

Central Ecuador and the Amazon

Sept.- Oct. 2013

Riobamba

Transportation - (4 hours from Quito)
Private van with Edwin Correa (\$120?)
Stopped in Ambato for lunch

Hotel

Hotel La Estación
Av. Unidad Nacional 29 -15 y Carabobo
03-2955226
www. hotelaestacion.com

Across from the Train Station and Plaza Alfaro

It's seen better days - the restaurant was closed and we were about the only guests there. Access to roof had nice views of volcanoes

Nariz del Diablo

Ticket per person regular price - \$25; includes ticket for lunch in Sibambe (10/2/13); train ride is 2 1/2 hours long. We left Alausi at 11 and arrived in Sibambe at 13:30 famous train ride of switchbacks requiring the train to move forward and backward as it swithes tracks. No longer allowed to sit on the roof of the cars since the death of a tourist a few years ago.

you take a bus from Riobamba to board the train at Alausi

Alausi is a sweet little town - lots of building upgrades going on. I think it would be interesting to stay here overnight to catch the train.

The train stops in Sibambe at the station there for lunch, a touristic dance performance by indigenous, and has a nice small museum about the building of the switchbacks.

Transportation

Bus from Riobamba to Baños -

Transporte Riobamba - Terminal Terrestre or Terminal Oriental - different from the terminal that we went to to go to the Nariz del Diablo

This bus went directly to Baños and did not go through Ambato (skirted it)

Fabulous view of valley as you approach Baños - can see the volcano which you cannot see from the city of Baños.

left at 9 a.m. on Oct. 3 - \$1.50 each

Baños (Oct. 3-4, 2013)

Bus from Riobamba arrives at the Terminal Terrestre, a short walk from the hostel

Hotel

Hostal Plantas y Blanco (Plants and White Hostel)

Calle Luis A. Martinez y 12 de Noviembre

+(593) 0993654142

<http://www.plantasyblanco.com>

info@plantasyblanco.com

\$12/ person/night for double with private bath (not including breakfast)

Excellent location within walking distance of everything

Breakfast is very good but you pay extra

Had a very nice matrimonial room on second floor with a view of the waterfall

Have a nice cafe on the top floor terrasse with a good view of the town and the waterfall

Things to Do

Waterfall Route (Ruta de La Cascadas) - We went with a bus tour (can also do it by touristic chiva) but there is an adventurous 60 km. biking trip from Baños to Puyo (rent your own bike; bike down and take a bus/truck back - many people only go halfway as far as El Pailon del Diablo waterfall) El Pailon del Diablo is breathtaking - be sure to stop there (pay a fee). Take a cable car across the Rio Pastaza gorge to another; do a zipline; walk a swing bridge. Can also do puenting.

If you take a bus, be sure to sit on the right side going down the ruta.

Swing at the End of the World - Casa Del Arbol...the views are incredible of the Tungurahua volcano - we didn't do this but would like to next time - looks like a real adrenalin rush! You can hike or take a taxi.

Las Piscinas de la Virgen:

Went to check out the local baths in town a few blocks from the hostel at the base of the waterfall - bit run down - pools didn't look very inviting. You could see the source of the water coming out of the ground which was cool.

We walked to the waterfall.

Museum next to the Church - beautiful courtyard.

Church - fiestas where a different barrio had a procession to the church each day - procession with people carrying flowers, preceded by statues of the saints, a band, and setting off firecrackers.

Check out the booths selling sugar cane, candies, and the famous taffy that you see guys pulling and tugging in every doorway.

A lot of tagua artists in Baños

Huillacuna Casa del Arte - wonderful Art Gallery

12 de Noviembre y Montalvo

Fabuous local sculptor - Carlos Moreta - sculptures in wood - fell in love with one of his sculptures (\$1500) of a woman splayed out horizontally

Gallery also had paintings by Claudio Alberto Soriano

They also have rooms here but we have no first hand knowledge of them (pretty good rating on Tripadvisor).

Restaurants

Casa Hood - Calle Martinez y Eloy Alfaro (Atras del Supermercado)

(it is confusing because there is also a Cafe Hood and a Cafe Good)

Great cafe a few blocks from the Hostal on same street.

Good coffee and food and fun place to hang. They show movies at 4 p.m.

Swiss Bistro Baños -

Calle Martinez y Eloy Alfaro (again down the street from our hostel)

http://www.swiss-bistro.com/#_=_

Painted like a cow in black and white - you can't miss the Swiss flag symbol

Yummy Swiss food - Nice change from Ecuadorian food

Took a bus to Tena from Baños.

Although we had tickets with seat assignments, they overbooked the bus and did not have seats for Maureen and Buzz (who sat on a makeshift seat at the back).

Tena

Hakuna Matata Lodge

Archidona (10 km north of Tena)

Rudy and Marcellina are Belgians

www.hakunamat.com

06-2889617

4day/3night package - basic price \$335/person

Total stay= \$705.60 or \$352/pp

\$159.84 per person lodging, 17.83 drinks, 40 12%tax, 33.75 10%service, \$140 pp rafting, and \$13.84 2% credit card fee. (Works out to \$65/nite for basic lodging with food, taxes, and service included without rafting)

River rafting on the Jatunyaku River in Tena:

Rios Ecuador

www.riosecuador.com

Damaris Andy

Reservations: 099 6804046

Tena # - (593 6) 2886727

reservations@riosecuador.com

Venancio (Ven), Jorge (our guide), Leandro (Jorge's son on the safety kayak)

Jorge was in 5 international championship competitions

This was organized as part of our package at Hakuna Matata for \$140/person

Photos posted on facebook page.

Restaurants

Delicias de Italia -

Calle Marañon 131 y 15 de Noviembre

Good food, ugly decor. Owned by Christian (Italian) and Anita (Ecuadorian) - lived in Milan.

La Casa Blanca BandB - in Tena

Gary and Michelle

Beautiful new BandB facility

Transportation

Fabian Quihivi (friend of Gary's from Casa Blanca)

Drove us in his taxi from Tena to Comuna del Rios - a 3 hour rough road - to catch the canoe to Yachana Lodge. He charged \$60; Yachana said they would charge \$90.

Good deal especially since the road was so rough. He also took us into town for dinner the night we stayed at Casa Blanca.

Papallacta

Hotel Termas de Papallacta

Via Baeza Km. 65

www.termaspapallacta.com

06-2895052

recepcion@termaspapallacta.com

Basic rate - \$144/night for double - Oct. 14, 2013

Total stay was \$250.14 (\$144 for hotel incl. tax and service), massage \$44, and food \$62

Entrance to the Terme Baths (Balenario) were included in the stay (normally \$6/person if you were not a hotel guest. The Spa entrance was \$15/person. 15% discount on spa services for guests.

Latacunga

Took a bus from Quito to Latacunga
Went for Mama Negra Festival

Hostal Tiana

Very basic hostel - breakfast was bread and jam

Nice location on a pedestrian street a block from Parque Vicente Leon and convenient to the Mama Negra action (centered on Iglesia La Merced and market area).

Got high marks on TA and LP and from Jean (Bahia friend who lives in Quito) but I would NOT stay here again. We had a double room on the second floor with shared bath (3 to choose from). The place was dirty and the bathroom toilet leaked and this bathroom was disgusting and smelled. The garbage bins were not emptied frequently enough. Mo and Buzz had a double with private bath on main floor.

No heat in the rooms so a bit chilly but we had a nice window with a view of Cotopaxi Volcano from our room. We had cookies in our bag on the table and got infested with ants.

Had access to the roof for a view of Cotopaxi and Ilisha .

Very nice people

Alternative hotels:

Best but most upscale: I would stay here next time.

Hotel Rodelu

Calle Quito 16-31

03-800956/811264

Double - \$40/night (tax and breakfast included) for the room.

One block from Parque Vicente Leon

Hotel Rosim

www.hotelrosim.com

Calle Quito 16-49 y Padre Salcedo

03-2800853

Double - \$28/night (tax not included) for the room and no breakfast
Next to Hotel Rodelu and same owners I believe.

Restaurants

Restaurant and Pizzeria Rodelu - wood burning oven for pizza.
At the Hotel Rodelu
Calle Quito 16-31

Guadalajara Grill - Laura was the owner and chef (real name- Soraya Matehu). She had lived in the US so spoke good english. Really nice.

Quijano y Ordoñez 5-110 y Luis F. Vivero (close to Hostal Tiana)
03-2806100

Had dinner (ok Mexican food) one night with the Festival parading outside the window.
Had almuerzo there for \$3.00

El Leñador - Av. Amazonas near Calle Guayaquil - cheap roasted chicken platters

Quilatoa Loop

Beautiful turquoise crater lake (especially beautiful if the sun is out)
Went with a guide who made us lunch here

Saquisilí Market - amazing and famous animal market. (4 in all: Animal, Grain and vegetables, Small animal (guinea pigs and fowl), and artesanias).

Hired a taxi to take us around rather than go by bus. \$8 I think.
20 minutes from Latacunga.

Did not go to Cotapaxi

Resources

<http://www.thisisecuador.com> - also a little magazine to look for . I found it in Quito at a Tour company.

La Amazonía, also known as *El Oriente*, or "the east", comprises the [Amazon rainforest](#) areas in the eastern part of the country, accounting for just under half of the country's total surface area, though populated by less than 5% of the population.

Napo Wildlife Center

Guides were Fabian (Quechua) and Miguel Carrera (shicama73@yahoo.com)
Oct. 11-14
3 nights/4 days
\$750/per person

Yahcana Lodge
Oct. 9-11
2 nights/3 days - \$340/per person

Abel was our guide (friend of Octavio's from Hakuna Matata)
Owner was Douglas

SAFARI TOURS

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10th floor, Office 1002B
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USA & Canada Toll free: 1-866-247-2405
France local number: 09.75.18.03.40
www.safari.com.ec
skype: safarieccuador
Quito - Ecuador

The country has four main geographic regions:

- **La Costa**, or "the coast", comprises the low-lying land in the western part of the country, including the Pacific coastline.
- **La Sierra**, or "the highlands", is the high-altitude belt running north–south along the centre of the country, its mountainous terrain dominated by the [Andes](#) mountain range.
- **La Amazonía**, also known as *El Oriente*, or "the east", comprises the [Amazon rainforest](#) areas in the eastern part of the country, accounting for just under half of the country's total surface area, though populated by less than 5% of the population.

- **La Región Insular** is the region comprising the [Galápagos Islands](#), some 1,000 kilometres (620 mi) west of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.