



QUILOTOA LOOP HOSTED BY AMANDA KWONG

Hacienda La Alegria is located south of Quito in the verdant valley of Machachi. As it is surrounded by eleven volcanoes, this region is referred to as "The Volcano Avenue".

Uniquely, the only form of transportation during your trip will be your horse. They will be your partner throughout this adventure. We will thoroughly explore and experience the grandeur of the Andes.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Hacienda La Alegria | Insilivi | Sigchos | Quilotoa

INCLUDES:

- four days quality horseback riding in the Ecuadorian Andes with all the necessary equipment, including wool ponchos, rain ponchos, chaps, horse bag, and helmets
- bilingual guide (Spanish/English)
- support vehicle on part of the ride
- all meals feature gourmet international and Ecuadorian food, wine and beer
- lunch boxes on most of the rides.
- your choice of wool protected saddles. You may also bring your own equipment
- suitable for families with children 12 years and older with good riding skills and capacity for long journeys
- two riders will incur an additional fee of \$100 USD per rider.

Please contact me for pre or post accommodation or a Galapagos Extension.

\$1,100* p.p. + taxes
from 8 to 16 riders

4-6 nights

Feb. 28 – Mar. 3, 2016



Amanda grew up riding horses and takes every opportunity to combine two of her passions: travel and horses. As an avid rider, she has led horseback safaris in both South Africa and Mozambique. This will be Amanda's third trip to Ecuador.

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USD\$ pp dbl occ. Single supplement: \$90 USD/night. Land only. Not included: airfare, any personal expenses, such as insurance, passport fees, and gratuities, any meals, or items not mentioned. Pre-night: \$125 USD pp dbl occ. Airport transfer: \$50 up to 4 pax one direction. 50% non-refundable deposit if the trip confirms. Deposit is due by Oct. 15, 2015. If the trip does not confirm, 100% refund will be given. Final payment is due 60 days prior to departure (Dec. 29, 2015). Cancellation within 60 days of the trip will incur 100% penalty. Contact a Merit Travel Specialist for full terms and conditions. ON-4499356/4499372 | BC-34799 | 111 Peter Street, Suite 200, Toronto, ON. M5V 2H1 | Canadian owned 



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OPTIONAL PROGRAM (BEFORE THE REGULAR PROGRAM): Two-day ride to the cloud forest \$450 p.p.

Day 1: In the morning, we ride west toward the Corazon (4,000 m) and descend to the cloud forest. At the cloud forest, we can observe a great biodiversity of plants and flowers. In the afternoon, we arrive for tea at Hacienda Bomboli (3,000 m). Following a great meal, relax by the fireplace, enjoy the sunset, and watch the lights of the villages near the coast.

Day 2: We leave behind the cloud forest and ride the old road that, until 1960, connected Quito with the coast. Crossing extensive pastures and eucalyptus forests we arrive to the valley for a snack.

Dinner at the Hacienda

Accommodations: Hacienda Bomboli

Day 1 | Sun., Feb. 28, 2016 | TORONTO - HACIENDA LA ALEGRIA

Arrive at the Hacienda and get acquainted with the horses and tack that we will use during the ride. Then we ride around the neighbouring Haciendas. Our first experience with altitude starts today. Lunch in the Hacienda house, visit the milking barn and aging cheese cave, and enjoy the hot tub and fireplace.

Accommodations: Hacienda La Alegria

Riding hours: 4

Day 2 | Mon., Feb. 29, 2016 | INSILIVI

The ride begins an hour south of Hacienda La Alegria, which marks the start of our adventure south of the Illinizas Volcanoes. We will observe a drier ecosystem, less agricultural, accompanied by friendly locals. From here, we will ascend from the small valley to the ridge, with scenery of rock peaks and mountains that make up the Quilotoa volcano.

Along the way, observe the flow of dozens of canyons that was formed by the Toachi River, during the eruption of the Quilotoa volcano. We will ride along ancient mule tracks, which were used for hundreds of years by the Incas, colonists, alcohol smugglers, and merchants. There is a stop on the way for lunch before continuing our ride to the tiny town of Insilivi, composed of two main streets and about 50 houses. Here, we will find a comfortable hostel to spend our first night in the mountains. You will have the option to walk a few blocks and see the valley from a viewpoint that will allow us to observe the arrival points for the next few days. At the hostel, enjoy a hot tub and steam room, a delicious dinner and rooms with a fireplace.

Accommodations: Inn at Insilivi

Riding time: 5 hours

Day 3 | Tues., Mar. 1, 2016 | SIGCHOS

Today, we will continue riding down hundred-year-old paths to the Toachi River and Canon. These paths go up high into the mountain ridge and are used by farmers to transport water by mules and donkeys to their farms. Observe a very rural landscape with subsistence agriculture. As we make our way to the canon, witness the geographical barriers that the canon walls create between the small towns, still reminiscent of Spanish colonization. After lunch, we will make our way up to the Hacienda San Jose, which is located at a higher elevation (an oasis of trees and green pastures). There you will find a heated pool, hot tub, steam room and comfortable rooms. This evening enjoy dinner before leading your horse to graze in the pastures.

Accommodations: Hacienda San Jose

Riding time: 4 hours

Day 4 | Wed., Mar. 2 2016 | QUILOTOA AND HACIENDA LA ALEGRIA

Continue toward the western mountain chain with views of the eastern chain, where the Illinizas volcanos predominate. We will ascend to the edge of the mountain range which, on a clear day, allows us to appreciate an endless horizon. Pass ancient observation points called "pucaros" these were built by the Incas in the two ranges of the Ecuadorian Andes to protect the empire. As we descend, there will be a stop at one of the artisanal cheese factories. Here, we will learn about cheese making, the local traditions, culture and their lifestyle and then cross through the small town Chugchilan.

Today is a special day, where the goal is to reach the great volcano, with its unique emerald blue lagoon formed at its crater. We will descend to one of the canons before ascending to the edge of the volcano, with a view that will leave you speechless. Ride for an hour and a half, following the path at the edge of the crater, until we reach our hostel along the edge of the crater. After leaving the horses you will have the chance to walk toward the edge of the crater. Arrive at Quilotoa village where we will be transferred by car to Hacienda la Alegria for our overnight.

Accommodations: Hacienda La Alegria

Riding time: 8 hours

Day 5 | Thurs., Mar. 3 2016 | HACIENDA LA ALEGRIA - TORONTO

Transfer to airport.