

# Quito - Unique World Heritage

Quito, officially known as San Francisco de Quito is the capital of Ecuador. It is the first city in the world that was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. In 2008, it celebrated 30 years of being part of the list of World Heritage sites.

After La Paz in Bolivia, Quito is the second highest capital city in the world at 2,850 meters. Furthermore, Quito is the second most populated city in Ecuador, after Guayaquil. The city is also the official headquarters of the Union of South American Nations. Encircled by Andes volcanoes, nestled in the Guayllabamba river basin, Quito is a dreamer's paradise.



Due to its elevated location and mild climate, Quito can be visited any time of the year, making it a perfect tourist destination. The surrounding snow capped volcanoes, especially the Pichincha volcano standing tall at 4,790 meters, add a natural touch to its beauty.

The city boasts of 40 churches, 16 convents and monasteries, 12 museums and a rich cultural heritage. Many tourists enjoy exploring the city, by viewing the monuments and churches and getting to know the vibrant life of the local people.

Quito is a mix of old colonial architecture with upcoming modern complexes resulting in an old world charm of the city. There are plenty of attractions in the form of trendy shopping malls, high quality restaurants, colonial museums, churches, historical monuments and outdoor markets. As you enjoy your evening walking on the cobbled roads, trying to summarize the breathtaking view, you will definitely understand why Quito is a World Heritage site.



## **Historic Centre**

Nestled deep within the valley of towering Andean volcanoes, at 2,800 m (9,184 feet) above sea level, Quito's spectacular old town extends over 320 hectares - the largest historic center in the Americas.

This important zone in the Ecuadorian capital holds invaluable colonial churches, chapels, monasteries and convents as well as museums, plazas, charming interior patios, republican edifications and an interesting architecture of 20th century.

In November 1978, UNESCO declared Quito as the First World Cultural Heritage Site, describing the city as "a harmonic connection between human actions and nature that together create an exceptional and transcendental piece of art in its category".

This acknowledgement has encouraged the authorities to continue working in the preservation and rehabilitation of the elegant public spaces, the historical edifications and the intangible cultural heritage the Historic Center holds.

Nowadays, Quito's heart beats with an impressive cultural life and renovated vigor; so that citizens and visitors can enjoy these unique attractions. The "Jewel in Ecuador's crown" shines today brighter than ever before!



## **The Middle of the World**

Explore the monument that marks the Equatorial Line at zero latitude, where you can straddle both hemispheres at once and visit enlightening museums.

Hundreds of years after the indigenous peoples of Ecuador had established Catequilla as the centre of the world, a French expedition arrived to ascertain a geographically-measured centre. In the foothills of the Equinoctial Andes, the famous middle of the world monument marks the equatorial line: the centre of our planet earth: 0°-0'-0" Latitude.

As the day breaks over the town of San Antonio, and the clouds and morning mist are lit and lifted by hazy dawn sunlight, the silhouette of a trapezoidal monolith topped with a sphere breaks through the backdrop of a mountainous horizon.

The 18th century, the beginning of the modern age, the Age of Enlightenment, the century of the geographic study of the Earth... At this time, a group of outstanding French scientists dedicated themselves to the study and measurement of our planet. In 1736 their mission to determine the meridian arc of the Southern hemisphere brought them to Quito, Ecuador. The team of specialists spent almost eight years placing their markers of small pyramids across the Andean countryside. They suffered all sorts of privations, while their markers were destroyed by superstitious Indians or expropriated for building materials. In 1936, the centre of the world ascertained by the measurements made by the French Geodesic expedition was finally marked by a monument.

At 0-0'-0" latitude, on the equatorial line, the grandiose quadrangular pyramid of the Equinoctial

Monument. Placed with its four monoliths in 1979, the central monolith is decorated with a globe encircled by a silver band representing the equator. The globe is orientated corresponding to the true position of the earth.

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