



Central Highlands

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Best Places to Hike

- ➔ Laguna Limpiopungo (p133)
- ➔ Laguna Quilotoa (p141)
- ➔ Sendero de los Contrabandistas (p156)
- ➔ Parque Nacional Sangay (p157)
- ➔ Volcán Chimborazo (p160)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Hostería La Ciénega (p134)
- ➔ Hostal Tiana (p137)
- ➔ Hotel Roka Plaza (p147)
- ➔ Posada del Arte (p154)
- ➔ Llullu Llama (p144)

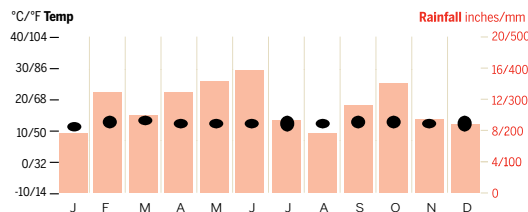
Why Go?

The rooftop of Ecuador offers up more adventure per square meter than most places on earth. This vast region cut from fire and ice inspires the imagination and offers a remarkable journey deep into the myth and beauty of the Andes. There are heavenly volcanoes, glacier-capped peaks, high-arching grassy plains, surprisingly quaint colonial cities, bucolic haciendas, and precipitous green valleys that take you from highlands down past waterfalls and indigenous villages to the heavy-aired environs of the Amazon Basin.

Most trips to the area will include a couple of days in the region's exceptional national parks and reserves, including Los Ilinizas, Cotopaxi, Llanganates, Chimborazo and Sangay. The Quilotoa Loop brings hiking and biking travelers through traditional indigenous communities to an impossibly deep crater lake. And there are rail adventures and crafts markets, plus plenty of tropical adventures in the verdant valley leading down to the ever-popular town of Baños.

When to Go

Riobamba



Jun–Sep The dry season is the top time for climbs, bikes and treks.

Sep or Nov Hit up the Mamá Negra festival in Latacunga.

Dec & Jan A dry spell gives way to adventure – plus everything is green!

Central Highlands Highlights

- 1 Hike your way along the backcountry roads of the **Quilotoa Loop** (p139).
- 2 Get splashed by waterfalls as you plunge down the **Baños-Puyo road** (p156).
- 3 Take the high road to **Salinas** (p159) against a sublime high-altitude backdrop.
- 4 Ride the rails of **La Nariz del Diablo** (p168), an unparalleled switchback descent down a sheer rock face.
- 5 Hike beneath, around and up one of the world's highest active volcanoes in **Parque Nacional Cotopaxi** (p132).