

SPECIAL INTEREST & HACIENDA TOURS

Following the Trails of Traditional Crafts and Modern Art in Ecuador

SI-01	<p>Modern Art and Crafts</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>13 days, all meals and accommodation; except dinner in Quito. (airfare Cuenca-Quito not included)</i></p> <p>Ecuador's wide variety of landscapes, its pre-Colombian cultural heritage and, most importantly, its assortment of people from different ethnic groups, make the country a fascinating treasure to be explored. Discover it, by following the trails of human beings' first artistic creations and contemporary expression of art and crafts.</p> <p>The earliest fragments of pottery found in Ecuador are 6900 years old. Throughout history, coastal, highland and Amazon cultures have come and gone, leaving their traces and telling their history through their crafts. Objects of both daily and sacred use continue to be made even today using traditional techniques. The varying shapes and designs are symbols of their evolving cultures and of their mystical and cosmic view of life.</p> <p>Our trip takes us first to the Northern highlands and the province of Imbabura. Then we drive Southward passing by green mountains, patchworked with corn fields, and the stark majestic snowcapped volcanoes that reach out to the crystal sky. We visit the Cotopaxi volcano and Quilotoa crater lake area and finally arrive in Cuenca; a beautiful colonial city known as a crafts and arts center, both traditional and modern. In Cuenca we will be welcomed into the homes and workshops of artisan families who are pleased to share their skills and experience with us. While in the countryside we will become acquainted with the shapes, designs and techniques of Indian traditions. In Quito and Cuenca we will have the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas and insight face to face with Ecuadorian artists as they show us their personal interpretation of traditional motifs in modern art. The towns we visit also give us the opportunity to relax, stroll through the cobbled streets of their colonial centers and visit some of the local museums. The pleasure of urban nightlife will add to our trip.</p>
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Following the Trails of Ancient Cultures through Ecuador

SI-02	<p>Archaeological Tour</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>13 days, all meals and accommodation; except dinner in Quito. (airfare Manta-Quito not included)</i></p> <p>On the Pacific coast, in the highlands and in the wilderness of the Amazon rainforest, traces of different cultures that developed, flourished and disappeared, can still be found. Discover these many wonders. Starting in Quito, with its charming colonial center and its interesting archaeological museum, then travel on the Avenue of the Volcanoes to Ecuador's largest archaeological Inca site, Ingapirca. This fortress built by the Incas, boasts a "tambo", a sun temple and storehouses. The last part of our trip takes us from Cuenca to Guayaquil, to explore the beautiful Pacific coastal region. Drive North to Puerto Cayo, a small fisher's village. In addition to the sandy beaches of Machalilla National Park, the area also offers the Agua Blanca ruins. Archaeologists working here to uncover the mysteries of the Machalilla culture will tell us about their work, including the small but very interesting museum in Salango, with its carefully chosen collection of artifacts from the area. From Manta fly back to Quito.</p>
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A trip designed to pamper and disconnect from the stresses of contemporary life

SI-03	<p>Hacienda and Spa Tour <i>5 days, all meals and accommodation; except in Quito</i></p> <p>This journey takes the traveller to the finest haciendas in Ecuador, transporting the visitor into another time while offering the highest quality comforts and luxury designed to forget the daily worries and liberate the stress caused by the accelerated pace of contemporary life.</p> <p>Accompanied by a specialized guide with in-depth knowledge of the visited areas, the tour begins with a 2-hour drive South from Quito to Cotopaxi National Park. After spending the morning in the park enjoying views of Mt. Cotopaxi (5897 m), the trip continues to San Agustin de Callo. Built on the site of an important "Inca Palace", this working farmhouse, luxuriously furnished, offers today's discerning traveler an unrivaled glimpse into Ecuador's rich and colorful past. The following day the journey continues to the Northern province of Imbabura, for two nights at Hacienda Zuleta. One of the world's "Top Ten Finds", this beautiful hacienda on a 4,000-acre working ranch in the Andes belongs to the family of former Ecuadorian President Galo Plaza Lasso. Fernando Polanco, the gracious host of this wonderful place, takes the visitor hiking to Condor Huasi, where Andean Condors are being reintroduced into the wild. You can also ride the high-quality horses that are bred at this hacienda.</p> <p>The last night of this amazing tour is spent at La Mirage Garden Hotel and Spa, the only Relais & Chateaux member in Ecuador. Here the luxury and pampering reach a climax: each room or suite is individually decorated, the service is impeccable, the cuisine extraordinary, and the hotel is equipped with a spa which rivals any first-class spa in the world.</p>
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SI-08	<p>Family Holidays</p> <p>Ecuador, being a small, compact country with a diversity of landscapes as well as cultural settings, is an ideal country for family travel. There are activities for all interests and age groups, such as travel to the Galapagos, rafting, horseback riding, biking, relaxing on the beach, among many other activities.</p> <p>If you are interested in a family holiday in Ecuador, please contact us, stating your interests, and we will design a tour to suit your wishes.</p>
SI-09	<p>Educational Tours</p> <p>As mentioned above, Ecuador is a small country with many different landscapes and fields of interest. Therefore, it is an ideal location for educational tours. We have had many years of experience designing trips for student groups interested in a variety of subjects, such as nature, indigenous cultures, pre-columbian and colonial art, etc.</p> <p>Please contact us for more information. We will gladly tailor an educational tour for your specific needs and fields of interest.</p>