

Ecuador & Galapagos

See the Wonders of Ecuador through nature and culture!

Ecuador is one of 17 countries in the world that harbors the majority of Earth's species and a high level of endemic species. As a result, it is referred to as a Megadiverse Country. It is also made up of three highly different regions that consist of: the coast, the highlands and the Amazon with an extra insular region – the Galapagos Islands

The ultimate destination for wildlife enthusiasts, the Galapagos Islands are home to some of the rarest and most fearless animal species on the planet.

Active Adventures, with Hiking, Snorkeling, and aquatic Explorations. We capture the wonder of Darwin's legendary archipelago to include hikes, snorkeling excursions that reveal sea turtles, Galápagos penguins, marine iguanas, and a kaleidoscopic array of tropical fish, and on optional exploration by sea kayak.

Our program below includes a Quito City Tour and Middle of the World through the highlights of this world heritage city. Enjoy 2 nights in Otavalo with natural and cultural activities. Spectacular wildlife will be seen in the Amazon and Galapagos where you will enjoy natural and adventure activities.

Itinerary

Day 1: Quito

Transfer Quito (airport-hotels) - Mariscal Sucre Airport
English speaking assistance

Night at La Casona de la Ronda (Standard room)



Included: transportation , English speaking guide , accommodation

Day 2: Quito

Full Day City tour in Quito & Equatorial Line

Ecuador is history, fascinating indigenous cultures, slow winding rivers and lush tropical forests, spectacular snowcapped volcanoes and some of the most exciting wildlife on earth.

The place to start is the 'Mitad del Mundo', a site located just 45 minutes north of Quito, where a monument marks the equator at its closest point to the city. Archaeological evidence shows that both pre-Inca and Inca civilizations recognised and celebrated the equinox, the day the sun is directly over the equator.



In the morning we will make the 45 minute journey northwest to the equatorial line, where we will walk the rim of the extinct Pululahua volcanic crater. Later we will visit the "Ciudad Mitad del Mundo" a group of buildings designed to explain the significance of the site, as well as the Ethnographic or Inifiam Museum, located right on the Equator. Here you will have the chance to plant your feet in two hemispheres at the same time!

Back in Quito, after lunch we will visit the city's impressive colonial centre, the reason Quito was the first city to be named a world heritage site. First on the agenda is a walk through the main plaza, the 'Plaza de la Independencia', where you will see the Government Palace, the Cathedral, and some of the most important churches built around the XVI and XVII centuries, including the San Francisco Monastery, a building begun only 5 days after the founding of the city.

There is a lunch at Tianguéz cafe that is included.

Now for our chocolate experience! Ecuador's unique equatorial climate provides the perfect environment for growing the world's finest cocoa - Cacao Arriba. Cocoa has been revered in Latin America for over 5,000 years. Spanish explorers loved it so much they called it the 'Food of the Gods'.

The *Republica del Cacao's* founders began their voyage over ten years ago when they set themselves an ambitious mission: to produce the most authentic and delicious chocolate, while protecting and developing sustainable fine cocoa production.

Our chocolate experience starts with a guided explaining the history of cocoa in Ecuador, followed by a chocolate tasting.

Night at La Casona de la Ronda (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation

Day 3: Quito- Otavalo

Excursion Otavalo Market

On this day we will visit the Quitsato Sundial, a cultural-tourist area located on the equatorial line near the Cayambe volcano, where you will learn about the astronomical knowledge of the region's prehispanic cultures.

We will then head to the town of Otavalo. This is truly one of the most interesting towns in Ecuador, where the local Kichwa indigenous culture is not only plainly visible, but in the ascendancy.

The town's famous craft market is one of the most visited sites in Ecuador, and with good reason. The market is filled with interesting colourful and sometimes rare objects and crafts. Do remember to bargain, but only if you're interested! The market is held every day on one of the town squares at the foot of the majestic Mt. Imbabura. And to help you navigate the market, you will be given a short explanation of the market and provided with a map of the area.

As part of our day at the market we will visit the workshop of Master weaver Miguel Andrango, in the village of Agato. Miguel's art has taken him abroad, mainly to exhibitions and fairs in the United States where the quality of his work is widely acknowledged. In the small store in the courtyard of his Tawantinsuyo workshop, the walls are covered with bright designs, most with an indigenous motif; the designs are based on Inca patterns but are the work of Miguel and his family. The workshop uses only pure wool and Alpaca; the weavers card and spin it themselves and then dye it with natural inks made from mosses (for yellow) or seeds such as 'Achiote'(for red).

Night at the Hacienda Cusin (Standard)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner



Day 4: Otavalo

FD Cuicocha Loop - Crater Lake Exploration

Today we will drive to the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve for a three hour hike at Lake Cuicocha, a deep-blue crater lake on the lower southern flanks of Mount Cotacachi. We will enjoy more views of the surrounding volcanoes Cayambe, Imbabura and Cuicocha while learning about the local flora and fauna. For bird watchers there will be the chance to see ruddy ducks, giant hummingbirds, silvery grebes, and more.

After the hike we will stop at the picturesque colonial town of Cotacachi, famous for its leather work before we head back to your hotel.

Night at the Hacienda Cusin (Standard)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner



Day 5: Otavalo- Quito

Raptor Rescue Center - Parque Cóndor

After breakfast, we will visit a rescue center for the protection and recovery of a number of species of birds of prey. Amongst these is the magnificent Andean Condor, whose wing span can reach more than eight feet. This is a must if you are interested in this marvelous bird and its close association with Andean indigenous cultures. Here we will also see some of the other fascinating and beautiful birds of prey to be found in the Northern Andes.

Exhibition days: Wednesday to Sunday and Holidays

Private transportation from Otavalo to Quito.

Night at the Hotel Polo Club (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation



Day 6: Quito- Coca

Transfer Quito (airport-hotels) - Mariscal Sucre Airport
English speaking assistance

Local flight from Quito to Coca (not included)

Getting into the Amazon

Our journey starts with a 35-minute flight from Quito to Coca where staff will meet you upon arrival. We will transfer to the banks of the Napo River where your bilingual guides will give a safety briefing before embarking on a 2 ½ hour boat trip on the largest Ecuadorian affluent of the Amazon, the Napo River. During the journey, we get a taste of the Amazon – ancestral communities, life on the river, and birdlife such as herons, egrets and vultures. A packed lunch will be provided.



The motorized canoe ride is followed by a 15 minute walk through flooded forest and a 20 minute paddle canoe ride across the beautiful Challuacocha blackwater oxbow lake. The lodge staff warmly welcomes us with refreshing cold drinks and delicious snacks before settling down in our cabins.

After getting settled in, we will have a short hike on nearby trails where we will get acquainted with the sights, smells and sounds of the Amazon jungle. As we enter the forest, sunlight is immediately filtered and we are faced with a million shades of green. A symphony of insect song fills the air, and our senses are instantly heightened. We might see one of the forest's 13 species of primate, birds, frogs, or extraordinary flora. The walk is one of discovery, and immediately tunes us in to the richness of Amazon ecosystem.

Return to the lodge for a chef-prepared dinner. The talented culinary staff at Sani Lodge is proud to offer a wide variety of delicious national and international cuisine. They are able to cater to a wide variety of dietary preferences, including for vegetarians and vegans. One of our bilingual guides will give a briefing about the Amazon region before you head out into the lagoon to search for nocturnal wildlife, paddling silently through its black waters. Someone's flashlight will almost certainly find eyeshine in the darkness – you might manage so see black caimans! Return to the lodge for overnight.

Night at Sani Lodge (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , box lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner

Day 7: Yasuni

Wildlife Discovery

After breakfast at the lodge, we set out for a full day of adventure in the rainforest. We will take a long hike to learn about the plants, animals and people of the Amazon. We will discover medicinal uses for the rainforest's many plant species, search for impossibly small species of frog and startlingly large insect species, keep our eyes open for primates high in the forest canopy, and learn about the Sani culture. We will also hone our blow gun skills to understand survival hunting techniques.

After a full morning, we will enjoy a picnic lunch in the forest in a special spot chosen by our guide. Following lunch, we will make our way to the lagoon system where we will set out on kayaks for an afternoon of paddling. A stop at Sani Lodge's observation tower is a highlight.

We will wind our way up a 36 meter (108 ft) high staircase to the wooden observatory perched at the top of the forest canopy in majestic kapok (aka 'God's Hand) tree. The exhilaration of



standing above the entire forest is quickly overtaken by the excitement of spotting some of the 565 registered species of birds. With some luck, there is also a chance to spot howler or squirrel monkeys or even sloths resting high in the canopy. The wildlife viewing from above is an entirely different perspective, and gives a chance to discover some of the Amazon's biodiversity that can be difficult if not impossible to see from the ground.

After getting our fill of wildlife watching from the tower, we walk back to our kayaks for a (1 hour) recreational paddle back to the lodge. We will enjoy another delicious chef-prepared dinner before retiring for the night.

Night at Sani Lodge (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner

Day 8: Yasuni

Yasuni National Park Exploration and Indigenous Community Visit

After an early breakfast, we will depart for a visit to Yasuni National Park. This 9,620 sq km park is Ecuador's largest mainland park and is a Unesco designated international biosphere reserve. The park was untouched by the last ice age, resulting in a thriving and diverse pool of species, and it is one of the last true wildernesses in Ecuador.

We will walk in the park, observing its flora and fauna and make our way to a viewing blind near one of the park's famous clay licks. There we might be lucky to see parrots and parakeets. They visit most mornings to eat clay that aids their digestion of unripe seeds and fruits. We might see mealy Amazon, yellow-crowned, orange-winged and blue-headed parrots among others.

After our morning in Yasuni, we will visit the local Sani community. Here, we will learn about and support their women's project, the community turtle breeding work, and also participate in a cooking class, which will become our traditional lunch. Spending time with the Sani women in the kitchen allows for a special glimpse into their culture and customs, and also insight into our many commonalities. We enjoy a very special, very local lunch in the community.

Our cultural exchange and exploration continues after lunch, when we will hike back to the lodge on a "camino vecinal" (minor road/community path?) accompanied by our guide and a member of the local community. On our hike, we will get first-hand insight into local life while the Napo River flows by our side towards the Atlantic Ocean. We will learn about the local's architecture, see their farming activities, their lifestyle, discover plants in the rainforest that are used for medicine, and more.

We will return to the lodge in the late afternoon for a well-deserved dinner. Optional night walk in the rain forest to see myriad insect, spider and frog species come to life in their nocturnal habitat.

Night at Sani Lodge (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner



Day 9: Coca- Quito

Reality Tour

After breakfast, we will make our way back to Coca for our flight back to Quito. As we journey up the Napo River, we will learn about some of the challenges that local communities and ecotourism ventures face with the intense pressure that extractive industries place on the Amazon.

Local flight from Coca to Quito (not included)

Transfer Quito (airport-hotels) - Mariscal Sucre
Airport
English speaking assistance



Night at La Casona de la Ronda (Standard room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation

Day 10: Quito - Baltra Island- Santa Cruz Island

Transfer Quito (airport-hotels) - Mariscal Sucre Airport
English speaking assistance

Local flight from Quito to Baltra (not included)

Arrival in the Galapagos

Today we arrive in Baltra Island, the gateway to the Galapagos. This tiny island was a military base during the Second World War and hosts the Islands' principal airport. The airport was built using the most advanced environmental techniques to reduce emissions and energy use, some of which you'll notice as you walk through the facility. This was the first ecological airport in the world.

We dive into our adventure as soon as we arrive! We enter the airport through a special VIP lounge where you will have a chance to change clothes, put on some sunscreen and get a cool drink before we transfer to the Itabaca Channel to explore its spectacular turquoise waters. We will have a chance to kayak, snorkel and stand up paddleboard (SUP), as well as encountering some of the most famous Galapagos wildlife such as blue-footed boobies, sea lions, brown pelicans, a variety of herons and white-tipped reef sharks.

There's no better introduction to the Galapagos than to get on the water as soon as possible! We will glide through beautiful red mangrove forests and along lava rock cliffs on water so clear we can see the marine life in the shallows. Our ocean (sit on top) kayaks come in doubles or singles, and life jackets are provided. A support boat will escort us throughout our water activities to ensure safety and to provide water, snacks and towels between activities.

From the Itabaca Channel we head up to the Santa Cruz highlands to a private reserve that borders the National Park, where we can see the famous Giant Tortoises roaming in the wild.

There will be lunch at the reserve for us.

After lunch we drive to our exclusive giant tortoise reserve where our tented camp is located. Perched high on a hillside overlooking the ocean, Magic Galapagos Tented Camp will be our home for the next two nights. The sounds of nature will serenade us in the evenings, and the Milky Way will be our night light. We'll be able to feast our eyes on the mountains and forests surrounding the Camp, and enjoy the peace of having the entire hillside to ourselves, with the exception of seasonal resident giant tortoises.

Watching the colorful sunset from Magic's western perch is the perfect segue into evening. Dinners are sumptuous three course affairs, prepared by expert chefs in an open-air kitchen in the main lodge. A favorite post-dinner activity is a short walk to the reserve's natural lava tubes, for a night cap in the one-of-a-kind 'Lava Lounge!' It's the perfect spot to relax around the fire and share stories from the day's adventures.

Technical Details:

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Kayak: 1.5-2 hours depending on fauna activity and skills of kayakers

Means of Transportation: boat, kayak, stand up paddleboard and private transportation to Galapagos Magic.

Night at Galapagos Magic (Standard Tent)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner



Day 11: Santa Cruz Island

Navigable Tour to neighbor islands

Embark our motor yacht and enjoy of a daily excursion with a welcoming crew members and knowledgeable naturalist guide as you experience the remote islands in comfort and style. Our daily excursions will take you to experience the Galapagos Islands in a safe and comfortable manner. We can visit North Seymour and Bachas, South Plazas, Santa Fe Island or Bartolome, and Sullivan Bay. Along the way, we might see leaping rays or other sea life, while enjoying the vastness of the Pacific. The yacht tour lets you see the Islands and their wildlife in their most pristine state. Island visited may vary according to National Park regulations



Night at Galapagos Magic (Standard Tent)

Included: breakfast, excursion, lunch, English speaking guide, transportation, accommodation, dinner

Day 12: Santa Cruz Island- Isabela Island

Isabela Island

Today we take an early morning speedboat to Isabela Island where we will check into our hotel. Our adventure begins when we bike the Wetlands Trail where we can see marine iguana colonies and a number of different types of mangrove trees (all four can be seen here) as well as enjoying the network of trails, beaches and historic sites. At the end of the trail is the Wall of Tears, built in the late 1940's by Second World War prisoners held at the US base on the islands. Our guide will explain the importance of the Wall of Tears, giving us a glimpse into the lives of the island's previous inhabitants. On this network of trails you will catch some beautiful views of the village below and we will have the chance to see birds and, maybe even some wild giant tortoises.



In the afternoon we will visit the Tintoreras Islet, a group of small islands close to the town of Puerto Villamil. The islands are named after the white tipped 'Tintoreras' reef sharks that swim in these calm waters. On the Tintoreras we will see almost all the archipelago's iconic wildlife: white-tipped reef sharks, sea lions, turtles, rays, penguins, and of course pelicans and blue footed boobies. This is a Galapagos in miniature! After walking on the island, we will have a chance to snorkel in the bay. Don't be surprised if some of the penguins or sea lions jump in to play alongside you in the water!

Night at Isamar Hotel (Standard Room)

Included: breakfast, excursion, lunch, English speaking guide, transportation, accommodation, dinner

Day 13: Isabela Island

Hiking day!

Volcanic eruptions created all the Galapagos Islands, and you will have a chance to see this geologic process first-hand as we explore Isabela, one of the archipelago's youngest and most volcanically active islands.

We have the whole day to explore the Isabela highlands, and we start by hiking up to the crater of the massive Sierra Negra volcano, and then onward to the rim of the Volcan Chico. This fascinating walk usually begins with some morning fog and drizzle, which sometimes persists in the shadow of the volcano, adding to its mysterious character. Despite the drizzle, we may see Galapagos Hawks, finches, flycatchers and Short Eared Owls en route.



When we reach the rim of the Sierra Negra crater, the second largest in the world after the Ngorongoro in Tanzania, we will see the reward for our efforts. The crater is so large, and the views so expansive, photos can't do it justice, but bring your binoculars and camera anyway!

Later, as we head towards Volcan Chico, we may get the feeling we are walking on Mars due to the alien landscape. And while the land appears to be utterly desolate, a closer look will reveal small lizards scurrying about among the rocks. From the crater's rim, we will enjoy more amazing views along with lava tubes and fumaroles.

After Volcan Chico and its extreme landscape, we will be able to relax in the shade of a lovely "jaboncillo" tree, and enjoy our box lunch while taking in the spectacular and expansive views over the central and northern parts of the Island. In the distance, we will be able to see Fernandina, Pinzon and Santa Cruz Islands. We then head back down to complete our day of hiking (16 kilometers / 9.94 miles in total) and relax on the beaches of Puerto Villamil.

Night at Isamar Hotel (Standard Room)

Included: breakfast , excursion , lunch , English speaking guide , transportation , accommodation , dinner

Day 14: Isabela Island- Santa Cruz Island- Baltra Island

Departure
day

Today we take an early morning speed boat back to Santa Cruz and then transfer by land to Baltra for our onward journey or flight back home.

Local Flight from Baltra to Quito or Guayaquil (not included)

Included: breakfast , English speaking guide , transportation



hotels



La Casona de la Ronda

Hotel La Casona de la Ronda
Quito, Ecuador

You'll find La Casona de La Ronda Boutique Hotel located in Calle Morales (La Ronda) OE1-160 and Guayaquil, Historical Centre of Quito Old Town. Many of our guests have defined us "an oasis of tranquility on your arrival in Quito".

We look forward to accommodating you for as many nights as you need before, during or even after all the adventurous destinations you explore during your visit to Ecuador and South America.

Being a successful business is important to us and we achieve this by being passionate about our guests. Our goal is to have completely satisfied guests which we can't accomplish without having a sincere interest in them. We give genuine, warm smiles and truly want our boutique hotel to become a home away from home for our guests.

Although travelling means something different for everyone, we must all agree that it is the human bonds we make along the way that enriches our lives.



Hacienda Cusin

Hotel Hacienda Cusin
Ecuador

Hacienda Cusin Hacienda Cusin is a restored, 17th-century estate at 8.500ft/2.600m in the Ecuadorian sierra. This very personal hotel and its 38 attentive staff and famous gardens is 70 mins. north of Quito's new International airport, via the Equatorial line, 2 hours north of Spanish Colonial Quito and 20 mins. south of Otavalo markets. Property, events, celebrations, etc.

Guest rooms garden cottages, suites and salons, furnished with antiques and select Andean craft, most with log-burning fireplaces & beamed-ceilings, overlook several acres of landscaped perennial gardens, ancient trees, and often snow-capped mountains. Youtube property tour Guest rooms Sierra, Suites and Garden Cottages For a room number, place pointer on a guest room photograph.



Hotel Quito Polo Club

Hotel Polo Club
Quito, Ecuador

Live the experience of staying at a luxury hotel focused on polo. Feel the adrenaline and live the matches from your room. Stay in our new suites and enjoy country life in the city.

If your passion is polo or you want to learn to play, we offer a horse-rental service per chukker or private classes.



Galapagos Magic

Hotel Galapagos Magic
Galapagos, galapagos, Ecuador

Galapagos Magic is a million miles from the world's hustle and bustle. Set in the highlands of Santa Cruz (and away from the waterfront crowds), this totally unique property surprises and delights. All six safari tents have gorgeous views, and guests are surrounded by nature as they sleep. Galapagos Magic is a place to relax, walk the beautiful mountainside, turn your gaze to the beautiful heavens and to admire nature. Giant tortoises call Galapagos Magic their home much of the year, and guests might see a handful slowly moving through the grounds or many dozens dotting the meadow.

Sunsets from Galapagos Magic are, well, magic! Enjoying the last light of day with a cocktail on the meadow deck is a relaxing pastime, as is sharing stories of the days' adventures in front of the open-air main lodge's crackling fire. Magic serves sumptuous, three course dinners. The chefs use their culinary skills in the open kitchen to turn local ingredients into creative and elegant dishes. An after dinner stroll to the 'Lava Lounge' for a nightcap is the perfect way to end the day.

Capacity – 20 people
4 elevated tree houses
6 raised, walk-in tents
Hot water
Wireless Internet
Laundry service



ISAMAR

Hotel Isamar
Isabela Island, galapagos, Ecuador

IsaMar Hotel is idyllically located on Isabela's beautiful white sand beachfront. Its setting gives guests sweeping views of Pacific waves, swaying palm trees and boats bobbing on the water.

The beautiful Galapagos retreat is walking distance to the tortoise breeding center, the flamingo lagoon, water activities and to the sandy streets of town where guests will find bakeries, restaurants and bars.

IsaMar's rooms are the perfect base for exploring Isabela's wonders.

Hearty meals are available to keep visitors going on hikes and water activities, and outdoor social areas are ideal for taking a siesta, reading a book or stargazing late into the evenings.

IsaMar features:

Beachfront location
Capacity – 10 rooms in five blocks
Full service restaurant and bar
Outdoor social areas
WiFi
safe box
hot and cold water
air conditioning
hair dryer
night stand
night light
sofa
one queen bed and one twin bed
bathroom amenities.

