



American
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The Spirit of Alpinism

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Cayambe-Antisana Skills Expedition Program Itinerary

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Day 1: Arrive -Quito (9500 ft / 2895 m) – Start of Part 1

This is the first scheduled day of the program. Arrive in Quito and meet your guide and other members of the expedition at Hotel Reina Isabel. The first day is designated for travel to Ecuador and becoming situated in country. For those who arrive early, we will provide you with a variety of sight seeing options including a tour of the historic colonial sector of Quito and El Panecillo overlooking the city. We will spend the night at Hotel Reina Isabel.

Day 2: Acclimatize - Otavalo Market

After meeting the rest of your group for breakfast, we will drive north, crossing the line of the Equator on our way to the Otavalo market. We begin our acclimatization by exploring the market which is filled with indigenous crafts and food. For lunch, we will take a leisurely walk to Lago de San Pablo and dine on the lake shore across from the dormant Imbabura Volcano (15,255ft). We will return to Hotel Reina Isabel for the evening.

Day 3: Acclimatize - Cerro Paschoa (13,776 ft / 4199 m)

Today we will go on our first acclimatization hike on Cerro Paschoa. The Paschoa Wildlife Refuge has been protected since 1982, and exists as it did in pre-Colombian times. In the forest below Cerro Paschoa we will hike among stands of pumamaqui, polyapis, podocarpus, and sandalwood trees as we watch for some of the more than one hundred species of native birds. We will return to Hotel Reina Isabel for the evening.

Day 4: Acclimatize - Gua Gua Pichincha (15,696 ft / 4784 m)

We head north of Quito to the Pichincha Massif today for our final acclimatization hike on Gua Gua Pichincha. This hike provides views of the central valley from high above Quito. In the afternoon, we travel to one of the oldest haciendas in Ecuador (built in 1580). The hacienda is located on the lower slopes of Cayambe, making it a great initial base camp for our climb. Night at Hacienda Guachala.

Day 5: Travel to Cayambe Refuge (15,250 ft / 4648 m)

We make our way through the small village of Cayambe to have a close look at the simple rural architecture, which typifies villages in the Andean foothills. Eventually, we reach the famous

Cayambe Refuge with breathtaking views of the precipitous Glaciar Hermoso (“beautiful glacier”). In the afternoon, guides will give instruction for novice climbers and review for experienced climbers on glacier travel (including how we use the climbing rope – tying in, spacing climbers, prusiks attachment and use) and crevasse rescue. In the evening, if the skies cooperate we will enjoy the alpenglow at sunset showing our route up the south and western flanks of Cayambe. Spend the night at the Cayambe Refuge

Day 6: Skills practice on Cayambe

Much of this day will be spent discussing and practicing alpine climbing skills to prepare for our summit attempt on Cayambe. The glacier above the hut provides an excellent classroom for learning and reviewing basic glacier travel skills, ice axe and crampon technique, and crevasse rescue. After spending the day on the ice, we return to the comfort of the refuge and discuss our plan for summit day. Spend the night at the Cayambe Refuge.

Day 7: Climb Cayambe (18,996 ft / 5790 m)

We start our climb before dawn; making use of the firm snow conditions caused by the cooler night time temperatures. The route takes us up varied terrain, including a short section of 4th class belayed scrambling, and climbing until we reach the glacier; we then configure our rope for glacier travel. The snow and ice climbing on Cayambe is moderate, and the steepness remains at a comfortable 35 degrees. We will take a fairly long break at Picos Jarrin (17,390 ft/5,300 m), a big rock outcrop where we will have good shelter from the wind if we need it. During the break we'll have food and drink and make any necessary equipment adjustments. Adjustments will also be made to the rope teams to allow each climber to climb at the best rate for them. Below the summit, the bergschrund has always presented interesting route finding. We usually need to traverse one way or the other around the bergschrund, to reach the final slope below the summit dome. The traverse creates an exciting finish to one of the great classics of equatorial climbs. Descend and spend the night at Hacienda Guachala.

Day 8: Drive to Antisana Reserve

This day allows for rest and recovery after our ascent of Cayambe. We leave Cayambe and drive south, passing through the remote Andean village of Pintag, following a winding mountain road up into the páramo. Parts of the Antisana area were privately owned as recently as 2012, when the government bought out the private land owners to expand the Antisana Reserve. In addition to protecting a beautiful wilderness area, the government has strong interest in the region as a water source; water from the mountain is being used as the principal potable water supply for the south part of Quito. The reserve provides wildlife habitat for deer, foxes, and bears; we commonly see condors here, the largest flying bird in the Andes. Night in a local hacienda.

Day 9: Drive to Antisana Base Camp (13,448 ft / 4100 m)

We have a second easy day as we cross open grasslands and drive through a remote region of old hacienda lands, enjoying great views of Sincholagua (15,988 ft / 4,873 m) and Cotopaxi (19,347 ft / 4,099 m). We visit the Nature Reserve's office at La Mica Lake where we present our climbing permits and then drive further before establishing our camp near the base of Antisana (13,448 ft / 4,100 m). Night at Antisana base camp.

Day 10: Climb Antisana (18,827ft / 5,740 m) and Return to Quito – End of Part 1

Rising at about midnight for an "alpine start" we begin the day with a drive of thirty minutes to the beginning of our climb at 15,092 ft / 4600 meters. We will climb on easy terrain for about forty-five minutes before donning our crampons for ascending up the glacier, amidst great views of Cotopaxi. The alpine start allows us to take advantage of the firm route conditions during the early morning hours. We gradually make our way up the impressive glacier to the saddle between Antisana Cumbre Maxima (highest summit) and Pico Sur (south summit). Near the saddle, route finding becomes integral to finding access to the upper reaches of the mountain. Ultimately our route will involve a combination of moderately angled glacier travel and short, steep sections that require the use of a full range of snow and ice techniques for intermediate terrain. The varied gradients and glacial configurations make this a particularly interesting and enjoyable ascent. If conditions allow, we enjoy food, drink, and a rest on the summit while photographing Cayambe to our north and rumbling Cotopaxi to our south. Upon descent we return to our vehicles, and drive back to Quito where we will have dinner and celebrate our successes. Night at Hotel Reina Isabel in Quito.