



Cotopaxi Travel

REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES

MACHACHI - ECUADOR

RAPID | O₂

— C O T O P A X I —

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RAPID O₂ COTOPAXI | OXYGEN-ASSISTED ASCENT PROJECT



OVERVIEW

Rapid O₂ Cotopaxi — 6 Days

This six-day private expedition places you on the summit of Cotopaxi (5,897 m / 19,347 ft), one of the world's highest active volcanoes, using integrated supplemental oxygen, continuous physiologic monitoring, and a three-person mountain team assigned to each climber.

A conventional Cotopaxi program requires eight to twelve days because the body needs that long to increase its oxygen-carrying capacity. Rapid O₂ addresses the governing variable directly rather than compressing the schedule and hoping: supplemental oxygen raises the inspired oxygen pressure you breathe on the summit to roughly what your body experiences lower on the mountain, lowering the physiologic cost of the climb while raising the margin of safety.

The program combines progressive acclimatization on Rucu Pichincha, collection and individual fitting of the oxygen system and technical equipment at the Ilinizas Mountain Lodge, two nights sleeping above 3,600 m, and a full system rehearsal in Cotopaxi National Park, followed by a summit day supported by ASEGUIM-certified mountain guides. It is designed for experienced professionals with limited time, not limited standards.

Duration	6 days · 5 nights
Summit	Cotopaxi — 5,897 m / 19,347 ft
Group size	6 climbers maximum
Team per climber	1 ASEGUIM-certified Lead Guide + 2 Mountain Assistants
Oxygen	One dedicated 6.8 L cylinder + 2 group reserve cylinders
Monitoring	SpO ₂ , heart rate, altitude, oxygen system status
Technical difficulty	Low — glacier travel on crampons; no rock climbing
Physical demand	Moderate to high
Season	December - January · June - September
Investment	USD \$5,897 per person

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The objective is not to make the mountain easy. The objective is to arrive higher with more reserve.

AT A GLANCE

Itinerary summary

Day	Program	Altitude	Accommodation
1	Arrival in Quito	2,850 m / 9,350 ft	Hotel in Quito
2	Acclimatization — Cueva del Oso, Rucu Pichincha	4,300 m / 14,100 ft	Hotel in Quito
3	Mountain gear & oxygen system check · Ilinizas Mountain Lodge	3,600 m / 11,811 ft	Hacienda Los Mortiños
4	Cotopaxi National Park · acclimatization	3,750 m / 12,303 ft	Tambopaxi Lodge
5	SUMMIT COTOPAXI · descent · Papallacta hot springs	5,897 m / 19,347 ft	Termas de Papallacta
6	Return home	—	—

DAY BY DAY

Detailed itinerary

DAY
1

Arrival in Quito

Private transfer · intake briefing · medical baseline

You are met on the ground at Mariscal Sucre International Airport and driven privately into Quito. The afternoon is yours. Quito sits at 2,850 m / 9,350 ft, and the acclimatization clock starts the moment you land — the most productive thing you can do this afternoon is nothing at all.

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In the evening, your expedition leader conducts the intake briefing: the route, the oxygen system, the safety protocol, and the turnaround discipline. A physician-designed screening is completed and your baseline measurements are recorded — resting oxygen saturation, heart rate, blood pressure. These become the reference against which every subsequent reading on the mountain is judged.

ALTITUDE	MEALS	ACCOMMODATION
2,850 m / 9,350 ft	—	Hotel in Quito

DAY
2

Acclimatization — Cueva del Oso

Rucu Pichincha · first exposure above 4,000 m

A cable car lifts you from the edge of Quito to Cruz Loma at 4,050 m / 13,287 ft in under twenty minutes. From there you walk the ridgeline toward Rucu Pichincha and the Cueva del Oso — the Bear Cave — a rock shelter set into the volcano's flank with the entire capital spread out below.

The walking is unhurried and the views are extraordinary, but the purpose is clinical: three to four hours above 4,000 m triggers the erythropoietic response that will carry you through summit night. Your guide records oxygen saturation at intervals and observes how you move under load — data that will determine your position in the summit-night departure order.

ALTITUDE
4,300 m / 14,100 ft

DISTANCE
~7 km

DURATION
4-5 hrs

MEALS
B · BL

LODGING
Hotel in Quito

DAY
3

Mountain Gear Check — Hacienda Los Mortiños

Ilinizas Mountain Lodge · oxygen system and equipment collection

You leave Quito and drive south along the Avenue of the Volcanoes, stopping at the Ilinizas Mountain Lodge in El Chaupi. This is where the expedition is armed: your complete oxygen system and technical

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mountain equipment are collected here, and every component is checked and signed off before it travels any further.

Each cylinder is pressure-tested and logged. Regulators, reservoir masks, cannulas and spares are matched to you by name. Your personal equipment is then fitted individually — double mountaineering boots, crampons matched to those boots, ice axe sized to your height, harness, helmet, and the full outer shell system. Nothing is issued from a bin on the mountain.

Boot fit in particular is worth the hours. More summit attempts are lost to cold feet and blisters at 5,500 m than to any failure of will, and a boot that felt acceptable in a shop at sea level behaves differently on a glacier at minus fifteen.

You continue to Hacienda Los Mortiños in El Pedregal, a hacienda-style lodge on the northern flank of Cotopaxi with eleven mountains visible from the terrace. Dinner is unhurried and the fireplaces are lit. Sleeping at 3,600 m tonight is not incidental — it is the acclimatization step that makes the following two days work.

ALTITUDE	MEALS	ACCOMMODATION
3,600 m / 11,811 ft	B • D	Hacienda Los Mortiños

DAY
4

Cotopaxi National Park — Tambopaxi

Acclimatization walk · full Rapid O₂ system rehearsal

A short drive from Los Mortiños takes you through the northern entrance of Cotopaxi National Park to Tambopaxi, a mountain lodge standing alone on the high páramo with the glacier filling the window.

You walk the high páramo with the three people who will climb with you — an unhurried acclimatization outing past the Limpiopungo lagoon that lets your Lead Guide observe your pace and record a further set of readings. You then rehearse the complete Rapid O₂ system collected the day before — cannula, reservoir mask, regulator, cylinder pressure — until the sequence is automatic with gloves on. Pressures

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are rechecked and logged, and your individual oxygen plan is confirmed against the physiologic response measured across the previous three days.

Dinner at 6:00 p.m., summit briefing, final medical check, and lights out by 8:00. You will be woken shortly after 10:00 p.m.

ALTITUDE	DURATION	MEALS	ACCOMMODATION
3,750 m / 12,303 ft	4-5 hrs	B • BL • D	Tambopaxi Lodge

No climber uses this equipment for the first time on summit night. That rule has no exceptions, and it is the reason Day 4 exists in this form. Note that Day 4 is an equipment rehearsal and acclimatization outing, not a mountaineering course — formal glacier instruction is not included in this program.

DAY
5

Summit Cotopaxi

5,897 m / 19,347 ft • descent • Termas de Papallacta

A short private drive from Tambopaxi brings you to the trailhead at 4,600 m / 15,092 ft, followed by a forty-five-minute walk to the José Ribas Refuge beneath the glacier. Rope teams then depart on a staggered schedule between 12:15 and 1:15 a.m., each climber with a Lead Guide and two Mountain Assistants nearby. Staggered departures prevent route congestion and reduce the time climbers spend standing in the cold.

Oxygen flows from the moment you leave the hut, delivered by nasal cannula so you can talk, drink, and use a camera normally. Around 5,500 m you switch to a reservoir mask for the final section. There is no cylinder change on the mountain — the 6.8-liter cylinder covers the entire day with reserve.

Time	Milestone	Altitude
11:00 p.m. (D4)	Private transfer to the trailhead	4,600 m / 15,092 ft
12:15 - 1:15 a.m.	Staggered departures from José Ribas Refuge	4,864 m / 15,958 ft

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Time	Milestone	Altitude
3:00 a.m.	Enter the glacier; rope up	~5,100 m / 16,732 ft
5:00 a.m.	Switch to reservoir mask	~5,500 m / 18,045 ft
6:00 - 7:15 a.m.	SUMMIT	5,897 m / 19,347 ft
8:00 a.m.	Absolute turnaround time	—
10:30 a.m.	Return to refuge	4,864 m / 15,958 ft
Afternoon	Descent and private transfer to Papallacta	3,300 m / 10,827 ft

On the summit, with oxygen flowing at four liters per minute, the inspired oxygen pressure is roughly equivalent to what your body experiences at 1,200 m. The crater is 800 meters across and still vents sulfur. On a clear morning, you can see Antisana, Cayambe, the Ilinizas, and Chimborazo on the southern horizon.

Oxygen is weaned progressively on the descent rather than stopped abruptly. After a hot meal at the refuge, you are driven to Termas de Papallacta, where volcanic hot springs sit in a cloud-forest valley at 3,300 m. Ending the hardest day of your life in thermal water is part of the program, not merely a logistical convenience, and it is the evening most climbers remember.

ALTITUDE 5,897 m / 19,347 ft	DISTANCE 12-14 km	DURATION 9-11 hrs	MEALS B • BL • D	LODGING Termas de Papallacta
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Turnaround is 8:00 a.m. and it is absolute. If your rope team has not reached the summit by then, it descends. That decision belongs to your Lead Guide alone and is not reviewable by you, your party, or our commercial team, regardless of how strong you feel in the moment. This is the single most important safety control in the program, and it is the reason the Summit Guarantee exists — so that no one, on either side of the transaction, has any incentive to push that clock.

DAY
6

Return home

Papallacta · private transfer to Mariscal Sucre International Airport

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An unhurried breakfast, a final hour in the thermal pools if time permits, and a private transfer from Papallacta to Mariscal Sucre International Airport. You leave with a summit certificate and the complete record of your ascent: altitude profile, oxygen saturation at every checkpoint, flow settings, and elapsed times — the physiologic file of your climb, and the baseline for Chimborazo if you decide to come back for it. End of services.

MEALS Breakfast	ACCOMMODATION —
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THE PROGRAM

Includes

- ASEGUM-certified Lead Guide dedicated exclusively to each climber, Days 4 and 5.
- Two Mountain Assistants per climber, carrying equipment, water, insulation and oxygen.
- Expedition Leader supervising the operation as a whole.
- One dedicated 6.8 L / 300 bar oxygen cylinder per climber — full summit day, no cylinder change.
- Two shared reserve cylinders per group, plus spare regulators and masks.
- Nasal cannula for the approach; reservoir mask for the summit section.
- Rapid O₂ field log with physiologic checkpoints throughout the ascent.
- Two nights at a hotel in Quito; one night each at Hacienda Los Mortiños, Tambopaxi Lodge, and Termas de Papallacta, with spa access and meals as listed.
- Private ground transportation throughout, including both airport transfers.
- TelefériQo cable car access and guided acclimatization on Rucu Pichincha.
- Group technical climbing equipment and individually fitted personal gear: double boots, crampons, ice axe, harness, helmet and outer shell layers, collected and checked at the Ilinizas Mountain Lodge on Day 3.
- Acclimatization outing on the high páramo with your assigned mountain team, Day 4.

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- National park entry fees and climbing permits.
- Pre-trip medical screening and physician fitness clearance review.
- Pulse oximetry at defined checkpoints throughout the program.
- Mountain rescue insurance and evacuation agreement with a Quito clinic.
- Portable hyperbaric chamber and high-altitude medical kit on every departure.
- Summit Guarantee (see Notes).

Not included

- International flights and departure taxes.
- Travel and medical insurance (mandatory).
- Single-occupancy supplement: USD \$650.
- Personal technical clothing: base layers, gloves, glacier glasses and socks.
- Glacier school and formal mountaineering instruction (available separately, on request).
- Extra meals and drinks in cities; alcohol.
- Tips and personal expenses.

NOTES

Oxygen does not replace judgment.

This program compresses acclimatization. It does not eliminate it.

Summit Guarantee

If you do not reach the summit because of weather, glacier conditions, park closure, or a safety decision by your guide, you return the following season at no program cost, covering only your flights. Valid once per climber. Does not apply where the climber withdraws voluntarily or fails to comply with the medical protocol.

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Medical clearance

A physician-signed fitness clearance and completed medical questionnaire are required no later than thirty days before departure. We assess cardiovascular and respiratory history, blood pressure, baseline saturation and any prior altitude illness. Our medical director reviews the information before approval.

Physical condition and experience

Participants should be able to walk for six to eight hours with 1,000 m of elevation gain and have previous trekking experience. Prior experience on crampons and with roped glacier travel is expected: this is a summit expedition, not an instructional course. Formal glacier school is not included and can be arranged separately before the program on request.

The autonomous descent standard

You must be capable of descending without oxygen from any point on the route. Supplemental oxygen is a performance aid, not a life-support system on which your safety depends. A climber who does not meet this standard does not go up, and that decision is not negotiable at any price.

Conditions and contingency

- All climbs are subject to weather and mountain conditions. The summit is never guaranteed.
- Cotopaxi is an active volcano. If the national park is closed by the competent authority, the program relocates to Chimborazo (6,268 m / 20,564 ft) or Cayambe (5,790 m / 18,996 ft) on the same six-day structure.
- A contingency day may be added upon request to improve summit success and allow time to wait for a weather window. Pricing is available upon request.
- Departure order on summit night is assigned by the Expedition Leader based on observed pace during the Day 2 and Day 4 acclimatization outings.
- Formal glacier and mountaineering instruction is not part of this program. Cotopaxi Travel offers dedicated climbing school programs separately.

REFERENCE

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Program altitudes

Location	Meters	Feet
Mariscal Sucre International Airport	2,400 m	7,874 ft
Quito	2,850 m	9,350 ft
Termas de Papallacta	3,300 m	10,827 ft
El Chaupi · Ilinizas Mountain Lodge	3,336 m	10,945 ft
Hacienda Los Mortiños, El Pedregal	3,600 m	11,811 ft
Tambopaxi Lodge	3,750 m	12,303 ft
Cruz Loma (TelefériQo)	4,050 m	13,287 ft
Cueva del Oso, Rucu Pichincha	~4,300 m	~14,100 ft
Cotopaxi trailhead	4,600 m	15,092 ft
José Ribas Refuge	4,864 m	15,958 ft
Glacier edge	~5,000 m	~16,404 ft
Cotopaxi summit	5,897 m	19,347 ft
Chimborazo (forthcoming program)	6,268 m	20,564 ft

Rapid O₂ is supplemental support for a high-altitude mountaineering activity and does not eliminate the risks of hypoxia, acute mountain illness, weather, cold, falls, crevasses, avalanche, or other objective hazards. Oxygen must never be used to justify continued ascent by a climber who should descend. Final safety decisions rest with the guide and the operating team.

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