

As to roads: Bogota to Girardot to Ibague; all right. .. Rule 1. Have the fuel pump cleaned out at least once a month. Rule 2. Tires at 28 pounds pressure. Rule 3. Get gas when you can, it may be some time before you'll see another place. Rule 4. Carry water and get water at every gas station for the car. Also have your radiator flushed out occasionally, a lot of water is not too clean.

Ibague to Armenia to Cali. Very pleasant and the pass near Armenia (about 12,000 feet) isn't too bad to negotiate.

Cali to Popayan. Very nice, quite easy drive.

Popayan to Pasto. There was a very short stretch one way, quite near Pasto. You probably won't have to wait long for your turn. Pasto, we had the front and rear springs reinforced.

Incidentally, when you want good information about the roads, go to the bus companies, they know as much as anyone, which isn't saying too much.

Pasto to Ipiiales. Four hours, towards the end very straight. Roads are always kept up for smugglers.

Ipiiales to Tulcan to Otavalo (Ibarra just before Otavalo, if you prefer to stay there.) This trip isn't bad. The Ecuadorian roads are cobblestoned- a little hard on the tires. Watch out for the holes, they may be deep.

Otavalo to Quito. Quite easy. Near Quito there is a steep grade, carry water for the car.

Quito to Ambato. Easy five hour drive.

Ambato to Riobamba. Only two or three hours, good road.

Riobamba to Babahoyo. You'll have fun here - we did. From Riobamba to Guaranda you have to go up about to 12,500 or 13,000 feet. (Riobamba, 9,500) Junior almost didn't make it. I'd suggest having the spark advanced, we didn't do that, but should have. After Guaranda the road goes down and down, round and round, and is a pleasant mixture of mud and cobblestones. However, it may not have rained when you do it. We did part in the rain. Great fun. Near Balzapamba we found a bridge that wasn't present, but since we're such exalted creatures as periodistas, they built the bridge for us. At Babahoyo, a mud hole, we took a boat to Guayaquil. Cost 300 sucres for Junior, 8 apiece for Kamy and me. There is a road which is passable in the dry season, from Babahoyo to Vinces to Dule, to Guayaquil, which they say isn't too bad, but ask in Quito. Boats leave every night from Babahoyo for Guayaquil at eight o'clock so you don't have to stay in Babahoyo, fortunately.

From boat you arrive at Guayaquil about 2.30 a.m., but you can find a hotel at that hour. From Guayaquil to Santa Rosas, by boat, cost 350 to 400 sucres, but maybe you can get them down. From Santa Rosas by car to Tumbes and head south for Lima. When we arrived in Guayaquil we discovered that the road south of Santa Rosas to Tumbes was impassable because of the rainy season, so went to Talara, Peru, by boat, but you will be doing it in the dry season and an American told me today that it is a very pleasant trip at that time.

We enquired about the possibilities of driving from Riobamba to Cuenca to Loja thence to Santa Rosas, thus missing the boat trips altogether, but discovered there is no road from Quito or Riobamba to Cuenca, you have to take a train part of the way. As far as I can see, you can't avoid the water, but you might look up in some of the old issues of Inter-American to see if and how that girl did it. I can't see that it's possible.

In Tumbes, there is, I hear, a State Tourist Hotel, and if it is like the others, it will be marvellous. The road is paved all the way to Lima from Chiclayo on, about 400 to 500 miles, and not bad at all before that. All desert, though, carry water for car, don't go too fast, as car will heat up.

As to hotels, etc. At Girardot, there are some good cafés, Café Chamco is a possibility, to have lunch in, just ask, they're right on the road that goes to Ibague.

Ibague. Hotel Lusitania, has a place in back for the car. When we were there they had no electricity, but possible that will be rectified.

Armenia; Hotel Atlantico for lunch, very nice.

Cali. Pension Parisienne. The only place in town where there was a patio de automoviles. Pension run by a young German, very nice, good food, try not to get a room in back.

Popayan. Hotel Victoria. No place for the car, but there is a garage about three blocks away. The hotel is in a beautiful old colonial house, run by some very nice Germans, excellent food, Popayan is charming.

Pasto, Hotel Pacifico. Quite pleasant, run by Germans. Also an excellent garage here run by Mr. Sichel (German) If your car needs anything, he'll fix it and not charge much.

Ipiiales. Gran Hotel. O.K. A garage nearby for the car. They'll show you where.

Tulcan, Ecuador. Hotel Granada. Lunch, fair, but it is the only decent place in town.

Ibarra. Hotel Imperial, run by a North American, Mr. Mesmer. Very pleasant. He'll find a place for your car.

Otovalo. Hotel Roma. Not too hot, but again the only place in town, and you ought not to miss the Saturday fair. No place for the car at hotel, but they can find you a garage or sorts. Incidentally, really quite necessary to have your car stabled at night. ~~###~~ People down here have taking ways, and there are a lot of things that are ~~had~~ to replace. If you can't find a garage, ask about night watchman, and give him a little something for keeping an eye on your car.

Quito. We stayed at the ~~sensi~~on San Luis, 18 of Set. and Avenida Campos Eliseos, which is good, but we don't like the manager. Anyhow, they may not have rooms. However, other possibilities. Le Gourment, the best restaurant in town, also a pensión on Avenida Campos Eliseos, too. Another, Hotel Windsor, near Le Gourmet. ~~####~~ Pensión Gremlin, run by a Mrs. Campbell, north American. Lots of Americans stay there, if you want that kind of thing. Pensión Roosevelt, of course, very nice. Also, Hotels "etropolitano and Majestic, ~~on Fridays~~ Incidentally, don't fail to have seviche at the "ajestic, on Fridays Saturday or Sunday, marvellous! Garages, ask and you'll find one. There is a Ford Service station in Quito, good if your car needs anything.

Latacunga. Lunch at ~~station~~ restaurant. Fair.

Ambato. Villa Belgica. The manager is tricky, but hotel is all right. Also Villa Hilda, supposed to be the best but usually crowded. There is a fair Monday, here.

Riobamba. Hotel Metropolitano, right next to railroad station, but it is the only decent place in town. Place in back for car. There is a good mechanic down the street, if your car needs attention. Fair on Saturday.

Guayaquil. Grand Hotel, second best hotel in town, much less expensive than the Metropolitano there, which is expensive, even on American standards. There are garages for car, just ask at hotel.

Tumbes, ~~#####~~. As I said, there is a State Tourist Hotel.(Peru)

Talara. Hotel Royal, if you want to go out of your way, it's O.K.

Piura. State Tourist hotel. We had just lunch there, but undoubtedly the rooms are good, too.

Chiclayo. Hotel Royal, food is good, accommodations not so hot. There is also a Hotel Europa which may be better.

Trujillo. State Tourist Hotel. Place for car. Wonderful hotel.

Lima. Hotel Colmena, Avenida Nicolas de Pierola, Izquierda. No restaurant, but hotel is good, and there is a place behind for the car. Marvellous restaurants in Lima, Chez Victor, the Hotel Maury, Trocader, Cabana Club, and Crem-Ricas, a Peruvian version of Howard Johnson, founded by two young North Americans.

Places suggested are not expensive and are about the best.

(Extract of letter from Joan Rothwell)