

Colombia to Ecuador

Written by Glenn Tester

Tuesday, 09 March 2010 22:38 - Last Updated Tuesday, 23 March 2010 22:41

Colombia to Ecuador

1250 miles



Our starting point of Bogota could be changing for this leg if we decide to take the option of a boat to transit us from Panama to Colombia. This would have us starting in Cartagena approximately 500 miles north. The reason for taking either the plane or boat is to by-pass the swamp and rainforest strip that separates Colombia from Panama. This is known as one of the most dangerous stretches of land. Only a hand full of people have ever made it through but a lot have tried and never come back. Its full of drug lords and dodgee deals. Our journey is full of risks and not so safe areas, so to attempt that border crossing was just pushing our luck. After getting our bikes out of the packing crates we head east and wind our way through the mountains to Armenia and Parque National Del Café, or often referred to as the Disneyland of the coffee bean.

We hit the dirt tracks and continue south along the range to Cali, Colombia's home of Salsa dancing and all night parties. A stop here for a couple of quick lessons may be a change of pace.

Our next stop is Popayan at the end of Valle del Cauca. Popayan is respected as Colombia's second best colonial town. First is Cartagena.

On our way to the border town of Ipiales we pass the active Volcán Galeras. Its last major eruption was only in January 2008.

Crossing the border into Ecuador our first town is Tulcan, similar to Ipiales in that there is no real attraction here just border towns relying on passing trade.

Following the Pan American Highway we pass through Ibarra and make a stop off in Otavalo to see the famous colorful local markets.

Continuing on we find ourselves in Ortavia, shadowed by its surrounding volcanoes the location alone will take your breath away. A nights stay here will allow us time to head up to volcano Guagua Pichincha and ride the ridge. It should be a good skill and nerve testing experience. Only 50 miles south and we hit the dirt again to ride the most spectacular trail in the Andes, the Quilotoa Loop.

Passing quickly through Corazon and El Arenal we find ourselves in Riobamba, "the sultan of

Colombia to Ecuador

Written by Glenn Tester

Tuesday, 09 March 2010 22:38 - Last Updated Tuesday, 23 March 2010 22:41

the Andes”.

From here it's a very windy road all the way south to Cuenca, another gem of the south.

We start climbing slowly up to Saraguro, and then down into Loja one of Ecuador's oldest towns.

Its only dirt between us and the border town of Macara as we pass numerous small villages, rise and fall over ranges, and have views to die for.