

Ecuador “Ring of Fire” Ski Expedition Cayambe & Cotopaxi

11 Days in Ecuador / Skill Level: Introductory



June 1-11, 2019
Nov. 30 - Dec 10, 2019

Land costs **\$4750**

June 6-16, 2020
December 5 - 15, 2020

*All costs included with the exception of alcohol, in-town meals

Difficulty Level: Introductory Ski – No technical climbing or altitude experience is necessary. It is imperative, however, that you are in good physical shape and are able to hike and ski tour in rugged terrain for long days. We expect each skier to have a solid background in “all-mountain” skiing as variable snow conditions often exist. We also recommend that each skier has a minimum of 10 days on alpine touring equipment in the backcountry. We are happy to detail physical and technical training programs as needed to get you ready for our introductory high altitude ski expeditions.



Highlights

- Ski two of Ecuador's biggest peaks, including Cotopaxi, world's tallest active volcano
- Learn high altitude climbing and skiing skills and progress from backcountry skier to ski mountaineer through the skills you learn on this trip
- Experience the rich Ecuadorian culture in Quito and Otavalo

Overview

Alpenglow is thrilled to be offering the Ring of Fire ski expedition. Our high altitude guides are also big mountain ski mountaineers. The combination of their expertise and high-end logistics uniquely positions us as the first guide service to offer international, high altitude ski expeditions. We created this program as a perfect segue for backcountry skiers looking to gain the skills that will enable them to ski higher and more technical mountains. This program is for the backcountry skier who wants to become a ski mountaineer, and the ski mountaineer looking to progress to high altitude peaks.

Alpenglow Expeditions' guides have been climbing and guiding in Ecuador since 1994 and believe it is unparalleled for learning the essential skills of high altitude climbing while also exploring a friendly and interesting culture. These mountains are also the ideal place for bringing your backcountry skiing to the next level. On the Ring of Fire expedition, we focus on teaching you technical skills that you might not have needed in the backcountry settings you've previously experienced. You will be utilizing ropes for glacier travel and on exposed terrain, while also managing the effects of high altitude. Incorporating these elements and skills with your backcountry skiing experience is a significant step in your progression from "backcountry skier" to "ski mountaineer." Throughout our attempts to summit and ski both Cayambe (18,997' / 5790m) and Cotopaxi at (19,347' / 5897m), we will be preparing everyone on the team with the skills and knowledge needed not just for these peaks, but for bigger peaks around the world.

Our ski expedition begins in Ecuador's capital of Quito. The city, surrounded by four glaciated peaks, sits at 9,500' / 2896m elevation, so your acclimatization begins immediately upon arrival. We spend the first day exploring the old colonial center of Quito and enjoying fantastic food and hospitality. We continue our acclimatization by riding the local telepherique to 14,000' / 4,267m on Rucu Pinchincha and then hiking to its summit (15,700' / 4785m).

After spending time in Quito, we move to the town of Otavalo, which is known for its local markets and beautiful culture, including lots of textiles and wonderful food. We base out of Otavalo for a couple of days as we continue our acclimatization on day hikes, before we move up to the base of Cayambe.

Once we are settled into the hut at the base of Cayambe, we spend a full day discussing and practicing high altitude climbing and skiing skills on Cayambe's lower glaciers. This day is essential in becoming a competent team member on this ski expedition. We will cover crampon and ice axe techniques, traveling on a rope team, snow and ice anchor placement, companion rescue, and advanced skinning techniques.

At this point, we are ready to put our skills to use on Cayambe. We wake early to begin our climb and ski. We'll scramble on scree, skin on mildly glaciated terrain, beginning with low angle touring and progressing in steepness to the point of transitioning to crampons for the final section to the summit. Cayambe's terrain will push everyone to utilize their complete skill set, while still allowing us to take in the beauty of the glaciated volcano. Once we ski down, we head back to Papallacta and visit the natural hot springs in the cloud forest of the eastern Cordillera.



Once we settle into the lodge inside Cotopaxi National Park, we prepare to wake early for our climb and ski descent of Cotopaxi. This is a long day of climbing during which we will spend more time in crampons than we did on Cayambe. This also means that on our descent we will be able to put our more technical ski mountaineering techniques

into practice, including belayed skiing. The climb and ski on Cotopaxi are much more demanding than on Cayambe and the team is rewarded with a long technical descent and unmatched views. After skiing Cotopaxi, we head back to Quito for a final day of celebration before departing for home.

One or more of Alpenglow's AMGA certified lead/ski guides will guide our Ring of Fire ski expedition. The AMGA (American Mountain Guides Association) certification is the highest possible training available to guides and only the most experienced and dedicated attain it. Our lead guides have also traveled and climbed extensively in South America and know the Ecuadorian volcanoes intimately. Our guide's knowledge of Andean culture and mountains, and their passion for teaching others to become competent mountaineers, guarantees that your experience will be one to remember.

We combine our ski guides' experience with the local expertise of our close friend, guide, and expert Ecuadorian logistics operator, Jaime Avila. Jaime is one of Ecuador's most respected climbing guides, and he guides with Alpenglow around the world. Our small team size and low ratio of skiers to guides (3:1) ensures that you stay healthy and strong, and are able to enjoy each component of this unique experience.



Ecuador “Ring of Fire” Itinerary	
Day 1	Arrive in Quito (9,500' / 2896m) in the evening. Our guides will pick you up and bring you to our hotel, a local family-run place close to excellent restaurants and the tourist center of the city. (Saturday)
Day 2	Explore the colonial section of Quito. This historical city is famous for its beautiful churches, president’s palace, and ever-present views of the glaciated peaks that surround it. After touring for half the day, we spend the afternoon preparing for our acclimatization climb on Pinchincha, practicing fixed line techniques, and organizing all our ski and climbing gear.
Day 3	Our first acclimatization hike. We ride the telepherique from the center of the city to 14,000' / 4267m on Rucu Pinchincha. Two hours of hiking brings us to the rock ridge, which we climb, conditions permitting to Pinchincha’s summit (15,700' / 4785m). This climb is a proud peak on its own and it is also important acclimatization for bigger peaks.
Day 4	We move to the town of Otavalo. Otavalo has some of the best food in Ecuador and is renowned for its local markets. We will spend most of the day taking a day hike around Quicocha Lake, a stunning crater lake, and then spend then evening at the Hacienda Pinsaqui.
Day 5	We move up to Cayambe and settle into the mountain hut. We spend the afternoon out on Cayambe’s lower glacier. Sitting just below the hut, the glacier is an ideal venue for practicing self-arrest skills and avalanche beacon practice.
Day 6	We spend the morning reviewing the skill set that we will need for climbing and skiing Cayambe. This day includes instruction on crevasse rescue, advanced glacier travel, and ski touring techniques. We spend the afternoon resting, hydrating, eating, and getting to bed early for the summit of Cayambe.
Day 7	Cayambe Summit Day! We wake around midnight, have a hot drink and breakfast, and then begin our climb. The route takes us across scree to the glacier, and then winds up through progressively steeper slopes and heavily crevassed areas. From there, moderate slopes lead to another steep headwall. Often icy, this slope will require all of our climbing techniques to make it to the top. From the summit, we will strap on our skis for an amazing glaciated ski descent off of the summit. Once back at the hut we will descend back to the town of Papallacta for an evening of recovery in the natural hot springs.
Day 8	Depart Papallacta midday and drive to Hosteria Tambopaxi. Tambopaxi is a beautiful lodge located in Cotopaxi National Park, where we will be set up well for our climb and ski.

Day 9	Rest and skills day at Tambopaxi.
Day 10	We will wake around midnight and move up to the parking area below the Cotopaxi hut. We will then begin our climb of Cotopaxi starting on a series of trails through the lower scree slopes. We will climb the lower glaciers up to the summit headwall where the terrain steepens as it leads us to the summit. Once on top we will begin our ski descent back down the glaciated slopes. After arriving back in the parking area, we will descend and continue to Quito for the evening.
Day 11	We have this day built in to allow for an extra weather or acclimatization day, or an extra day to take advantage of Quito for more sight-seeing after we have completed the ski descents of Cotopaxi and Cayambe. Flights home should depart Quito late in the evening, after 10pm.

Client Expectations and Timeline

90+ Days to Departure	
Reserve Spot	Make your deposit to confirm registration - if you haven't already, head over to our website and click "Reserve Spot" and select your dates. The rest of the process is as easy as buying a book online. Make sure that you select to add an extension if you wish to extend any expedition.
Q&A	Q&A with Alpenglow - time to ask any question about travel, logistics, training and everything in between.
Application	Complete full application including medical questionnaire & travel information.
Reserve Rentals	Reserve rentals if needed within application. For our climbing schools, we have a small rental inventory of boots, ice axes crampons, helmets and harnesses. These are provided at no cost on a first come first serve basis. Please let us know what you plan on renting as soon as possible.

Within 90 Days to Departure

Complete Payment	Full Payment will be collected at the 90 day mark. Alpenglw will contact you prior to taking final payment and once you confirm we'll simply move your booking into the final stages. For international trips, a wire transaction is the best way to send payment. We also accept credit cards with transaction fee of 3% or you can pay by check.
Book Travel	We recommend reviewing flight options outside of 90 days and confirming with Alpenglw on travel times. Use us to guide you to the best flight schedules to make travel as easy as possible. Once you book your flights don't forget to share with the Alpenglw office so we pick you up on time from the airport.
Training	This is the hard part. The hours of training you put in directly correlates to your success in the mountains. Train hard and be ready for the adventure of a lifetime!
Equipment	Compile all equipment using the equipment list as a guide.
Purchase Insurance	Purchase travel and rescue insurance. We recommend Global Rescue and Travel Guard. Click here to find links to each.

General Trip Information

Payment

1. A 20% deposit is required for all treks and expeditions. Deposits are due upon registration, and can be paid by check made out to "Alpenglw Expeditions, LLC". All payments should be mailed to Alpenglw Expeditions at P.O. Box 3122, Olympic Valley, CA 96146 or sent via wire transfer. If wiring payment, please contact us for bank details and be certain that you are covering ALL fees! We also accept credit card payments with a transaction fee of 3%. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable. This is not a flexible policy. Planning our trips takes significant time and has non-refundable costs as well.
2. Balances are due 90 days before the expedition departs from the United States. Payment should be made as described above.
3. The cost of your trip includes your land costs (excluding in-town meals). This includes: double occupancy lodging while in town, meals on the mountain, scheduled transportation while in the countries we are visiting, group camping and climbing equipment, individual technical climbing equipment (boots, ice axes, crampons, helmets, harnesses), and guides.
4. The cost of your trip does not include: flights to/from the city where the expedition begins, airport taxes, visas, in-town meals, immunizations, tips for guides or local staff, travel, rescue, or any other type of insurance, hospitalization or evacuation costs, single supplement charges, excess baggage charges, alcohol, or other personal expenses.

5. The costs of delays or changes to itinerary that are beyond the control of Alpenglw Expeditions or its agents are not included.

Cancellations

1. We reserve the right to cancel any trip at any time. Reasons for cancellation might include (but are not limited to) political instability, natural disasters, or inadequate enrollment. If we cancel a trip prior to its start for low enrollment, we fully refund your payments. If we cancel your trip prior to its start due to political instability, natural disasters, or other reasons of that nature, we will refund all but non-recoverable costs. Changes to a trip itinerary made by our guides for any reason do not constitute a cancellation, and no refunds will be made in this case.
2. If you cancel your trip more than 90 days prior to departure, Alpenglw Expeditions will refund your payment minus the non-refundable deposit. 60-89 days prior, Alpenglw Expeditions will refund 50% of your payment. Fewer than 60 days prior, there are no refunds or credits.
3. On any trip, our guides reserve the right to remove any person, for any reason. These reasons generally stem from a person jeopardizing the safety of themselves or another team member. This includes a person who is not physically able to climb at the level necessary for the chosen route. In all these cases, there are no refunds whatsoever, and the client will be responsible for any additional costs incurred in leaving the trip.

Flights

We recommend using Kayak.com as a primary source for finding low-fare airfares.

****Please confirm your itinerary with Alpenglw Expeditions before you purchase it.****

Insurance

We require that all participants carry rescue insurance, travel insurance, and health insurance. Your policy numbers must be provided to us prior to leaving the USA. Homeowner/Renter's insurance is also recommended.

- Rescue Insurance- For US citizens, we recommend obtaining rescue insurance through American Alpine Club and upgrading that service via Global Rescue. Visit www.americanalpineclub.org to become a member and obtain the appropriate level of coverage based on the altitude of the peaks you will be climbing with us. Helicopter rescues in foreign countries, while unlikely, can cost up to \$20,000. International climbers have several options as well for rescue insurance. Our recommendation is Global Rescue as we have had great success with them in the past. Your insurance must not have a mountaineering exclusion and must cover up to your trip's highest altitude. This coverage is very important.
- Travel Insurance- We recommend using [Global Rescue's IMG Signature Travel Insurance](#). Coverage should include lost/damaged baggage, unexpected delays, accident/life, and trip cancellation. Trip cancellation will cover you for non-refundable air and land costs should you need to cancel your trip due to an emergency. Since our costs are often not refundable, this coverage is very important as well, and should be purchased as soon as possible after registering for an expedition.
- Health Insurance- All members of our teams are required to have current health insurance. This insurance should cover emergency hospitalization abroad as well as domestically.
- Homeowner/Renter's Insurance- While unusual, thefts can occur while overseas. We recommend a policy to cover these losses.

Medical

All of our expeditions and treks are physically demanding. Regardless of the skill level or experience needed, it is essential that you arrive in good physical shape, and prepared to handle extreme conditions, including cold, heat, and long tiring days. Alpenglow Expeditions, LLC and its guides reserve the right to remove any member of our trips at any time if we do not believe they are ready for the rigors of the trip.

Our guides are certified in wilderness medicine, CPR, and are experienced in client care in remote high altitude locations. However, Alpenglow Expeditions, LLC is not a medical facility and Alpenglow Expeditions, LLC assumes no liability regarding medical care.

You are responsible for your own medications, inoculations, and deciding whether you are physically able to participate in an Alpenglow Expeditions trip. You should discuss your participation in this trip, and the dangers involved, with your physician.

Some of the medications you may consider carrying with you include:

1. Tylenol – a simple painkiller for headaches and minor pains.
2. Ibuprofen – mild altitude headaches, along with body aches and pains, are common.
3. A cold and flu remedy of your choice (strong decongestant).
4. Pepto Bismol - for minor stomach upset, best taken in caplet form.
5. Immodium AD – to control diarrhea, when necessary. Again, tablets are preferred.
6. Cough Drops – the air at altitude is very dry, and many climbers develop hacking coughs.
7. A laxative agent of your choice.
8. Dramamine (or equivalent) – an anti-motion sickness agent of your choice as bus/plane rides to our trailheads are often very bumpy.
9. Diamox (Acetazolamide) required – prescription medication often used prophylactically to prevent altitude sickness. You should have a large enough supply to take 250mg/day (best as scored tablets so you can take 125mg twice a day).
10. Z-pack required – a broad spectrum anti-biotic.

Also be sure to discuss vaccinations with your doctor. Often a travel clinic has the most up-to-date information on which shots are necessary for the country you are visiting. Be sure to mention that most of our trips explore only the highlands and capital cities. This might mean that you need fewer immunizations, and anti-malarials are often not necessary. Determine this with your doctor, and refer to your trip itinerary for the exact locations we will be visiting. At the very least, your tetanus shot should be up-to-date and you should have protection against Hepatitis A.

Aerobic Conditioning

We cannot stress enough the importance of being in excellent aerobic condition before arriving on your trip. Arriving fit will increase your safety on the trip and reduce the risk of medical issues. It will also dramatically increase your enjoyment and learning during your trek or expedition. At the minimum, we recommend an exercise regimen that includes a minimum of 3 one-hour workouts per week (biking, running, swimming) along with a few long days hiking as you get close to your departure date. Please call us if you would like to discuss a specific routine to fit your needs.

Money

The countries we visit can still be challenging places to use a credit card or find an ATM. While you may choose to bring these for backup, we recommend you bring enough cash for your planned spending. American dollars are still the easiest way to carry money. Be sure you carry clean, new bills and have some smaller denominations. Carry your money and important documents in a hidden waist pouch under your clothes.

The amount of money you need varies by how many presents you plan on bringing back! In addition to souvenirs and gifts, plan on spending on airport departure taxes, alcohol and snacks, and tips for local staff and your guides.

Additional Notes

- Single Supplement - If you prefer a single room while we are in hotels, please let us know as soon as possible. There will be an additional cost associated for this.
- Cameras – high quality point and shoot digital cameras are an excellent option. We have found that small pocket cameras are much better than big DSLRs for summit days. You need a simple light system, and the new generation of digitals take great photos. A guide favorite is the Sony RX 100.
- Be sure to create a data sheet of all of your essential information – passport, credit card or ATM numbers, airline ticket information, visa number (if applicable), etc. This sheet should then be photocopied and scattered amongst your luggage. If any of your documents are stolen, having this information will be essential.
- Rental Equipment - Alpenglow Expeditions offers a limited number of mountaineering boots, crampons, ice axes, helmets, harnesses, carabiners, perlon, and belay devices for use by our clients. There is no additional charge for using this equipment, but please let us know as soon as possible if you intend to use Alpenglow Expeditions' equipment. Check your expedition's equipment list to see what technical climbing equipment is necessary for your climb or trek. Rental gear from Alpenglow is only available for shipment within the US. Rental gear must be taken home by the renter and shipped back to Alpenglow within two weeks of end of trip at the renter's expense.