

Historic Plaza San Francisco unfolds directly in front of Casa Gangotena

High Tea and Original Frescoes

By Karen Catchpole

This elegant stairway from the lobby of Casa Gangotena in Quito, Ecuador was part of a five-year renovation

bling for the interior which is heavily gold-leafed and is home to the wooden Virgin of Quito sculpture.

Double pane windows in the hotel keep out any street noise, though the muffled bells of the San Francisco church can still be heard pleasantly. Rooms are outfitted with absolutely addictive beds dressed with creamy sheets. The hypoallergenic pillows are in the closet, which has a scented sachet and a full compliment of hangers. Bathroom amenities are indulgent and there are robes and slippers in his and hers sizes.

The airy, art-filled restaurant at Casa Gangotena is where a vast and varied breakfast buffet (included in room rates) is served as well as all other meals. It's tempting to overdo it, thanks to a spread that includes delicious local cheeses, freshly baked bread and pastries, perfect tropical fruit and juice plus a full menu of hot items, but save some room for high tea later in the day.

Guests of Casa Gangotena are welcomed to free afternoon tea daily from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tea (or a cup of Ecuador's excellent coffee) is served with a two-tier tower of bocaditos Quitano (Quito snacks) like empanadas, along with international favorites like quiche, biscuits with cream and jam, bite-size desserts and more. Served in a light filled atrium positively bursting with arrangements of roses (Ecuador is one of the world's top rose producers), high tea at Casa Gangotena is elegant and bountiful and you'll want to linger over it.

Indulgence and elegance aside, service is also a top priority at Casa Gangotena. For example, staff will burn a CD of your digital camera images for free to clear up card space so you can take more photographs during your stay. Casa Gangotena is one of the best meldings of a historic renovation with modern touches, much like the city of Quito itself.

To Do

Just a few blocks from the hotel is Casa del Alabado Museum, home to expertly curated and displayed Pre-Columbian treasures in a gorgeously restored home built in 1671.

Take a break with a traditional hot chocolate made using Ecuadorian chocolate at an outdoor table at the Tianguiz Café on Plaza San Francisco.

Buy a handmade Panama hat (which originated in Ecuador) from the venerated Homero Ortega shop. You'll need it for the sun which is extremely strong on the equator. Casa Gangotena, part of the Kiwi Collection, was on the 2012 Conde Nast Traveler Hot List, on the 2012 Travel+Leisure It List, was rated 92 by Andrew Harper and has received a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence since opening. For more information and reservations visit

www.casagangotena.com/en/