Ecuador – Mainland Tour Options

Ecuador, a land of towering, snow-covered volcanoes, tropical rainforests and secluded beaches and towns nestled in the Andean valley is also a country filled with tradition and multicultural environments unlike any other. Part of Ecuadorian tradition includes weekly indigenous markets held in many of the provinces of Ecuador. These markets are filled with color, music, sounds and wares, all of which are part of the Ecuadorian heritage. Though these tours require a full day, the opportunity to see the Ecuadorian countryside is well worth the time and effort (half-day tours of the city of Quito are also available – more information below).

Tours based in Quito

**Otavalo Market and Cotacachi**
- **Duration:** Full day
- **Group size:** Private or shared (group)

We will travel from Quito to edge of the San Pablo Valley and visit the local people of the Imbabura Province. You will have an opportunity to meet the people of Otavalo and to see their wares displayed in the market stalls of Poncho Square. These include wood carvings, hand-woven purses, wall carpets and much more, all available for purchase. We then travel to the village of Cotacachi, where you may stroll along the main street and visit shops with an incredible selection of locally made, high-quality leather items. On the return trip we will visit Calderon, a village known for the creation of masapan figurines sold worldwide.

**Cotopaxi**
- **Duration:** Full day
- **Group size:** Private or shared (group)

This tour travels along the Pan American Highway, known locally as the “Avenue of the Volcanoes,” to Cotopaxi National Park. The park is 2 hours south of Quito and located at the foot of the snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano, the highest active volcano in the world. This fascinating, pristine region is home to animals such as llamas, rabbits, deer and a great variety of birds, plants, fungi and much more. From here we travel to beautiful Limpiopungo Lagoon for a nature walk.

For the more adventurous traveler, Cotopaxi tours are also available by mountain bike.
**Mindo-Nambillo Ecological Reserve**  
**Duration:** Full day  
**Group size:** Private  
About 85 km north of the capital is the Mindo-Nambillo Ecological Reserve, providing visitors with a magnificent example of Ecuador's diversity. As we travel from the Sierra to the reserve, we will observe drastically changing landscapes. We will stop to visit the Nono village of Santa Rosa and later trek to the lookout tower of Cuzcangui and visit an experimental forest. Along the road we'll admire fabulous waterfalls, primary forest zones, geological formations, fossilized wood and a great variety of indigenous plants and animals. Later, we will ride to the Nambillo River, where dozens of endemic bird species are found.

**Whitewater Rafting**  
**Duration:** Full Day  
**Group size:** Shared  
The Ríos Toachi and Blanco are a fantastic introduction to the rivers of Ecuador. Flowing off the coastal side of the Andes they have some of the longest navigable sections of whitewater in the country. Combine this with the sights and sounds of the forest environment we pass through and you are guaranteed a day to remember.

The journey to Toachi is a 3-hour drive west of Quito through a beautiful cloud forest.

**Half-Day Tour Options**

**Quito City Tour**  
**Duration:** 3-6 hours  
**Group size:** Private or shared (group)  
The city of Quito provides a visitor with charming historical and modern treasures. The city has been declared a “Cultural World Heritage Site” by UNESCO because of the unique cultural assets within the city. Tours give visitors a chance to straddle the Northern and Southern Hemispheres at the world-renowned “Mitad del Mundo” monument, view the Pululahua crater, tour the colonial and modern districts of Quito and much more. There are several Quito city half- and full-day tours available including the Mitad del Mundo and the Teleferico. The Teleferico is a gondola ride to the highest point in Quito. You will reach an altitude of 4,100 meters at the top of the ride. Enjoy a beautiful view of the city of Quito and the valley it lies in, with the majestic peak of Pichincha in the background. This can be included with the city tour.
Tours based in Guayaquil

**Guayaquil City Tour**
*Duration:* 3 hours  
*Group size:* Private or shared (group)

The Guayaquil city tour includes a visit to the principal tourist sites of the city. The tour will visit "Parque Seminario", the old South Market called "Palacio de Cristal" (Crystal Palace) and "Plaza de la Integración y Administración". Enjoy a panoramic view of the "Malecón" (boardwalk), a visit to the "Las Peñas" neighborhood, the "Mercado de las flores" (flower market) and the "Malecón del Salado" (Salado's boardwalk).

**“The Castle” Cocoa Ranch**
*Duration:* Full-day (09am to 15pm).  
*Group size:* Private

El Castillo is located one hour’s drive south-east of Guayaquil. Here you’ll visit their cocoa, mango, and green banana plantations, as well as their chocolate factory. The tour ends with a delicious typical lunch at the farm’s hacienda and a chance to sample the delicious organic chocolate they make.

**BIRD ISLAND**
*Duration:* Full-day, 8 hours.  
*Group size:* Private

“Bird Island” is located in the Guayas Province. Traveling time is 1.5 hours by bus from Guayaquil to "Puerto de El Morro" followed by a 1-hour boat ride through mangroves. After this scenic journey you will arrive at the “Isla de los pájaros” (Birds’ Island), a magical island with nesting Frigates. In the mangroves you will be introduced to a number of species of birds and foliage. On the return drive we pass through the area of Playas and have a local seafood lunch at a restaurant on the beach.