



Avenue of the Volcanoes Trail

Weight limit: 95 kilos
Nearest airport: Quito, Ecuador
10 days/ 9 nights/ 8 days riding



This trail takes you through the heart of Ecuador's Avenue of the Volcanoes, 45 minutes south of the historic colonial city of Quito, the capital of Ecuador. You'll enjoy traditional hospitality with a touch of luxury at your host's beautiful hacienda. Catering for independent travelers as

well as larger groups, this trail, amid the majesty of the high Andes of Ecuador, was voted one of top horse treks in the world.

The Riding

Ecuador is a riders paradise with a dizzying variety of landscapes and scenery. The first few days of the trail are dedicated to acclimatizing to the altitude; you'll ride through farmland, thickly forested valleys and alpine terrain before reaching the rare cloud forest; an area of lush native, subtropical vegetation. As the trail continues you will ascend up to the highland plateaus of the Andes. The region is flanked by eight dizzyingly-high snow-mantled mountains, known as the Avenue of Volcanoes and the valleys are rich with a landscape of dense forest and tiny fields plastering impossibly steep slopes. Dotted around is a mix of deeply traditional indigenous and colonial settlements. This is supreme riding country, with trails leading to craters harbouring turquoise volcanic lakes, with views of one the biggest peaks; Cotopaxi. The pace is tailored to the needs of the group although all riders will be at least intermediate level. For those who are happy to go faster there are opportunities for longer canters and gallops.



Level of riding and fitness

This trail is for intermediate riders confident at walk, trot and canter on varied and sometimes very steep terrain. There are also some long days in the saddle (7+ hours) so all participants will need to be riding fit and we advise riding regularly prior to coming on the trail. You will need to be able to mount and dismount independently, be capable in the saddle and ready for the long days at high altitude.

Guides & Groups sizes

You'll be guided by the host and owner of Hacienda Alegria: Gabriel Espinosa. A natural horseman he has been welcoming guests and guiding trails for decades.

The group size is between 2-12

Horses & Tack

The horses used at this destination are excellent, most have been bred on the farm from mixed Criollo (native South American), English Thoroughbred and Arabian stock, resulting in a near perfect combination of toughness, agility, calm temperament and mountain sense. Beginners and experienced riders alike have found them easy to ride, willing and good mannered.

A range of tack is used including North American style, English style, McClellan cavalry saddles, and traditional Ecuadorian "Chagra" style with its intricate leather-work and saddle horn.

Accommodation and Dining

You will stay in Hacienda La Alegria for the first two nights before heading out on the ride as well as your final night. Set in a 135-hectare organic dairy farm and ranch and nestled into a lush valley less than an hour from Ecuador's capital. The Hacienda's large rooms feature high ceilings, original hardwood floors, private bathrooms, Wifi and spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. While on the trail local haciendas and mountain hostels are used for dinner and overnight stays.

All meals are included and feature delicious, gourmet international and Ecuadorian foods. Wine and beer is also included.



Itinerary

Day 1

Depending on your time of arrival you can have a short ride at the hacienda before dinner. Meet your fellow riders and hosts over dinner and settle into your accommodation for the night.

Day 2

Ride in the arena and get acquainted with your horse and tack that you'll be using for the

Trail. Your first day of riding is around the neighboring haciendas of the west Andes. Today is designed to help you get acclimatised to the altitude, so you will experience your first ascent and descent and ride for around 4 hours. Afterwards you will have lunch in the hacienda, visit the milking barn, the aging cheese cave and enjoy the hot tub.

Day 3

Another day of riding close to home, with some free time to relax at the hacienda. The day is very flexible - you may wish to have a break from the saddle altogether today! Home cooked cuisine at the hacienda.

Day 4

After breakfast you set out on your first ride, crossing extensive pastures and eucalyptus forests and getting your first spectacular view of the "Avenue of Volcanoes". From here you can appreciate the green and fertile Machachi Valley and view the route you will be taking over the next few days, across the eastern mountain chain.

Ascend along Corazon volcano up to 4000 metres and then descend into the cloud forest. In this now endangered ecosystem you can observe a great biodiversity of plants and flowers, including giant guneras, orchids, and birds. In the afternoon you will ride to Hacienda Bomboli at a height of 3000 metres and relax by the fireplace enjoying the sunset and watching the lights of the villages near the coast while being served a hearty meal.

Accommodation: Hacienda Bomboli

Riding: 4 hours

Day 5

In the morning you will have the chance to walk through the hacienda's gardens to learn about the incredible variety of orchids and cloud forest plants.

You then set out riding uphill, admiring the forest and the hundreds of plants and flowers. You ride along an ancient road which was built in 1873 to connect Quito to the coast, and arrive back at Hacienda La Alegria in time for a late lunch. In the afternoon you can relax or enjoy the hot tub or fireplace.

Accommodation: Hacienda La Alegria

Riding hours: 6 hours

Day 6

You are first transferred by vehicle one hour south of the hacienda to start your four day journey into the southern Andes. You set out riding along an old Inca trail, along dirt paths and

roads which lead to Isinlivi, a picturesque village in the Southern highlands. Your adventure from here will take you through dramatic landscapes including steep ravines and narrow passages. In the distance you can glimpse the Eastern Mountain Chain over the valleys. You arrive at a lodge close to the village in time for dinner.

Accommodations: Lodge at Isinlivi

Riding hours: 5 hours

Day 7

After breakfast you set off south to the Quilotoa crater lake. Your trail heads west along a high mountain route where you will see a smattering of farms with dairy cattle or making cheese. As you head down into the canyon the land is very dry and the soil is composed of pumice from the eruption of Quilotoa volcano in 1280. In the afternoon you arrive at the summit of Quilotoa at 3800 metres and can view the breathtaking Quiltoa crater lake.

Accommodations: Quilotoa Hostel, beside the crater

Riding hours: 5 hours



Day 8

Today is a long journey in the saddle where you'll be riding to the village of Sigchos, known as the last home of the Inca general Ruminahui. After breakfast, you'll head north along the ridge of the Quilotoa Crater Lake, at this point the trail goes across the highest mountain heading north-west. Along the route you'll find some small dairy farms and a couple of artisanal cheese makers, and you'll stop for a short visit and cheese tasting. In the afternoon you'll arrive at Hacienda San Jose, a working dairy farm and guesthouse, in time for a good meal, Jacuzzi, sauna and a comfortable night. Our horses will have lush fields of fresh grass.

Accommodation: Hacienda San Jose

Riding hours: 7 hours

Day 9

Today's route is through a dramatic landscape, including steep ravines. Even though we can visualize where we are heading and it looks near, you'll be crossing several mountain chains to get there. This area is a combination of forest, rocky peaks and eroded land from past centuries. The last day of riding involves passing through several narrow paths originally used by the Incas. Finally you'll reach the end of the trail and make your way back to Hacienda La Alegria by car for dinner and overnight.

Accommodations: Hacienda La Alegria

Riding hours: 6 hours

Day 10

Enjoy a final breakfast before transferring back to the airport.



Flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please plan your flights to/from as follows:

Please book a flight which arrives between 8am-7pm on the first day

Your departure flight should leave after midday if possible

Return airport transfers cost £75 and the journey takes around 45 minutes.

What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your helmet in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please use the packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

- Shirt: Cotton or wool, long sleeved or turtleneck
- Sweater: Heavy wool or fleece sweater or vest
- Riding trousers
- Underwear: Light-weight (polypropylene) thermal underwear, top and bottom
- Headwear: bandana, and sunglasses.
- Jackets: Insulated or Gore-Tex mountain parka for rain and wind (important)
- Gloves
- Lightweight hiking boots or riding boots
- Sunglasses
- Sun-blocking lotions +30 and lip balm
- Torch
- Washcloth
- Camera extra batteries

Climate

Day temperatures can vary considerably in the mountains (18° C during the daytime, 0° C at night). Average temperatures will range between 12-18 C.

Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at the National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.



Travel documents

For entry requirements to Ecuador for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ecuador/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & Tipping

The official currency in Ecuador is US dollars (\$). This ride is fully inclusive so you do not need to bring any extra spending money. Tipping the trail guides is appreciated but by no means required.

Riding Declaration

"I am confident and in control at trot and canter out in the open and over uneven ground. I'm able to mount and dismount unaided and have a good level of current riding fitness. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others."

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms saddletravel.com

Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.

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