

11 Days/10 Nights

Departs Daily from Quito



Ultimate Ecuador: Quito, The Galapagos, Guayaquil & Cuenca

Experience magical Ecuador - its culture, history, landscapes and biodiversity. Begin in Quito, situated at 9300 feet in the heart of the Andes, just south of the Equatorial Line. The country's colonial history is reflected in Quito's Historic Centre and the lovely city of Cuenca, both UNESCO World Heritage sites. Get In touch with indigenous culture at the famous handicrafts market at Otavalo, and the surrounding villages. Visit Ecuador's other major city, Guayaquil, before flying to the Galapagos Islands for a 4 night cruise that will introduce you to the amazing wildlife that is unique to this environment.

ACCOMMODATIONS

• 3 Nights Quito

• 4 Nights Galapagos Cruise

• 2 Nights Cuenca

- 1 Night Guayaquil

INCLUSIONS

- All Ground Transfers plus Flights to & from the Galapagos
- Scenic Quito Tour
- Otavalo Market Tour
- Daily Guided Excursions in the Galapagos
- All Meals in the Galapagos
- Scenic Cuenca Tour
- Daily Breakfast



DAY
1

ARRIVE QUITO:

Quito airport greeting and transfer to your selected hotel.

(Accommodations, Quito)



DAY
2

QUITO:

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon (2:30 pm) your three-hour city tour begins with a visit to the historic Colonial Centre, designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, and considered to be the largest and best preserved in South America. Continue to the Monastery of San Francisco, Quito's oldest church and monastery, and one of the great religious buildings of the New World. The scenic tour ends at a lookout point with a great view of Quito.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Quito)



DAY
3

QUITO:

Today, travel to the world renowned Otavalo Market. Otavalo dates back to pre-Inca times and is famous for its textiles woven on back-strap and shuttle looms. Here you can buy geometric design tapestries, woven ponchos, brightly colored alpaca scarves, hand-knit sweaters, as well as woodcarvings, and paintings by local artists. The market is held daily, but it is larger on Saturdays. An early departure from Quito, your two-hour journey will take you through green rolling hills with snow-covered mountains in the background to the Otavalo valley. You will have ample time to visit the famous market and stroll along the narrow cobblestone streets. Here you will see the Otavalo men with their long braided hair, their distinctive blue ponchos and white trousers. The Otavalo women wear lovely white embroidered

blouses, long black skirts and shawls, and multiple strands of gold glass beads around their necks. Lunch is at one of the charming country inns or haciendas in the area. Late afternoon return to your Quito hotel. Note: Take a sweater even if the day is warm and sunny.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Quito)



QUITO TO GALAPAGOS:

Transfer to the airport for a flight to the Galapagos. Passengers are picked up at the airport by a naturalist guides and taken on a ten minute bus drive to the pier to board the M/V Santa Cruz.

Las Bachas (Santa Cruz Island): Located on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island, it is a glorious white beach (wet landing), with several brackish lagoons only a few steps away from the sea. These lagoons are the feeding grounds of various wading birds, from stilts to flamingos. This is a great opportunity to get acquainted with snorkeling gear and techniques. Welcome cocktail, expedition plan for next day and dinner.

(Breakfast, Quito; Dinner & Accommodations, M/V Santa Cruz)



BUCCANEER COVE (JAMES ISLAND):

After breakfast, enjoy a coastal exploration along the impressive cliffs of Buccaneer Cove. Learn about the history of Santiago Island, its relevance for the whalers, pirates and early researchers, including Darwin's epic voyage in 1835, and the conservation projects aimed at eradicating feral species. Today the island is free of feral goats, and the cove is home to a large number of marine birds, sea lions, and inter-tidal organisms. Enjoy fantastic natural formations such as the "Elephant Rock", "The Bishop" and an impressive natural cave. This is a great site for snorkeling too! Lunch on board.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner & Accommodations, M/V Santa Cruz)



RÁBIDA ISLAND (JERVIS):

Disembark at Rábida Island on a red-coloured beach, due to the unusually high content of iron in the volcanic material. A gratifying stroll along the beach of this small island allows the observation of a large colony of sea lions, marine iguanas, mockingbirds, yellow warblers and several species of Darwin's finches. Very close to the beach, hidden behind a strip of green saltbush, is a salt pond where at times greater flamingos migrate. This is a great place to snorkel from the beach, both for beginners as well as for experienced snorkelers, due to the unique combination of underwater species and submarine landscapes. Non-snorkelers will enjoy a ride on the glass bottom boat. Lunch on board.

Bartolomé Island: Disembark at Bartolomé Island for a hike to the summit. This is a

moderately steep climb aided by a wooden staircase, resting platforms, and handrails. Dinghy ride around colossal Pinnacle Rock, then time to enjoy the beach and some snorkelling, possibly with Galápagos penguins, or else a ride in the glass-bottom boat for great views of the underwater world. Expedition plan for Thursday and dinner.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodations, M/V Santa Cruz)



PRINCE PHILIP'S STEPS (TOWER/GENOVESA ISLAND):

The morning starts with a very interesting panga ride along the cliffs and then disembark on rocks for a steep climb up some stairs. Once at the top of the stairs, the land is flat, allowing for a stimulating walk of about a mile to the other side of this small island, observing large colonies of Nazca boobies, red footed boobies, great frigate birds and storm petrels. Those not wishing to disembark can enjoy a longer panga ride along the cliffs. Lunch on board.

Darwin Bay (Tower/Genovesa Island): In the afternoon, a wet landing for an easy stroll observing hundreds of birds, mainly frigate birds, red footed and Nazca boobies, gulls, herons, finches and mockingbirds. Optional walk over sharp lava and uneven terrain for dramatic views, or else return to the beach to enjoy swimming and snorkelling at this beautiful natural harbour, or join us in a Glass Bottom boat ride. Farewell cocktail, departure briefing and dinner.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodations, M/V Santa Cruz)



PUERTO BAQUERIZO MORENO (SAN CRISTÓBAL ISLAND):

After breakfast, optional departure to see the breeding programme of giant tortoises at Cerro Colorado. Learn about his endangered species, and its promising recovery. This site is 45 minutes by bus, on the south shore of San Cristóbal Island. Return to town and transfer to the airport to take the flight back to Guayaquil. Transfer to a Guayaquil hotel and spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure.

(Breakfast, M/V Santa Cruz; Accommodations, Guayaquil)



CUENCA:

Transfer from Guayaquil to Cuenca by air (without tour) or by ground with a tour of El Cajas National Park on the way. This area is an Andean cloud forest, soaking up the mists that roll across the mountains. Visit Llaviucu and La Toreadora Lakes for a stroll amidst their beautiful scenery.

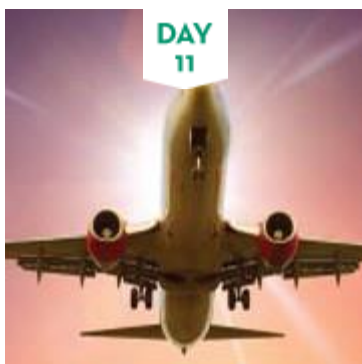
(Breakfast, Guayaquil; Lunch & Accommodations, Cuenca)



CUENCA:

At 9:00 am, you will have an opportunity to discover why Cuenca has been recognized as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, as you stroll through this charming city. You will visit a workshop where fine quality Panama hats are made (yes, Panama hats are made in Ecuador!), and Plaza San Francisco, where the beautifully embroidered skirts of the cholas are for sale. Your tour continues to the colorful flower market at the small plaza in front of the carved stone entrance to the church of El Carmen de la Asunción. From here, stroll to the main square, surrounded by the imposing blue-domed Cathedral, the Court of Justice, the Municipal Palace, the Governor's Palace and the Church of El Sagrario. See an example of the mortar-less stonework of the Incas and the remains of Spanish arches at Todos Santos Ruins. The tour ends with a drive along the Tomebamba River to see the city's overhanging houses and the laundry spread out to dry on its riverbanks. Lunch will feature typical Cuenca cuisine. After lunch there is free time to visit museums, and to shop for handicrafts. Return to your hotel for dinner.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodations, Cuenca)



DEPART CUENCA:

After breakfast, take a flight back to Quito. Continue home or to your next Avanti Destination!

(Breakfast, Cuenca)



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