



CUENCA BIKING, HIKING AND HORSEBACK RIDING, 3 DAYS

Effort: Moderate

Accommodation: First Class Small Boutique Hotels

Cuenca is much more than culture! This small city located in the southern highlands of Ecuador, was declared as World Cultural Heritage Site in 1999 by UNESCO, won the first place on the World's Best Retirement Haven by International Living in 2009, and it is listed as one of the Lonely Planet's Top Ten Cities To Visit in 2010. That is why Cuenca is a must-see sight while you are in Ecuador.

Rich in architecture, gastronomy, handicrafts and landscapes, the city also offers a variety of adventure options: Biking, Hiking and Horseback riding are some of the activities you can enjoy in Cuenca and its surroundings.

Come and visit Cuenca and discover the adventure & adrenaline in the south!

Activities: Biking, Hiking and Horseback riding

•TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:

- Biking thru a wonderful Cultural Heritage Site crossed by 4 rivers.
- Hiking at El Cajas National Park, a lake system with more than 230 small lakes and astonishing paramo landscapes.
- Horseback Ride thru the southern Andes and in traditional Haciendas.

BIKING THRU CUENCA & HOT SRPINGS IN BAÑOS

DAY 1

After a 45 minute morning flight from Quito we arrive to Cuenca, check in at our hotel and get ready for a great adventure in the south. We begin the biking at Cuenca's downtown, famous for its wonderful architecture, picturesque squares, and churches. Continuing the ride we discover El Paraiso Park, a nature's sanctuary in the middle of the city full of birds and trees and scenery roads. We leave the park and take the highway to San Joaquin, a small village known for its handicrafts and gastronomy. Here we will stop for a delicious Box lunch to later find our way back to Cuenca, thru some traditional neighborhoods and streets. In the afternoon, we go to Baños, just 15 minutes away from Cuenca, to relax in the Piedra de Agua hot springs where we will have a mud's treatment and enjoy a lovely Dinner. Transfer to our Hotel. (L, D)



DAY 2

HIKING EL CAJAS NATIONAL PARK



Today we visit El Cajas National Park, that offers tundra vegetation on a jagged landscape of hills and valleys. Our first stop is Llaviucu, one of the more than 230 lagoons boasted in the park. We will start our first hike to discover some endemic birds and plants. We get back in the car to reach the park's highest point at 4.200m, from where you have an amazing view of the whole area. We go down to La Toreadora lagoon, for a 3 hour hike exploring some small lagoons, astonishing landscapes and the paramo flora and fauna. A rewarding lunch of typical dishes awaits us at Dos Chorreras. In the afternoon we return to Cuenca and have some time to explore the city. (B, L, D)

HORSEBACK RIDING IN CUENCA SURROUNDINGS

DAY 3

Early in the morning we drive to a Colonial Haciendas near Cuenca. After a safety talk and some important instructions we get on our horses for a 3 hour ride along beautiful trails, through small hidden villages, farming areas and typical countryside landscapes. At noon we will enjoy a delicious box lunch and do a small hike. In the afternoon we drive back to Cuenca to take our flight back to Quito. (B, L,)



RECOMMENDED GEAR:

- Trekking Boots
- Trekking shoes
- Gaiters
- Water bottle or Camelback
- Backpack
- Camera
- Sunscreen

RECOMMENDED CLOTHING

Multi layering is the best way to go (Nylon, Gore Tex, Polyester and synthetic fibers dry quicker).

- 3 to 5 non-cotton t-shirts
- 2 long sleeves non-cotton shirts
- Non-cotton socks
- Sun glasses
- Hat, cap, and/or buff
- Wool hat
- Shorts and swimming suit
- Long non-cotton pants (better if you can zip off legs)
- Rain Jacket, Water Poncho, or Gore Tex Jacket
- 2 to 3 non-cotton sweaters (fleece is good)
- Cotton clothing when you are not hiking

INCLUDED:

Accommodations in small boutique hotels; private land transportation; all mentioned meals (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner); adventure and protective equipment and professional English-speaking guide.

NOT INCLUDED:

Flight to/from Cuenca. National Park entrance fee; hotel & restaurant beverages, tips, or gratuities; guide tips and personal expenses.