



TOUR UPDATE

The Newsletter of mikesworldtour



Tour Highlight:

April 2023
Quito, Ecuador



2nd Highest Capital in the World

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A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Ecuador assured independence from Spain in 1822 and became part of the Gran Colombia country but seceded in 1830 to be an independent nation. Initially there was a political feud between the aristocrats in Quito and the cosmopolitan people of Guayaquil who felt that they paid more taxes although they generated more industry for the nation. During WW2 since Ecuador had not officially claimed a lot of its territory where native tribes lives, Peru invaded and no one could help Ecuador since they were preoccupied with WW2. Ecuador had to cede the Amazon lands to Peru and never got them back. After the country switched between democracy and two military governments include famous caudillo José María Velasco Ibarra. The end of the 20th century included neoliberalism, economic booms, and closer relations with the US. Indigenous rights is a major problem here today.

Quito, Ecuador



Some quick tips for Quito :

- The best place to stay for convenience is the historical center, but it can sometimes feel like a ghost town at night
- There are a lot of great day trips from Quito but make sure to book on the company site and not trip advisor to save money
- Quito is the 2nd highest capital city in elevation in the world, make sure to acclimate
- The Mitad del Mundo is not actually at the equator, you have to go to Museo Intiñan for that

FOOD

BANH MI

The Floresta neighborhood has some great international cuisine restaurant serving dishes from places all around the world. It is near the district with the embassies in the city so this makes sense. I got this recommendation from friends that studied in Quito in the Fall semester and it was so good. I got the drunken noodles which was this pad thai style dish with a really good sauce. I wish we had more time to try the restaurants around here because they all looked so good.



HELADERIA & CAFE CARIBE

This breakfast location has been around in the historic district for over 50 years! Since 1950 this place has been serving delicious breakfast to tourists and Ecuadorians alike. They have everything from an entire breakfast to just an egg sandwich ranging from \$2-\$5 for your entire breakfast. I had an egg sandwich that was very good. They also serve ice cream all day which I will get to in a quick second.



STREET ICE CREAM

Something that I loved about Quito is their affection for ice cream, specifically soft serve, at all times during the day. It was very common to see people eating ice cream in the morning. With places at every corner I was eating soft serve multiple times a day for only \$1! My favorite was at Heladeria & Cafe Caribe with their Vanilla and Strawberry swirl soft serve that I might've had multiples times a day all weekend.



Quito, Ecuador

EXPERIENCES

The entire historic district of Quito is listed as a Unesco world heritage sight so there are so many things to do. Being in the mountains there are fantastic views from above of the city, and many day trips to see the beautiful nature outside the city. You really can keep yourself busy in Quito learning about the history of the Incas who once lived in Quito as well.

VIRGEN DEL PANECILLO

Overlooking the city of Quito at 135 feet is the tallest aluminum statue in the world and one of the highest statues in South America (actually taller than Christ the Redeemer in Rio). In 1950 city officials designed to put a statue on the hill that is visible from the entire city based on a wooden replica designed by Spanish architect Bernardo de Legarda in 1734. The statue is a replica of the Virgin of Quito and was designed by another Spanish sculptor Agustín de la Herrán Matorras. The statue is made of 7,400 pieces of aluminum.



PLAZA DE LA INDEPENDENCIA

Also known as Plaza Grande, this is the main square in Quito surrounded by a church (you guessed it!) as well as the presidential palace. The Spanish began calling it Plaza Grande in 1612 because it was the biggest square at the time, and was used similarly to many European main squares during the Spanish rule. In the early 20th century the city decided to add French inspired parks into the square, and in 1906 they unveiled a new statue in the middle of the square as a tribute to the independence movement in the country.

INDEPENDENCE MONUMENT

Located in the middle Plaza Grande is a statue to the heroes of the independence movement also known as the heroes of August 10, 1809. It was inaugurated into the city in 1906 on the anniversary of the first call for Independence from the Spanish. Quito was the first city to disobey the Spanish crown in 1809 (hence the name of the monument), and this represent the courage it took to stand up to the Spanish. At this time they overthrew the Spanish Count in charge of Quito, but did not get full independence until years later.



Quito, Ecuador

BASILICA AND CONVENT OF SAN FRANCISCO

Also located in the Plaza Grande, this is the most important and oldest religious site in Ecuador. It took 150 years to build the structure, and has many styles incorporated within it. It is part of the Roman Catholic church systems and was completed in 1650 (yea its old). Inside is home to over 3,500 pieces of Colonial art as well as a library that was said to be the best in the Viceroyalty of Peru during the colonial period. Today it is used for religious, educational, and public health. It is about 40,000 square meters in area and has three temples as well as an atrium inside.



(I forgot to get a good picture of this so going to have to use Wikipedia for this picture)

CATEDRAL METROPOLITANA DE QUITO



Also located in the Plaza Grande (there are a lot of important things here) this is the highest ranking Catholic church in Ecuador. It was built from 1562 to 1565, and is probably the oldest church in South America. The Pichincha Volcano eruption in 1660 caused a lot of damage in Quito, and the church had to be rebuilt with the inside redecorated. An earthquake in 1755 led to another reconstruction of the church, and there were two more reconstructions in 1797 and 1868 (also due to an earthquake). The remains of Venezuelan Marshal Antonio José de Sucre who is a hero of Latin American Independence are also here.



CARONDELET PALACE

Also located in Plaza Grande (I swear its the last one) this is the official seat of government for Ecuador. Its history stems back to 1570 where old Spanish royal families had their houses in the center of the city (to show their importance obviously). The earthquake in 1627 caused repairs to be made to the building. After independence it was home to the Southern Department of Gran Colombia and Simón Bolivar went here a few times! This is the official residence of the President, and has recently been opened to the public for tours. Surprisingly it has been looted many times over the years so the furniture inside is new.



Quito, Ecuador

CALLE LA RONDA

One of the most traditional (in colonial terms) streets in Quito, it used to be home to writers, poets, politicians, and bohemians. Its name refers to the Spanish night patrols, but had the name Ullaguangayacu once the Spanish arrived. Some of its famous characters that lived here were Faustino Rayo, Carlos Guerra, and Taita Pendejadas (if you understand Spanish those names should give you a laugh. Today there are many bars and restaurants that line this street. The neighborhood (La Ronda) and the street were remodeled in 2006.



PLAZA SANTO DOMINGO

Located in the historic center, this plaza also has the church of Santo Domingo that was built in 1540. It was given to the community of Dominicans (church order & hence the name). Here is where many of the city's public transit lines converge making the square perfect for tourists and locals alike. Traditionally this was the entrance into the city (now the Old Town) from the south, and sometimes goes by the name Plaza Sucre which is shown by the statue that is in the middle of the square.

CENTRO DE ARTE CONTEMPORANEO

This art museum once used to be a military hospital, but now has been converted into housing various art exhibits. Currently the museum has an exhibition called Brujerías (witchcraft for my non-Spanish speakers) which is influenced by Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel 100 years of Solitude and another exhibit that focuses on feminism and feminist voices within Ecuador. Another really cool thing about this museum is its use of natural light in its spaces as it has a rooftop that you can view. Another great thing about this museum is that its free to enter!



Quito, Ecuador

BASÍLICA DEL VOTO NACIONAL



Probably my favorite views of Quito, this is the largest Neo-Gothic building in America. The idea for the building came in 1883 as a commemoration to Ecuador, but it was not completed until late into the 20th century. It was officially inaugurated in 1988, and it took so long that there was a joke in Quito that once the building was finished the world would end or Ecuador would no longer be a nation. Nevertheless the views from here are spectacular, and you can climb up all the way to see the clocks and get views from the top.



MITAD DEL MUNDO

Built between 1979 and 1982 this monument is made to show the equator line in Ecuador and praise the mission in the 18th century to find the exact point of the Ecuador. There are only two exact points located exactly on the equator included the Quitsato sundial and Catequilla archeology site. Within this monument is literally an entire town dedicated to the equator with a town square, restaurants, and souvenir shops.



MUSEO DE SITIO INTIÑAN

Located directly next to the Mitad del Mundo is the Intiñan Site Museum. It is a little complicated and controversial where the real equator is, and this museum claims to be located on the exact equator line. After the Mitad del Mundo was built modern GPS actually put the equator here. In this museum they give history about native tribes to Ecuador as well as various science experiments related to the equator. Some of my favorites were how water does not spin on the equator, balancing an egg is hard to do on the equator, and when you try to walk in a straight line on the equator you are pulled from each side. This is definitely a really cool museum to check out if you like science.



Quito, Ecuador

QUILOTOA CRATER

About three hours away from Quito is this turquoise lake that may be the most beautiful lake I have ever seen. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour to hike down and up (it is lokwey hard so beware) but totally worth it. At the lake you can canoe or take a boat tour around the lake. It is technically a volcano and the color of the lake comes from the minerals that came out of the volcano in the past eruptions. It is the most West Volcano in the Ecuadorian Andes region. The lake is 250 meters deep, and its last eruption was about 800 years ago which is said to have been catastrophic.



PARQUE CAROLINA

Quito has many great parks, and the city is great for nature lovers. In this park there is a botanical garden with all types of different plant species. It also has a Japanese Garden (if you read my Buenos Aires blog you know how much I love these) which was also very beautiful. There is a lake/river (water attraction) inside the park where you can rent pedal boats as well vendors selling ice cream and people just enjoying their day. There is something so simple about a park in the middle of a big city because it seems like life here stops and everything is calm.



TELÉFERICO

Opening in 2005 this cable car can take you up to 3117 meters on the 2.5 kilometer long cable car. It leads to a trail where you can hike as well as some amazing viewpoints of the city. You literally can see the entire city from here and it was cool to see the famous buildings we had been in before looking so small from above. You are in the clouds up here with some of the clouds getting pretty close to the ground where you feel like you can touch them



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!