



Ecuador

AND THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

with

Terry Colby Williams.

09 August 2022 to 29 August 2022



Introduction



Touring the Galápagos and Ecuador will offer two distinctly different adventures rolled into one.

Both are biodiversity hot spots and both straddle the equator, yet the *Islands of the Tortoises* (Galápagos) are - geologically speaking - young and arid, whereas the *Republic of the Equator* (Ecuador) is mostly older and distinctly wetter with a great variety of climate zones from the frigid highlands of the Andes to the steamy, tropical Amazon rainforest.

One thing they do share is constant re-landscaping by volcanic activity.

On the mainland, Reventador (“The Exploder”) and Sangay volcanoes are currently erupting. Ecuador contains 33 active volcanoes and these are fuelled by the collision of two tectonic plates just off the coast. The relentless activity of these plates is forcing the snow-capped Andes mountains ever skywards.

Wolf Volcano, on Isabella Island, is one of 13 active volcanoes fed by the Galápagos hot spot. Fortunately, lava streaming from its most recent eruption avoided key habitat of the island’s threatened wildlife.

There are more endemic species on and around this archipelago than a tool-using Darwin’s finch can poke a stick at.

The Humboldt Current brings cold ocean water to the Galápagos marine conservation area, which is a slightly smaller area than Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. This current sustains a great variety of marine life, including the Galápagos sea lion, Galápagos fur seal and the Galápagos flightless cormorant. The Galápagos penguin is the only penguin living north of the equator, and the Galápagos marine iguana is the only land reptile known to dive and graze on marine algae.

The Galápagos pink land iguana was only recognised in 1986, and this is one of the oldest events of species divergence known in the Galápagos. The entire adult population of these early adapters consists of 200 individuals, they occupy just 25 square kilometres of Isabella Island and their favourite habitat happens to mostly be around the crater rim of the active Wolf Volcano. Talk about living on the brink!

Our visit will coincide with garúa, the season which brings occasional, atmospheric fog and drizzle to this generally sunbaked archipelago, so keep your eyes peeled for tree opuntias harvesting moisture from the fog, and blooming wildflowers, such as the endemic daisy, *Erigeron lancifolius*, the aromatic tree *Bursera graveolens* (related to frankincense and myrrh), lava cactus and orchids, like the endemic crucifix orchid, *Epidendrum spicatum*.

We will see some of the unique Galápagos fauna that helped to shape Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Due to the absence of other species of birds a single species of tanager bird, nicknamed a finch, (*Geospiza magnirostris*) evolved into three other species... The tanagers adapted to new, empty, ecological niches, their bodies and especially their beaks altered allowing them to eat different types of foods such as nuts, fruits, and insects.

On this archipelago, reptiles have right of way on roads and tracks. Giant tortoises once roamed nearly all the Earth’s continents, but are now only found on these Pacific islands and on islands in the Indian Ocean.

There are twelve extant species of Galápagos giant tortoise. These migratory animals are vital ecological engineers, creating meadows as they graze. Weighing up to 300kg and living for up to 150 years, some that we see might have helped Charles Darwin document their speed when they were youngsters.

These gently ambling giants cannot swim, and yet soon after the Galápagos archipelago erupted from the ocean floor they managed to somehow colonise the islands from South America. Driven to extinction on some islands and the brink of extinction on others, these magnificent tortoises are slowly recovering but remain vulnerable.

Ecuador is one of seventeen megadiverse countries in the world, famous for having the most biodiversity per square kilometre of any nation.

Ten percent of all known species of plant and animal live here - roughly 16,000 known bird species and 6,000 known species of butterfly. Over 2,700 species of orchid have been described. I'm very happy we will have an orchid expert on hand, because that leaves me with just 25,000 species of tree to try identify for you as we travel.

The Andes mountains form the highlands, separating the coast to the west from the Amazon to the east. La Costa (the coast) is the most heavily populated and settled region with Guayaquil the largest coastal city. Warm and moist, fertile soils, sheltered valleys and coastal plains support rice, coconut, banana, pineapple and yuca (the local name for cassava) production and major fisheries.

The cooler La Sierra (highlands) is where most of Ecuador's volcanoes and all of its glaciers occur. Increased melting of Andean ice is impacting on urban water supplies to some of the least advantaged people in the world, who depend on the rivers, which in turn depend on the melt water from the mountains to help them endure El Nino droughts.

Quito, the region's largest city, is famous for refreshing drinks made from naranjilla, *Solanum quitoense*, the golden fruit of the Andes. The population is predominantly Amerindian Kichuaon, and many family farms raise guinea pigs for meat and llamas for wool, farming traditional crops of potato - in great variety - as well as onions, cabbage, corn and quinoa.

La Amazonia (the east) still largely consists of tropical rainforests, including both national parks and Amerindian lands under traditional ownership. Despite being known as 'untouchable zones', oil companies continue to operate in La Amazonia. The oil industry in Ecuador has a very poor environmental track record. Revenue from oil contributes significantly to the economy of this developing country but its activities are as controversial as coal mining in Australia.

There remain numerous tribes deep in La Amazonia that remain little contacted. Ecuador's new constitution is the first in the world to recognise legally enforceable Rights of Nature, or ecosystem rights (2008).

Even by Latin American standards, Ecuadorian cuisine is intriguing and varied.

A consequence of the range of climate zones means each region we visit will have something different and local to try. Like coca tea, the perfect fillip for high altitude tourism. Biscuits, anyone?

With a focus on local produce, some dishes will only be available in certain districts, so please explore the menus. Even something as simple as naranjilla juice can vary from a hot, sweet fruit tea to an icy cold and salty beverage.

Outside of city hotels and restaurants catering for tourists, Ecuadorian favourites and conventions rule! For example, it is a convention that rice and a bowl of soup complete a traditional main course. I am looking forward to getting ideas for preparing plantain (cooking banana) and yuca (cassava) which I grow in Brisbane. Both are cheap and plentiful and they are served in as many ways, shapes and forms as pasta in Italy.

As in rural Asia, chicken and beef is not factory farmed so it will taste stronger and require more chewing. Guinea pig is Andean 'chicken' and is commonly served roasted whole. Goat is as popular here as lamb in Australia. River fish and seafood are widely available.

There will be plenty of exotic fruits and vegetables in markets to enjoy. I'll be on the lookout for native peach palm (*Bactris gasipaes*). Its fruit and palm hearts are as popular and as widely used here as lemons in Australia. Potato soup and salads aren't the cop-out they can be in Australia! In Ecuador, potatoes are extremely diverse in a country where hundreds of traditional varieties are grown on family farms. Expect anything other than McCain's.

Slow food reigns in Ecuador and *almuerzo* (lunch) is almost sacred. If you're tempted by pizza, hamburgers, French fries, and similar fast foods, they will be available, but street food retailers are really worth investigating and they offer interesting options you'll never find in an Australian mall.

Jerry Coleby-Williams
27th March 2022

Trip Summary

- 09 Aug 2022 – Airport to Hotel Transfer (Private), Guayaquil
- 09 Aug to 12 Aug 2022 – Unipark Hotel, Guayaquil (3 nights)
- 10 Aug 2022 – Full day Guayaquil City Tour including Botanic Gardens (Private), Guayaquil
- 11 Aug 2022 – Full day Chocolate & Mangroves Tour with Lunch (Private), Guayaquil
- 12 Aug 2022 – Hotel to Airport Transfer (Private), Guayaquil
- 12 Aug 2022 – Flight: Guayaquil to San Cristobal, Galápagos Islands
- 12 Aug 2022 to 16 Aug 2022 – 5-day Solaris: Southern & Central Islands, Galápagos Islands (4 nights)
- 16 Aug 2022 to 19 Aug 2022 – 4-day Galápagos Safari Camp – Classic Safari, Galápagos Islands (3 nights)
- 19 Aug 2022 – Flight: Baltra, Galápagos Islands to Quito
- 19 Aug 2022 – Airport to Hotel Shuttle (Shared), Quito
- 19 Aug 2022 to 20 Aug 2022 – Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel, Quito (1 night)
- 20 Aug 2022 – Hotel to Airport Shuttle (Shared), Quito
- 20 Aug 2022 – Flight: Quito to Coca
- 20 Aug 2022 to 23 Aug 2022 – 4-day Napo Wildlife Centre, Napo (3 nights)
- 23 Aug 2022 – Coca to Tena including Naranjilla plantation visit (Private), Coca
- 23 Aug 2022 to 24 Aug 2022 – Hakuna Matata Amazon Lodge, Tena (1 night)
- 24 Aug 2022 – Tena to Papallacta via San Isidro Cloud Forest (Private), Tena
- 24 Aug 2022 to 25 Aug 2022 – Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta (1 night)
- 25 Aug 2022 – Papallacta to Otavalo area including Molina San Juan and Rose Farm (Private), Papallacta
- 25 Aug 2022 to 27 Aug 2022 – Hacienda Zuleta, Zuleta (2 nights)
- 26 Aug 2022 – Hacienda Zuleta Activities (Shared), Zuleta
- 27 Aug 2022 – Full day Otavalo Markets tour and transfer to Quito with guide (Private), Otavalo
- 27 Aug 2022 to 29 Aug 2022 – Hotel Casona de la Ronda, Quito (2 nights)
- 28 Aug 2022 – Quito City Tour and Middle of the World (Private), Quito
- 29 Aug 2022 – Hotel to Airport Transfer (Private), Quito

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 – Tuesday 09 August 2022

Arrive Guayaquil

Welcome to Ecuador! Upon arrival at Guayaquil Airport, a local representative will meet our group and transfer us to the hotel. Our accommodation in Guayaquil for the next three nights is the centrally located Unipark Hotel (Standard Room).

Day 2 – Wednesday 10 August 2022

Guayaquil City Tour including the Botanic Gardens

After a morning at leisure, we will be collected from the hotel at 1:00pm to begin a tour of Guayaquil. Our first stop will be Malecon 2000 – Guayaquil’s equivalent of Brisbane’s Southbank. An urban renewal project on the old Simón Bolívar boardwalk, Malecon 2000 stands along the western shore of the Rio Guayas and stretches for approximately 2.5km. This lively promenade is a hive of activity both day and night, and a number of the most significant historical monuments of Guayaquil can be found along its’ length. The area is also dotted with museums, gardens, fountains, shopping malls, restaurants, bars and street food stalls.



Next, we will continue to the colourful Las Peñas neighbourhood. Situated at the foot of Cerro Santa Ana, Las Peñas has been a Cultural Heritage Site since 1982 and is a top spot to enjoy amazing panoramic views of the city and the Guayas River. The neighbourhood is a reminder of 16th century colonial Guayaquil, with each house having significant historical value. Many important cultural and political figures have lived in this neighbourhood, including Ernesto "Che" Guevara.



We will then visit Seminario Park, which was the heart of colonial Guayaquil 300 years ago. Also known as Iguana Park, these gardens are home to dozens of friendly iguanas that happily mingle with tourists. The green iguana (*Iguana iguana*), is generally the largest and most docile species of iguana. Wild green iguanas are vegetarian, but in urban areas it has broadened its diet by scavenging. They may take food, but should not be fed bread, meat or lettuce.

The tour will continue with a visit the Botanical Gardens. Opened in 1979, Guayaquil’s botanical gardens are home to over 325 species of native and imported tropical flora. Well-tended paths wind through sections of ornamental plants, orchids and bromeliads as well as medicinal plants, herbs, fruit, timber trees and various crops. The orchid collection is

particularly beautiful! The gardens are a great place for urban bird watching too, with over 70 bird species on record, as well as over 60 species of butterfly. The gardens also have a spectacular vantage point, allowing for views of the Daule and Babahoyo rivers.

Following the tour, we will enjoy dinner at a local restaurant before transferring back to the Unipark Hotel.

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Dinner]

Day 3 – Thursday 11 August 2022

Full day Chocolate & Mangroves Tour with Lunch (Private), Guayaquil

This morning, we will take a backroad across luscious vegetation to reach the farm of a local family that provides sustainable tourism experiences. Here we will enjoy lunch, and take part in an interactive chocolate tasting experience. This area is one of the world's most productive for cultivating and exporting fine-aroma cocoa fruit, as preferred by Swiss chocolatiers!



Next, we will continue to the Manglares Churute Ecological Reserve - one of the last pristine mangrove forests in the area. Having been spared from the explosive urban sprawl of Guayaquil, this reserve hosts abundant marine life plus countless aquatic animals and sea birds. The sounds of exotic birdcalls and singing parrots accompany the imposing roar of mantled howler monkeys. There are even sloths, anteaters, agoutis, armadillos, peccaries, ocelots and jaguars found here, although they are quite elusive.



We will then stroll along a walkway that passes through a swamp forest teeming with red mangrove crabs (guariche) before exploring the Churute River by canoe. En route we will be able to observe and compare the skilled fishing techniques of osprey, pelicans, egrets and herons.

At high tide, we might get the opportunity to explore the secluded Ulpiano Creek in search of green iguanas. A privileged close encounter with the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, regionally almost extinct) might complete our adventure before we return to the Unipark Hotel in downtown Guayaquil.

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch]

Day 4 – Friday 12 August 2022

Guayaquil to the Galápagos Islands

The local representative will collect us from the Unipark Hotel this morning and provide a transfer to Guayaquil Airport for our flight to the Galápagos Islands.

AM: Arrival at San Cristobal Airport

Upon arrival at San Cristobal Airport, all travellers must pass through an airport inspection point to ensure that no foreign plants or animals are introduced to the islands. Our group will be met by a guide who will help us collect our luggage and escort us on a short bus ride to the harbour. It is here that we will board *Solaris* to begin our 5-day cruise around the Southern & Central Galápagos Islands.



Our southern itinerary on *Solaris* (pictured) will give us a thorough overview of the Galápagos. This route combines two of the most popular snorkeling sites in the archipelago - Champion Islet and Bartolome - where, if we are lucky, we might swim with Galápagos penguins.

Most of the oldest islands in the southeast region of the Galápagos have azure bays and striking beaches of white coral sand where large colonies of Galápagos sea lions congregate. The route will also take us past albatross and booby colonies, to see marine iguanas on Española, and the flamingo lagoon of Floreana.



PM: Interpretation Centre (San Cristobal)

In the afternoon, we will visit the Galápagos National Park Visitor Centre, which is located close to the port town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. The centre is an excellent place to learn about the natural history of the Galápagos, with displays on the volcanic origins of the islands, their remoteness from the continent, ocean currents, climate, the arrival of different species and their colonisation, as well as other points of interest.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 5 – Saturday 13 August 2022

Espanola (Gardner Bay and Punta Suarez), Galápagos Islands

AM: Gardner Bay (Española)

Gardner Bay is a wonderfully sheltered area on the eastern shore of Española Island. It boasts one of the best beaches in the archipelago and is the perfect place for relaxing, swimming and snorkelling. Here we will have the opportunity to observe Galápagos sea lions and marine iguanas, and we may even see sharks swimming in the clear ocean waters below.

PM: Punta Suarez (Española)

This rocky landing spot sustains one of the most impressive and varied colonies of sea birds in the Galápagos. Along its southern shore, high cliffs rise up from the sea, giving visitors spectacular views of soaring birds and of a blowhole where water spouts up to 15-25 metres in the air, depending on the tide and swell.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]



Day 6 – Sunday 14 August 2022

Floreana (Post Office Bay, Punta Cormorant & Champion Islet), Galápagos Islands

AM: Punta Cormorant & Champion Islet (Floreana)

This site is home to one of the best - and largest - flamingo lagoons in the Galápagos. The area has a very special atmosphere to it as the lagoon sits between two inactive volcanic cinder cones. Cerro Pajas (aka Cerro Paja or Cerro de Pajas) is the cinder cone located in the south of Floreana Island. At 640 metres, it is the highest peak on Floreana. A cinder cone is comprised of loose pyroclastic fragments, such as volcanic clinkers, volcanic ash, or cinder that has been built around a one off eruption from a volcanic vent.

As well as flamingos, we will observe a number of species of shorebirds here. The most abundant are stilts, white-cheeked pintail ducks and other migratory birds. It is also interesting to see the two distinct beaches: Green Beach, where the sand is tinged green by olivine crystals, and Flour Sand Beach, where the sand is made of fine, pulverized coral. After our visit to Cormorant Point, we will continue in our yacht to the nearby islet known as Corona del Diablo (Devil's Crown). Here we can enjoy some great snorkelling.

PM: Post Office Bay (Floreana)

Post Office Bay is one of the few visitor sites in the Galápagos where human history is the main focus. A group of whalers placed a wooden whisky barrel here in the 1790's and called it a post office. Travelling sailors would leave addressed letters in the barrel in the hope they would be delivered by seaman returning home from their trips. The original barrel is no longer there but the tradition lives on – visitors are encouraged to leave their own postcards (no stamp required) and take any with them that can be hand-delivered when they return home. Whilst here we will visit the north of the island where we will ascend an elevated slope to enjoy a beautiful view from Baroness Lookout. From this viewpoint, the landscape covers the coastline from Enderby Islet to Post Office Bay, as well as Cerro Pajas, the pool of flamingos and the forest of Palo Santo.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 7 – Monday 15 August 2022

Sullivan Bay and Bartolome, Galápagos Islands

AM: Sullivan Bay (Santiago)

Santiago, also called James or San Salvador Island, is located in the central-west part of the Galápagos archipelago. It is the fourth largest island in the group after Isabela, Fernandina and Santa Cruz. Like Isabela and Fernandina, Santiago is volcanically active and over the last two centuries a number of eruptions have been reported here. We will see many young lava flows and cinder cones in this area - particularly along the south, west, and east coasts. Santiago actually consists of two coalesced volcanoes: a typical shield volcano on the northwest end and a low, linear fissure volcano at the southeast end.



A shield volcano is named for its low profile, formed by the eruption of highly fluid lava, which spreads farther, forming thinner flows. A fissure volcano is formed by a linear crack in the Earth's crust through which lava erupts, usually without any explosive activity. Fissures may be just metres wide but many kilometres long. Fissure volcanoes can cause large lava floods which run first in channels and later in lava tubes as seen during the eruption of Cumbre Vieja, La Palma, Canary Islands (2021). These volcanoes are even visible from space!



PM: Bartolome

Bartolome Island, situated across Sullivan Bay, has an altitude of 114 metres. From its peak, we will observe one of the most picturesque landscapes in the Galápagos Islands – a landscape that includes volcanic cinder cones, lunar-like craters, lava fields and the famous Toba-formed pinnacle eroded by the sea. There is very little vegetation on this island but it has two breathtaking beaches where marine turtles exist, as well as a very small colony of Galápagos penguins.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 8 – Tuesday 16 August 2022

Explore Santa Cruz (Black Turtle Cove) & Disembarkation + Galápagos Safari Camp

AM: Black Turtle Cove (Santa Cruz)

This little cove is located at the northern side of Santa Cruz Island. It is a very calm and quiet red mangrove lagoon, making it an ideal nursery for sharks and rays.

Mangrove forests in the Galápagos consist of three species: *Rhizophora mangle* (red mangrove, Rhizophoraceae), *Avicennia germinans* (black mangrove, Acanthaceae) and *Laguncularia racemosa* (white mangrove, Combretaceae). Mangrove associate species *Conocarpus erectus* (buttonwood mangrove, Combretaceae); manzanillo tree, *Hippomane mancinella* (the famous poison apple) and *Cryptocarpus pyriformis* (saltbush) are found at the transition zone.

The crystal clear waters of the lagoon will allow us to observe large groups of white-tip reef sharks, black-tipped reef sharks and hammerhead sharks, as well as schools of golden rays and spotted eagle rays. Sea turtles are frequently sighted and are sometimes seen mating in the mangrove-lined waters. There is a very good chance we will see pelicans and herons too. As there are no landing sites at Turtle Cove, the visit will be done by zodiac.



After the zodiac excursion to Black Turtle Cove, we will return to the yacht to collect our luggage and transfer to Baltra Airport. Here, we will meet a representative from the Galápagos Safari Camp to begin the next chapter of our adventure.

Inspired by the magic of African safari lodges, Galápagos Safari Camp is a luxury-tented eco-lodge nestled in the wild highlands of Santa Cruz Island. During our three nights here, we will have an authentic ‘inland’ Galápagos experience that will include plenty of memorable wildlife encounters and lots of plant identification.

After meeting our bi-lingual naturalist guide and driver from the safari camp, we will transfer into the lush highlands of Santa Cruz. Our first stop will be at Los Gemelos (The Twins), which are two overgrown lava tunnels that formed massive sinkholes when they collapsed. The larger of the twins is over 700 metres deep and almost 400 metres wide! During a short hike around the rim, our guide will point out birds that are endemic to the Scalesia forest, including Galápagos doves and eight species of Charles Darwin's finches, more accurately known as tanagers.

The genus *Scalesia* (Asteraceae) has fifteen species and six subspecies, all endemic to the Galápagos Islands. Varying from shrubs to trees, they collectively form Scalesia forest - the vegetable equivalent of adaptive radiation of Darwin's tanager birds. Each has adapted to occupy different microhabitats. The tallest grow in cloud forest, creating the unique, lush and leafy Scalesia Zone. *Scalesia pedunculata* dominates Santa Cruz and also San Cristobal, Floreana and Santiago, while *Scalesia cordata* is dominant on Isabela, and *Scalesia microcephala* on Fernandina.

Scalesia usually grow in groups of uniform age and height. They reach maturity after 15 or so years. Very few young trees are found under the canopy because the whole group grows, dies and regenerates from seed simultaneously. El Niño heat and drought events can trigger entire forests to die and start regenerating, and while this is a natural response El Niño events are becoming more extreme and more frequent. This in turn threatens the capacity of Scalesia to adapt to shorter regeneration cycles.



From a distance, Scalesia vegetation looks almost as if cloud pruned – rounded rather like mallee eucalyptus – but under this protective canopy mosses, bromeliads, epiphytes and orchids thrive, creating habitat for Darwin’s tanagers.

From Los Gemelos we will travel to a tortoise reserve. The reserves of Santa Cruz are home to giant tortoises with domed shells and short necks to accommodate the environment of the island. The many trails of the highlands, including those around the camp, lead to sightings of these giants resting in ponds and slowly traversing the land. Keep a lookout for short-eared owls too. If you are lucky, they can be spotted in the trees dotting the landscape.

Elsewhere in the highlands are elaborate, underground lava tubes that were created centuries ago by the Santa Cruz volcano. These tubes formed when the lava at the surface cooled, insulating the molten lava underneath. As the lava flowed, it left these tubes in its wake. Some of the tunnels on Santa Cruz are several kilometres deep and 20 metres high. Local folklore suggests that pirates once used them as hideouts and to store supplies.

We will then descend into the caves for a mysterious look into the formation of the island - following a lit path with our guide through cavernous tunnels that date back at least one million years. The experience can be daunting in places where the tubes get narrow, but it is a worthwhile trek into the geological past of the island.

After stopping for lunch, our group will return to the camp to enjoy a sunset cocktail on the lookout, and a four-course, tapas-inspired meal in the main lodge before retiring for the evening.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 9 – Wednesday 17 August 2022

Cerro Mesa & Garrapatero, Galápagos Islands

Located in the eastern highlands of Santa Cruz, Cerro Mesa is a private reserve that is rich in endemic flora and bird life including six subspecies of tanagers, mockingbirds and short-ear owls. The area is also home to Santa Cruz Galápagos tortoise, which is endemic to Santa Cruz.

Cerro Mesa is a short drive from the camp. In the morning, we can explore the various trails at the reserve and end the circuit at a lookout. On a clear day, this is the perfect place to contemplate the lush landscape of Santa Cruz and the nearby islands. After lunch, we will make our way to Garrapatero Beach. Depending on your level of energy, you can hop back in the vehicle or take a gentle eight-mile bike ride for the rest of the way.

The striking contrasts of the black lava, white sand and turquoise water of Garrapatero Beach catch many by surprise. Nearby, dense mangroves play host to all of the Galápagos ground tanagers including the cactus tanager, which feeds off the *Opuntia* cacti that dot the trail. During our 15 minute hike to the beach, watch out for the manzanillo or poison apple tree, *Hippomane mancinella*, along the path. The small apples on their branches may look inviting but all parts are extraordinarily poisonous - even the sap touching your skin can cause irritations and burns.



Other creatures above and below the waterline that call Garrapatero Beach home are marine iguanas, sea lions, blue-footed boobies, rays and sea turtles.

Through the mangroves that skirt the sand is a freshwater lagoon where you can often spot flamingos, white-cheeked ducks and black-nested stilts in the morning or late afternoon. Just past the tide pools on the beach, clear waters offer a secluded spot for swimming. Kayaking off the beach in search of sea turtles can also be arranged, and this is a wonderful way to actively explore the bay.

On our way back to the camp, we will visit El Trapiche Ecológico - a working farm in the highlands that produces sugar cane liqueur and Galápagos coffee. Here we will learn about the different methods used to refine sugar cane, including the use of a mule-driven press. For those who have not seen on television how Jerry grows and produces his own coffee at home, there is also a demonstration of how artisan coffee is produced, from picking the berries to roasting the beans.

As the day winds down, we will head back to the camp to enjoy a relaxing drink or a dip in the infinity pool. After devouring a scrumptious dinner of locally sourced produce, we might do some stargazing if the skies are clear – the perfect way to end the day!

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]



Day 10 – Thursday 18 August 2022

Puerto Ayora, Charles Darwin Station and Tortuga Bay, Galápagos Islands

Today we will explore the striking shoreline and enticing visitor sights in and around the main town of Puerto Ayora, as well as discovering the arid south of Santa Cruz.



Puerto Ayora is the main traveller's hub for the Galápagos Islands. This small town of 15,000 inhabitants has an intriguing collection of shops, art studios and restaurants amid Galápagos sea lions and pelicans that frolic along the shoreline. During the week, the wharf is bustling with fishermen, merchants and seafood stalls selling the catch of the day.

A short drive from Puerto Ayora, the Charles Darwin Research Station's small visitor centre offers a glimpse into the work that the station is doing in the Galápagos. The complex is also home to a tortoise-breeding centre where we will observe these iconic reptiles - both hatchlings and adults - at close range.

Shimmering turquoise waters, a breathtaking beach and the black volcanic outcrops of Tortuga Bay present postcard-perfect scenes that provide a tropical backdrop for relaxation and enjoying island life. This Santa Cruz landmark is a short motorboat ride from Puerto Ayora.

The stunning beach is not the only attraction of Tortuga Bay. It is also home to a wide range of wildlife including marine iguanas and the brightly coloured Sally Lightfoot crab, an opportunistic predator of young Galápagos penguins. Brown pelicans can also be found here, and sea turtles nest in the white sand on the beach. Flamingos can be seen at times in the lagoon behind the beach, and you might spy blue-footed boobies here too.



The vegetation in this area is also interesting and includes Palo Santo trees (*Bursera graveolens*, related to frankincense and myrrh), lava cactus (*Brachycereus nesioticus*) which plays a crucial role in colonising fresh lava, and saltbush (*Cryptocarpus pyriformis*), a relative of Bougainvillea.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 11 – Friday 19 August 2022

Sunrise walk in the Galápagos Islands + Fly to Quito

Early risers can enjoy the serenity of the Galápagos Safari Camp during a sunrise walk today, or you can simply relax and enjoy the stunning views of both the Pacific Ocean and the National Park from the 'Viewpoint' terrace. We will then transfer to Baltra Airport for our flight to Quito.

Upon arrival at Quito Airport, we will catch the shuttle bus service provided by the hotel and transfer to our accommodation at Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel (Standard Room).

[Meal Included: Breakfast]

Day 12 – Saturday 20 August 2022

Napo Wildlife Centre

This morning we will take the hotel shuttle bus back to Quito Airport to catch a short, 30-minute flight over the eastern Andes to the town Coca, which is located in the La Amazonia.

Upon arrival in Coca, we will receive a warm welcome from the representatives of Napo Wildlife Centre before transferring to the Francisco de Orellana Port, which is only 5 minutes away from the airport. This is where your second adventure begins!

At the port, we will board motorised canoes and head downstream on the Napo River - a major Ecuadorian tributary of the Amazon River. During the trip, we will have the chance to see a variety of birdlife including kingfishers and herons, whilst admiring pristine Amazonian rainforest. A box lunch will be provided today.



After a two-hour boat ride along the Napo River, we will arrive at the Napo Wildlife Centre's dock. Here we can take a short break to freshen-up and use the restrooms. We will then continue to the lodge by paddle canoes, as motorised canoes cannot be operated within the Napo territory. This majestic and peaceful ride by dugout canoe will take us down a narrow stream that leads to Añangu Lake, where the hotel is located.

We will arrive at Napo Wildlife Centre in the late afternoon. After a welcome drink, the staff will show you to your room and familiarise our group with other areas of the lodge.

The Napo Wildlife Centre is an award-winning Amazon rainforest lodge located within Ecuador's Yasuni National Park, an area renowned for its rich biodiversity. The park is home to more than 565 species of birds, 11 species of monkeys, jaguars, pumas and tapirs, and Napo's expert naturalist guides provide visitors with amazing insights into the region's flora and fauna. Comfortable private cabanas will help ensure an unforgettable experience that directly protects both the community's reserve and Yasuni National Park.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 13 – Sunday 21 August 2022

Napo Wildlife Centre

Activities at Napo Wildlife Centre begin very early in the morning! On our second day at this premium Amazon jungle lodge, we will witness one of nature's most incredible sights: the parrot clay licks.

The first parrot clay lick is quite close to the lodge, and it will take us an hour to get there on foot. We will arrive at the clay lick at about 7:30am or 8:30am and the birds will make an appearance shortly afterwards. It is a dazzling display of colour!



About 11 species of bird including parrots, macaws and parakeets visit the clay licks every day to consume the soils that contain sodium and other minerals that help to neutralize the toxins present in their diet of seeds and berries. Keep a lookout for butterflies, which use salt licks to complete their dietary needs.



Later on, we will hike along a forest trail to visit the Kichwa Añangu community and spend some time with the men, women and children who live there. We will learn about their everyday activities and routines, and become familiar with their ancestral customs and traditions. The Añangu community have a tremendous understanding of the natural medicines found within the jungle. Men and women here, both young and old, know all about the advantages that plants have to offer, and this knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation.

After saying goodbye to the Añangu families, we will continue on our adventure. Returning to the creek, we will hike for 30 minutes through terra-firme forest before reaching the second parrot clay lick. Here we will repeat the experience of seeing a large variety of parrots, parakeets and macaws congregate at an exposed riverbank as we eat a delicious lunch provided by the Napo staff.

Later in the afternoon, we will arrive back at the Napo Wildlife Centre to rest and enjoy the lodge's social areas and comfortable rooms.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]



Day 14 – Monday 22 August 2022

Napo Wildlife Centre

After a delicious breakfast at the lodge, we will make an early start to visit the Canopy Observation Tower. Located half an hour from Napo Wildlife Centre, within the terra-firme forest, this 36-metre tall wooden platform will give us a totally different perspective of the jungle, whilst affording an amazing 360° view of the surrounding area.

To reach the top of the observation tower, which was strategically built next to a huge and ancient Kapok tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), we will pass through different levels of the forest. From bottom to top, there is no finer canopy experience in eastern Ecuador. Birds that are virtually impossible to see from the jungle floor, such as flocks colourful tanagers and blue-and-yellow macaws, pass right through the canopy here. Spider monkeys can be seen searching for fruit in nearby trees, and two species of large toucan often appear in the early mornings and late afternoons. Keep your eyes peeled for orchids too.

In the afternoon, after eating lunch at lodge's restaurant, we will follow a trail deep into the terra-firme forest to learn about the role that plants play in the complex world of a tropical rainforest. Vines, trees, bromeliads, orchids, ferns and fungi are all found in great variety in this extraordinary natural garden. We will also be on the lookout for lizards, snakes, rare and unique insects and monkeys such as the endemic Golden Mantle Tamarin.

Our guide will also take us to view the black waters of Añangu Lake and its tributaries, which are home to numerous species of fish and mammals such as the Giant Otter, a unique species from the Amazon basin.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner]

Day 15 – Tuesday 23 August 2022

Coca to Tena including Naranjilla Plantation

We will depart the Napo Wildlife Centre this morning and return to Coca city to have lunch at a local restaurant.

After a bite to eat, we will begin the overland journey to Tena, which is approximately 3 hours' drive away. The road will wind through some spectacular jungle scenery and we will pass through several small villages and farming regions along the way. Located on the edge of the Andes mountains, Tena is surrounded by verdant cloud forest and is renowned for its breath-taking landscapes.

This area is the 'cinnamon' capital of Ecuador, where *Ocotea quixos* (Lauracea) – a species native to Ecuador and Colombia with similar uses to true cinnamon – grows naturally. This is also one of the main regions where naranjilla (*Solanum quitoense*) is cultivated. Whilst here we will be taken on a guided tour of a naranjilla plantation. Known as 'The Golden Fruit of the Andes', naranjilla plants are short-lived shrubs that are commonly found throughout Central and South America.

The accommodation this evening is at Hakuna Matata Amazon Lodge (Hakuna Cabin).

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]



Day 16 – Wednesday 24 August 2022

Tena to Papallacta via San Isidro Cloud Forest

After breakfast, we will depart from Tena and climb into the Andes mountains. The scenery will change from thick jungle to lush cloud forest, and we will enjoy a tour of the San Isidro reserve. San Isidro lies at an elevation of about 2,000 metres above sea level and the reserve consists of a variety of habitat zones typical of the region, including some of the most beautiful, accessible and well-preserved cloud forest in Ecuador. San Isidro has built a reputation for being a premier spot for bird watching so twitchers flock to this lush subtropical zone of the eastern slope of the Andes. The plant life here will not disappoint either!



Mammals are becoming increasingly rare in the neo-tropics - especially in the Andes - but sightings of species such as Spectacled Bear, Mountain Tapir, Pudu, Night Monkey, White-fronted Capuchin, Oncilla, Puma, Jaguarundi, Tayra and even Giant Anteater are reported with increasing frequency in the San Isidro reserve. After the tour, we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before continuing higher into the Andes. Keep your eyes peeled for the nearby Antisana Volcano, a stratovolcano which reaches an impressive height of 5,753 metres above sea level. It is the fourth highest volcano in Ecuador.

Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon and evening at the fabulous Termas de Papallacta Lodge where you can enjoy gorgeous gardens, beautiful scenery and relax in the natural hot springs (entrance included).

This evening we will stay the night at Termas de Papallacta Lodge in Papallacta (Standard Room).

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch]

Day 17 – Thursday 25 August 2022

Papallacta to Otavalo area including Molino San Juan & Rose Farm

This morning we will depart Papallacta and head to Molino San Juan in Cayambe – a former mill that has been converted into a beautiful country lodge. If the skies are clear, you should be able to see the Cayambe Volcano. The glacier-topped peak of this stratovolcano is the point of Earth's surface farthest from its axis and it rotates the fastest as Earth spins. Cayambe is the third highest mountain in Ecuador at an elevation of 5,790 metres above sea level.



Next, we will visit a rose plantation where a guided tour will give us a closer look at the processes of cultivating and harvesting these beautiful flowers. Ecuador is the third largest exporter of cut flowers in the world and nearly three quarters of the blooms that they ship are roses.

Ecuadorian roses have larger buds and blooms than flowers grown elsewhere, and they have longer and thicker stems too.





Ecuador has some of the most unique growing conditions for roses in the world. Two main factors contribute to the larger, longer lasting flowers. The first is simple geography. Ecuador is an equatorial country so the flowers receive equal hours of night and day all year round.

The second factor is that roses in Ecuador are grown at high altitudes. Most of the rose farms here are located in the Pichincha province of the Andes mountains, at an elevation between 2,800 and 3,000 metres above sea level. This environment allows the plants a longer time to grow their stems, making them the most beautiful long-stemmed roses in the world. The higher elevation also means warm days and cooler nights, which sometimes results in bicolor blossoms.

After enjoying a typical Ecuadorian lunch at the mill, we will travel to the picturesque Otavalo region.

Our accommodation for the next two nights will be at the charming Hacienda Zuleta (Standard Room).

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch]



Day 18 – Friday 26 August 2022

Activities at Hacienda Zuleta

Hacienda Zuleta is a stunning, 17th Century hotel and working farm. Blessed with beautiful antique rooms, the property also serves delicious homegrown Andean cuisine and offers a wealth of activities for the visitor. Hacienda Zuleta was once owned by the former President of Ecuador, Galo Plaza Lasso and his family, and was created with his natural warmth, hospitality and community ties.

At Hacienda Zuleta, we will participate in activities that are coordinated by the hacienda staff. These activities may include hiking and trekking, horseback riding, horse drawn carriage rides, mountain biking and bird watching.

[Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner]

Day 19 – Saturday 27 August 2022

Otavalo Market Tour & Quito

Today we will venture into the heart of Otavalo to visit the colourful markets that are held every Wednesday and Saturday. Our first stop will be the farmers market where friendly *campesinos* in traditional dress trade livestock. We will then continue on to the fruit and vegetable section to mingle with locals shopping for their weekly supplies.

Otavalo is famous for its weaving and music culture, and nowadays you find the handicrafts and music of the Otavaleño people all over Ecuador and the world. The markets are bursting with wonderful handmade souvenirs including ponchos, sweaters, wall hangings and shawls at reasonable prices. This will be the perfect opportunity for you to do some shopping!



After enjoying lunch in our hotel, we will transfer to Hotel La Casona de la Ronda (Standard Room) in Quito where we will stay for the next two nights.

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch]

Day 20 – Sunday 28 August 2022

Quito City Tour & Middle of the World

After meeting our local guide at the hotel this morning, we will transfer to the colonial district of Quito. Whilst walking the historic streets, our guide will give us a fascinating insight into the pre-Inca civilisations of Ecuador, the Spanish occupation and the independence of the nation.



During the orientation tour of Quito, we will visit the lookout at El Panecillo (Panecillo Hill), Independence Square, the beautifully ornate La Compañía Church, Plaza de San Francisco, the neo-Gothic Basilica of the National Vow and Parque La Alameda.

After this, we will take a short drive to the Middle of the World (Mitad Del Mundo). Situated about 10km north of Quito, Mitad del Mundo highlights the location of the equator and is one of Ecuador's most famous attractions. Here you will get the opportunity to stand with one foot in the Southern Hemisphere and one foot in the Northern Hemisphere.

The centerpiece of the Mitad del Mundo is a 30-metre high stone trapezoidal monument topped by a brass globe, which contains a viewing platform and museum. An interesting fact about Mitad del Mundo is that the monument was erected in the wrong place thanks to a slight miscalculation made by Charles-Marie de la Condamine in 1736 – long before GPS was developed. The actual equator line is 240 metres from the monument but it still makes for a great photo opportunity. The museum provides information about the indigenous people of Ecuador through dioramas, clothing displays and photographs, and on the lower floors you will find interactive exhibits that examine the science and myths of the equator.



Returning to Quito city, we will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before transferring to the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon will be at leisure.

[Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch]

Day 21 – Monday 29 August 2022

Depart Quito

This morning we will bid farewell to Ecuador. A local representative will collect us from our hotel at a designated time, and transfer us to Quito Airport.

[Meal Included: Breakfast]



Costing

DOUBLE / TWIN ROOM:

8-9 people in the group:	\$ 21,590 per person (plus flights to/from Ecuador)
10-11 people in the group:	\$ 20,690 per person (plus flights to/from Ecuador)
12-13 people in the group:	\$ 20,390 per person (plus flights to/from Ecuador)
14-15 people in the group:	\$ 19,890 per person (plus flights to/from Ecuador)

SINGLE SUPPLMENTS:

Add \$ 4,280 per person (Single Room throughout)
Add \$ 3,150 per person (Single Room except 3-nights Twin Share Galápagos Safari Camp)

Please note our prices are subject to a minimum group size of 8 passengers (plus Jerry). Should numbers fall below minimum numbers we reserve the right to review full pricing of travel packages and registration costs.

INCLUSIONS:

- All accommodation, transfers, touring & entrance fees as per the itinerary
- All meals as per the itinerary
- Internal flights (Guayaquil-San Cristobal; Baltra-Quito; Quito-Coca) – Tickets will be provided locally.
- 3 nights at Unipark Hotel, Guayaquil
- 5 day / 4 night Galápagos cruise on Yacht Solaris
- All meals, water, tea & coffee whilst on the Galápagos cruise
- Snorkeling equipment whilst on the Galápagos cruise
- All activities & excursions on the Galápagos cruise
- Galápagos Transit Control Card
- Galápagos National Park Entrance Fee
- 4 day / 3 night Galápagos Safari Camp package
- All meals during your stay at Galápagos Safari Camp
- All activities & excursions during your stay at Galápagos Safari Camp
- Wetsuit & snorkeling equipment whilst at Galápagos Safari Camp
- 1 night at Wyndham Airport Hotel, Quito
- 4 day / 3 night Napo Wildlife Centre package
- All meals during your stay at Napo Wildlife Centre
- All activities & excursions during your stay at Napo Wildlife Centre
- 1 night at Hakuna Matata Amazon Lodge, Tena
- 1 night at Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta
- 2 nights at Hacienda Zuleta, Zuleta
- All activities at Hacienda Zuleta
- 2 nights at Hotel Casona de la Ronda, Quito
- Bilingual local guides (Spanish-English)
- Escorted ex-Australia by Jerry Coleby-Williams

EXCLUSIONS

- Flights to/from Ecuador – Ask us for a quote!
- Travel Insurance (Compulsory) – Ask us for a quote!
- Arrival/departure taxes, reciprocity fees or visa fees where applicable
- Gratuities
- Optional wetsuit hire on the Galápagos cruise (to be paid on board in cash only)
- Soft drinks and alcoholic drinks on the Galápagos cruise (to be paid on board in cash only)
- Beverages at Galápagos Safari Camp
- Any items not mentioned as included
- Items of a personal nature

BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES:

The Adventure Traveller - Brisbane
Email: devin@theadventuretraveller.com
Phone: 1800 181 020 or (07) 3369 0799
Website: <https://www.theadventuretraveller.com/>

Eclipse Travel – Sydney
Email: matt@eclipsetravel.com.au
Phone: 1300 575 752
Website: <https://eclipsetravel.com.au/>

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