

Ecuador Exploration



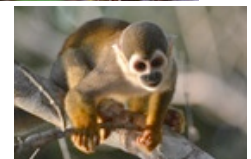
Ecuador is the second smallest country in South America, yet it offers travelers an astounding range of activities. It is a place rich in biodiversity, culture and natural beauty. It is one of the most species-rich countries on the planet.

The Jungle: January 10-15

\$1895 group size 6-10. Domestic airfare not included

January 10 Arrive to Quito.
Airport transfer to the Historic Center of Quito. Your first class hotel is in the heart of the charming Andean city.
Overnight Quito at Patio Andaluz hotelpatioandaluz.com

January 11 City Tour of Quito,
A Gondola ride at the top of the city is a good way to start the day on the Teleférico. Then the Museo Guayasamín, Olga Fisch Folkart Gallery & lunch. Of course there's always plenty of optional walking. Keeping in mind you are acclimating, there will be as much activity offered as you are up for.
Overnight Quito at Patio Andaluz (BLD)



January 12-14 La Selva Jungle Lodge
The Amazon Ecolodge sits high on Lake Garzacochoa near the Napo River, a major tributary of the Amazon River. The hotel, resort and Spa is located across the river from Yasuni National Park, Ecuador's premier Amazonian National Park which is home to some of the most biodiverse rain forest ecosystems on the planet. This is also the home of the indigenous people of the Huaorani, Shuar and Quechua. La Selva has an abundance of birds, due to its perfect location on the border of Yasuni National Park. La Selva is perhaps the best base for wildlife photography in the Amazon because of its location on a backwater lake. It is frequently visited by several species of monkeys, hundreds of species of birds, caymans, and a myriad of other rainforest species. The lodge is close to the famous Napo river Parrot and Macaw salt lick where hundreds of birds flock to in the mid-morning. (BLD)



January 15 Morning nature activities. Travel to Quito
Afternoon free to further enjoy the historic district of Quito
Overnight Patio Andaluz (B)



Galapagos Islands

The Galapagos January 16-23

\$4495 Domestic airfare not included

DAY 1 Friday Arrival at Baltra airport

AM: Flight to Galapagos from Quito Airport.

The flight from Quito to the Galapagos takes approximately 2 ½ hours. Upon arrival at Baltra airport, all passengers have to go through an airport inspection, pay the park entrance fee of \$100 USD, and the \$10USD for the INGALA transit control card, both mandatory to enter the National Park. A 'Panga' (dinghy) will transport us to the M/C Anahi, where the crew will welcome us onboard. After lunch, we will proceed to the first visit.

PM: Bachas Beach

These two small beaches are found on Santa Cruz island. Their sand is made of decomposed coral, which is white and soft, making it a favorite nesting site for sea turtles. Behind one of the beaches it is possible to observe flamingos and other coastal birds, such as black-necked stilts and whimbrels. The other beach is longer and has two old barges that were abandoned during the Second World War, when the US Army used Baltra Island as a military base to protect the Panama Channel. (BLD)

DAY 2 Saturday Genovesa Island

AM: Darwin Bay

This bay originated when the crater of the island collapsed below sea level. The wet landing (jumping from the panga to the shallow waters of the shore) is on a beautiful white coral sandy beach. This is a favorite island for birdwatchers: red footed-boobies, masked boobies, wandering tattlers, lava gulls, whimbrels, yellow-crowned, and black-crowned lava herons, and yellow warblers can usually be seen in the area. Continuing on the trail, we will climb to the edge of the cliff to see red footed-boobies nesting in the Mangrove trees below. Bird watching includes sightings of sharp-beaked finches, large cactus and ground finches, Galapagos doves, and swallow-tailed gulls.

PM: El Barranco

This visitor site is located on the southern part of Darwin Bay, on Genovesa Island. The trail is made of volcanic rock and has a length of 1.5 km, which we will walk in about 2 hours. The youngest area of the island, from a geological point of view, is found here. The natural erosion that has occurred in these lava flows has transformed the place in the ideal spot for nesting Storm Petrels. We will see two species of petrels that nest in cavities and holes in the lava. One of the main predators of this place is the short-eared owl. The Nazca booby is also present on this island. During the panga ride along the cliffs we have the possibility of watching fur sea lions and other several species of seabirds. (BLD)

DAY 3 Sunday Plazas and Santa Fe Islands

AM: Plazas

Plazas Island is located to the east of Santa Cruz, and despite its small size, some of the most interesting and outstanding species of the Galapagos are found here. Throughout the island we will find several hybrid iguanas, a result of crossing a male marine iguana and a female land iguana, these unique animals, recognizable at first glance by their black/gray color, with a land iguana's crest, have the face and tail of the marine iguana. The big iguanas' population is due to the presence of tunas, their favorite food. We will also find swallow tailed gulls nesting in the rugged cliffs along with other sea birds such as: the Audubon shearwaters, red-billed tropicbirds, frigate birds, and brown pelicans.

PM: Santa Fe

Located in the southeastern part of the Galapagos, this island was formed from an ocean floor uplift and not a volcanic eruption, and thus its mostly flat shape. Santa Fe is home to a number of endemic species like the Galapagos hawk, the Galapagos snake, the Galapagos mockingbird, rice rats, and one of the two species of lands Iguanas of the islands. After disembarking in the beautiful and clear waters, we will visit one of the many sea lion colonies. Along the trail we will see many salt bushes as well as the giant Prickly pear cactus; gigantism is a characteristic of oceanic islands. There are also great possibilities for snorkeling with sea lions and tropical fishes. *(BLD)*



DAY 4 Monday San Cristobal Island

AM: Punta Pitt

This place is located on the north part of San Cristobal Island. Here we can find endemic species such as the lava lizard and the red-footed booby. We will walk to the high part of the island for an impressive view.

This spot is also home to the Chatham mockingbird, only found here on San Cristobal.

PM: Kicker Rock

Also known as the Sleeping Lion because of its shape, this islet is located off the coast of San Cristobal. The remains of a lava cone eroded by the sea and the two vertical rocks that rise 500 feet from the ocean surface form a small channel suitable for small boats. This natural monument has become a favorite sight for cruises because of the many tropical birds, frigates, and

boobies that live in the place. Beneath the sea, the crystal clear waters offer a superb show of colorful tropical fishes and invertebrates. Lobos Island: Here, we will find a small population of blue-footed boobies and common frigate birds nesting on the site. We will observe the two species of sea lions present in the archipelago. During the panga ride is possible to see brown pelicans and several species of shorebirds. And when snorkeling, it's common to see juvenile sea lions, manta rays and sea turtles. *(BLD)*

DAY 5 Tuesday San Cristobal Island

AM: Interpretation Center.

The Interpretation Center will help us learn about both the geological and human history of the islands, conservation issues, and natural history. The older Museum of Natural History aims to the preservation of the natural history of the islands.

Frigate Bird Hill: The trip to the Hill takes approximately 20-40 minutes. Once there, we are going to be treated to a spectacular view of the white beaches and a panoramic view of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. The hill is often visited by frigate birds.

PM: La Lobería

This coral sand beach is a piece of coast that has been named for the large number of sea lions. Despite being outside the boundaries of the National Park area, the park staff obliges for its care and maintenance because of its great importance. Here, we will see button mangrove, white mangrove, chala, palo santo, cotton, Tiquilia, morning glory and other species of the coastal zone, such as the cacho de chivo, whose seeds are the main source of food for several species of finches. Besides the sea lions, yellow warblers, frigates and various species of finches are usually present. (BLD)

DAY 6 Wednesday Española Island

AM: Punta Suarez

This rocky point sustains one of the most impressive and diverse colonies of sea birds in the Galapagos. High cliffs rise up from the sea along the southern shore, affording us spectacular views of soaring birds and of the blowhole, where water is squeezed through a fracture in the rocks and is expelled up to 50-75 feet into the air.

PM: Gardner Bay

Gardner Bay is an excellent beach for relaxing, swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and also presents a terrific opportunity to observe sea lions and sharks in the crystal clear waters. (BLD)



DAY 7 Thursday Floreana Island

AM: Punta Cormorant

Here we find probably the best flamingo lagoon in the Galapagos and one of the largest in the islands. There are a variety of species of shorebirds besides flamingos; the most frequent are common stilts, white-checked pintail ducks, and other migratory birds. Devil's Crown is located just off Punta Cormorant and offers some of the best snorkeling in the Galapagos. The only way to see the Crown is on the water, as it is termed a Marine Visitor Site. This is actually an almost completely submerged volcano, and erosion has transformed the cone into a series of jagged peaks, that resemble a black crown.

PM: Baroness Lookout

We will continue to the north of the island to then ascend to an elevated slope to enjoy a view of the Baroness lookout. It is said that Baroness Eloisa Von Wagner loved this place and spent several hours watching the landscape, which covers the coastline from the Enderby islet to Post Office Bay, as well as Cerro Pajas, the pool of flamingos and wide forest of Palo Santo. (BLD)

DAY 8 Friday

Santa Cruz Island

AM: Charles Darwin Station

Although most Galapagos visitors come here to observe and appreciate the natural wonders, it's also interesting to learn how the protection and conservation of the islands is carried out. The main attractions here are the National Park information center, the Van Straelen Exhibition Hall, the Breeding Center for young tortoises, and the adult Galapagos tortoises in captivity. Airport transfer to airport for a later morning return flight to Quito. (B)