

CUENCA UNVEILED: AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION

4-Day Tour in the Andes



Wander through cobblestone streets to discover a city brimming with captivating architecture, vibrant markets, and welcoming locals eager to share their rich cultural heritage. Cuenca's renowned craftsmanship and the importance of guilds in the region, such as artisans and carpenters are evident in every corner, showcasing the region's dedication to preserving traditional skills while embracing contemporary influences.

Join us on this immersive journey to experience the heart and soul of Cuenca, where history, culture, and modernity come together to create an unforgettable adventure.

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Day 1: Welcome to Cuenca (B/L/-)

Upon your early morning arrival in Cuenca, you will be transported to your hotel to prepare for a discovery tour of the beautifully maintained historic district, where colonial architecture harmoniously blends with modern structures and natural surroundings. With its rich cultural and historical background, the city offers numerous sites such as the San Sebastian neighborhood, the Museum of Modern Art, and the main square, Parque Calderón, surrounded by cathedrals and other important buildings.

Stroll along the picturesque Barranco area and the evergreen Tomebamba River trails, noting the unique bridge structures. Follow this with a fascinating tour of a Panama hat workshop and museum—a fantastic opportunity to acquire this unique Ecuadorian souvenir.



In the afternoon, you will visit the Mirador de Turi, a wonderful viewpoint where the city's terracotta roofs and blue domes can be admired against the imposing backdrop of the mountains. Back in the historic district, you will be enchanted by a family-owned jewelry workshop. Here, you will learn about the importance of silver to the region's development and enjoy a hands-on experience making your very own silver ring. At the end of the tour, you will be transported back to your hotel. Overnight.

Day 2: Mountain Sanctuary and Ingapirca Fortress

Today you will enjoy a scenic drive north of the city. Along the way, you will admire the mountain scenery and the colorful traditional clothing of local indigenous communities.

The first stop of the day is a visit to a sanctuary that sits atop a hill. The majestic church of Virgen del Rocio is nestled among the mountains and can be easily seen from the road.



Featuring granite rocks in a Gothic-like style, it exudes charm as if it were created from a fairy tale. Enjoy the magnificent landscape from various viewpoints atop the hill, where you can also admire the intricate work on its facade and the many stairs leading to its entrance.

Back on the road, you may see locals on the side of the road preparing "cascaritas," a pork dish made using a very special cooking method.

Your next destination is Ecuador's largest Incan ruins complex: Ingapirca. This fortress was built atop a Cañari civilization adoration site, revealing the intriguing blend of both cultures before Spanish colonization. This fascinating site features a system of aqueducts where water flowed to the ritual baths and irrigated sacred crops, showcasing agricultural knowledge through a solar and moon "calendar." Return to Cuenca, overnight.

Note: This tour is available Wednesday to Sunday.





Day 3: Pottery and Moorlands (B/L/-)

Enjoy an immersive pottery experience with a practical tour and class at the workshop of Ivan Encalada in his family-owned pottery shop. This hands-on experience will turn you into an artist while you gain important insights into different pottery techniques and the significance of this craft.

Next, you will head west of Cuenca for a fantastic visit to Cajas National Park, which features numerous exploration trails at different elevations. Here, you can admire its captivating moorlands, hundreds of lakes, and the Polylepis tree forest. Capture stunning photographs of the breathtaking vistas of the mountains shaping the western Andes of Ecuador. At the end of the day, return to your hotel in Cuenca. Overnight

Day 4: Music, Traditions and Craftsmanship (B/L/-)

Today's adventure will take you to the small yet picturesque town of San Bartolomé, welcoming you with its beautiful main square and colonial church. You may also see local women weaving authentic Panama hats at the entrances of houses or on the corners of the town center. Many of the locals are musicians and guitar luthiers, so you will enjoy a visit to a small local workshop specializing in acoustic guitars.



In Gualaceo, you will enjoy a delightful visit to a traditional market, walking through stalls of various produce and foods, including the traditional "hornado." Gualaceo is also known for its shoe-making industry, giving you time to browse local shops and do some shopping.

In the afternoon, Chordeleg, a true silversmith town, welcomes you with its famous filigree earrings that hang from the light poles around town. Filigree is an art that uses fine wires to form delicate pieces of jewelry. This quaint town is a hidden gem full of small, locally-owned silver shops for you to explore and shop.



Before heading back to Cuenca, you will visit an artisanal weaving workshop, where the renowned “Macanas,” colorful pashminas, are made using an ancient and complex traditional technique known as IKAT.

Return to Cuenca for an airport drop-off and the end of services.

Note: It is advisable to book your flight back to Quito or Guayaquil after 6:00 pm.

INCLUDED

- Airport Pick-up and Drop-off
- Private Transportation
- 3 nights of hotel accommodation
- Bilingual Guide
- Meals as described in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L= Lunch). Meals include one soft drink per serving.
- Entrance Fees
- Workshops as described in the itinerary; materials included
- One simple silver ring per person

NOT INCLUDED

- Airfare tickets
- Dinner and meals not described in the itinerary
- Personal Expenses
- Extra soft beverages and alcoholic drinks
- Extra and/or non-scheduled visit/activity
- Tips

Notes:

The itinerary and order of visits are subject to change due to guests' interests, time constraints, physical endurance, weather, municipal regulations, safety, and/or unforeseen circumstances.