



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## Ecuador 2012

### Riding Trip Information Sheet

These rides explore the Andean highlands surrounding Ecuador's snow-capped peaks of Cotopaxi (the world's largest active volcano - now dormant!) and Cayambe Volcanoes and the grassy meadows, farming villages and Indian communities that line the valley floors below. Ecuador has some wonderful wild and little visited highland country. A 'backbone' of towering, snow-covered volcanic peaks runs lengthwise down its centre and the valleys between are a patchwork of peasant villages and traditional smallholdings where peasant Indian farmers tend livestock and work the fields, much as their forefathers have done for centuries. It also boasts a number of prestigious colonial haciendas, grand farming estates and country manor houses that were (and in many cases still are) owned by some of the country's noblest and most re-known families. Ecuador is one of the few South American countries where you can enjoy good riding and varied, dramatic mountain scenery but also plenty of contact with the colourful local people. The 'Colonial Hacienda Ride' explores the areas around both Cayambe and Cotopaxi and takes you from colonial hacienda to hacienda with nights spent at what were some of the most prestigious haciendas of the Ecuadorian highlands. It is a great choice for those looking for good riding and horses, local culture, historical interest and comfortable accommodation. The 'Cotopaxi Ride' circumnavigates Cotopaxi, exploring the area around both it and Antisana Volcano, with nights spent at local farms and guest-houses. It is for those who enjoy wild, natural landscapes and who want to get off the beaten track and further from signs of civilisation. The 'Volcano Ride' is a 10 night itinerary, with 2 night spent at a working hacienda followed by an itinerary similar to the Cotopaxi Ride. The meeting point for all rides is Quito, Ecuador's beautiful capital founded in 1554.



**Dates** The three different itineraries of 7 or 10 nights, are run from set dates. Please see dates at the end of this information sheet. Set date rides will be confirmed when there are a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 10 participants - although rides can be run for 2 or more people for a supplement (see Note overleaf with price details). Other rides for groups or families of 2 to 10 people can be run by arrangement from dates to suit. Please contact us to discuss dates, your plans and availability. Rides can be arranged year round.

**The Horses** The horses used are mostly the local Criollo breed, crossed with Andalusian, Thoroughbred, Peruvian Paso and other warm blood breeds. They are between 14.2hh and 16hh, are generally fairly narrow in build but are strong, calm and sure-footed. They are very well suited to the terrain and are also responsive, forward going and a thoroughly enjoyable ride. The horses are carefully selected and are very well schooled by Sally Vergette who is English and organises the rides, great care is taken to match horse and rider. Saddles are McClellan style, ex US Cavalry saddles which are half way between an English and western style saddle and are covered with a comfortable sheepskin. Some English saddles are available on request. One or two horses are only ridden in English tack, English style, but most of the horses are trained western style so are used to neck reining. Ponchos for each rider are tied to the saddle and saddle-bags are provided for personal belongings. Vehicles transport most equipment. The weight limit is 95 kgs / 15 stone (sometimes up to 100kg on the Cotopaxi and Volcano Rides) but this does depend on riding experience and fitness - if you are 85 kg or more please call us to discuss and to check that suitable horses are available. Riders over 85kg may be charged extra.

**Riding** The Colonial Hacienda Ride includes riding on 7 days with 5 or 6 hours in the saddle on 3 days and slightly shorter hours, usually 3 to 4 hours, on other days. The Cotopaxi Ride includes 5 to 7 hours in the saddle on 7 days and the Volcano Ride includes 10 days riding, around 5 to 7 hours a day though the first 2 or 3 days can be flexible and more relaxed. The rides are organised by an English lady, Sally Vergette, who now lives in Ecuador. Sally leads some of the rides herself while other rides are lead by English speaking Ecuadorian guides trained by her. Sally may also lead the first 3 or 4 days with one of her other guides taking the second half. Riders are also accompanied by at least one local horseman (usually one for every 3 or 4 horses) who is on hand to help with tacking up, untacking and so on. Horses are generally prepared for rides by the groom(s) and guide, although on the Cotopaxi Ride participants are asked to help with the horses a little more, always under supervision of the guide and grooms. There is normally a change to new horses at least once during each full ride itinerary, so horses are always fresh. Rides are normally run for a maximum of 10 riding guests.



**Pace** The pace of the rides varies from day to day according to the terrain and will also depend on the ability of the group, but overall both rides are planned to be at a moderate, varied pace, with good chances to canter along sandy tracks and across grassy meadows. Most of the riding on the Cotopaxi and Volcano Rides is in the highlands and there are good places on this route for long, exhilarating canters. On the Colonial Hacienda Ride there is good terrain for faster riding on the last few days particularly. There are also some steep climbs on both routes and areas where the pace must be slow and (particularly on the Cotopaxi & Volcano Rides) you may need to get off to lead your horses over steep, rough or rocky ground.

**Riding Experience** To participate in the set date rides you must be a reasonably competent rider who is used to riding in open country and over varied terrain. As a minimum to join one of the set date rides, you should be comfortable, well balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and canter and able to control a well schooled horse at all paces. Hours on the Cotopaxi and Volcano Rides are generally a little longer so these are only suitable for fit, intermediate riders and above who can cope with fairly long hours in the saddle each day. Rides can be specially organised or tailor-made for more novice riders and also for families of mixed abilities on request, with itineraries adapted

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**Riding Experience cont.** to include less riding each day and a slower pace - if you are interested in this please ask. You will always enjoy your trip much more if you are reasonably riding fit and if you are not used to riding for several hours a day, we recommend you put in some concentrated practice before you go to get used to the hours you will spend in the saddle.

**Terrain** The rides take you through a variety of terrain ranging from sandy and dirt tracks in the valleys, winding between groves of pine and scented Eucalyptus forest and passing through small communities of Indian farmers and around fields of potatoes, corn and sugar cane, to the 'paramo' of the Ecuadorian highlands. This is the vast open grassland plain and high pasture above the treeline that skirts the high volcanic peaks. You will also ride in Cotopaxi National Park where steep scree slopes have tracks marked out by wild horses and where there are waterfalls and blue crater lakes.

**Safety** Rides are accompanied by an English speaking guide and at least one local groom (usually one groom for every 3 or 4 horses). A medical kit for both horses and riders is carried on each trip. A mobile 'phone is also carried for emergencies. A vehicle usually meets the group at lunchtime each day on the Colonial Hacienda Ride.

**Accommodation** On the Colonial Hacienda Ride, accommodation is at a selection of Ecuador's old haciendas, farming estates and country manor houses, some dating back to the 17th and 18th Century and many of which are now run as small hotels. These haciendas, with their antique-filled rooms and gorgeous flowering gardens, hold a unique and important position in the country's history and staying at them gives a wonderful insight into Spanish colonial life. Accommodation at the haciendas is comfortable and all bedrooms have a private bathroom and often their own open fireplace and chimney. Many are also decorated with local Indian crafts and embroidery. The haciendas are however all individual and varied in style and character. Those used include Hacienda Cusin and Hacienda Pinsaqui which is simpler but is one of the country's oldest haciendas and full of history. La Cienega with its tree-lined avenues, courtyards and arches, is grand and imposing. It was one of the largest haciendas in Ecuador and is now a comfortable hotel. The Colonial Hacienda Ride now also includes the newly renovated Hacienda Santa Ana. On the Cotopaxi and Volcano Rides, nights are spent at smaller working haciendas and local farms. The farms and hostals used are, again, individual and vary in style and character, although they are simpler and much more rustic than the haciendas, with twin bedrooms and shared bathrooms (hot showers) on most nights (on one or two nights it may be possible to book a private bathroom by paying a supplement).



**Meals** Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day except in Quito, when you are free to make your own arrangements for dinner and to sample some of the capital's many local bars and restaurants. Food on the rides is good and includes a combination of European and typical Ecuadorian dishes. Lunches are picnics carried with you in saddlebags - usually include a combination of cheese, cold meats, salami, bread and salads with a different menu each day. At the haciendas / hotels, you will usually be offered a cooked breakfast and, after a day's riding, dinner is three courses - perhaps including a local speciality such as fresh trout. Meals at the hostals and farms are simpler, perhaps with less of a choice, but still good. Breakfast may be a warming bowl of porridge, tea or coffee, bread and eggs. Dinner will be a substantial two course meal, often a hot soup to start with followed by a pasta or rice dish. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice on all rides but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that special arrangements can be made. Bottled water is provided on all rides and other drinks are available to purchase. Most of the haciendas have a full bar selling wine, beer and a selection of spirits.

**Weather and Altitude** Ecuador has a temperate climate so it is possible to ride year round. Daytime temperatures can reach 28°C, although most days start at a crisp 6 to 10°C. Night-time temperatures sometimes drop to 2°C and even freezing in the hills around the crater lakes. The difference in temperature between night and day is most evident from June to November. From December to May days remain a little cooler (up to about 25°C) and nights are not quite so cold. The rainy season in most areas is generally October to May (varies in some parts), although rain is possible year round. Even in the rainy season, rain does not fall daily and is rarely prolonged - generally there are afternoon rains when you have finished riding. Heavy showers are most likely in May and October. July and August are generally the driest months. They can be windy, though are often clear and can be the best time for viewing volcanoes.

Most rides take place above 2500 metres (8125 feet) and some rides take you up to 4125 metres (13,400 feet). The routes are planned so you can acclimatise gently but it is very wise, if you have time, to spend a day or two in Quito (which is at an altitude of about 2900 metres / 9500 feet) before the ride.

**What to bring** We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when your booking is confirmed.

**Itineraries** An example itinerary for the Colonial Hacienda Ride is set out below. Please enquire for the Cotopaxi and Volcano Ride itineraries. Please note that this is only an example and day by day arrangements are subject to change and may be altered if your guide considers this advisable or if local conditions require. Tailor-made rides incorporating parts of either itinerary are also possible on request, as are family stays at haciendas, riding out each day. We can also arrange additional accommodation in haciendas or hotels and wonderful combinations with add-on tours such as a visit to the Galapagos, the Cloud Forest, Amazon Basin or the coast. Please call us to chat about your plans. We would be happy to advise and book for you.

### Example itinerary - Colonial Hacienda Ride

This is a journey back in time taking you along ancient Inca and Spanish colonial routes, between several of the most prestigious haciendas in Ecuador. You will visit two beautiful, yet very distinct, areas of the Ecuadorian highlands, crossing vast plains and riding through pastoral valleys. The route follows the Avenue of Volcanoes, skirting the giant snow-capped peaks of Cayambe and Cotopaxi, taking you through forests, into the mountains and for exhilarating canters through the wild Andean 'paramo' grasslands. Most nights are spent at 17th and 18th Century, antique-filled hacienda hotels, which are all individual with their flowering gardens, private churches and glorious secluded lakeside settings. As well as marvellous scenery and unique overnight accommodation, there are many encounters with the local population, whose customs and rhythm of life has changed little over the centuries. The following is an example of the itinerary planned (subject to change if local conditions require):



**Day 1** - You will be met in Quito and driven north about 90 minutes, stopping at the famous Andean market town of Otavalo (market days are Saturdays and Wednesdays) where local people, who still wear traditional dress, sell a colourful array of cloth, handwoven jumpers, crafts and textiles. Drive on a short distance to Hacienda Pinsaqui, a fine old hacienda, now a small hotel, where Simon Bolivar, the great South American liberator, reputedly stayed. With its balconies and cool gardens with citrus, palm and pine trees it is an ideal place to relax after your journey and to gently drift into the Latino lifestyle! Meet the horses and an introductory ride to try them and the South American tack, and for a first view of the area. After trying the horses in the school, set off on a 2 to 3 hour ride through the surrounding patchwork of fields before returning to the hacienda. Dinner and the night at Hacienda Pinsaqui. (L,D)

**Day 2** - Leaving Hacienda Pinsaqui, ride across the slopes of the Imbabura mountain (a focus of many Inca legends) through tiny hamlets and a patchwork of fields. There are wonderful views of San Pablo lake and you will see many locals in vibrant dress working the fields and herding sheep and pigs. Continue riding to Hacienda Cusin (about a 5 hour ride) which dates back to the early 1600s and has a wonderful flowering garden and a kitchen garden growing avocados and passion fruit. In the late afternoon after riding there is the option to visit local weavers who still use the ancient pre-Inca back strap loom, before returning to Cusin for dinner served in the cosy dining room with its tapestried walls. Overnight at Hacienda Cusin. (B,L,D)

**Day 3** - Breakfast and set off on another beautiful ride heading through the pastoral valley of Zuleta, past eucalyptus woods and then riding out onto open plains before descending into the meadows below where there is a chance for some faster riding. Head down towards a working hacienda and farm in the middle of the sleepy valley, perhaps catching sight of a huge Andean Condor, as well as brightly coloured humming birds and scarlet flycatchers along the route. You will stop for a picnic lunch out riding and then arrive at the hacienda, which is also home to Andalusian horses and fighting bulls, in the late afternoon (about 5 to 6 hours riding). There may also be time to visit some of the craft workers in the village to see examples of the wonderful embroidery that has made the valley famous. Dinner and overnight at a working hacienda, La Merced. (B,L,D)



**Day 4** - Breakfast and set off riding along tree lined tracks between the meadows and then upwards and out into open, wild grasslands. Taking to the steep paths following the gorges and climbing high onto a ridge you will enjoy spectacular views of the distant peaks and the valleys below, including some pre-Inca earthworks. Ride on across the Pesillo plains, into the Cayambe Valley, dominated by the snow-capped Cayambe volcano, which straddles the Equator. Meet the vehicles and, saying goodbye to the horses, drive south. Stop for traditional lunch at a beautiful old hacienda before a visit to a rose plantation and driving on, crossing the Equator and bypassing Quito, to Hacienda La Cienega. This 17th century hacienda has had such distinguished guests as the explorer and scientist von Humboldt, as well as being the site of a number of battles during Ecuador's fight for independence. Dinner and night at La Cienega. (B,L,D)

**Day 5** - Breakfast and the chance to browse in the hacienda's own shop filled with local crafts before the short drive to the Cotopaxi national park visiting the fascinating Hacienda Agustin built on an Inca site with fine examples of Inca stonework, including complete walls. At the entrance to the park meet the horses and then set off riding through Cotopaxi National Park, skirting the almost perfectly conical shape of Cotopaxi and cantering across the barren plain at the base of the mountain. Several herds of wild horses inhabit the park and to ride alongside these long-maned horses galloping freely across the rugged terrain is an exhilarating experience. Part of this ride follows the main Inca highway which linked Quito with Cusco in Peru. The ground here is covered with tiny pumice stones and lichen and you pass many native species of high Andean flora including the ancient polylepis trees. There is a good chance of seeing hummingbirds which, surprisingly, manage to survive in these elevated areas. Passing a shallow lake on the high plains you ride on, through the lunar landscape and arrive at the Hosteria Chilcabamba, situated just outside the **cont. over**



**Day 5 cont.** national park where you will stay the night in a stunning location. About 6 to 7 hours riding in all. Dinner and overnight at Hosteria Chilcabamba. (B,L,D)

**Day 6** - A ride into another part of the Cotopaxi national park, again maybe meeting the wild horses as you ride across the plains and old lava flow. Cantering through pasturelands arrive at an old Inca fort that guarded the route down to the Amazon, today's riding is in the wild open expanses of the Andean highlands and spectacular views of the close by Cotopaxi snow-capped volcano. A picnic lunch before you ride out of the national park to an old Jesuit Hacienda Santa Ana, recently converted and now a very, very comfortable highland hacienda. (B,L,D).



**Day 7** - Breakfast and another long ride today of 6 to 7 hours, taking a picnic lunch you leave the beautiful hosteria and head up over a high mountain pass (4200 metres) to enjoy this stunning high Andean wilderness. In these remote 'paramo' areas the local 'chagras' are the only people to venture, checking their herds of cattle on their trusty horses. You will be accompanied by a local horseman, guiding you through a sea of grass, along mountain tracks, across streams of snowmelt passing native scrubland and really experience the remoteness of the magnificent high Andes with wonderful views of the surrounding peaks including Cotopaxi, Ruminahui, Sincholagua and Pasachoa. After some canters across the grassy plains you will start climbing and may be lucky to catch sight of some wonderful Andean wildlife including condor, foxes and deer which have been seen along this route. Once over the high pass and across the scree slopes you begin to descend into the valley where you say goodbye to the horses and return to Quito by car (about 90 minutes). Overnight at the Hotel Sebastian (or similar) in Quito and your own arrangements for dinner either at the hotel or at one of the many restaurants close by. (B,L)

**Day 8** - Breakfast and you will then be transferred to the airport for your onward flight. (B)



**2012 DATES** Rides are scheduled for the following dates in 2012 **BUT PLEASE NOTE** that dates can change and new ones may be added from time to time. If you are thinking of booking, please call us for an update.

### **Colonial Hacienda Ride 2012**

7th to 14th January	9th to 16th June	8th to 15th September
14th to 21st January	1st to 8th July	6th to 13th October
28th to 4th February	7th to 14th July	24th November to 1st December
29th to 8th February	21st to 28th July	1st to 8th December
11th to 18th February	4th to 11th August	23rd to 30th December
25th February to 3rd March	18th to 25th August	
10th to 17th March	25th August to 1st September	

### **Cotopaxi Ride 2012**

7th to 14th January	9th to 16th June	8th to 15th September
14th to 21st January	23rd to 30th June	22nd to 29th September
11th to 18th February	1st to 8th July	3rd to 10th October
25th February to 3rd March	21st to 28th July	24th November to 1st December
3rd to 10th March	4th to 11th August	1st to 8th December
	22nd to 29th August	27th December to 3rd January 2013

### **Volcano Ride 2012**

3rd to 13th July	20th to 30th June	19th to 29th August
29th January to 8th February	1st to 11th July	30th September to 10th October
	29th July to 8th August	

### **Special Itineraries - Please enquire for details**

**Fiesta Rides** - 23rd June to 1st July, 22nd to 30th September

**Cattle Round Up** - 6th to 12th February





## RATES 2012

**Please note** that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay. NB Rates quoted below assume a minimum number of riders (see Note below)

**Colonial Hacienda Ride:** USD 2845 per person (single room supplement USD 495 per person).

**Cotopaxi Ride:** USD 1995 per person

(single supplement USD 290 per person - single rooms only possible on 4 or 5 nights).

**Volcano Ride:** USD 2835 per person

(single supplement USD 395 per person - single rooms only possible on 7 or 8 nights).

### Special Cattle Round Up

6th to 12th February 2012 - USD 2150 per person (assumes 6 or more riders)

(Single rooms are not usually possible on the Cattle Round Ups).

The rates quoted above **INCLUDE** all riding, guiding and equipment, 7 or 10 nights twin accommodation, meals from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8 / 11 except dinner in Quito on Day 7 / 10, some drinks, entrance fees to National Parks and transfers from and back to Quito airport at set times on the first / last day. The rates **EXCLUDE** international flights to Quito and taxes, transfers outside the set times, personal medical insurance (compulsory), personal expenditure such as your bar bills, laundry or telephone calls, any visa fees, any extra nights accommodation before or after the ride or any tips you wish to leave.

**NOTE** - Rates quoted are based on a minimum of 4 riders (6 riders for February 2012 Cattle Round Up). The rides can be confirmed / run for just 2 or 3 riders although the itinerary will be altered slightly if there are fewer than 4 (price maintained). Alternatively a supplement will be charged to run the same itinerary for fewer than 4 riders. If a ride is confirmed for 2 or 3 participants and more riders join before the departure date taking the number of participants to 4 or more, the itinerary will return to that published (or, if you have paid a supplement for a smaller group, this will be refunded).

**Single supplements** - All rates quoted above assume twin accommodation. If you are travelling alone, the single supplement indicated will be payable to book a single room at hotels and haciendas (NB single rooms are not available every night on the Cotopaxi & Volcano Rides). The single supplement is compulsory when you book if you are travelling alone but if you are prepared to share a twin room with another guest please let us know and we will see if we can find another person to share with you. If we find a sharer the supplement will be refunded, however we cannot guarantee to find a sharer and if we do not, the supplement will be payable.

**Flight and Travel information:** The meeting point for these rides is Quito. There are currently no direct flights from London to Quito but there are flights from London to Quito with KLM via Amsterdam, usually overnight arriving, Quito early in the morning. You can also fly with several US airlines via the USA. The latter are usually day flights, arriving Quito in the evening. Rates vary with the season and airline but expect to pay between £650 and £800 per person for an economy return. **Please call us if you would like further information on flights, for a quote or to book. We would be happy to book flights for you (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).**

**Please note that we advise arriving in Quito at least one or two nights before the start date of the ride as both routes are at high altitudes (starting above 3000 metres and riding to 4000 metres on the Cotopaxi Ride) and this will help with acclimatisation.**

**General visa and health information** (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking).

**Visas** If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Ecuador for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

**Health** No inoculations are legally required for Ecuador if travelling from Europe but Polio and Tetanus are recommended. If you are travelling on in Ecuador (particularly if you are going to the coast or the jungle) after the ride you might need additional inoculations and Malaria prevention tablets - you should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

**(DRAFT 04/01/12)**

