

QUITO: VISIT TO THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD



Once, this place was a very important city for the Inca civilization. Its value and relevance were reestablished by the Spanish as their conquest of Central and Southern America proceeded. Nowadays, it presents one of Ecuador's most popular and happily situated towns which lure tourists from all over the world. Quito is a major tourist magnet.

It is situated approximately 22 km from the Equator. Surprisingly, there are no extremes in temperatures - the year-round temperatures feel spring-like; there are two seasons, the wet (winter) and dry. Quito's location is very convenient. The surrounding natural beauty strikes even the laziest and grumpiest of visitors; local mighty mountain ranges with occasional volcanic peaks immediately gain respect even from the most daring adventurers.

The city itself has long been on the list of UNESCO world heritage sites (since 1978). The Old Town is the perfect place to start a sightseeing tour. Many of the precious cathedrals and churches were built here during the times of the Spanish control in the 16th and 17th centuries. The majestic plazas present a typical example of this influence, too. The Monastery of San Francisco or the Palacio de Gobierno are the most spectacular architectural gems of the city.

Many of the buildings from the colonial period have been wonderfully preserved. Strolling down the La Ronda, a charming alley is considered the best opportunity to admire the charming houses with traditional balconies.

A trip to the Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) is a definite must. Here, the travelers get a chance to straddle both hemispheres, admire the Mitad del Mundo monument and also visit the nearby pre-Inca site of Rumicucho and the volcanic crater of Pulumahua. On Saturdays, tourists are advised to visit Otavalo, a very famous market town where the indigenous Indians offer their traditional dress and jewelry. Nature lovers shouldn't miss a visit to the Parque Nacional Cotopaxi, Ecuador's most visited national park.

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