

## American Alpine Institute

– Program Itinerary –

Ecuador High Altitude Expedition  
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### Part One

#### **Day 1: Arrive Quito (9500 ft) – Start of Part 1**

*\*This is the first scheduled day of the program.* Arrive in Quito and meet your guide and other members of the expedition at Hotel Reina Isabel. The first day is designated for travel to Ecuador and becoming situated in country. For those that arrive early, we will provide you with your guide's room number and a variety of sight seeing options including a tour of the historic colonial sector of Quito and El Pancillo overlooking the city. We will spend the night at Hotel Reina Isabel.

#### **Day 2: Acclimatize - Otavalo Market**

After meeting the rest of your group for breakfast, we will drive north, crossing the line of the Equator on our way to the Otavalo market. We begin our acclimatization by exploring the market which is filled with indigenous crafts and food. For lunch, we will take a leisurely walk to Lago de San Pablo and dine on the lake shore across from the dormant volcano Imbabura (15,255ft). We will return to Hotel Reina Isabel for the evening.

#### **Day 3: Acclimatize – Cerro Pasochoa (13,776ft)**

Today we will go on our first acclimatization hike on Cerro Pasochoa. The Pasochoa forest has been protected since 1984 and exists as it did in pre-Columbian times free of non-native plants. Here we will hike among stands of pumamaqui, polyapis, podocarpus, and sandalwood trees. We will return to Hotel Reina Isabel for the evening.

#### **Day 4: Acclimatize – Gua Gua Pichincha (15,728 ft)**

We head north of Quito to the Pichincha Massif today for our final acclimatization Hike on Gua Gua Pichincha. This hike provides views of the central valley from high above Quito. In the afternoon, we travel to one of the oldest haciendas in Ecuador (built in 1580). Located on the lower slopes of Cayambe, it makes a great initial base for our climbs. Night at hacienda.

#### **Day 5: Travel to Cayambe Hut**

We make our way through the small village of Cayambe and have close look at the simple rural structures and architecture which typify a “modernized” village in the Andean foothills. Eventually, we reach the famous Cayambe hut (15,250 ft) with breathtaking views of the precipitous Hermosa Glacier (“beautiful glacier”). If the skies cooperate we'll enjoy alpenglow at sunset showing our route up the south and western flanks of Cayambe. Night at Cayambe Hut.

#### **Day 6: Skills practice on Cayambe**

We will spend the better portion of today reviewing skills to prepare for our summit attempt of Cayambe. The glacier adjacent to the hut provides an excellent classroom for reviewing or learning basic glacier travel skills, ice axe and crampon technique, and crevasse rescue. After spending the day on the ice, we return to the comfort of the hut and discuss our plan for summit day. Night in Cayambe Hut.

**Day 7: Climb Cayambe (18,993 ft)**

We start before dawn making use of the improved snow conditions on the mountain that occur because of the cooler temperatures at night. Our route takes us up varied terrain including a short section of 4th class belayed scrambling and climbing until we reach the glacier and configure ourselves for glacier travel. The snow and ice climbing on Cayambe is moderate, and the steepness remains at a comfortable 35 degrees. The summit bergschrund has always presented interesting route finding and an exciting finish to this classic Equatorial climb. Night at hacienda.

**Day 8: Travel to La Cienega**

We leave Cayambe and travel to Hacienda La Cienega in the central valley where we relax amongst the beautifully landscaped gardens located in the center of the hacienda. We review our climb of Cayambe and discuss the coming ascent of Cotopaxi. This will be a well-earned day of rest and most climbers will want to simply enjoy the pool and other amenities. Night at hacienda.

**Day 9: Travel to Cotopaxi National Park and Jose Ribas Hut**

Today we drive down the "Valley of Volcanoes" and turn east to Cotopaxi, eventually finding ourselves on a small altiplano beneath Cotopaxi National Park's towering summits: Ruminahui (15,602'), Sincholagua (16,360'), and Quilindana (16,134'). We are fairly likely to get good sightings of wild horses, llamas, and condors while driving up to 15,100 feet. 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. Night at Jose Ribas Hut.

**Day 10: Climb Cotopaxi (19,347 ft) - End of Part 1**

*\* This is the last scheduled day of Part 1.* On summit day we again leave well 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 arrives, we enjoy views of 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 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 move onto a steeper ice face up to about 55 degrees, 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 continue along easier slopes 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 directly below us. We drive back down to our hacienda in the central valley where we enjoy a celebratory meal together before those climbers who are just doing Part 1 meet a vehicle and driver for the return trip to Quito. Those continuing with Part 2 spend the night at the hacienda.

**Part Two****Day 11: Drive to a lodge on the flank of Chimborazo – Start of Part 2**

We travel further down the "Valley of Volcanoes" and then move up onto the western flanks of Chimborazo where we spend an evening in a lodge at 13,200 feet. It sits in picturesquely in grassy plains below Chimborazo and allows us to rest and enjoy views

of the altiplano surrounding Chimborazo and Carihuarirazo (also known as “Chimborazo’s Wife”). Night at lodge.

**Day 12: Meet Arrieros and Hike to Camp**

Our vehicle takes us to the north side of Chimborazo where we meet our arrieros and their horses at a very remote location at 13,700 feet. The arrieros load up our gear, and we hike with just day packs to 16,200 feet, the highest point to which the horses can safely travel on the steadily more rugged terrain. We then carry our gear to our camp at 16,500 feet. We should have great wildlife viewing on this hike including condors and vicuña.

**Day 13: Climb Chimborazo (20,702 ft)**

We have both days #13 and #14 for this climb so that we can be flexible with the weather. When we begin our climb, we’ll spend one-and-a-half hours on very low angle glacier before the terrain begins to steepen. We’ll alternate between climbing on névé and bare glacier ice as we move steadily higher up the massive glacier. We will belay three sections of 40 to 45-degree ice and then make our way to the north ridge which we will ascend directly to the summit.

**Day 14: Climb Chimborazo if poor weather dictates**

This day is a cushion day in our itinerary. We will climb on this day if we need to use day #13 to wait out inclement weather. If we climb on day #13, we will hike out this day and return to Quito.

**Day 15: Return to Quito – End of Part 2**

*\* This is the last scheduled day of the program.* Our final day in Ecuador. Free day in Quito if we climb on Day #13. If we climb on Day #14, hike out and return to Quito where we prepare for flights home the following day. This will be our last evening in Ecuador and we usually spend it recounting and celebrating our successes as well as discussing plans for future adventures. Last night at our hotel in Quito before flying home.

**Program Cost Inclusions and Exclusions**

**Inclusions:** Lodging in hotels, haciendas, huts, and tents on a shared basis (available on a private basis by special arrangement, subject to availability, and at added cost); meals while in the mountains; group cooking equipment; admissions to museums and national parks; group climbing equipment; transportation during trip.

**Exclusions:** Airfare; personal equipment; meals except while climbing; gratuities to guides; government and airport taxes; inoculations; personal insurance; excess baggage.