

# San Agustin de Callo



## Highlights

- Excellent location for exploring Cotopaxi National Park.
- Unique Inca architecture.
- Variety of interesting accommodation options.
- Range of activities available.

## Situation

Nestled in the foothills of Cotopaxi volcano.

## Activities

Usually arranged through local operator but for longer stays mountain biking and horse riding can be arranged directly with the hacienda.

Nestled in the foothills of Cotopaxi volcano, the historic Hacienda San Agustin de Callo is the perfect base to explore the National Park and surrounding Andean villages.

The hacienda is one of only two major Inca sites in Ecuador. Dating from around 1440, San Agustin de Callo has served as an Inca fortress, Augustinian convent and temporary home for the French Geodesic Mission. In 1921 the hacienda was purchased by General Leonidas Plaza Gutierrez. Gutierrez and his son both stood office as President of Ecuador and the hacienda is currently owned by the General's grand daughter.

In both the main house and the Callo Lodge the individually decorated rooms come with en-suite bathrooms and fireplaces (many have fireplaces in the bathrooms as well). Beds are on the generous side and are extremely comfortable. The beautiful wall paintings are made by the Chilean artist Manuel Araya. There are 3 rooms in the Callo house with a central living room and kitchen, and 6 in the main house set around a Spanish courtyard. The meals are served from a cosy dining room with lovely views across the foothills to Cotopaxi volcano. Meals are a tasty mix of local and international dishes. A full English breakfast is served with the warning that the hacienda 'is not liable in any way for consequences, medical or otherwise, for consumption of English breakfasts at high altitude!!' The dinner menu usually includes Andean dishes such as tamales (steamed corn maize stuffed with seasoned chicken, eggs, chillies and olives wrapped in achira leaves), locro (a rich cheese and potato soup served with slices of ripe avocado), and a variety of poultry, seafood, lamb or pork. Freshly picked vegetables and salads accompany the main

dishes.

The setting of the hacienda is excellent for exploring the flora and fauna of the surrounding paramo (high altitude wet tropical grassland above the treeline) either on foot, mountain bike or horseback. Horse riding trips of a few hours to typical high Andean villages, or longer day trips along little explored Inca Trails can be arranged. There are numerous trails suitable for mountain biking and for the more adventurous transport can be arranged close to the Cotopaxi refuge at 4,800m for an exciting descent to the park entrance where return transport will be waiting. For those interested in a more sedate pace some of Ecuador's most authentic markets are within a 30 minute drive of the hacienda.

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