

# HACIENDA DE SAN AGUSTIN

*From Incan Fortress to Colonial Palace*

*By Jennifer Pelaez*



Just over an hour south of Quito, Ecuador at the foothill of the grand Andes lies the legendary estate, Hacienda San Agustín de Callo, which beams with history, charm and natural beauty. Built on the site of a 15th-century Inca fortress, this boutique hotel is strikingly situated in the foothills of Ecuador's Cotopaxi volcano and sets the stage to experience idyllic country life while also offering exciting adventure and cultural exploration with an unrivaled glimpse into Ecuador's rich and colorful past. From discovering the famed Cotopaxi National Park to shopping for artisan treasures in the surrounding Andean villages, Hacienda San Agustín de Callo transports you to a tranquil and magical moment in time.

In addition to its natural grandeur and stunning

views, the unique family-run Hacienda de San Agustín also proudly boasts a fascinating history. Since its construction, it has served as an Inca fortress, an Augustinian convent, and a temporary home for the French Geodesic mission. The current owner, Mignon Plaza, inherited the property from her grandfather, Leonidas Plaza, two-time president of Ecuador and continues to carry on the spirit and warmth of family which is evidenced by the design and atmosphere of this special hotel. Today, relics of the past still remain, including two meticulously carved volcanic stone walls of the dining room and chapel which have impressively survived from the 17th century - truly regarded as living pieces of history. A significant part of the Incan walls have been preserved and are carefully combined with the more recent architecture. The building's historical importance continues to

attract international archaeologists interested in revealing more secrets of its past.

The main house, referred to as the Inca House, showcases a Spanish courtyard built around Inca rooms with magnificent views of the surrounding hills and volcanoes. The 11 accommodations are divided among three separate buildings, each designed in the style of a family home and are decorated in a traditional and elegant yet eclectic manner. The cozy guest rooms and suites are all individually designed with no two alike and are adorned with extravagant murals, brightly painted walls, carved woods and local textiles. All rooms have log fires and ceilings of exposed beams and some even feature original Inca stonework walls, imparting a truly authentic ambiance. Callo Lodge is a quaint country house with one



Northern Lights across Hraunfoss Waterfalls

find vibrant displays of produce, spices, fruits and hand woven ponchos. Also available, an array of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, trekking, trout fishing and mountain biking where you can breathe in the fresh Andean air while becoming one with nature. Be on the lookout for condors and Andean wolves as you explore the neighboring villages and landscapes.

If all the outdoor adventure has opened up your appetite, you are in luck. Savor authentic Ecuadorian cuisine and high Andean dishes in Hacienda San Agustin de Callo's Inca Imperial dining room with original Inca stonework and impressive views of Cotopaxi. Local specialties like traditional llapingachos, quinoa croquettes, tamales, and rich soups like the cheese and potato locro, a local favorite are served up in creative and delectable

presentations. Most ingredients are sourced locally - fresh vegetables and exotic fruits from nearby markets, accompanied by quinoa, barley wheat, and other products from the Andean region. After dinner, relax in the drawing room with a book while unwinding to the warmth of the fireplace.

Regardless of your day's activities and dinner selections, you will be swept away by Hacienda San Agustin de Callo's hospitality and authenticity. It is an incomparable retreat where you experience a new culture and appreciation for your awe-inspiring surroundings while in the comfort of a home away from home.

[incahacienda.com](http://incahacienda.com) ♦



suite, two double rooms, a cozy living room with fireplace, and a private kitchen. The "Casita" is surrounded by horse yards and a little forest as your backyard. It is a perfect hideaway for those looking for a more private experience, while families or couples should consider Cotopaxi House, which hosts two suites complete with separate drawing rooms and inviting Jacuzzi hot tubs.

After lounging in the toasty and cozy rooms, take in the beauty of the property while taking a stroll through the gardens and cobblestone courtyard. Later, explore the great outdoors replete with adventurous and cultural activities right at your doorstep. The Cotopaxi National Park and its abundance of flora and fauna is only a short drive away, as are the colorful indigenous markets of Saquisilí, Pujilí and Zumbahua where you can

