



## Ecuador High-Altitude Expedition Trip Notes

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|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 2011 / 2012 Dates: | Jan 28 - Feb 11, 2011 |
|                    | Feb 18 - Mar 4, 2011  |
|                    | May 13 - May 27, 2011 |
|                    | Jun 3 - Jun 17, 2011  |
|                    | Jun 24 - Jul 8, 2011  |
|                    | Jan 6 – 20, 2012      |
|                    | Jan 27 – Feb 10, 2012 |
|                    | Feb 17 – Mar 2, 2012  |
|                    | May 11 – 25, 2012     |
|                    | June 1 – 15, 2012     |
|                    | Jun 22 – Jul 6, 2012  |
|                    | Nov 2 – 16, 2012      |
|                    | Nov 23 – Dec 7, 2012  |
|                    | Dec 14 – 28, 2012     |

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**Ascents of the Ecuador Volcanoes:**    **Cayambe 18,996ft / 5,790m**  
  **Cotopaxi 19,000ft / 5,911m**  
  **Chimborazo 20,703ft / 6,310m**

**Ecuador is one of Latin America's greatest secrets. Lush jungles, amazing beaches and at its heart, the high and wild Andes mountains. For people wishing to experience an exotic culture, amazing scenery, and fantastic climbing all in one trip, this is the place to go.**

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### History

In the late 1800's as Edward Whymper and associates made their annual forays into the high country, they had no idea that they were stepping into mountaineering history as some of the first climbers to find alpine terrain directly on the equator at over 15,000ft (5,900m).



## How the expedition will run

### Commence in Quito and Otavalo

The Andes of Ecuador run as two parallel and impressive chains of peaks, rising dramatically from Pacific coastal lowlands on the west and even more abruptly from the Amazon Basin on the east. Our flight into Ecuador gives us a grand view of the entire range as we cross the country's northwest coast and pass just over the Pichinchas, 15,700-foot volcanoes standing right above Quito, then drop down to the capital's airport at 9400 feet. It is an exciting entrance into a spectacular country and beautiful city.

Quito is South America's second highest capital (after La Paz, Bolivia), and its high altitude allows us to begin our Acclimatisation as soon as we arrive. The city fills a gently sloping valley beneath thirteen to fifteen thousand-foot peaks, and from several points just above Quito it is possible to look up and down the "Avenue of the Volcanoes," as the Ecuadorian tourist industry is fond of calling it, and see most of the country's major summits.

The program begins with climbing team members travelling to Ecuador on a Friday and meeting our guides that evening for an initial program orientation. On our first full day in Ecuador we drive north, stopping briefly at the Equatorial Monument for photos on the equator, then move on to Otavalo, world-renowned for the excellence of its weavings. Our visit is timed for market day when the Otavalans come down from their villages in the surrounding mountains to sell their agricultural products, weavings, and sweaters. After a morning of exploration, photography, and shopping in the market, we hike the hills above town and cross through fields and eucalyptus groves as we make our way to a lake for a meal of Otavalan cuisine at a shoreline restaurant.

During our additional time in Quito, your guides will continue the program orientation with discussions of the itinerary, high altitude physiology, and a final equipment review and check. We explore Quito, a city of pretty parks and boulevards, grand mansions and embassies, but also a living display of South America's colonial past. Not far from our hotel wind cobbled streets with sunken walks spanned by beautiful stone arches and all overlooked by buildings of 16th and 17th century Spanish architecture. We also visit the national ethnological museum (which provides a good introduction to the history of Ecuador), several of the city's most interesting colonial churches, and the busy and traditional central market.

### Acclimatisation Hikes

Our first acclimatisation hike is on 13,776-foot Pasochoa, an extinct volcano about twenty miles south of Quito. Its large, eroded crater opens to the west, and its northwest flanks support a forest like those that once covered the entire Quito basin. We establish a very easy pace on this day hike as we begin to get our bodies used to altitudes above 10,000 feet. Our second acclimatisation hike is on Guagua Pichincha, and though its summit rises to 15,670 feet, our time in Quito and on Pasochoa make this a good next step for us at altitude. Our primary goal on both of these days is to give our bodies a chance to begin their further adjustment to the altitude while we enjoy some beautiful hiking and photographic opportunities. These rocky ridges, high grasslands, and summits provide great views of the entire cordillera and an excellent orientation to Ecuador's geography.



### **Ascent of Cayambe (18,997ft/5,790m)**

Cayambe is Ecuador's third highest peak. Forty miles northeast of Quito, it stands at 18,997 feet, looking out over Reventador ("The Exploder", one of South America's most consistently active volcanoes) and over the Amazon Basin. Cayambe's glaciers are large and among the most active of all equatorial ice flows, and the varied glacial terrain here provides an excellent training ground and a rewarding summit climb.



Having spent at least seventy-two hours above nine thousand feet, group members should be well enough acclimatised to begin sleeping and climbing at greater altitudes. Driving north to the mountain we pass through high, rolling grasslands with wildflowers and occasional herds of sheep and llamas. Leaving paved roads, the track we follow passes several working haciendas, steadily narrows, and becomes more rugged as it climbs higher and higher, finally to reach a point

within a half-hour hike of a large stone hut which serves as our base on the slopes of Cayambe at 15,290 feet.

As we continue our adjustment to the altitude, we spend our first after-noon and the following day in moderate activity on a low section of the glacier where we work on glacier travel skills, protective systems techniques, and the general procedures we will use in our ascents. The route we will take is not technical, but the number and size of the crevasses make the route serious and the route finding and overall climbing very interesting.

Climbing with headlamps, we leave long before dawn in order to have firm snow conditions throughout the ascent. For the first four hours we make an easy glacier climb to a saddle, and then continue onto steeper and more exciting ground. We traverse around large crevasses, many with enormous tropical icicles hanging from their edges, pass some spectacular seracs, and climb 35-degree slopes with occasional and short, steeper sections as we work our way to the crater rim. The final climb to the summit follows a photogenic line along the glaciated edge of the volcano's crater, a fittingly dramatic ending to an ascent that is varied and scenic throughout.

### **On to Cotopaxi (19,348 ft/5,911m)**

Cotopaxi is the world's highest active volcano. It stands in Ecuador's eastern cordillera, towering high above a small altiplano along with three other major peaks within the borders of the beautiful Cotopaxi National Park: Ruminahui (15,602'), Sincholagua (16,360'), and Quilindana (16,134'). Before entering the park, we drive south from Cayambe and stop for a night of rest at a seventeenth century hacienda from which we enjoy great mountain views of Illiniza Sur (17,268'), Illiniza Norte (16,861'), and Cotopaxi.



The next morning we leave the fertile and richly green central valley and drive east into Cotopaxi National Park. We travel through pine forests, then through drier and more open country as we ascend a rugged escarpment and finally reach a small altiplano beneath the park's towering summits. As we make our way up to and across the plain, we are fairly likely

to get good sightings of wild horses, llamas, and condors. Following a rather remarkable track in our vehicle, we are able to drive to 15,100 feet, and from there, a forty-five minute climb with full packs takes us to the José Ribas Hut on Cotopaxi's flank at 15,729 feet.

On summit day we again leave long before dawn in order to have firm snow conditions. We first climb non-glaciated slopes and then ascend a series of uniform snow and ice ramps of 30 and 35 degrees to reach a glacial platform at 17,000 feet. As dawn approaches, we enjoy one of the most spectacular colour displays in the Andes. Almost every morning, the sun rises over a low trail of clouds which drift in from the tropical forests of the Amazon Basin. As the sun moves further above the horizon, we are treated to a magnificent array of colours — in the clouds, on the multi-hued soils and rock faces of the parkland, and on the massive glacial slopes of 18,714-foot Antisana which rises to our north.

We belay across occasional snow bridges, skirt large crevasses, and ascend moderate terrain and occasional short steep slopes towards the huge summit cone. We reach the base of the 400-foot rock wall Yanasacha (which means “black wild place” in Quechua), and to its side encounter a gaping bergschrund at the base of the final glacial slopes that we must climb to reach the summit. We traverse out to the far end of the bergschrund, make an easy descent to its floor, and then return to a point below our original position to reach a climbable section of its upper wall. A belayed ten-foot move on steep ice puts us on the 55-degree face, and from there we belay up some of the most enjoyable snow and ice climbing pitches in Ecuador. The gradient eases off as we reach the crater rim, and from there it is an easy ten minute climb to Ecuador's second highest summit. From the top we enjoy views of nine major equatorial peaks, the seemingly limitless Amazon Basin to our east, and Cotopaxi's spectacular 1000-foot deep summit crater.



### **Ascent of Chimborazo (20,703 ft/6310m)**

Chimborazo is Ecuador's highest peak. A massive, five-summitted mountain rising nearly 11,000 feet above Ecuador's central valley, it is visible from Colombia in the north, from near the Peruvian border in the south, and from far out on the Pacific Ocean. This is a much more complex volcanic peak than most all others of its type, showing many faces that offer a wide range of challenges to alpine climbers. The one that we climb, the Southwest Face, is moderately steep and pleasantly varied, including slopes from 25 to 40 degrees, a short gully climb, and time on both névé and hard glacial ice. This mountain's great height combined with our route's requirement of diverse climbing techniques make this ascent a significant accomplishment.

After our climb of Cotopaxi we return to the hacienda for another refreshing night in the 9000-foot central valley. The next morning we drive up Chimborazo's flank to reach a small lodge at 13,200 feet, and a day later, a hut at 16,405 feet. Of our days spent in Ecuador prior to our summit climb of Chimborazo, seven are normally at 15,250 feet or above, and by this point in the itinerary, members of the group should be well acclimatised. That acclimatisation plus the additional conditioning that has occurred while on the other peaks allow us to make this ascent in a single day from the hut. Though it is a long climb, these factors have brought an extremely high rate of success to our climbing teams.



We climb by way of an intermediate level technical route. The thorough acclimatisation and further development of glacier climbing skills achieved during the first two-thirds of the program should have team members well prepared for the climbing challenges encountered here. Leaving the hut, we move immediately to the massive glacier on Chimborazo's Southwest

Face where we traverse moderately angled ice, then climb through a series of icefalls and up steep ice ramps. Climbing simultaneously on moderate ground and belaying up the steep pitches, our rope teams gradually ascend to a skyline ridge.

By the time we reach the 18,500-foot level, we will have surmounted most of the technical barriers on the mountain, and the remainder of our route ascends slopes of moderately angled snow. The summit crater area is vast, and from it on clear days the panorama encompassing Ecuador's many other glaciated peaks is superb. The views during the climb, the intricacy of the route, and the variety of technical challenges encountered here make this ascent of the world's highest equatorial summit an important achievement for alpine climbers.



After our ascent we return to Quito or most commonly, if we have an extra day because of good weather during all of our climbs, we travel east from the central valley down one of the major routes to the Amazon Basin. We stop in the mountain valley town of Baños where the lush vegetation is home to an unusual variety of orchid, butterfly, and hummingbird species. Based in a hotel across from a waterfall and natural hot baths, we normally have a full day and two nights to enjoy its swimming pool, steam room, and sauna. Group members also have the option of hiking with their guides to a gorge and series of waterfalls below Baños. Our visit to the Baños provides an exotic ending to an exciting and richly varied high altitude climbing trip.

### **Day to Day Itinerary**

- Day 01: Arrive Quito, lodging at Hotel
- Day 02: Otavalo Market, lodging at Hotel
- Day 03 : Pasochoa, lodging at Hotel
- Day 04: Guaga Pichincha, lodging at Hotel
- Day 05: Cayambe, lodging at Refuge
- Day 06: Cayambe, lodging at Refuge
- Day 07: Summit Cayambe, lodging at Termas de Papallacta
- Day 08: Rest day at La Ciénega Hosterly
- Day 09: Cotopaxi. Overnight at Jose Ribas hut
- Day 10: Cotopaxi summit, lodging at La Ciénega
- Day 11: La Ciénega, lodging at Estación Urbina
- Day 12: Estación Urbina. Transfer to Whympet refuge.
- Day 13: Chimborazo Summit
- Day 14: Extra day

Day 15: Quito  
Day 16: Depart from Quito

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### **Flight Information**

Flight arrangements should be made so that you arrive in Quito on the first scheduled start day of the trip, and you depart the day after the last scheduled day of the trip (ie Day 16 as indicated above).

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### **The level of experience required**

To climb these peaks you need to be physically fit, have strong mental stamina and be capable of strenuous exercise for several days' duration. Expedition members can expect to be exerting themselves for about six hours per day and be capable of carrying a 20 kg pack.

Climbing at altitude affects people differently, most climbers notice a lower performance rate than normal. Our climbing days are mostly short to accommodate this and vital rest days are usually welcomed! Our graduated acclimatisation program allows you to progressively consolidate your fitness.

This expedition is suitable for those who are relatively new to mountaineering or have had some previous experience. Climbing skills and techniques will be instructed by your guides during the expedition.

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### **The Expedition Fee**

**The cost of the expedition ex Quito, Ecuador is US\$3,540.** This is an inclusive cost and covers the following;

- Qualified and experienced mountain guides
- All expedition organisational requirements
- Airport transfers
- All land transport within Ecuador
- Hotel in Quito for days 1 – 4 and day 15 on the trip based on twin-share
- Lodging at the Haciendas on a shared basis during the expedition
- All trek and mountain food ex Quito, excluding dinners in Haciendas
- Group Equipment: ropes, tents, stoves etc and all supplies necessary to make a safe and strong bid for the summit(s)
- Climbing permits

The expedition fee does not include the following:

- Personal clothing and equipment
- Personal/ Trip Cancellation/ Medical Evacuation Insurance
- Dinners in Quito and when staying at Haciendas

- Extra nights in Quito
  - Personal expenses such as alcohol etc
  - Return flights to Quito, Ecuador
  - Excess equipment over the 20kg per person allowance
  - Any rescue costs
  - Government and airport taxes
  - Inoculations
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### Deposit

A non-refundable deposit of **US\$500** is payable to secure a place on the expedition and the balance of payment is due 90 days prior to your expedition start date.

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### Payments

All payments should be made by bank transfer to the following bank and account:

**Bank of New Zealand  
Offshore Branch  
1 Willis Street  
Wellington  
New Zealand**

for the account of **Adventure Consultants Limited**

Account #                   **1000-594771-0000**  
Account Type:           **US Dollars**  
Swift Address:           **BKNZ22**

We can accept your deposit and balance payment by credit card – **Visa, MasterCard** or **AMEX**.

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### Cancellation and Refund Policy

Once you have paid your deposit your trip is confirmed, subject to payment of the balance of fees owing 90 days prior to your trip commencement date. A climber may then cancel his/her participation on the following basis:

- Cancellations outside of 90 days will result in the loss of the trip deposit.
- For cancellations made within 89-60 days of the trip commencement date we reserve the right to retain 50% of the full fee.
- For cancellations within 59 days of the departure date a cancellation fee of 100% of the full fee applies.
- We strongly recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent.

## Visas

Generally entry Visas are not required for travellers staying less than three months in Ecuador but please check with your travel agent. (Climbing permits are a separate matter dealt with by the expedition agent).

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## Team Membership

The team will have a **minimum size of 4 members and 1 guide** and a **maximum size of 10 members and 2 guides**.

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## Food

During the expedition you will enjoy high quality 'western' food as well as popular local dishes. Please indicate any specific dietary requirements you may have on your application form.

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## Equipment List

Expedition members will be sent a list detailing all necessary individual clothing and personal equipment to be provided.

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## Medical Examination

Expedition members will be provided with a medical questionnaire and asked to visit their family physician and receive a full medical examination. This information will be sighted only by our medical adviser and treated with full confidentiality. Advice on immunisations will be provided at this time.

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## Documentation and Photographs

Expedition members will need to provide 3 passport photographs for various climbing and trekking permits and a copy of their passport bio-data page.

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## The advantages of climbing with us

Adventure Consultants is renowned for the quality of its service and strategy applied to high altitude expedition climbing. Our reputation is attributed to meticulous planning and

experienced logistics coordination. We have a philosophy of investing in every expedition to offer our climbers the best possible chance of success.

We employ strong and specialized Expedition leaders and support staff, who are some of the most pre-eminent in the industry. We pride ourselves on operating with small teams, the best back-up and support available. This includes nutritious and ample quantities of food, comfortable base camp facilities, reliable communications systems and the necessary medical back up.

Our Ecuador High Altitude Expeditions are a joint Adventure Consultants/American Alpine Institute trip. We used AAI's experienced and motivated staff for these trips, offering you the best possible price and high quality expedition.

Many of our expedition members come to us because they have seen us in action on a previous trip and decide to opt for our level of service and proven experience. Others return because they know we do our very best to make expeditions safe and successful.

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### How to join this expedition

If you would like to join the expedition please request an Expedition Application Form and forward along with your climbing résumé and the deposit for the trip. If you require more information please contact us at;

**Adventure Consultants Ltd.**  
PO Box 739, 58 McDougall St  
Wanaka, 9343  
New Zealand

Ph + 64 3 443 8711 Fax + 64 3 443 8733

Email: [info@adventure.co.nz](mailto:info@adventure.co.nz)

Web: [www.adventureconsultants.com](http://www.adventureconsultants.com)

Adventure Consultants is affiliated to the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association (NZMGA), New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and a corporate member of the American Alpine Club (AAC). Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.



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