ECUADOR

Avenue Of Volcanoes Trek







ACTIVITY	ACCOMMODATION	CHALLENGE FACTORS	CHALLENGE FACTORS	DURATION:	GRADE
Trek	Communal	Altitude	Terrain	9 days	

The Avenue of the Volcanoes, named in the early 1800s by famous explorer Humboldt, is a volcano-lined corridor stretching south through Ecuador. Many of these towering snow-capped cones are still active.

Between the volcanoes lies the dramatic Toachi canyon, flanked by verdant valleys of tropical forest and farmland dotted with indigenous villages; our trek explores this diverse landscape, criss-crossing the steep-sided canyon on ancient trading paths rising over 3000m. Our goal is the rim of Quilotoa (3870m), a vast volcanic crater known for its vivid turquoise lagoon.

With time to acclimatise to the altitude, this is a challenging trek through breathtakingly beautiful landscapes full of colourful Andean culture. Time to explore Quito's colonial old town and well-earned relaxation in hot springs book-end an unforgettable experience.

This trip generates around **84 kg of CO_2 per person.** Because of our commitment to responsible travel, **we offset 100% of these emissions**, including flights booked with us.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart London for Quito

Flight may be day-time or overnight; if evening arrival we transfer to hotel; dinner and trip briefing (time permitting). Night hotel/in flight.

Day 2: Quito

Quito, located close to the equator in the foothills of the Andes, lies in a long, narrow valley at the base of the Pichincha volcano. It is one of the best-preserved colonial cities in the Americas, and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site over 40 years ago. We spend the morning exploring the beautiful old town, soaking up the cobbled streets and colonial architecture. In the afternoon, you can explore independently or take the opportunity to visit a community foundation to see the work they do in supporting local street children. At an elevation of 2850m, our bodies will already be acclimatising to the altitude. Night hotel.

Day 3: Quito – Cotopaxi National Park

An early start sees us heading out of the city through the Avenue of Volcanoes to Cotopaxi National Park. Cotopaxi is one of the most famous active volcanoes in the world, and Ecuador's second-highest summit. Our warm-up trek takes us onto the slopes of nearby Rumiñahui, an impressive volcano in its own right, where we follow trails uphill from beautiful Limpiopungo Lake towards the central summit of this rocky mountain (its Quichuan name means 'rock face'.) Not only are we rewarded with magnificent views over Cotopaxi's symmetrical snow-capped cone, but, in heading up to approximately 4000m, this trek aids our acclimatisation for the coming week and kicks off our challenge in style. The surrounding views are magnificent. After descending, we transfer to a charming hacienda on the outskirts of the Park; from its grounds you can see both Cotopaxi and the Illinizas, a distinctive pair of volcanic mountains. Night lodge.

Trek approx 4-5 hours; total drive approx 2-3 hours

Day 4: Cotopaxi National Park – Sigchos – Isinlivi

A scenic start as we drive through a majestic landscape of steep green hills, with great views of Illizina Sur. Dairy farms, fields of crops and native forest form a patchwork on the surrounding slopes, and whet our appetite for the landscapes to come. Our trek start point lies at the small Andean village of Sigchos, where we set off on along a dirt road that heads gently downhill. This quickly changes to narrow, twisting paths that lead us into increasingly inspiring landscapes, following the canyon and passing rural communities living and farming traditionally in the heart of the sierra. After a short, scenic stretch along the river, we cross and then it's steadily uphill, through farmland and lush vegetation opening out to impressive views. Eventually we see the colourful village of Isinlivi perched enticingly across the fields. The combination of spectacular scenery and indigenous culture makes this a day packed with 'wow' moments. Night guesthouse (2900m).

Drive approx 1.5 hours; trek approx 5-6 hours / 12-14km

Day 5: Isinlivi – Chugchilan

The scenery ramps up a notch or two today, as we continue along the increasingly-dramatic Toachi canyon, passing more small farmsteads and villages. We follow undulating, narrow paths that contour along the hillsides above the river, with striking vistas of canyon cliffs and rich green valleys. The vegetation reflects the changing eco-systems, with bromeliads and moss-covered trees overhanging narrow paths sunk into high banks. Once again, the going gets tougher once we cross the river, with a long ascent to the top of the canyon, which becomes particularly steep at times. We should be well-acclimatised to elevations around 3000m now, but everything is

more of an effort at this altitude, so we take it steady. At the top of the steep section we come to another small community, adding colour to the magnificent natural surroundings, and continue more gradually uphill to our friendly accommodation. Night guesthouse (3200m).

Trek approx 5 – 7 hours / 11-12km

Day 6: Chugchilan – Quilotoa Crater

We head deeper into the mountains on small trails used for generations by small Andean communities for trading and visiting neighbours; local people still barter and exchange goods and livestock. We descend gently across fields and open meadow for our final river crossing – marking today's lowest point at around 3000m – and then it's relentlessly uphill trekking for the rest of the day. After a relatively steep path takes us to the top of the canyon, we then continue uphill on wider tracks, through villages, farmland and forest. Overall, the gradient is more gradual than yesterday's big climb, but for most it will be our most challenging day, with total ascent exceeding 1200m. Our reward comes as we reach the crater rim of Quilotoa, a volcano containing Quilotoa Lake, known for its striking vivid turquoise colour. We continue around roughly quarter of the rim – still largely uphill – to our last night's accommodation in the mountains. Night guesthouse (3800m).

Trek approx 6–8 hours / 12-13km

Day 7: Quilotoa Crater – Papallacta Hot Springs

After breakfast, we trek fairly steeply down into the caldera to get a closer view of the lake; the views on the way down are mind-blowingly beautiful. The ash and minerals in the water create the lake's vivid hue – usually a deep blue or turquoise – this often changes with the light. At the lakeshore (3500m), we take some time to enjoy exploring the crater – it's possible to paddle or swim in the chilly water, rent kayaks (optional; at your own cost), or simply sit and drink in the views. We then tackle the last steep haul to the top again; this is a tough climb and a fitting end to our challenge. Back in the village, there is time to shop for souvenirs at the many roadside stalls, there's also a small handicrafts market. We grab some lunch as well – there are plenty of options for all budgets. Our vehicles then whisk us away to the comfort of our wonderful hotel, where we can relax in the thermal hot springs and admire the views of the majestic mountains and cloudforest that surround it. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 3-4 hours; drive approx. 4 hours

(Lunch not included)

Day 8: Papallacta; Flight Departs

We transfer directly to the airport at Quito for our international flight back to London.

(Lunch & dinner not included)

Day 9: Arrive London

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London to Quito
- All known airline taxes
- Transport and transfers as part of itinerary
- All accommodation in hotel (twinshare) and guesthouses
- All meals except where specified
- Discover Adventure crew (number dependent on group size)
- Local guide, support and back-up equipment
- **We offset 100% of the carbon emissions from your trip, including flights booked with us**

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Personal spending money, souvenirs, drinks and tips for local guides/support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | ORANGE

All our trips are designed to provide a challenge. Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **ORANGE** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors. Trip duration, accommodation and living conditions are also taken into account. Some sections will feel more challenging than others, but the grade reflects the overall trip. Unusual weather conditions can also have a significant impact.

The Accommodation icon indicates the living conditions while trekking/cycling. While there are usually several factors that present a challenge, the Challenge icon indicates the trip's most challenging element, for most people.

Trip grading explained

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh

wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Trip Doctor

An expedition doctor or medic accompanies the group (dependent on group size.) Their role is to look after the well-being of the whole group and deal with any medical incidents. They help the crew to ensure the trip runs smoothly, and encourage you when things get tough. The total number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with appropriate communication devices (eg phones, radios), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Altitude

Altitude adds to the challenge, and affects people differently. Most travellers experience no more than headaches and shortness of breath (typical symptoms of being at altitude, and not usually a concern.)

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) or 'altitude sickness' occurs when you ascend to high altitude quickly. The best way to avoid it is to allow time for the body to adjust - our itineraries are designed with this in mind - and to walk at a slow pace (which our leaders will set). We also recommend avoiding alcohol and smoking. Problems usually begin at heights of around 3500m - 4500m. More severe symptoms are usually quickly remedied by descending to a lower altitude and

taking more time to acclimatise.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We stay in a variety of hotels/lodges ranging from quite simple, friendly guesthouse-style to more international-style hotels in larger towns or cities. Standards are generally good, in great locations, but there may be a night or two where facilities are more basic, as you'd expect in very remote, untouristed or rural areas.

Roomshare Arrangements

Our trips are sold on a shared accommodation basis. Some nights are usually twin-share. On some nights we are likely to sleep in more communal rooms such as dormitories, huts, local homestays, etc., depending on the trip, and you may be sharing with a larger number of participants or the whole group; this type of accommodation cannot always be single-sex.
You can tell us if you are travelling with someone else on the trip when you book or within your passenger portal, and we will do all we can to accommodate this request. It is important that each person completes the room share request on their bookings. For customers booking and travelling together, including same-sex couples, a double bed can be requested if available.
If you're not familiar with anyone in the group, rest assured, we always pair you with someone of the same gender (as per the information you provided when booking, or passport markers), and a similar age where possible. We're actively working to improve our system's gender restrictions to be more inclusive, and we've recently made significant strides in this area. If you identify differently from the gender marker on your passport and would like to discuss this before booking, please feel free to reach out to us.

Single Supplements

In most standard hotels, we can usually offer a limited number of single rooms. This is upon request, on a first-come, first-served basis, and additional charges apply. In more communal accommodation, single rooms are rarely an option. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Challenge Grading

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Trip grading explained

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Terrain

Walking is predominantly on narrow rocky, dirt or grass paths, though there are some wider tracks too. We walk through valleys, canyons, farmland and tropical forest; paths can be uneven, and slippery after rain. There is very little flat ground. Some sections are very steep, both up and down, and these can feel relentess if it's very hot or muddy. There are a few sheer drops - while these are not on particularly narrow paths, those who suffer from vertigo may find these sections present extra challenges. The altitude adds to the challenge.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the FCO's advice on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you will all necessary information 6 weeks prior to depature to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check the NaTHNaC Travel Health Pro website for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click here.

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by email or post. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration, administration and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Passenger Portal

We have a Passenger Portal which will give you more details of the challenge itself. It also enables you to see any outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - Passenger Portal Log in.

CHALLENGE EXTENSIONS



GALAPAGOS EXTENSION

The Galapagos Islands, an isolated rocky archipelago lying roughly 1000km off the coast of Ecuador, are neither easy nor cheap to get to, but they are justifiably world-renowned for their unique wildlife and incredible biodiversity. They are also inextricably linked to Charles Darwin, whose later Theory of Evolution owed a great deal to his observations in these volcanic islands.

Known as one of the best places to view wildlife on the planet, many of the species here can be found nowhere else, and the marine habitat is fiercely protected. The creatures are largely unbothered by human presence, allowing for the unparalleled close-up encounters which make the Galapagos so special.

Our time is packed with highlights, including snorkelling, kayaking, and walking as we discover these volcanic islands and see the famous giant tortoises, as well as penguins, turtles, sea lions, marine iguanas and a rich array of birdlife. We also visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, known for its giant tortoise breeding programme. While our days are active, there's always some down-time, where you can explore the small towns we stay in, have a dip in the sea, or relax and watch the fascinating wildlife that is never far away.

This tour is not private to our group, which has the advantage not only of assuring guaranteed departures, but also making the costs of visiting this bucket-list destination more realistic for our customers.

Please note that circumstances can occur where we are unable to operate this extension exactly as detailed; the order of activities may change, for example, and wildlife presence can never be guaranteed.

Contact the office for pricing and availability.

Independent Reviews 96%

ABTA No.Y6195

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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 8 Nov 2026, and the challenge is subject to change.