



The Best of Ecuador and Galapagos

13 Night Private Tour

Journey to the far side of the world for an experience of a lifetime on our private Best of Ecuador and Galapagos tour.

This epic 13 night private tour is a truly unique lifetime adventure blending the spectacular geography of Ecuador's mainland of active volcanoes, immense canyons, vast tropical rain forests and powerful waterfalls, with the enchanting Galapagos Islands, where the magic diversity of fearless animals flourishing in a volcanic ecosystem create an awe-inspiring atmosphere.

Highlights:

- Explore the old town of Quito, the largest and best-preserved colonial city of America, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Enjoy a morning flight to Baltra Island and a boat ride to Isabela Island - part of the Galapagos Archipelago
- Snorkel and kayak in the well documented and filmed tintoreras and lava tunnels
- Have an encounter with wild giant tortoises
- Visit the Charles Darwin research station
- Enjoy a half-day tour of Academy Bay
- Volcano trek in Cotopaxi National Park in the Andes
- A day of biking, hiking and bird watching in the Cloud Forest
- Recharge in the volcanic hot springs at Papallacta

Please note, all services in Galapagos such as snorkelling, transfers and flights to Galapagos itself will be shared with maximum of 16 passengers. All other activities and excursions throughout the tour are private.

What's included:

- Getting there: Return flights to Quito Airport
- Transport: Return airport transfers and return flights to Galapagos plus transport throughout the tour
- Accommodation: 13 nights total duration (including 1 night on inbound flight) - 11 nights in hotel accommodation and 1 night hacienda in Otavalo
- Meals included: 12 breakfasts and 4 lunches
- English-speaking trip leader and local guides

Not included:

- Galapagos Ingala Card – USD 20 per person (payable direct locally)
- Galapagos National Park Fee – USD 200 per person (payable direct locally in cash upon arrival in Baltra airport in Galapagos Islands)
- Isabela Pier Fee - USD 10 per person (payable direct locally)
- Any meals (other than the one mentioned in the itinerary), drinks, tips, expenses of personal nature.
- Optional excursion/tours
- Travel insurance and visa

Full Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Quito

Welcome to Quito, the largest and best preserved colonial city in the Americas, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. Nestled in a valley at the foothills of the Pichincha volcano, Quito is considered the Cultural Capital of South America. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel; depending on your arrival time, you can spend the day exploring the charming old town and surrounding areas.

Your first day is designed for acclimation and orientation.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Sheraton Quito or similar



Day 2: Arrive in the Galapagos - Isabela Island

Today, embark on an adventure to the awe-inspiring Galapagos Islands, where Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution.

In the morning, board a flight from Quito to Baltra Island, then continue to Puerto Ayora, the largest town in the Galapagos. From here, take a scenic boat ride to Isabela Island, the largest island in the archipelago and home to six majestic shield volcanoes—Alcedo, Cerro Azul, Darwin, Ecuador, Sierra Negra, and Wolf. Five of these are still active, making Isabela one of the most volcanically dynamic places on Earth.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hotel Cally, Galapagos or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



Day 3: Snorkel in the Lava Tunnels

Discover the surreal lava formations along Isabela's coastline, created by past volcanic eruptions. This magical labyrinth of crystal-clear water, known as "Los Tuneles," has been featured in BBC and National Geographic documentaries. Snorkel among sea turtles, eagle rays, sea lions, sharks, and even playful Galapagos penguins.

We also recommend visiting the nearby giant tortoise breeding centre.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hotel Cally, Galapagos or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 4: Explore Tintoreras

Option A: Hike Sierra Negra, Kayak and Snorkel in Tintoreras

After breakfast, head to the highlands of Isabela for a hike around the impressive Sierra Negra Volcano. Standing at 1,500 metres with an outer diameter of about nine kilometres, it boasts the world's second-largest lava dome. Enjoy lunch in Puerto Villamil, then embark on a kayaking adventure in the bay, where you might spot penguins, blue-footed boobies, pelicans, marine iguanas, sea turtles, sea lions, and eagle rays. Conclude with a snorkelling session at Concha & Perla, reached via a scenic mangrove boardwalk.

ACTIVITIES: Active walk, wildlife observation.

WILDLIFE: Galvan Galapagos, Darwin's finches, flycatcher, mockingbird.



Option B: Navigation to Tintoreras with Snorkelling

Depart from Puerto Villamil Pier for a short boat ride to Las Tintoreras, a cluster of biodiverse islets. Here, snorkel among white-tip sharks, sea lions, marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies, and Galapagos penguins. You'll also find nesting sites for marine iguanas, offering close-up wildlife encounters.

ACTIVITIES: Walking, snorkeling (superficial diving) wildlife observation.

WILDLIFE: Sea lions, marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies, zayapas, sea turtles, starfish, tropical fish, rays, sharks, pelicans, and Galapagos penguins.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hotel Cally, Galapagos or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 5: Charles Darwin Research Station and Santa Cruz Highlands

In the morning, travel from Isabela to Santa Cruz Island. Keep an eye out for dolphins and whales (July to October) during the crossing. Upon arrival, visit the Charles Darwin Research Station to learn about endemic species and conservation efforts.

In the afternoon, explore 'Rancho Primicias' in the highlands, home to the iconic Galapagos tortoises. Enjoy hiking alongside these gentle giants and observing highland wildlife like pintail ducks, egrets, flycatchers, finches, and frigate birds.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Hotel La Isla, Galapagos or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



Day 6: Academy Bay Tour

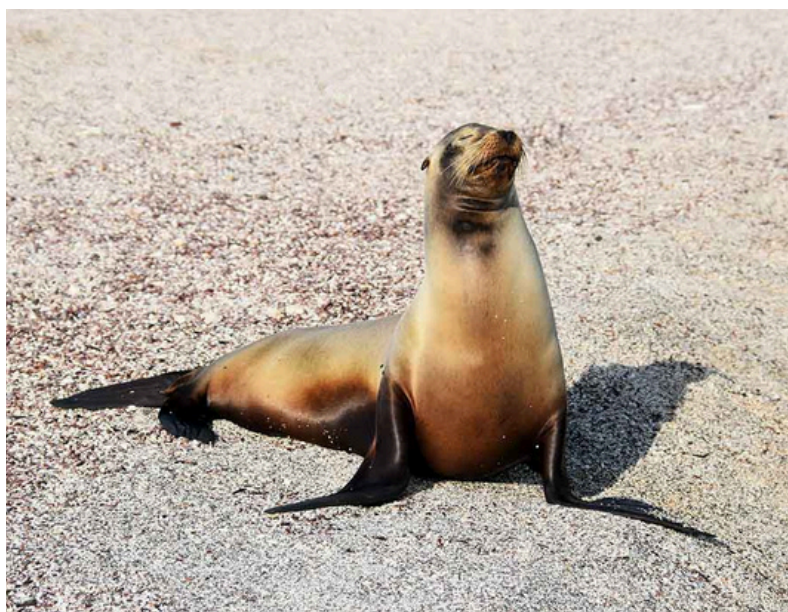
After breakfast, enjoy a half-day tour of Academy Bay.

Top tip: Be sure to pack everything you need for this trip. Optional snorkel equipment will be provided free of charge to anyone who wishes to use it.

Snorkel with vibrant marine life, including curious sea lions and exotic fish. Spot blue-footed boobies perched along the rocky shores. Climb to a scenic viewpoint for panoramic views, where you might see white-tipped reef sharks gliding below. The striking contrast of red rocks, giant cacti, and turquoise waters offers fantastic photo opportunities.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Hotel La Isla, Galapagos or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



Day 7: Flight Back to Quito

After our final breakfast on the Galapagos Islands and you've taken the last photos of sea lions, transfer to Baltra's airport to catch the flight back to the mainland.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Sheraton Quito or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 8: Quito City Tour and Mindo Cloud Forest

Today, explore Quito and its surroundings. Visit landmarks like the Colonial City, the Equator Line, and Otavalo Market Fair. Drive along the 12th of October Avenue to the Culture House and Legislative Palace, then continue to the Basilica Church and San Juan Mirador for breathtaking city views.

Afterwards, you will reach the small town of Mindo, nestled in the cloud forest. This area teems with a wide variety of plants and animal life, providing a perfect introduction to Ecuador's diversity. Mindo and its surrounding cloud forest are a haven for birdwatchers, especially those interested in hummingbirds!

In the afternoon, you will visit a chocolate distributor, offering a tour of the cocoa processing, from harvesting the seed to the final product, such as a delicious brownie or a cup of genuine hot cocoa.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hosteria Septimo Paraiso, Mindo or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



Day 9: Full Day in Mindo

Immerse yourself in Mindo's pristine cloud rainforest. Hike alongside waterfalls, cross cable cars, and spot vibrant birdlife, including toucans and hummingbirds.

One of today's highlights is the visit to the butterfly nursery, where enormous butterflies dry their wings after emerging from their jewel-like cocoons. You can dip your fingers into a banana concoction and then be delighted as butterflies the size of birds alight on your hands for a snack.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hosteria Septimo Paraiso, Mindo or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



Day 10: Otavalo and Cuicocha Crater Lake

Travel to Otavalo to experience its bustling handcraft market, filled with textiles, alpaca goods, jewelry, and more. Engage with the local Otavalo people, known for their vibrant traditions.

Next, visit Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve and hike around the breathtaking Cuicocha Crater Lake. Enjoy a boat ride on the crater's pristine waters before heading to Hacienda Las Palmeras for a night of Andean hospitality.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Las Palmeras Inn, Otavalo or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 11 - Sacha Warmi Project and Papallacta Hot Springs

You will journey to Pijal, a small village nestled in the heart of the Andes, to visit a sustainable project - Sacha WarmiKuna (women from the mountain). This initiative aims to support their families and enhance the role of women in the local society. You will actively participate in the preparation of "Aji," a local spicy salsa integral to their identity. Additionally, you will share valuable time with them and enjoy a delicious traditional lunch crafted from the fresh produce harvested that same day from the surrounding organic fields. Later, you'll gain insights into the weaving process of their textiles.

In the afternoon, travel to Papallacta to relax in the soothing volcanic hot springs, surrounded by Andean peaks.

ACCOMMODATION: Papallacta Spa & Resort or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 12: Cotopaxi Volcano

Explore Cotopaxi National Park, home to the majestic, snow-capped Cotopaxi Volcano. Start at the interpretation center, then drive across the paramo to Limpiopungo Lake. Enjoy a nature walk, spotting Andean birds and soaking in stunning volcano views.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Sheraton Quito or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 13: Departure

After breakfast, departure transfer to airport for your return overnight flight.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 14: Arrive Home

Your overnight flight arrives back in the UK for you to make your journey home.

FAQs

DO I NEED A VISA?

UK passport holders can visit Ecuador without a visa for up to 90 days in any 12-month period. Tourists can stay in the Galapagos Islands for up to 60 days. You must have travel health insurance (mandatory) and have completed an online Galapagos transit control card at least 24 hours before your flight, which you must also keep a copy of. Please visit the FCDO website for more information.

WHAT CURRENCY SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?

Ecuador uses the USD as its official currency. If you need to withdraw cash while you're there, stick to ATMs inside banks or secure locations for added peace of mind. It's handy to carry small bills, as larger notes can be difficult to break, especially in rural areas.

WHY ARE THERE ADDITIONAL EXCURSION/EXPERIENCE FEES?

National Park fees and the Galapagos Card fee are necessary for anyone wanting to visit Galapagos. These fees are payable locally which have to be made to the Tour Provider so they can ensure your successful entry.

DO I NEED TRAVEL/HEALTH INSURANCE?

Having the right travel insurance is a must for entering the Galapagos. It's there to make sure you're covered for any healthcare or medical treatment you might need. Make sure your policy includes any activities you're planning to do, like rafting or other adventure sports.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

We'd recommend bringing insect repellent, biodegradable sunscreen, a rain jacket (handy for boat rides and rafting), comfy walking or hiking shoes, and a hat for the sun. If you're heading to higher altitudes, take it easy as you adjust to avoid any ill effects.

WHO IS THIS TOUR SUITABLE FOR?

This tour includes activities like hiking and rafting, but nothing too strenuous. A reasonable level of fitness is helpful, but you're not obliged to join in on everything—if rafting's not your thing, you can choose not to participate. No prior experience with water sports is needed. The minimum age for children on this tour is 8 years old.

DO I NEED ANY VACCINATIONS?

Ensure your routine vaccinations and boosters are up to date, as recommended in the UK; you won't need to show proof. While Quito, the Andes, and the Galapagos aren't in malaria-risk areas, Zika virus is present, so we'd advise against travel if you're pregnant.