



# Central Highlands

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Restaurant Roka Plaza (p138)
- » La Posada de Tigua (p132)
- » Café Mariane (p146)
- » Mercado La Merced (p157)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hostería La Ciénega (p126)
- » Hostal Tiana (p129)
- » Hotel Roka Plaza (p137)
- » Posada del Arte (p144)
- » Refugio Whympner (p153)

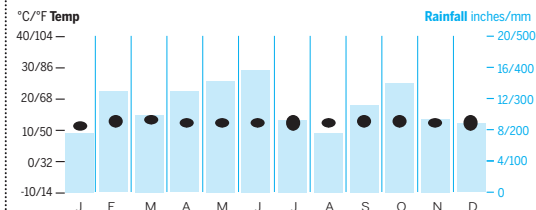
## Why Go?

Cut from fire and ice, the rooftop of Ecuador offers up more adventure per square meter than most places on earth. There are glaciated mountains and active volcanoes, high-arching plains perfect for biking and trekking, surprisingly quaint colonial cities, bucolic haciendas and bustling crafts markets, and precipitous green valleys that take you from the Andes 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. There are rail adventures on a preposterously steep line known as the Devil's Nose, and plenty of tropical hikes, bikes and boats 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.

**Sept 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 **Quitotoa Loop** (p131)
- 2 Get splashed by waterfalls as you plunge down the **Baños–Puyo road** (p148)
- 3 Take the high road to **Salinas** (p151) against a sublime high-altitude backdrop
- 4 Ride the rails down **La Nariz del Diablo** (p159), an unparalleled switchback descent down a sheer rock face

