

Top 10 Tourist Attractions in Ecuador

Ecuador's natural beauty, historical significance and cultural diversity make it one of the most exciting and memorable countries in the world for vacation with attractions to entice every type of tourist. Whether you are looking for the excitement of rafting on the mighty Amazon River, hiking through lush rainforest, or leisurely strolling through the many charming churches, there is no end of things to see and do in this beautiful equatorial land. The following are Ecuador's top 10 'must-see' attractions:

10. La Compania, Quito

"La Iglesia de la Compania de Jesus" (Church of the Society of Jesus) is centrally located in Quito and was built in the early 17th century. Its Baroque architecture is considered to be one of the finest examples still in existence. The church's central nave is lavishly embellished in gold leaf, and is considered to be particularly stunning.



9. Cotopaxi

At a height of 5,897 meters, Cotopaxi is Ecuador's second highest summit and is also one of the world's most active volcanoes, with eruptions since 1738 numbering more than 50. Visitors can enjoy a clear view of its white-capped peak from Quito.

8. Nariz del Diablo

Known locally as the "Devil's Nose", Nariz del Diablo is the railway track that stretches between the towns of Sibambe and Alausi. Considered to be one of the Andes' most amazing feats of engineering, it earned its name due to the high death toll of workers building the track. Riders of the track are enthralled by the spectacular landscape views from the train windows as the train steeply climbs towards Alausi.



7. Banos

Nestled at the base of Tungurahua, just one of Ecuador's many active volcanoes, Banos is a small city that boasts thermal hot springs fed by the volcano. Often referred to as the "Gateway to the Amazon" Banos has a wealth of beauty that includes gigantic waterfalls, the most impressive being Pailon de Diablo.

6. Tena

The starting point for many of the wonderful jungle adventures Ecuador has to offer, Tena is located right in the Amazon rainforest, and is a particularly popular spot for those looking for exciting kayaking and white water rafting experiences. Founded by missionaries, Tena is known for its history of the cinnamon industry.

5. Montanita

Beach lovers and surfers alike will find Montanita the perfect place to ride the waves and relax on beautiful warm sands. Once a sleepy little fishing village, Montanita has developed into a stimulating tourist destination with a variety of exciting nightclubs and bars to discover by night, and cafes to enjoy by day. Montanita's ideal surfing conditions draw surfers from around the world.

4. Catedral Nueva, Cuenca

Ecuador's third largest city, Cuenca enjoys a temperate climate all year round. The most recognizable landmark is the Catedral Nueva, which took almost a century to construct. Its 3 huge blue Czechoslovakian tiled domes and alabaster and marble exterior façade make this one of the most aesthetically exciting tourist attractions.



3. Otavalo Market

No traveler to Ecuador should leave without exploring the local arts, crafts and clothing markets located in the small town of Otavalo. With a myriad of handiwork available both to see and purchase on Saturdays at Plaza de Ponchos, tourists will be able to choose from stone and wood carvings, woven clothing and jewelry to take home souvenirs for family and friends.

2. San Francisco Church, Quito

The Iglesia y Monasterio de San Francisco is situated in the Old Town district of Quito, and is a massive complex that covers almost two blocks. Considered one of Latin America's most culturally significant

centers, the San Francisco Church and the adjoining museum house several masterpieces, one of which is a sculpture by Legarda, depicting the Holy Virgin. Built upon land where previously an Incan palace stood, construction of the church is said to have begun as far back as 1550.

1. Galapagos Islands

Located approximately 620 miles from Ecuador, the remote and isolated Galapagos Islands are home to a variety of marine wild life including penguins, sea lions, giant tortoises, iguana and many different species of birds. While access to this world famous tourist attraction is strictly controlled to protect the integrity of the islands unique ecosystem, tourists are able to approach and view much of the wildlife, all under the close supervision of a park-certified tour guide.

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