IAN TAYLOR TREKKING

# CLIMB COTOPAXI

Cotopaxi is for experienced trekkers and mountaineers with previous glacier experience. The well-known health risks of high-altitude ascents can prove to be fatal. To avoid them, we have designed this acclimatization program with the highest level of safety in mind. In preparation for Cotopaxi, we will climb lower peaks to gradually increase the altitude we reach. This gives us a better acclimatization schedule and the opportunity to explore more of the surrounding area. Our team of mountain guides will prepare you for all aspects of this trip. We propose this longer itinerary for comfort, experience, safety, and success.

We always have Certified Guides on all our trips to manage the risk and potential dangers. Because of its technical difficulty, historically, there have been fatal accidents in the volcano, most of them due to avoidable mistakes.

These mountains are mountaineers' paradise. Perhaps nowhere else on earth does the combination of high mountains and easy accessibility exist. All while climbing the most spectacular volcanoes in Ecuador.

Ian Taylor Trekking only works with expert guides. Our climber-to-guide ratio 2:1 for the Cotopaxi climb, which translates into safer climbing and much higher summit success. Our gradual acclimatization itinerary gives us ample time to prepare for climbs, and our in-depth knowledge of the climbing routes allows us to ascend with great efficiency.

## BRIEF ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive in Quito International Airport 2,850m/ 9,350 feet
Day 2: Hike to Cotopaxipungo 3,150m/ 10,335 feet
Day 3: Ascent of Pasochoa 4,200m/ 13,780 feet
Day 4: Hike to Hacienda Los Mortinos 3,600m/11,811 feet
Day 5: Ascent of Rumiñahui 4,624m/ 15,170 feet
Day 6: Training on Cotopaxi to 5,100m/ 16,732 feet
Day 7: Visit Inca Ruins & Technical training at Tambopaxi 3,750m/ 12,303 feet
Day 8: Ascend to Cotopaxi Hut 4,864m/ 15,958 feet
Day 9: Ascent of Cotopaxi 5,897m/ 19, 347 feet
Day 10: Hot springs of Baños 1,820m/ 5,971 feet
Day 11: Return to Quito – Overnight in Hotel
Day 12: Return transfer to Airport for onward journey

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# DETAILED ITINERARY

**Day 1: Arrive in Quito 2,850m/ 9,350 feet**

Today is your arrival day to Quito! It is ideal if you can arrive as early as possible on this day to allow for additional acclimatization. Quito sits at an altitude of 2,850m/ 9,350 feet. We will meet you at the airport and transfer you to our hotel for the night. It is important to rehydrate, relax and start adjusting to high altitude. If you feel up to it, you explore the city and you will find a wide range of dinner options. If you arrive early in Quito and would like us to arrange any side tours for your time there, we are happy to do so.

**Day 2: Hike to Cotopaxipungo 3,321m/ 10,895 feet**

After breakfast at the hotel, and an early morning briefing, private transportation will pick you up at the hotel to drive approximately one hour and thirty minutes to start today's hike. Once you reach the trailhead, there will be a shelter with toilets and a place for you to prepare and pack your lunch for the hike. The hike today will start in the Valley of Los Chillos, at 2,983m/ 9,788 feet, alongside the Pita River, which flows from Cotopaxi National Park. This beautiful canyon is a unique microclimate, crossing the river in multiple spots, leading you to the majestic Rio Pita waterfall, at the end of the valley. Here we will have lunch and enjoy the views before retracing our steps all the way back to our starting point. Here, we will take a short break before continuing up the road to our beautiful hotel for the night, Cotopaxipungo. Close to the Hacienda Cotopaxipungo you'll pass in front of a Shrine, a small religious place where locals come to worship the "Virgen de la Piedra", the Virgin of the Rock. Today's hike takes around 5 hours, and approximately 13km/8 miles covered. You will spend your first night at an altitude of 3,321m/ 10,895 feet. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 3: Ascent of Pasochoa 4,200m/ 13,780 feet**

You will set off early for the ascent of Pasochoa. We start with a long road hike before reaching grassy trails. Once you exit the road and begin hiking towards the summit, the terrain is very steep, so this will be a tough ascent to the top and back down. These winding trails towards the summit are reminiscent of the garden of Ireland, apart from the common swirling mists, which can bring the sulfurous smell of simmering lava from below! From the summit you may see condors - Pasochoa is one of the few volcanoes where these huge birds glide. The hike today will take approximately 6 hours and will cover 14.5k/ 9 miles. The elevation gain on this day is 870m/ 2,850 feet up and down, so it will be a challenging day! Once we reach the trailhead, we will drive to our next hacienda, Chilcambamba Hotel at 3,480m/ 11,417 feet. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 4: Hike to Hacienda Los Mortinos 3,600m/ 11,811 feet**

We will have an early breakfast and start the hike to Los Mortiños, our next Hacienda where we will stay two nights. From Chilcabamba, we walk along a dirt road for about 30 minutes, until we reach the entrance to the upper waterfall of the Pita River. From here, we walk along a trail that snakes alongside

the river. Part of the hike will have us walking over the remains from the 1876 eruption of Cotopaxi. Every time there was an eruption in the past this small river conducted most of the water from the melting glaciers of Cotopaxi to the Interandean Valley. The terrain changes dramatically as we get closer to Cotopaxi National Park.

Los Mortinos is right at the edge of the park. The house is a traditional hacienda, it was built with local materials such as brick, wood and adobe that have been used for centuries. Surrounded by four volcanoes, Cotopaxi, Sincholahua, Pasachoa and Rumiñahui, you will enjoy the rustic ambience of this traditional, comfortable, and beautiful casa de Hacienda (farmhouse). Today's hike will take approximately 5-6 hours. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 5: Ascent of Rumiñahui 4,630m/ 15,190 feet**

From the lodge, it will be a short drive to Limpiopungo Lake, where you will start hiking towards the central ridge of Rumiñahui, which leads to the middle summit. The volcano is located only 13km/ 8 miles northwest of Cotopaxi. Rumiñahui is named after a very well-known Inca general who fought against the Spanish when they were looking for the Inca treasure. This was around the year 1520. The trek today will be the most challenging day we have had so far. The ascent is approximately 800m/ 2,625 feet. The initial terrain is more gradual, through grassy pastures, until we reach the ridge leading up to the summit Rumiñahui. After crossing the ridge, the team will stop and put on our helmets for the final, long, steep, and rocky, ascent to the summit. The final few meters to reach the summit may require the use of ropes for safety, which would be set up by the guides if necessary. We will enjoy the stunning views from the top and may enjoy our lunch there or retreat lower to a safer location for lunch. After the trek, we will return to Los Mortiños Lodge 3,600m/ 11,811 feet for another night in this beautiful hacienda. The hike today will take approximately 7 hours to complete. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 6: Training day on Cotopaxi 5,100m/ 16,732 feet**

From our lodge, we will drive to the Cotopaxi National Park Entrance, check in, and continue driving up to the Cotopaxi car park at 4,620m/ 15,157 feet, where you will hike for 45 minutes to the Refugio 4,864m/ 15,958 feet. You will be carrying all your climbing equipment with you on this day for training. You will have your mountaineering boots on and in your pack, you will carry your water, clothing, axe, harness, crampons, helmet, climbing equipment. So, you will have a heavier pack for this day. The trail up to the hut is a zig-zag trail on sandy trails. We will stop in the Refugio for a short break before continuing higher on Cotopaxi for acclimatization and to find the right spot for the day's training. Once we reach the training spot, we will spend a few hours covering some important mountaineering etiquette and techniques needed to move on the glacier. Once we finish the training, we will return to the Refugio for lunch. After lunch in the Refugio, you will descend back to the car park, which will take approximately 20 minutes, and then get back in the vehicle to drive to Tambopaxi Lodge at 3,700m/ 12,139 feet, where you'll spend the night. The accommodation in Tambopaxi Lodge is a dorm style lodge, and you will have approximately 4-6 people per room. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 7: Hike to Inca Ruins and technical training 3,700m/ 12,139 feet**

Today is considered an active rest day. The guide will decide if you will do more training in the morning and hike to the Ruins in the afternoon or vice versa. If you visit the Ruins first, we will hike from the Tambopaxi Lodge after breakfast towards the Inca Ruins. The Ruins, located at the base of Cotopaxi, will take approximately one hour to reach on easy terrain. We will spend some time exploring these ruins then return to Tambopaxi Lodge for lunch. In the afternoon we will do more technical mountaineering and crevasse rescue training. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 8: Ascend to Cotopaxi Hut 4,864m/ 15,748 feet**

The morning will be spent organizing all equipment and gear for the upcoming climb. Your duffel bag will remain in the vehicle while you are on Cotopaxi, therefore you will have to rearrange your luggage for all required items for the climb to fit in your backpack. Today, you will have to carry all climbing equipment, sleeping bag and all gear you need for climbing Cotopaxi. The guides will go through this process in detail in the morning. After lunch, the team will drive back to the National Park entrance, where all guides and clients will have to register for the climb. From there, you will drive back to the car park and start the 45-minute ascent to the Refugio with a full backpack. The afternoon will be spent reorganizing your gear and preparing for the summit attempt. You will want to rest as much as possible this afternoon and evening as you will wake at 11pm to prepare for the summit attempt. Overnight in the Refugio in dormitory style accommodations. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 9: Ascent of Cotopaxi 5,897m/ 19,347 feet**

Today is the day! The team will wake at 11pm and be ready to leave at midnight. When you leave the Refugio, you will have approximately a two-hour ascent, on steep terrain, before reaching the entrance to the Glacier. Once you reach the Glacier, you will rope up with one other client and one guide as the ratio on Cotopaxi is 2 climbers per guide. From this point, you are on glaciated terrain all the way through the climb, back to this point, so you will remain roped up until you return to the entrance of the Glacier. From the entrance of the Glacier to the summit, it will take an additional four hours approximately and will be on steep and challenging terrain. This is where all your hard training done at home will come into play. As the sun rises, you should be reaching the summit of Cotopaxi. Cotopaxi's crater is a spectacular feature, and the mix of ice and steam vents make an unusual combination. After soaking in the awesome panoramic views from the second highest point in Ecuador, you will descend approximately three hours back to the Refugio. You will have breakfast in the Refugio and pack up your belongings before returning the final 20 minutes back to the car park. The vehicles will meet us, and we will drive approximately 3 hours to Baños, famous for its hot springs. Overnight in a hotel in Baños. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 10: Hot springs of Baños**

After breakfast in the hotel, we will go on a half-day tour of this exciting and beautiful region. After our tour, we will stop for lunch in a nice local restaurant. After lunch, we will return to the hotel in Baños, and you will have free time to explore Baños or the Hot Springs for the afternoon. The guide will set a time for dinner, and the team will go to a local restaurant for dinner. If you do not go to the hot springs in the afternoon, you could enjoy the evening spent in the springs! Overnight in the hotel. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

**Day 11: Return Quito**

Today, we will wake and have breakfast in Baños, before making the journey back to the hotel in Quito, for our final night in Ecuador. We will stop for lunch on the way back to the hotel and you will have many options on local restaurants near the hotel for your final dinner in Ecuador. Breakfast and lunch included.

**Day 12: Return Transfer to Airport for Onward Journey**

Breakfast is included today before we pick you up for your transfer back to the airport.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Every effort will be made to keep to the above itinerary, but as this is adventure travel in a remote mountain region, we cannot guarantee it. Weather conditions, road conditions, vehicle breakdowns and the health of climbers can all contribute to changes. The expedition Leader and our local agent will try to ensure that the trip runs according to plan, but an easy-going nature will be an asset!

## Price Includes

- The hotel and Hacienda accommodation is all on a shared basis, two people per room.
- Tambopaxi Lodge is dorm-style accommodation, four or more people per room.
- Cotopaxi Refugio is dorm style accommodation, everyone in the same room.
- All transport throughout the trip
- All meals as outlined in the daily itinerary (Lunch and dinners in Quito are not included)
- Ecuadorian Certified Bilingual Guides 1:5 for hiking portion of the trip. 1:2 for the climb of Cotopaxi
- All Park permits
- All entrance fees
- Airport transfers
- 5 days a week of office support

## Not Included

- Lunches and dinners in Quito
- Tips (optional, we recommend $250)
- Mountaineering gear
- Insurance
- Expenses if you leave the expedition earlier
- Additional Hotel nights out of the program