



RIDE WORLD WIDE ECUADOR 2025

RIDE INFORMATION

Ecuador has some wonderful wild and little visited highland country, a 'backbone' of towering, snow-covered volcanic peaks that runs lengthwise down its centre and valleys between that are a patchwork of peasant villages and traditional smallholdings. These rides explore the Andean highlands surrounding the dramatic volcanic peaks of Cayambe and Cotopaxi (the world's largest active volcano) and the meadows, villages and Indian communities that line the valley floors below where local farmers tend livestock and work the fields, much as their forefathers have done for centuries. There are a number of different ride itineraries offering excellent riding and horses combined with a variety of comfortable accommodation options and a wonderful insight into Ecuador's culture and history. The meeting point for all rides is Quito, Ecuador's historic capital founded in 1554.

The 'Haciendas of the Andes' ride explores both Cayambe and Cotopaxi, with nights in comfortable haciendas, hotels and manor farms. It is a great choice for anyone looking for a mix of good riding and horses, local culture, historical interest and comfortable accommodation. The 'Andean Adventure' ride is a more challenging itinerary, using simpler accommodation. Starting near Cayambe, the route explores a little visited hamlet before heading south for the wonderful riding country of Cotopaxi National Park. The 'Volcano Ride' is a longer 10 night itinerary, riding in the Cayambe valley, Zuleta valley and then Cotopaxi National Park - a fantastic combination for those who have the extra time.



DATES

Itineraries of 7 or 10 nights are run from set dates. Please see dates at the end of this information sheet. Rides will be confirmed at standard rates when there are at least 4 (and a maximum of 8) participants - although they can be run for 2 or 3 riders at a supplement (see price details below). Other rides for groups of 2 to 8 guests and tailor-made itineraries for families, can be run by arrangement. Please contact us to discuss dates, your plans and availability.

HORSES

The horses used are mostly the local Criollo breed crossed with Andalucian, Thoroughbred, Peruvian Paso and other warm blood breeds. They are between about 14.2hh and 16hh, are generally fairly narrow in build but strong, calm and sure-footed. They are very well suited to the terrain and also a responsive, forward going and thoroughly enjoyable ride. The horses are all carefully selected by ride organiser, Sally Vergette who is English but has been living in Ecuador for more than 20 years. She takes great pride in them, ensuring they are well schooled and extremely well cared for, and great care is taken to match horse and rider. Most of the horses are used to neck reining and respond well to light use of hand and leg.

TACK

Saddles are McClellan style, ex US Cavalry saddles which are halfway between an English and western style and are covered with a comfortable sheepskin. Ponchos (tied to the saddle) and saddle bags for small personal belongings are supplied and vehicles transport main luggage and equipment between accommodation.

RIDING

The Haciendas of the Andes ride includes riding on 7 days with around 4 to 5 hours in the saddle on the first day and between 5 and 7 hours on other days. The Andean Adventure ride includes around 5 to 7 hours in the saddle on 7 days and the Volcano Ride includes 10 days riding with around 5 to 7 hours in the saddle each day although the first 2 or 3 days can be flexible and more relaxed. Rides are either lead by Sally, who is an excellent horsewoman and an experienced, informative and knowledgeable bi-lingual guide or by another experienced English speaking Ecuadorian guide trained by her. Occasionally guiding is split, with Sally leading the first 3 or 4 days and one of her other guides taking the second half. Rides are also accompanied by at least one local groom / horseman (usually one for every 3 or 4 horses) who is on hand to help with tacking up, untacking and so on and a vehicle will usually meet the group at lunchtime where access is possible (usually every day on the Haciendas ride); on days where there is no vehicle access, a picnic lunch is carried in saddle bags. Horses are generally prepared each day by the groom(s) and guide, although on the Andean Adventure participants are asked to help with horses a little more, always under supervision of the guide and grooms. There is normally a change to new horses at least once during each full ride itinerary, so horses are fresh and well rested. Rides are normally run for a maximum of 8 riding guests (occasionally more for private groups).



WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a **strict** rider weight limit of 85kg (13st 5lbs) - although heavier riders up to 95kgs (15 stone) *may* occasionally be taken subject to riding experience and fitness and (because of the toll the altitude can take on the horses) payment of a charge for an extra horse (USD 295 for Hacienda rides; USD 295 for Andean Adventure rides and USD 430 for Volcano rides). This is by **prior arrangement** only so please contact us if you are close to or over 85kgs.

PACE

The riding pace varies from day to day according to the terrain and altitude and will also depend on the ability of the group, but overall rides are planned to be at a moderate, varied pace. There are good chances to canter along wide sandy tracks, across grassy meadows and 'paramo' grassland; where you ride on narrow tracks or cobbled roads, the pace will be slow. Most of the riding on the Andean Adventure and Volcano Rides is in the highlands with plenty of good places for long, exhilarating canters. On the Haciendas of the Andes the first few days are in the agricultural valleys between Cayambe and the Zuleta Valley where sandy tracks provide good going but local people and wandering livestock often mean you have to ride slowly and with care!

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PACE cont

On the last few days, as you approach Cotopaxi, there is plenty of good, open terrain for faster going. There are some steep climbs on all routes and areas where the pace must be slow and (particularly on the Andean Adventure and Volcano Rides) places where you may need to get off to lead your horse over steep, rough or rocky ground.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

To participate in the set date rides you must be a reasonably competent rider who is used to riding in open country and over varied terrain. As a minimum, you should be comfortable, well balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and canter and able to control a well-schooled horse at all paces. Hours on the Andean Adventure and Volcano Rides are generally longer so these are only suitable for fit riders of at least a good intermediate standard who can cope with fairly long hours in the saddle each day. On the Volcano Ride particularly, if weather is wet you may be asked to dismount to lead your horse down steep tracks so need to be comfortable doing this and of handling a horse from the ground. On the set date rides the minimum age for participants is usually 15 years - but families are welcome and rides can be specially organised or tailor-made, with itineraries adapted to include less riding, consecutive nights at the same place and / or a slower pace if required for more novice riders and for families of mixed ability - please ask. You will always enjoy your trip much more if you are reasonably riding fit and if you are not used to riding for several hours a day, please put in some concentrated practice before you go to get used to the hours in the saddle. Remember too that you will be riding at altitude which takes its toll, so general fitness is important for all rides.

TERRAIN

The rides take you across a variety of terrain ranging from sand, dirt and cobbled tracks in the valleys, groves of pine and scented Eucalyptus, past small communities of Indian farmers and fields of potatoes, corn and sugar cane, to the open, grassy 'paramo' of the Ecuadorian highlands. The 'paramo' is the vast grassland plain and high pasture above the treeline that skirts the high volcanic peaks. There are no fences, houses and few tracks here - just open grassland. On most itineraries you ride in Cotopaxi National Park, where there are waterfalls and blue crater lakes and sometimes steep scree slopes to cross with tracks marked out by wild horses.

SAFETY

All rides are accompanied by an experienced English-speaking guide and at least one local groom (usually one groom for every 3 or 4 horses). The guide / grooms carry a basic medical kit for both horses and riders and a mobile 'phone for emergencies. A vehicle will also often meet the group at lunchtime (this is only where access is possible so not every day / every ride).



ACCOMMODATION

On the Haciendas of the Andes, accommodation is at a selection of Ecuador's haciendas, farming estates, country manor houses and hotels chosen for their position and / or wonderful view. They all vary in size, style and character but accommodation at all is reasonably comfortable in bedrooms with private bathroom, often with own open fireplace and perhaps decorated with local Indian crafts and embroidery. The haciendas used include Hacienda La Merced, a working farm in the beautiful Zuleta valley, the lovely Hacienda Cusin near Otavalo, Cotopaxipungo country hotel and newly renovated Hacienda Los Mortinos, both with wonderful 360 views of Cotopaxi volcano. On the Andean Adventure and Volcano Rides, nights are at a combination of smaller working haciendas, hostels and local farms. Again all individual and varying in style and character, although simpler and much more rustic. Most have twin / double bedrooms (though on some nights, triple or dorm style rooms are the only option), often with shared bathrooms (with hot showers). On one or two nights it may be possible to book a private bathroom by paying a supplement. Private rides using accommodation in some of the country's more prestigious haciendas, some of which hold a unique and important position in the country's history, can be arranged on request.

MEALS

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day except in Quito, when you are free to make your own arrangements for dinner and to sample some of the capital's many local bars and restaurants. Food on the rides is good and includes a combination of European and typical Ecuadorian dishes. Lunches are picnics usually brought by vehicle on the Hacienda rides and otherwise carried in saddle-bags - a combination of cheese, cold meats, salami, bread and salads with a different menu each day. At the haciendas / hotels, you will usually be offered a cooked breakfast and, after a day's riding, dinner is three courses - perhaps including a local speciality such as fresh trout. Meals at the hostels and farms (Adventure and Volcano rides) are simpler, perhaps with less choice, but still good. Breakfast may be a warming bowl of porridge, tea or coffee, bread and eggs. Dinner will be a substantial two course meal, often a hot soup to start followed by a pasta or rice dish. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that special arrangements can be made. Bottled water is provided on all rides and other drinks are available to purchase. Most of the haciendas have a full bar selling wine, beer and a selection of spirits; hostels and farms have a more limited range.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Ecuador has a temperate climate so it is possible to ride year round. Daytime temperatures can reach 28°C, although most days start at a crisp 6 to 10°C. Night-time temperatures sometimes drop to 2°C and even freezing in the hills around the crater lakes. The difference in temperature between night and day is most evident in the main dry season, from June to mid-October; from December to May days remain a little cooler (up to about 25°C) and nights are not quite so cold. The rainy season in most areas is generally from mid-October to end November, then March to May (there is a short dry season December to February). Seasons do vary depending on location and rain is possible year-round so you must go prepared, but heavy showers are most likely in May and late October / November. Even in the rainy season however, it does not usually rain every day and is rarely prolonged, generally falling as afternoon rains storms and showers when you have finished riding. July and August are normally the driest months. They can be windy, but are often clear and can be the best time for viewing volcanoes. Most rides take place above 2500 metres (8125 feet) and some rides take you up to 4125 metres (13,400 feet). The routes are planned so you can acclimatise gently but **you are strongly recommended** to spend a day or two in Quito (which is at an altitude of about 2900 metres / 9500 feet) before riding to recover from any jet lag and help with acclimatisation.

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.



ITINERARIES

An example itinerary for the Haciendas of the Andes Ride is set out below. Please ask for the Andean Adventure and Volcano Ride itineraries - and note that all are only examples of what is planned and day by day arrangements are subject to change and may be altered if your guide considers this advisable or if local conditions require. Tailor-made rides incorporating parts of different itineraries are also possible on request, as are family stays at haciendas, riding out each day. We can also arrange additional accommodation in haciendas or hotels and combinations with add-on tours such as a visit to the Galapagos, Cloud Forest, Amazon Basin or the coast. Please call us to chat about your plans. We would be happy to advise and book for you.

Example itinerary - Haciendas of the Andes Ride

This is a journey back in time taking you along ancient Inca and Spanish colonial routes. You will visit two beautiful, yet very distinct, areas of the Ecuadorian highlands, crossing vast plains and riding through grassy valleys. The route starts close to the giant snow-capped peak of Cayambe and after a few days riding in northern Ecuador, you will be driven south, past Quito, to ride in the spectacular wild Andean 'paramo' highlands of Cotopaxi National Park.

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HACIENDAS OF THE ANDES ITINERARY cont.

Nights are at a combination of haciendas, farms and country hotels. As well as marvellous scenery and comfortable accommodation, this itinerary promises many encounters with local people, whose customs and rhythm of life has changed little over the centuries. The following is an example of the itinerary planned – always subject to change if local conditions require:

Day 1 - You will be met in the morning (usually about 08.30) in Quito and driven north about 2 hours, with a stop on the Equator line en-route. Meet the horses and, once everyone is comfortable, set off on a gentle introductory ride, climbing over a ridge with stunning views of lush valleys and of Cayambe volcano. Stop for a picnic lunch along the way and in the afternoon arrive at a working hacienda (farm), where Andalucian (PRE) horses are bred (about 4 to 5 hours riding). After riding you can view the collection of Inca and pre-Inca ceramics that have been discovered here. Dinner and night hacienda La Merced. (B,L,D)

Day 2 - Breakfast and set off riding, following tracks between the meadows and passing tiny hamlets of adobe huts and ladies in their bright coloured skirts herding pigs and sheep. The route takes you through woodland and around the patchwork fields of quinoa, potatoes, maize, lupins and tree tomato orchards. There are magnificent views of the jagged Mojanda summit as you cross the slopes of the sacred Imbabura Volcano - the focus of many pre-Inca legends. Nearing the night's accommodation, ride past avocado and papaya trees, passion fruit plants and, as you ride into the Hacienda's bougainvillea clad courtyard, you might see a flash of colour as humming-birds flit past en-route to the agapanthus flowers (about 5 to 6 hours riding). After riding there should be a chance to visit the nearby town of Otavalo, famous for its colourful market. Dinner and night Hacienda Cusin. (B,L,D)



Day 3 - Breakfast, and after a fascinating demonstration by local master weavers and a chance to buy some beautiful Andean handicrafts, set off riding. The route climbs out the valley onto the plains, with a chance to pick up the pace, following agave-lined sandy tracks. This is picturesque country and there are dramatic views of the hanging valleys and rocky ridges. Head down to lush meadows passing ladies in traditional dress embroidering intricate blouses whilst tending their flocks. There will be time to stop at one of the pre-Inca earthworks dotted around the valley and you may catch sight of a huge Andean condor soaring overhead. In the late afternoon, after about 6 hours riding, say goodbye to the first set of horses and you will be driven about 2 ½ hours to a comfortable country hotel where the next part of the ride begins. A quick trip to the hot tub or sauna for those who wish, then a delicious dinner. Night Cotpoaxipungo Country Hotel (B,L,D).

Day 4 - Breakfast then meet the new horses. The lush narrow valley below hotel hides a rushing river making its way to the Pacific coast, the banks lined with mountain bamboo, ferns and alder trees festooned with orchids and bromelia. There's plenty of birdlife too - woodpeckers, humming birds and slightly unnerving vultures. Leaving the micro-climate of the river valley, extensive views open up and you are surrounded by four Andean peaks, part of the "Avenue of Volcanoes". Traversing the sea of rough grasslands in the Sincholagua foothills there is a good chance of seeing Condors again as well as eagles, hawks, falcons and harriers. At the northern border of Cotopaxi National Park you arrive at a modern hacienda, often greeted by the llamas kept there, which is base for the next 2 nights. The idyllic location is dominated by the perfectly conical shape of the snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano (approx 6 hours riding). Dinner and night at Hacienda Los Mortinos (B,L,D).



HACIENDA RIDE ITINERARY cont.

Day 5 - Set off riding into the national park, where there are lots of chances for exhilarating canters across the wide, arid plains at the base of the Cotopaxi Volcano. The horses enjoy the open spaces but have a calm temperament so they settle into a rhythm without trying to rush. Several herds of wild horses inhabit the park and to ride alongside these, as they gallop freely with long manes flowing across the rugged terrain, is a unique experience. Part of today's route follows what was once the main Inca highway linking Quito with Cusco in Peru and turning east off this you ride on another Inca route leading down to the Amazon. Stop to visit the remains of an Inca fort before continuing on through gently undulating grassy hills, passing drumlins and moraine, crossing old lava flows before returning to Los Mortinos via a canyon (about 6 hours riding) Dinner and second night at Hacienda Los Mortinos (B,L,D).



Day 6 - Set off riding again, heading up the slopes of Rumiñahui ('stoneface') Volcano, where there are good chances to see condors, fox and deer and you will ride past polylepis ('paperbark') trees, native shrubs such as chuquiragua and valeriana and a host of colourful wildflowers scattered on the hillsides. Climbing to above 4000 metres (13,100 ft) this is a place for one of the highest canters in the world! Continue into a hidden valley where there are often wild horses grazing close to the towering cliffs, the views are unforgettable and the picnic spot unmatched. In the afternoon, trails marked out by the wild horses take you back down the mountain and on to a once important Jesuit Hacienda recently restored - now a delightful place to stay (6 to 7 hours riding). Dinner and night Hacienda Santa Ana. (B,L,D)



Day 7 - The final ride takes you on an exhilarating canter across the flat expanses of Cotopaxi National Park close to the volcano where you traverse old lava, volcanic ash and lahas. From here veer westwards and start a long ascent with outstanding views, riding up through native grasslands to the scree slopes where you cross over into the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Leave the national park, often meeting local horsemen ('chagras') checking their cattle - quite a sight, with their colourful ponchos, thick goatskin chaps and intricately plaited bridles. Their stirrups are enclosed - like clogs, and often carved into an animal head. Reach the backup vehicle where it is goodbye to the horses and then a drive to an historic hacienda close to Quito Airport (about 6 to 7 hours riding and a 2 hour drive). Dinner and night Hacienda Su Merced. (B,L,D)

Day 8 - Breakfast and own arrangements for onward travel. (B)

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Rates below assume a minimum of 4 riders (see Note below)

Rides are scheduled for the following dates **BUT PLEASE NOTE** that dates are provisional at the time of writing and where 2 ride itineraries are scheduled over the same dates the first to be booked will be confirmed (and the other cancelled). If you are thinking of booking, please contact us for an update. Additional dates and private or tailor-made rides are available on request.

Haciendas of the Andes (7 nights) - USD 4800 per person
(single room supplement USD 650).

11th to 18th January	7th to 14th June	23rd to 30th August
1st to 8th February	5th to 12th July	6th to 13th September
12th to 19th April	26th July to 2nd August	23rd to 30th December

Volcano Ride (10 nights) - USD 4450 per person

(single supplement USD 495 - single rooms **not** always possible for all nights).

18th to 28th January	9th to 19th August	27th December to 6th January
14th to 24th June	20th to 30th September	
12th to 22nd July	11th to 21st October	

Andean Adventure (7 nights) - USD 3475 per person

(single supplement USD 445 - single rooms **not** always possible for all nights).

3rd to 10th January	1st to 8th March	5th to 12th October
18th to 25th January	22nd to 29th March	8th to 15th November
8th to 15th February	12th to 19th April	6th to 13th December
		20th to 27th December

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DATES & RATES 2025 cont.

Rates quoted above **INCLUDE** all riding, guiding and equipment, 7 or 10 nights twin accommodation (single if paying supplement and note some shared dorm rooms possible on Andean Adventure and Volcano ride), meals (lunch Day 1 to breakfast Day 8 / 11 (except dinner in Quito Day 7 / 10 of the Andean Adventure and Volcano ride), some drinks, entrance fees to National Parks, meeting and transfers from / to central Quito.

The rates **EXCLUDE** international flights to Quito and taxes, airport transfers, personal medical insurance (compulsory), personal expenditure such as bar bills, laundry or telephone calls, any visa fees, any extra nights accommodation before or after the ride or any tips you wish to leave.

NOTE Rates are based on a minimum of 4 riders. Rides may be run for 2 or 3 riders at a supplement OR there may be an option to alter the itinerary slightly to keep the price the same. This will be discussed with you when you book. If a ride is confirmed for 2 or 3 participants and more join (taking the number to 4 or more) before the departure date, the itinerary will return to that published (or, if you have paid a supplement, this will be refunded).

Single supplements Rates assume twin accommodation and if you are travelling alone, the single supplement indicated is usually payable for a single room at hotels and haciendas (NB single rooms may not be available every night on the Andean Adventure and Volcano Rides - on some nights room are shared dormitory style). If you are travelling alone, the single supplement is generally always **payable** - but please check when you book. If you are prepared to share a twin room with another guest please let us know and we will see if we can find a sharer.



FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point is usually the Mariscal area of Quito and rates includes collection on the morning of Day 1 either from your hotel (depending on location), **OR** from a pre-arranged meeting place. Note that car access to the old colonial part of town is very limited so it may **not** be possible to collect you from your hotel if staying here. We can also arrange meeting from your flight and airport transfers at an extra cost and can book extra hotel nights in Quito on request. **Please note we strongly advise arriving in Quito at least one or two nights before the ride start date, particularly if joining the Andean Adventure or Volcano Ride as both routes are at high altitudes and this helps with acclimatisation.**

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FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION cont.

There are currently no direct flights from the UK to Quito but there are flights from London (usually overnight arriving Quito early morning) with KLM via Amsterdam and with Avianca via Bogota and also (usually day flights, arriving Quito in the evening) with Iberia via Madrid. It is also possible to travel with several US airlines via the USA. Fares vary with the season and airline but expect to pay from around £850 per person for an economy return. **Please call us if you would like further information on flights, for a quote or to book. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.**

GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking and you should always consult a health professional for more detailed & personalised advice).

Visas If you hold a full British Passport, which must valid for at least 6 months with an expiry date more than 6 months after the date you arrive, are visiting Ecuador and staying less than 90 days in any 12 month period, you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health No inoculations are legally required for travellers from UK as a condition of entry to Ecuador but a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required *IF* you are coming from a country with a risk of Yellow Fever transmission. Please seek further advice (TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) publish a list of Yellow Fever countries). Most travellers will be recommended up to date vaccination against Hepatitis A and Tetanus. Some travellers may also be recommended additional vaccinations against Hepatitis B, Rabies, TB or Typhoid and if travelling around (particularly if going to the coast or jungle) you might need Malaria prevention tablets - you should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

(DRAFT 18/02/2025)

