

The World's Greatest Places of 2026



Eric Mohl
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Nariz del Diablo

Andean Highlands, Ecuador

by [Karen Catchpole](#)

Passenger trains were once plentiful in Latin America. Many have shut down over time, but now, after five years of post-pandemic dormancy and a \$685,000 restoration, the most dramatic rail line in Ecuador has returned to service. The Nariz del Diablo—Spanish for Devil's Nose—was built in the early 1900s to conquer a seemingly impassable rock formation in the Andes. Engineers solved the problem by cutting a series of tight switchbacks into the

cliff faces, forcing trains to zigzag backward and forward as they climb or descend 1,677 ft. The result is a slow-motion ballet: at times the locomotive pulls the train; at others, it pushes from behind, while crew members jump out to manually switch tracks along stretches marked with signs warning *Cambio Pendiente* (“slope change”). Since last August, passengers have once again been welcomed aboard historic cars for the 15-mile, 2.5-hour round trip between Alausí to Sibambe, navigating the Devil’s Nose twice. Beyond the adrenaline rush, the primarily touristic journey offers sweeping Andean views and a cultural welcome at Sibambe Station, where members of local communities share their traditional dance, handicrafts, and native food—turning a feat of engineering into a living heritage experience.