|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **City / Site** | **Visitor Point** | **Description of the Visitor Point** |
| 1 | **Quito** | **Transfer IN** | Upon your arrival in `Mariscal Sucre` International Airport of Quito, is located in Tababela valley, about 18 kilometers (11 miles) east of Quito city; the capital of Ecuador, situated in a dramatic mountain setting at 2,850 meters above sea level / 9,350 feet above sea level. You will be welcomed by our guide and driven to your hotel. |
| 2 | **Quito** | **Transfer OUT** | Concluding this amazing experience on mainland Ecuador, you will be driven to Quito’s new international airport for your return flight home or onward in South America. Enjoy your last look back at the “crown jewel of the Andes,” a unique paradise with inspiring natural wonders. |
| 3 | **Quito** | **City Tour (Old Town)** | The visit to the historic center begins with the Basilica del Voto Nacional, one of the largest churches in Ecuador and one of the most important works of Ecuadorian neo-gothic architecture. While the outside of the building stands out for its stone carvings that represent plants and animals of the country, the inside consists of 24 chapels. Beneath the structure are crypts in which lie the remains of several former presidents of the Republic, and on top of the 100-meter-tall church is a beautiful gazebo that also serves as a small cafe.  We will continue on to the always vibrant Plaza Grande (“Independence Square”), which is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building and the Archbishop’s Palace. We will then visit the church of the “Compañia de Jesus” to find its impressive interior inlaid in gold.  Your tour of historic Quito will end with a birds-eye view of the city from the panoramic “Virgin of Quito” monument atop El Panecillo Hill, which overlooks the capital. This will give us a chance to appreciate Quito from above, and – if the weather permits – to catch a view of the spectacular “Volcano Avenue,” two parallel mountain ranges containing eight of the country’s ten highest peaks. |
| 4 | **Quito** | **Middle of the World** | After picking you up from your hotel in **Quito**, we will drive north out of Quito to the **Mitad Del Mundo** (“Middle of the World”) monument, located at latitude 0º 0’ 0.” This will provide you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to straddle the two hemispheres – a great photo op..!!  At this site, you’ll also have a chance to view the Mitad del Mundo (“Middle of the World”) monument, which was built to commemorate the French scientists who in the 1830s made history by determining the shape of the planet thanks to their studies at this location.  And just a few hundred meters away, you can visit the Intiñan Solar Museum, an amusing museum that provides outdoor exhibits of astronomical geography, a solar clock and explanations about the importance of Ecuador’s geographical location. To many people, what makes Intiñan even more interesting than the “official” equatorial monument is that you'll have a chance to participate in several experiments, such as watching water go down a drain in a different direction when placed only inches away from either side of the equator, or balancing an egg on a nail, or using an ancient sun dial, and more.  After the visit, we will drive you back to your hotel in Quito. |
| 5 | **Quito** | **Middle of the World + Pululahua** | After picking you up from your hotel in **Quito**, we will drive north out of Quito to the **Mitad Del Mundo (“Middle of the World”) Monument**, located at latitude 0º 0’ 0.” This will provide you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to straddle the two hemispheres – a great photo op..!!  At this site, you’ll also have a chance to view the Mitad del Mundo (“Middle of the World”) monument, which was built to commemorate the French scientists who in the 1830s made history by determining the shape of the planet thanks to their studies at this location.  And just a few hundred meters away, you can visit the Intiñan Solar Museum, an amusing museum that provides outdoor exhibits of astronomical geography, a solar clock and explanations about the importance of Ecuador’s geographical location. To many people, what makes Intiñan even more interesting than the “official” equatorial monument is that you'll have a chance to participate in several experiments, such as watching water go down a drain in a different direction when placed only inches away from either side of the equator, or balancing an egg on a nail, or using an ancient sun dial, and more.  Afterwards, we will drive to the nearby **Pululahua Geo-botanical Reserve**, which is situated in the crater of an extinct volcano of the same name. People make a living out of farming the fertile land within the crater, where you’ll be able to learn a little about their lives as well as have an opportunity to admire the beauty of the plant life and the numerous hummingbirds and butterflies that inhabit this strange, otherworldly place. Later, in the afternoon, you will return to Quito to spend another restful night at your hotel. |
| 6 | **Quito** | **City Tour (Old Town) + Middle of the World** | On this one-day tour, we will visit the historic district of the Ecuadorian capital, enjoying this urban jewel and its artistic and architectural treasures. One of the largest and best preserved colonial centers in South America, Quito’s “Old Town” area was declared the first “World Heritage Site” by UNESCO, in 1978.  The visit to the historic center begins with the Basilica del Voto Nacional, one of the largest churches in Ecuador and one of the most important works of Ecuadorian neo-gothic architecture. While the outside of the building stands out for its stone carvings that represent plants and animals of the country, the inside consists of 24 chapels. Beneath the structure are crypts in which lie the remains of several former presidents of the Republic, and on top of the 100-meter-tall church is a beautiful gazebo that also serves as a small cafe.  We will continue on to the always vibrant Plaza Grande (“Independence Square”), which is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building and the Archbishop’s Palace. We will then visit the church of the “Compañia de Jesus” to find its impressive interior inlaid in gold.  Your tour of historic Quito will end with a birds-eye view of the city from the panoramic “Virgin of Quito” monument atop El Panecillo Hill, which overlooks the capital. This will give us a chance to appreciate Quito from above, and – if the weather permits – to catch a view of the spectacular “Volcano Avenue,” two parallel mountain ranges containing eight of the country’s ten highest peaks.  From here, we will continue our journey 15 miles north of Quito to the Mitad del Mundo (“Middle of the World”), the monument on equator that was built to commemorate the French scientists who in the 1830s made history by determining the shape of the planet thanks to their studies at this location.  Next to the monument is “Middle of the World City,” a village built in a colonial style – with a main square, a church, a post office, a bullring, restaurants and many souvenir and crafts shops.  The highlight is the equatorial line running along latitude of 0° 0’ 0.” Here, you will be able to stand with one foot in each of the earth’s hemispheres – a great photo op!  We will also visit the Intiñan Solar Museum, where you will have the opportunity to perform various unusual activities like balancing an egg on a nail, losing weight in a second, or straddling the equatorial line that separates the two hemispheres.  After the visit, we will drive you back to your hotel. |
| 7 | **Quito** | **Wine & Roses** | Discover exquisite aromas and a tremendous variety of colors on one of the most exclusive tours for discerning people who love nature and fine wine. Owing to the quality and variety of its roses, Ecuador is a major exporter of these fragrant and colorful flowers. And precisely because of the attractiveness of these roses, many **rose nurseries** have also become involved tourism activities, showing off the more than 300 varieties of roses grown here – some with stems extending more than six feet! On this tour, you will have the opportunity to visit one of these rose-growing companies in the Ecuadorian Andes. During this excursion, you can arrange your own bouquet, possibly finding yourself in the middle of a field filled with these colorful flowers or posing next to ones taller than you.  Continuing this day of romantic activities, you will visit the most important vineyard in the area to see for yourself how wine is made. To cap this off, you will be able to sample those delicious **equatorial wines and homemade cheese**. |
| 8 | **Otavalo** | **Otavalo market** | In the morning we will begin this trip from Quito, heading north along the Pan-American Highway and making a brief stop in the town of Miralago for a superb view of Lake San Pablo. During this stop, you will also have a chance to taste delicious Bizcochos, a type of cookie or bread baked in a clay oven and covered with local cheese or caramel sauce.  From there we will head to the town of Otavalo, home to Ecuador's largest indigenous market and one of the best known in all of Latin America. The market sets up every day, allowing you to spend a few hours wandering through its bustling handicrafts market, in addition to its food markets.  Later, it will be up to you if you'd like to go for a short hike around beautiful Cuicocha Lake or do a bit more Otavalo shopping and people watching.  We can also visit a family of weavers who not only have amazing wares but will actually demonstrate how they weave on their traditional back-strap looms and how they make striking colors from local plants. Around the corner from there lives a family of musicians, where you’ll get a feel for Andean music and watch as perfectly tuned Andean flutes are crafted in minutes. |
| 9 | **Otavalo** | **Tren de la Libertad** | After a delicious breakfast at your hotel in Otavalo, you will be driven to the town’s train station to begin today’s journey to the Salinas area. The route of the locomotive (“**The Liberty Train**”), which was restored in just the last several months, allows travelers to visit places near Otavalo to learn about the region’s customs, history, crafts and textiles. The train will take you through imposing mountain landscapes to reach the **Afro-Ecuadorian town of Salinas**. There, travelers will be welcomed with a cultural presentation by a local traditional dance group. After touring the city and learning about its peoples’ customs, you will return to Quito in a private vehicle. |
| 10 | **Otavalo** | **Rose Farm** | Owing to the quality and variety of its roses, Ecuador is a major exporter of these fragrant and colorful flowers. Precisely because of the attractiveness of these flowers, many **rose nurseries** have also become involved tourism activities, showing off the more than 300 varieties of roses grown here – some with stems extending more than six feet! On this tour, you will have the opportunity to visit one of the rose-growing companies in the Ecuadorian Andes. During this excursion, you can arrange your own bouquet of roses, possibly finding yourself in the middle of a field filled with these colorful flowers or posing next to ones taller than you. |
| 11 | **Cotopaxi National Park** | **Cotopaxi National Park** | Early in the morning, we will head out for **Cotopaxi National Park** – home to **Cotopaxi Volcano**, one of the largest active volcanoes in the world (with its almost perfect conical shape, this post-card-perfect peak is also considered one of the most beautiful in the world). Once reaching the park, we will first visit the **Museum of Natural Sciences**, and then go on a 30 minute to 1-hour hike. At an altitude of 3,800 meters, we will explore the Limpiopungo Lake area, with the imposing Cotopaxi Volcano as our backdrop. Alternatively, we can visit the El Salitre pre-Inca ruins in the lower part of the reserve. In the afternoon, we will travel back to Quito. |
| 12 | **Cotopaxi National Park** | **Horseback Riding Cotopaxi** | Leaving Quito early to head out by train to **Cotopaxi National Park**, we will visit the world’s highest active volcano and explore this area of the Andes “cowboy style.” This is a great place for a horseback ride across the lunar landscape of the paramo highland altitudes while dressed in the ponchos and chaps of the original Andean *chagras* (cowboys). All of this takes place with a spectacular backdrop of glaciated cones and rocky buttresses framing the scene. Though there are many other activities to choose from here — from mountain biking and hiking to zip-lining — horseback riding is certainly one of the most popular. At the end of this tour, we can visit a **hacienda** that isone of our favorites, perfect for a cocktail after a full day of adventure. The haciendas on this “Andean Cowhand Tour of Cotopaxi” are magical spots – some possessing original Inca walls, colonial courtyards and llamas that will eat right out of your hand. |
| 13 | **Antisana Ecological Reserve** | **Antisana Reserve** | This is a spectacular day-trip outside of Quito to the **Antisana Volcano**. Ecuador’s fourth highest, it is covered with glaciers and snow, and situated within the Antisana Ecological Reserve. After about an hour’s drive southeast of Quito, the climb up the Antisana begins. Here you will find dramatic views of a massive glacial moraine that dates back some 11,000 years, as well as spectacular scenery formed by jagged peaks and the vast sweep of paramo grasslands between the tree line and snowline. The first stop is for an overview of the impressive view of a hardened lava flow at Antisana. From there we will admire an incredibly huge wall of cliffs along a narrow canyon. As condors breed here, they can be seen fairly regularly in this area, usually soaring up near the highest peaks a great distance away. Up in the paramo highlands (at an altitude of around 12,000 feet) we will make several stops to walk on level ground and observe the small but beautiful flowers that hug the ground among the lichens and paramo straw. These eye-catching plants include orchids, yellow composites, gentians, red Indian paintbrushes and chuquiraguas (also known as the “Flower of the Andes”). Around the many highland lakes and ponds in the reserve, you can observe moraine glaciers and an abundance of birds of a host of species, such as the highly endangered Black-faced Ibis, the Cinereous conebills, the Andean Teal, Andean Lapwings, many Carunculated Caracaras, Black-wing doves and the Siskin. Some fisherman are allowed to fish for trout in a few of the area’s mountain lakes, which also supply a portion of Quito’s water. After lunch, we will drive back to the capital city amid these breathtaking settings. |
| 14 | **Mindo** | **Mindo Cloud Forest** | At the break of dawn, we will head out from Quito for our trip to the famous Mindo cloud forest area, to explore the amazing mega-diversity of the plant and animal life there. Located only an two-hours from Quito, toward the Pacific coast, you'll discover this mysterious and magical environment where the clouds meet and trees.  We will visit a private protected reserve noted for its incredible biodiversity, and observe many hummingbirds and other colorful birds that inhabit the zone.  We will continue our tour to the village of Mindo itself, where we will visit a butterfly farm and also have a chance to obverse orchids and hummingbirds feeders.  At lunch, you can enjoy the many culinary delights of this region.  In the afternoon, we will walk for about an hour in the “waterfalls sanctuary,” taking an optional ride on an aerial tramway.  At the end of the afternoon, we will drive you back to you to your hotel in Quito. |
| 15 | **Mindo** | **Mindo Cloud Forest + Chocolate farm** | Just two hours northwest of Quito, you can slip away into the **Mindo cloud forest**, a wonderful escape into a land of tropical vegetation, wildlife and serenity. With over 350 species of birds, this zone is perfect for birdwatching. We will visit a private protected reserve, noted for its waterfalls and it incredible biodiversity, to observe the colorful species of fowl that inhabit the area. For lunch we will enjoy the culinary delights of this region before visiting the local butterfly farm, where you can witness the birth of one from a cocoon and later stop at hummingbird feeders to enjoy the amazingly rapid flying of this tiny bird species.    In the afternoon, we will go on a visit a guided tour of an **organic cacao farm** to witness the “bean to bar” process of making mouthwatering Ecuadorian chocolate. You will observe the first critical processes of fermenting and drying of the cocoa beans, which are then followed by the drying and roasting of small batches of the beans there at the El Quetzal hacienda; this is when they get their chocolaty flavor. A thin husk must be cracked and winnowed from each bean in order to isolate the bean’s meaty part, known as “cocoa nibs.” Over the course of many hours, the nutty earthy nibs are refined into a smooth molten chocolate. This chocolate is then molded and finally wrapped by hand.  At the end of the afternoon, we will drive you back to your hotel. |
| 16 | **Papallacta** | **Papallacta Hot Springs** | Due to the tectonic and volcanic origins of the mountainous Andes, hot springs are common here. Because these waters have various medicinal and healing properties, resorts and spas has been developed that welcome travelers who wish to undergo hydrotherapy treatments during their trips to Latin America.  In Ecuador, the town of Papallacta is one of these sites that possess mineral waters containing sulfates, sodium, calcium, chloride and magnesium – which give the water characteristics that are anti-allergic, de-inflammatory, diuretic, anti-rheumatic and sedative, and are even said to improve bowel movement.  Going on this journey, we will meet you in the morning at your hotel in Quito, and then leave for eastern Ecuador via an inter-oceanic route that links the Atlantic to the Pacific.  Once we reach Papallacta, you can soak, swim, play and relax in the medicinal hot springs in this exceedingly natural environment. If the sky is clear, you will have a spectacular view of the Antisana Volcano looming above your pool.  Depending on the season, the average outside temperature ranges from 50° to 57°F (10° to 14°C); however, the water temperature can reach a relaxing 104°F (40°C).  During your visit to the hot springs resort, if you wish, you can enjoy addition optional activities (see below), including the massage of your choice at the spa, for an additional cost.  In the afternoon, we will return to Quito.  Optional activities (extra):  **Option 1: Birdwatching**  Near the paramo grasslands and hot springs of Papallacta is Guango Lodge, a paradise for nature photographers and hummingbird lovers. At the lodge, it’s not uncommon to observe 14 species of hummingbirds within just an hour.  **Option 2: “Island Path” Hiking**  On the “Island Path,” you can trek along a mile-long trail of primary forest and grasslands that follows part of the Loreto-Papallacta River. During this one-hour hike, you can discover many different varieties of orchids and several waterfalls.  **Option 3: “Chorrera Path” Trekking**  On this 2-to-3-hour trek, you will find many of the dramatic waterfalls formed by the Peine Creek flowing down into the scenic Cayambe-Coca Ecological Reserve.  **Option 4: Papallacta Massages**  In a private and exclusive environment at the Termas de Papallacta Resort & Spa, you can enjoy a range of health and beauty treatments. These include hydro-massage baths, body treatments with medicinal Andean mud, pressure massages, aromatherapy and therapeutic massages, face and body treatments, and more! |
| 17 | **Quilotoa** | **Quilotoa Lagoon** | Today we will go on a car trip through the **western Andes mountain range**, one of the most awe-inspiring landscapes of Ecuador. You will drive to the small colorful town of **Zumbuahua**, though the home to only 40 families. From here you will continue another ten kilometers to **Quilotoa**, the site of a shimmering blue and green volcano lake, considered one of the most attractive bodies of water in the Ecuadorian Andes. From the crater you should be able to see a number of snowcapped volcanoes in the distance. You will have a chance hike down to the lake’s shore (with the round-trip walking time around an hour and a half).  Later we will drive southwards, and by late afternoon reach the **XXXXX hotel / inn** near the town of **Riobamba** (the third largest city in Ecuador and is known locally as the "Sultan of the Andes"), where you will spend the night. |
| 18 | **Cotopaxi** | **Pujili Market** | The **Pujili Market** takes place every Sunday, as indigenous residents from surrounding villages and towns gather to sell an astounding variety of traditional wares and crafts to support their families. The variety of goods here is often more beautiful and carefully crafted than those found in more easy-to-reach places where there is less of an emphasis on quality and artistry due to the rapid turnover of goods. |
| 19 | **Cotopaxi** | **Saquisili Market** shotguns | **Saquisili market** is Ecuador’s biggest and most authentic. Actually held in in eight main plazas, everything from fruits and vegetables to animals and handicrafts is sold. Each Thursday, the vibrant colors of mandarin oranges, tomatoes and avocados are complemented by the wild screaming of pigs, which are in turn accompanied by llamas, sheep and cattle in another nearby plaza. In other fascinating stands you will find vendors selling maguey ropes, reed mats and various herbal remedies. It’s best to arrive from early to mid-morning – and even earlier for the animal market. Also, make sure to bargain hard, as the haggling can get intense. And be prepared to find yourself captivated by the local indigenous attire all around, which consists of small black hats and red poncho garments. |
| 20 | **Riobamba** | **Chimborazo Reserve** | In the center of **Chimborazo Reserve** is situated the majestic **Chimborazo Volcano**, ascending to an altitude of 6,310 meters (the highest point in the Ecuadorians Andes). Located near the city of Riobamba, this reserve is rich in plant and animal life, which means that you shouldn’t be surprised to see rabbits running freely, the species of hummingbird known as “Chimborazo’s star” or even the occasional llama or alpacas. Similarly, you can observe several species of endemic plants, including Rosemary plants, blueberries, chuquirahuas, sigses and pumamaquis. We will hike around the reserve to relish the scenery and to take plenty of shots of the breathtaking landscape. |
| 21 | **Baños** | **Baños Waterfalls Route** | This morning, after breakfast we will continue our journey along the spectacular “**Avenue of the Volcanoes**” – a stretch that contains eight of Ecuador’s 10 highest volcanoes. Today’s destination is **Baños**, an lively town nestled in a valley where stunning waterfalls and natural hot springs are complemented by the mighty and very active Tungurahua Volcano (5,016 meters). The surrounding countryside is inhabited by the Salasaca indigenous community, who live mainly from the sales of their beautiful handmade weavings and handicrafts. Baños, with its pleasant sub-tropical climate and wonderful setting (at an altitude of 1,800 meters), is famous for its thermal spring water baths. There are also a multitude of outdoor activities available in and around the town – everything from mountain biking and ziplining to visiting waterfalls or safely observing the active Tungurahua Volcano from a variety of viewpoints. |
| 22 | **Riobamba** | **Devil’s Nose Route** | After breakfast, we will drive for 11/2-2 hours to the train station in the town of Alausi, where your breathtaking **locomotive adventure** begins. Though built in 1902, this line is still considered a technical masterpiece since it’s the steepest railway line in the world. On board an historic electro-diesel powered locomotive, you will enjoy unbelievable views of valleys, pastures and picturesque towns along the way. At the most spectacular section of the track, the train zigzags down a 600-meter vertical cliff known as the “**Devil’s Nose**.” After an unforgettable morning, we will continue our journey to the city of Cuenca by car. |
| 23 | **Riobamba** | **Ingapirca** | On the way, we will stop at the **Inca ruins of Ingapirca** (Kichwa for “Stonewalls of the Inca”). These are the most important and best preserved Inca ruins in Ecuador. Here you will be able to wander around the site and visit the small, informative museum. We will then travel on to Cuenca, a beautiful colonial city where you will find imposing churches, a host of arts and crafts shops, and a flower market. Cuenca was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. |
| 24 | **Cuenca** | **Transfer IN** | This afternoon we will reach **Cuenca** – Ecuador’s the third largest city (after Guayaquil and Quito), and considered by many as the artistic and cultural center of the country. In this beautiful colonial city, you will find imposing churches, a host of arts and crafts shops, and a flower market. Cuenca was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. |
| 25 | **Cuenca** | **City Tour** | After breakfast, we will begin a tour that explores the **colonial center of Cuenca**. The third largest city in Ecuador (after Guayaquil and Quito), Cuenca is considered by many as the artistic and cultural center of the country. This visit to Cuenca’s historic district will give you a chance to see its beautiful colonial and republican architecture, as well as its sacred art museums and markets, particularly the flower market. Cuenca is a good place to purchase another famous Ecuadorian souvenir: the “Panama” hat (which actually originated here in Ecuador); there are several government-approved franchise shops here where these hats are sold at a fair price. Cuenca is also a good place to buy ceramics, embroidery, leather goods and baskets. |
| 26 | **Cuenca** | **Craft-Making Villages** | If you’re interested in finding out more about the **arts and crafts created in villages surrounding Cuenca**, then this tour is ideal. In San Bartolomé, our first stop, craftsmen have been creating exquisite **custom-made guitars** for generations. When visiting Chordeleg (from “chorro de oro,” meaning waterfall of gold), you’ll learn about the production of fine **filigree jewelry** as well as handmade ceramic pottery.  While in Gualaceo, you’ll have the opportunity to wander through local **fruit and vegetable markets** brimming with fresh produce, as well as learn about (and taste!) delicious fruit grown only in Ecuador.  Next is a visit to Bulcay, where we will stop at the home of a family to observe **Ikat weaving**, an ancient tie-dye process that dates back to pre-Columbian cultures. The family employs this process to make shawls and ponchos on antique looms and using locally extracted natural dyes.  Another highlight of this trip is a visit to Ecuagenera, the most important **orchid growing laboratory** in Ecuador. Take the time to marvel at hundreds of exotic species — from the exquisitely tiny to the outrageously colorful — as you tour the facilities and learn about the propagation and preservation of these dazzling plants.  This morning tour will conclude with a leisurely lunch at a local restaurant. |
| 27 | **Cuenca** | **El Cajas National Park** | After breakfast, we will drive to **Cajas National Park**, located 15 kilometers west of Cuenca (only 30 minutes). In the park are about 200 lakes scattered about at altitudes of between 3,150 and 4,450 meters. These lakes are connected by streams and small rivers, whose crystal-clear waters flow down into the Pacific Ocean. Our Cajas National Park hiking tour will begin with an easy 1-hour walk in the lower cloud forest. In this section, birds are particularly abundant. This trek will be followed by a moderate 3-hour hike around a glacier lake (though we will cater to your particular interests and level of fitness). This hike will take you through tundra vegetation and a Polylepis forest that almost feels like a Lord of the Rings setting.  The tour will conclude with a delicious lunch at a local restaurant, where you will have a chance to taste locally sourced trout as well as other delicacies. From there we will head out by van to a delight in a panoramic view of Cajas National Park before returning to Cuenca. |
| 28 | **Cuenca** | **Transfer OUT** | Concluding your stay in historic Cuenca, you will be driven to the local airport for your flight to Xxxxxxxxxxx. |
| 29 | **Guayaquil** | **Transfer IN** | This afternoon we will reach **Guayaquil** – Ecuador’s largest and the most populous city, as well as the nation's main port. Known as the “Pearl of the Pacific,” this often overlooked and underestimated urban environment holds a lot in store. |
| 30 | **Guayaquil** | **City Tour** | This tour starts with **Parque Seminario**, perhaps the world’s only downtown park where you can find numbers of exotic iguanas – some over a meter in length. Passing the neoclassical **Town Hall** and the **Moorish Clock Tower**, we will reach the **Simon Bolivar Malecon**, a two-mile-long and quite upscale waterfront along the Guayas River. From there, we will walk through **the historic Las Peñas district**, at the foot of the **Santa Ana Hill**. We will also visit the ornate **cemetery**, with its impressive mausoleums and tombs created from Carrara marble by Italian artists during the city’s “cocoa boom” in the early 20th century. |
| 31 | **Guayaquil** | **Parque Histórico** | At **Guayaquil’s Parque Histórico (“History Park”)** you will learn a lot about nature and culture of Ecuador’s coastal region. On its beautifully landscaped boardwalks, you can stroll through an animal park in the middle of a mangrove on the edge of the Daule River. You will see endangered species such as tapirs, as well as spider monkeys, crocodiles, sloths, parrots and many more. In the cultural section of the park, you will see original city homes that date back to the days of the “cocoa boom,” in the early 20th century. Finally, you can enjoy a wonderful panoramic view of the tropical metropolis from **Cerro Paraíso (“Paradise Hill”)**, located in the Bellavista neighborhood. |
| 32 | **Guayaquil** | **Churutes Reserve** | Only 50 km southeast of Guayaquil, you will find the **Manglares Churute Nature Reserve**, one of the finest and most diverse protected areas in the tropical lowlands of Ecuador …definitely a *must* for nature lovers. In the morning we will take a scenic boat ride through the best preserved mangrove forests of the Ecuador’s Pacific coast. During the trip, you will see a variety of bird species, including egrets, herons, ibises, cormorants, pelicans, roseate spoonbills, kingfishers and many more. At low tide, you can observe how the locals collect Red mangrove crabs.  Afterwards you can go on a short hike through the **tropical dry forest** of the nature reserve, where you will have a good chance of spotting howler monkeys.  A typical lunch is included; though before returning to Guayaquil, you might want to visit a **small cocoa farm** on which you can learn a lot about growing and marketing Ecuadorian cocoa beans – the source of delicious Ecuadorian chocolate. |
| 33 | **Guayaquil** | **Banana plantation** | Today we will head to a **banana plantation** where 275 acres of the fruit are grown under contract with the Dole corporation to produce 270,000 crates of bananas annually for export to the US and Europe. This farm has been awarded the ISO 14000 Certificate for its environmental practices, including the recycling of waste water to prevent contamination.  Adjoining the plantation is a 3,000-acre **cattle farm** that is typical of the Ecuadorian coastal plain. Situated only 10m above sea level, and possessing a herd of 1,500 cattle and buffaloes, the farm is worked by cowboys in the traditional way. The extensive use of the land allows ranching to coexist with the abundant wildlife, which includes many types of birds, ostrich, sloths, iguanas, squirrels, turtles and snakes. There are also many natural flowering trees, which — with their pink, orange, yellow and blue blooms — make for a stunning setting. The elegant farm house, built in 1980, serves not only as the weekend home of the owner and his family, but also for lunch for guests. Its balcony affords a lovely view over the fields. |
| 34 | **Guayaquil** | **Hacienda “El Castillo” Caca o Farm** | **Hacienda El Castillo (“the Castle”)** is a place close of Guayaquil that is good for participating in agro-tourism. We will go there to see how the land is selected for growing cacao, plantains, mangos and other foods; in addition, you will see how people plant, harvest and manage those products until they are exported. Hacienda El Castillo also has a chocolate factory that we can visit …and sample the products! Hacienda El Castillo covers 300 hectares, of which 60 grow cacao and 30 for mango and other crops, and the rest forest. A specialized guide will welcome you by offering you a typical cacao drink accompanied by patacones (fried plantain) and cuajada (milk curd). After enjoying those treats, we will begin the tour of the cacao plantation, seeing how the cacao is transformed from the bean to the chocolate bar ready for export. Later in the afternoon we will return to Guayaquil for the night. |
| 35 | **Guayaquil** | **Cerro Blanco** | **Cerro Blanco (or “White Hill”) Protected Forest** is located at 14 km to the east of the city of Guayaquil, and is noted for being one of the last remaining Ecuadorian dry forests. Covering 6,000 hectares of wild natural diversity, this area is a birdwatcher’s paradise. In fact, in 1998 Birdlife International declared this forest an “important area for birds” owing to 219 species of birds, 54 species of mammals, and more than 900 plant species – mostly native ones. The forest is managed by the Foundation Pro-Bosque. Activities that can be practiced there include walks along natural trails, either with or without a guide.  The trails are as follows:   * Lana de Ceibo Trail – Duration: 21/2 hours // Distance: 1,177 m * Higueron Trail – Duration: 31/2 hours // Distance: 3km * Mono Aullador Trail – Duration: 5 hours // Distance: 5 km |
| 36 | **Guayaquil** | **Salinas Beach** | Considered by many visitors as the best tourist beach on Ecuador’s Pacific coastline, **Salinas Beach** borders a cool dark bay while backed by dozens of gleaming high rise apartments that look down on the water and sand. Often dubbed the “Miami of Ecuador,” the beach is the playground of wealthier Ecuadorians and foreigner residents who visit the main strip’s colorful shops, restaurants, bars and discos. |
| 37 | **Guayaquil** | **Salinas Beach + Whale Watching** | In the morning we will travel to the **seaside resort of Salinas**. This journey through the arid savannah of the Santa Elena Peninsula will take about two hours.  Upon our arrival, we will board an authorized boat for some humpback **whale watching**, as these enormous come to Ecuador every year from the Antarctica to mate and give birth to their offspring – a breathtaking natural phenomenon. Finally, we will visit a small private whale museum. After lunch (included), we will return to Guayaquil in the afternoon. |
| 38 | **Guayaquil** | **Shopping Tour** | Our shopping tour of Guayaquil will include a trip to its famous Malecon boardwalk, the most popular place for doing a wider range of shopping, including shopping for souvenirs. Another handicrafts option is a visit  the Mercado Artsanal or the Artesanias del Ecuador, without ruling out the largest shopping center in the country and most modern in Latin America: Mall del Sol. |
| 39 | **Guayaquil** | **Transfer OUT** | Concluding your stay in the hustling and bustling big-city environment of Guayaquil, you will be driven to the local airport for your flight to Xxxxxxxxxxx. |