terrain is quite tough but our sure-footed local Criollo horses are ideally suited to this ground and have no problem. After a walk on the lakeshore, we return to our Hosteria for a late lunch and a relaxing afternoon. Guests can cross the little bridge to walk around the hamlet – each group of family huts is surrounded by a traditional stick fence. At the tiny school, a game of football is often underway and it is not long before we are joining in.

Riding approx. 4-5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Hosteria in Piñan

Day 6 (Thursday): Cloud Forest & Coffee

Leaving the mountain settlement behind us, we ride westwards down towards the coast, into the cloud forest. These ancient routes were chronicled in the early 1600s by European explorers as used by the coastal people coming to the highlands to trade and barter. We cross highlands with views out over the hills far into the distance. As soon as we start our descent into the cloud forest the vegetation changes noticeably, and we ride past stands of bamboo and start to see more tropical plants such as passion fruit and citrus. Leaving the horses to return to the highlands, we are driven to the lodge with a lush, jungle-like garden and coffee trees. With the cicadas, crickets, frogs and birds expect a noisy evening as we roast our own coffee ready for breakfast.

Riding approx. 7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Cloud Forest Lodge

Day 7 (Friday): Tropical to Temperate

Although covering a relatively small size, the Ecuador Cloud Forests are considered the one of the richest biodiversity hotspot on the planet, containing approximately 15-17% of the world's plant species and nearly 20% of its bird diversity. The dawn chorus and the frequent flashes of brightly-coloured feathers in the undergrowth testify to that fact. After breakfast and time for a quick walk, perhaps harvesting some coffee beans, we head off to the famous Otavalo market – a shopping and a photography opportunity – and then on to meet the horses just south of Quito, close to Cotopaxi National Park. We ride to a delightful inn surrounded by unbelievable mountain scenery for a delicious, home-cooked dinner and overnight.

Riding approx. 3-4 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at Mountain Inn in Chilcabamba

Day 8 (Saturday): Cotopaxi National Park

We ford a river and traverse the remains of a lahar – one of the many classic volcanic features that we will see along with glacial features over the next few days. Huge boulders thrown out during an eruption litter the area around Cotopaxi Volcano. Reaching the pasturelands of a private hacienda – carefully avoiding the fighting bulls that have made this ranch famous – there is a chance to speed up as we head towards the national park. Keeping a look out for the Andean condors often soaring overhead, we once again cross the river and arrive at a Hacienda almost equidistant between four major Andean peaks, the snow-capped Cotopaxi filling most of the building's big picture windows.

Riding approx. 5-6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at remote Hacienda

Day 9 (Sunday): Wild Horses & Open Plains

A faster ride today as we enjoy long canters across the plains of Cotopaxi National Park; there are all too few open spaces left with ideal ground to enjoy such exhilarating riding, but these grasslands are certainly one of them. Usually the wild horses join in, an unforgettable experience as these herds gallop across the pastures alongside us, long manes and tails flowing. The 'lunar-esque' landscape is fascinating as we approach the magnificent Cotopaxi Volcano along an old Inca route – the main 'highway' between Cusco and Quito. On another Inca road heading down to the Amazon, we pass a reconstructed Inca Fort. Following a picnic lunch, we turn for

home, the setting sun lighting up the glacier.

Riding approx. 6 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch & Dinner

Overnight at remote Hacienda

Day 10 (Monday): Stunning Secret Valley

On our last day of riding, we ride up into the Rumiñahui foothills, another great place to spot condors, deer and foxes, and affording ever more fantastic views. We start with some invigorating canters across the flatlands close to Cotopaxi Volcano, then the pace steadies as we climb above 4,000 meters (13,123 feet) through the high 'paramo' grasslands to ride into a valley at the base of Rumiñahui peak. This route remains a favorite among guests and a magical way to round off the tour.

The highest canter in the world is an exhilarating experience, forming an indelible memory as we cross the undulating hills following narrow tracks mapped out by the 'chagras' and known by few.

Riding approx. 7 hours

Meals included: Breakfast & Picnic Lunch. Dinner not included tonight, you can dine at the hotel or we can make restaurant recommendations

Overnight at Hotel in Quito (Guests can be taken to a hotel near Quito airport, extra charge may apply)

Day 11 (Tuesday): 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.

Meals included: Breakfast

Non-Riders

If non-riders wish to accompany the tour, alternative activities can be organized for them and on most days, everyone can meet up for mid-day meals.

Other Info

Meeting: Quito - Cruz Loma Hotel

Airport: Quito

Transfer: Pick up and drop off at Quito Hotel Sierra Madre

The official meeting place is in the La Floresta or Mariscal areas of Quito. Pick up is generally 7.30am-7.45am as most hotels start breakfast at 7.00am.

Tack: McClellan western style saddles with sheepskin seats

Horses: Local criollo crossed with Andalusian, Arab, Thoroughbred, Peruvian Pasos.

Pace: Pace is varied due to the terrain with canters but no extended gallops due to altitude above 4000 meters. Guests will have to lead horses from time to time. Average of 5 - 7 riding hrs per day

Walk | Trot | Canter |

Level: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾 (3.5 to 5 out of 5) Strong Intermediate

Age: Min 15

Weight: 185-210 lbs / 85-95 kg

Riders: Min 4 riders

Max 8 riders

Riding helmets are mandatory for this ride.

October Fiesta Trip

On this ride, now an annual event, we have combined our guests' favourite routes, hacienda and visits plus, we also join the locals at a very traditional procession, party and lasso competition.

The tour includes:

- 8 days riding, including Cotopaxi National Park & the stunning pastoral Zuleta Valley
- 9 nights accommodation with en suite bathrooms. This includes staying at one of Ecuador's most important historic haciendas & at a working farm
- Taking part in the procession & party (dancing to a local brass band around an enormous bonfire; plenty of fireworks and the traditional 'vaca loca' (firework display)
- Spectating at a lasso/roping competition – teams of 3 roping Spanish fighting bulls
- Guided visit around a top Andalusian horse stud farm
- Visit to condor project and a good chance of seeing wild condors
- Visit to the famous Otavalo market; visit to the second most important Inca site in Ecuador
- City tour of Colonial Quito (UNESCO world heritage site)

Day 1: COLONIAL QUITO

Guests are met at Quito airport or at their hotel by a guide and taken for lunch and city tour of colonial Quito (a UNESCO world heritage site) to view the exquisite architecture, visit the ornate churches and wander through the plazas. Overnight in a comfortable Quito 4 star hotel. L.

Day 2: ANTISANA FOOTHILLS & CONDORS

Guests are driven south-east out of Quito to meet the horses and 'chagras' (Andean horsemen) for a introductory ride. Once guests are settled and comfortable with their horses we will ride out into the verdant Andean hills on a circuit ride (4-6hrs). A picnic along the way, stunning views out across the valleys as we round every corner and each time we emerge from the native forests. Regularly we see the mighty Andean condor soaring overhead as we traverse the Antisana foothills and much closer, the hummingbirds flit between the branches. Overnight at a nearby converted Jesuit hacienda with beautiful gardens and shady verandas. B, PL, D.

Day 3: AVENUE OF VOLCANOES, HEART OF THE ANDES

After a drive south down the very appropriately named 'Avenue of Volcanoes' – with the chance of seeing many of Ecuador's most impressive peaks including the erupting Tungurahua Volcano – guests meet the horses. We ride on tracks between the pastures up into the native vegetation (rough grasslands, scrub and bushes) and then through a forest of towering pines to the entrance of Cotopaxi national park. Guests will visit Ecuador's second most important Inca site to view complete Inca walls at a magnificent hacienda. Overnight is at one of Ecuador's most important historic haciendas – the scene of several independence battles as well as the base over the centuries for many famous European explorers. B, PL, D.

Day 4: COTOPAXI NATIONAL PARK & HIGH ANDEAN PLATNS

A long ride crossing the Cotopaxi national park entering by the south entrance and exiting through the north gate. Guests never forget the exhilaration of the long canter on the open, arid plains below the snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano. Riders pass close to this magnificent volcano, the highest active volcano in the world and also Ecuador's second highest peak and then ride on across rolling hills towards Pasachoa. Overnight is at a very comfortable thatched roof lodge in a truly amazing location: surrounded by no less than four mighty Andean peaks. B, PL, D.

Day 5: WILD HORSES, LAVA FLOWS & INCA FORT

A ride back into the national park, through a different area crossing luna-like landscapes, passing massive boulders thrown out during previous eruptions and, after cantering across an expanse of grassland, we visit an old Inca fort. Riding around curious-shaped mounds produced by both glacial and volcanic activity, we come across some of the herds of wild horses that roam freely in the park, their long manes and tails flowing as they gallop alongside us. We stop for lunch in a stunning location, with curious llamas often near the restaurant and then enjoy an afternoon ride back for a second overnight at the lodge passing an area where we have sighted condors. B, L, D.

Day 6: ANDEAN GRASSLANDS

Another full day ride, we set out to the slopes of Sincholagua carpeted with the tall native grasslands and a host of brightly coloured wild flowers. We ford a river rushing down with the glacier snowmelt and, having crossed an old lava flow, ride up into a sea of grasses. The views across the floodplains and lava flows to the surrounding mountains beyond are breathtaking. The horses expertly negotiate steep slopes and rocky stream crossings and eventually, meeting a paved road, we leave the horses and return to spend another night at the Jesuit hacienda (day 2). B, PL, D.

Day 7: NORTHERN HIGHLANDS, TORCHLIT PROCESSION & PARTY

A drive north takes us quickly into very different scenery and we meet fresh horses in the Cayambe Valley and ride into the sleepy, pastoral Zuleta Valley. Jagged peaks and verdant valley floors have taken the place of the wide expanses of the previous days. We ride into a working farm – in time to see the afternoon milking (half the herd still milked by hand) – and, while guests walk around the farm to admire the hacienda's Andalusian horses or relax on the verandas, the grooms have enough time to feed the horses and get them safely away before the firecrackers start. The procession leads down from the adobe houses and ends up at the chapel on the hacienda where we are staying. The locals, particularly the ladies, still wear their brightly coloured local dress and they dance along the procession route behind a brass band. After Mass the party begins with an enormous bonfire being lit at nightfall and ends after a lot of dancing and some very special, typical 'mobile' firework displays. Overnight at the hacienda. B, PL, D.

Day 8: LASSO/ROPING COMPETITION, ZULETA VALLEY

This is the big competition day! After a short ride out into the beautiful valley to see the hacienda fighting bulls we arrive back at the hacienda in time to see the teams assembling and also to have some roping lessons. Each team consists of three 'chagras' (local horsemen) in their traditional dress. They have to lasso a feisty fighting bull that is released from the corral and get the animal on the ground. The quickest team wins, which bull the team has to lasso is a lottery so some unlucky teams will draw the most ferocious bull with the sharpest horns! The lively crowd – the ladies dressed in their typical embroidered blouses and bright, pleated skirts, is on hand to shout advice! The winners are given a trophy and then everyone enjoys a meal and some local firewater as the band plays on. A second overnight at the working hacienda, fireplaces in most rooms. B, L, D.

Day 9: SAN PABLO VALLEY & OTAVALO MARKET

A morning ride takes us through another part of the Zuleta Valley, past the meadows, cantering along grassy trails lined with eucalyptus and sisal plants, avoiding the pigs and donkeys tethered in the lanes to graze. This ride is a very firm favourite: we climb out of the valley, cross a plateau then descend into the San Pablo valley dominated by the lake and Imbabura – an extinct volcano that gave the province its name.

The last part of our ride is fascinating, taking guests past exotic tropical fruits and the adobe and thatch houses. After lunch we say goodbye to the horses and head to the famous Otavalo market. Guests will have time to pick up some of the varied handicrafts on offer and also take some great photographs of the locals in their very special typical dress before heading back to Quito for a farewell dinner. Overnight in Quito, same comfortable four star hotel as day 1. B, PL, D.

Day 10: DEPARTURE

After breakfast guests are taken to the airport in time for their outward flights. B.
END OF SERVICES.

THE TOUR COST INCLUDES:

Horses (normally two horses during the ride)
Bilingual guide and local guides & grooms (guests will not be required to care for/tack up the horses).
Saddlebags and ponchos for each rider.
Accommodation (9 nights), en suite bathrooms, very comfortable, often fireplaces in rooms.
All meals from lunch day 1 to breakfast day 10 (except dinner day 1), including elaborate picnics.
Quito airport pickup & drop off (certain conditions apply).
All national park, reserve, church/museum entrance fees and local taxes.
Private transport throughout.
NOT INCLUDED: personal expenses such as bar bills, gratuities.

Rates and Dates 2026 - IT-ECRT04

Rates include:

Cotopaxi Adventure: Accommodation, Most meals with water, 7 riding days with English speaking guide & National park/private reserve entrance fees

Volcanoes & Vistas Ride: Accommodation, Most meals with water, 10 riding days with English speaking guide & National park/private reserve entrance fees

Riding helmets upon prior request (but we do recommend that you bring your own), wool ponchos, saddlebags and half chaps available on request.

Packages and Options

Season	Description	~US\$
A 2026	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride	\$3425
	Single supplement	\$555
	Weight supplement (over 85 kg, 95 kg max)	\$370
	Small group supplement (2 pax only), pp	\$1045
	Small group supplement (3 pax only), pp	\$705
B 2026	11 day trip - Volcanoes & Vistas Ride	\$4450
	Single supplement	\$620
	Weight supplement (over 85 kg, 95 kg max)	\$540
	Small group supplement (2 pax only), pp	\$1580
	Small group supplement (3 pax only), pp	\$1055

Transfer Option

Description

2026	Transfer from Quito Airport, per car (2 pax), roundtrip	\$90
2026	Extra night in Quito - please inquire	

Tour Dates

Season	Tour Dates		
B 2026	08/01/2026 - 08/11/2026	11d / 10n	11 day trip - Volcanoes & Vistas Ride
A 2026	08/15/2026 - 08/22/2026	8d / 7n	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride
A 2026	10/24/2026 - 10/31/2026	8d / 7n	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride
A 2026	10/31/2026 - 11/07/2026	8d / 7n	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride
A 2026	11/21/2026 - 11/28/2026	8d / 7n	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride
B 2026	12/16/2026 - 12/26/2026	11d / 10n	11 day trip - Volcanoes & Vistas Ride
A 2026	12/19/2026 - 12/26/2026	8d / 7n	8 day trip - Cotopaxi Adventure Ride

Min/Max: 4/8

Rates do not include:

Cotopaxi Adventure: Alcoholic beverages, Dinner on Day 7, Gratuities, Transfer from Quito & Medical insurance (mandatory)

Volcanoes & Vistas Ride: Alcoholic beverages, Dinner on Day 10, Gratuities, Transfer from Quito & Medical insurance (mandatory)

Reservation Form

Tour : _____ **Code #:** _____ **from:** _____ **to :** _____

The Travelers (Last Name, First Name)	Male Female	Single room / or tent	Birth Date MM/DD/YY	Height	Weight	Special diets													
						Special diets	Beginner	Novice	Intermediate	Strong Intern.	Advanced	ride English	ride Western	mostly arena	mostly hacking				
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Special Diets: _____

Your fitness level: Excellent Moderate Poor How long have you been riding? _____

How often do you ride? _____ Have you been on other riding tours? No Yes last trip when? _____

If Hidden Trails offers a transfer from the local airport/station: I would like the transfer to be included: YES NO

In an emergency, name and phone number of contact: _____

Attention: Please, if there is more than one participant, all have to sign the reservation form - make copies if needed

With my signature I confirm my reservation of the listed program(s) under the Hidden Trails Booking Conditions. I'm aware, and I made all participants aware of the risk involved with these outdoor adventure activities. All participants have read and agree with [the Hidden Trails Booking Conditions](#) and the *Hidden Trails Recreational Activity Release and Indemnity Agreement* in this brochure or as listed on the Internet.

I (we) will sign and forward the *Recreational Activity Release and Indemnity Agreement* at least 10 weeks before trip starting date.

Last Name and First Name (The Traveler) _____

Street _____ **e-mail** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Postal/Zip Code** _____

Phone (wk) _____ **(hm)** _____ **Cell** _____ **Fax** _____

Date _____ **Signature (mandatory)** 1. _____

Please, charge a 25% deposit (minimum \$ 350 per person) now and full payment 10 weeks before the travel date to my credit card.

For payments by **VISA** or **Mastercard** (no debit cards)

Cardholder: _____

Card # _____ 3 digit Security # _____

Exp.Date: _____ Signature _____

Billing Address for Credit Card (if different than mailing address):

I have enclosed a check for the deposit

Additional Signatures:

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Travel Cancellation Insurance Credit Card required

Sign me (us) up initial _____

No, we will provide our own initial _____

Hidden Trails

659A Moberly Road
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5Z 4B2

Toll Free: 1-888-9 TRAILS
(1-888-987-2457)

Phone: 604-323-1141
FAX: 604-323-1148



From the U.K.:

Phone 020-323-96201
Fax 0203-004-1200

Skype hiddentrails

E-mail info@hiddentrails.com
Website www.hiddentrails.com

Office hours:
Mo-Fr 8:30 am to 6 pm
Pacific Standard Time

