



The Virgin of Quito altarpiece.

QUITO'S HISTORIC CENTER: HALF-DAY TOUR

Tour Quito's *Centro Histórico*, a living neighborhood at the heart of the city that shows both the colonial legacy of Ecuador's capital and contemporary Andean culture. Founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city, Quito's historic center—the largest and best preserved in Spanish America—was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, second in the world after Galápagos. In recent years the entire area has undergone a revitalization, which we learn about during a tour of one of the local markets.

Departing the hotel after breakfast, we begin our walking tour at Plaza Grande, with its monument to the heroes of independence. Also called Plaza de la Independencia, the square is flanked by the Cathedral, Municipal Palace, and sprawling Archbishop's Palace. Admire the ornate *Compañía de Jesús*, the Jesuit church with its dazzling gold-leaf nave, and explore the remarkable Church of San Francisco—one of the great religious buildings of the New World. Its impressive façade and atrium lead to a gilt interior, in the Baroque mode but influenced by Moorish style, with a winged Virgin of Quito at its main altar. We stop at a café, run by a local non-profit. Enjoy the abundance of tropical and Andean produce and diverse wares on display at a bustling covered market in the company of a neighborhood guide. The recently renovated Mercado San Francisco, oldest in the city, is known for its produce as well as its herbalists and healers.

Return to the hotel after the tour or, if you like, remain in the center on your own for lunch, to wander the shops of La Ronda, or visit the Casa del Alabado Archaeological Museum.

Tour Preparation and Packing: This tour includes walking short distances over uneven and rough surfaces without handrails or other aids. Please wear good walking shoes, protect yourself from the Equatorial sun, and expect changeable mountain weather conditions. Women should not wear shorts or short skirts; men also rarely wear shorts in this conservative city where people dress up. On this tour we visit churches, where shorts would not be considered appropriate attire.

Altitude: 9,200 feet. Do not overexert yourself. Eat moderately, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

Climate: Temperatures are reasonably constant throughout the year with daytime temperatures in the 70s°F and nighttime temperatures in the 50s°F. Northern winters (October-May) are cloudier with more rain than the northern summer (June-September). You should dress in layers; bring a sweater or jacket even if the day is warm and sunny, as well as a rain protection (especially from October to May).

Price and Inclusions: \$110.00 per person. Includes exclusive tour with driver, guide, coffee/drinks, and gratuities.

For more information call us at 1.800.397.3348 or call your Travel Advisor