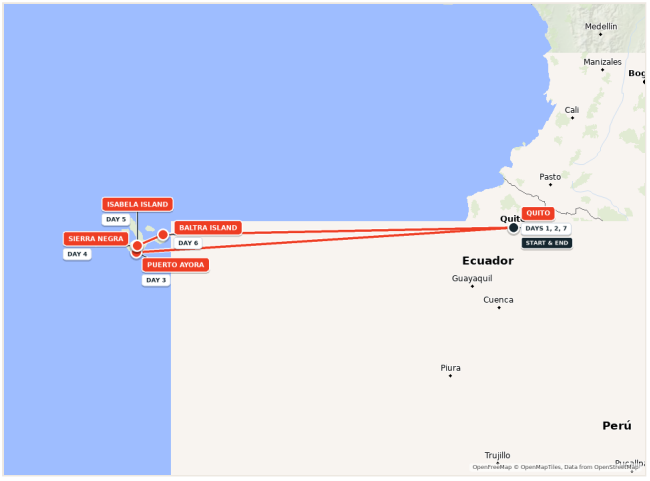
ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Best of the Galapagos

COUNTRY(IES)	Ecuador & Galapagos
TOUR TYPE	Small Group
TRANSPORT	domestic flight, ferry, speed-boat, mini-van
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 12
DURATION	7 days
STARTS	Quito, Ecuador
ENDS	Quito, Ecuador
MEALS	Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 2, Dinners - 0

TOUR ROUTE MAP **7 Days**



ROUTE: **Quito** (Start) → **Puerto Ayora** → **Sierra Negra** → **Isabela Island** → **Baltra Island** → **Quito** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Visit the Sierra Negra Volcano, snorkelling with sea turtles, rays, penguins and sea lions, Kayaking, Tintoreras & Lava tunnels, Charles Darwin research station, and encounters with wild giant tortoises.

Itinerary

DAY 1 Arrive in Quito. Evening welcome briefing

Arrive in Quito, Ecuador's capital set high in the Andes, and begin your journey with an easy introduction to the city. After arrival, the evening is dedicated to a welcome briefing that provides orientation and practical insight into the days ahead. This first night allows time to settle in and adjust to the altitude and surroundings. Quito's blend of historic character and mountain setting creates a distinctive opening atmosphere. The briefing sets a clear and organised start to the experience.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive in Quito**
  Arrive in Quito, Ecuador and settle into your hotel in the historic capital. Spend the day acclimating and exploring the city surroundings at your own pace.
- **Evening Welcome Briefing in Quito**
  Attend an evening welcome briefing at your hotel in Quito, Ecuador. Meet your trip leader and receive an

overview of the Galapagos journey ahead.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Quito hotel	None	Quito Arrival Airport Transfer, Extra Night in Quito - 5-star (pre-tour)

DAY 2 Fly to Baltra Island and take a boat to volcanic Isabela Island

Travel from mainland Ecuador to the Galápagos Islands with a flight from Quito to Baltra Island. On arrival, continue by ferry across the Itabaca Channel to Santa Cruz Island, marking your entry into the heart of the archipelago. This journey highlights the geographic shift from the Andes to a remote volcanic island environment. The transfer sets the stage for wildlife encounters and island exploration ahead. It is a smooth and practical transition into the Galápagos.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Flight Quito to Baltra Island**
  Fly from Quito, Ecuador to Baltra Island in the Galapagos archipelago. The flight may include a technical stop in Guayaquil before reaching the islands.
- **Travel from Ferry Baltra Island to Santa Cruz Island**
  Cross the Itabaca Channel by ferry from Baltra Island to Santa Cruz Island in the Galapagos, Ecuador.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Isabela Island hotel	Breakfast

DAY 3 Lava tube snorkelling and kayaking with penguins, sea lions and turtles

Explore the unique marine and coastal environments of Isabela Island through a combination of snorkelling and kayaking. Snorkelling at the lava tunnels reveals underwater landscapes shaped by volcanic activity, with opportunities to observe marine life in clear, sheltered waters. Kayaking around Tintoreras allows quiet access to narrow channels and rocky inlets where wildlife is often seen resting along the shore. The experience highlights the close relationship between volcanic geology and marine ecosystems in the Galápagos. This active day offers an immersive way to experience Isabela Island from both sea level and below the surface.

ACTIVITIES

- **Snorkelling Lava Tunnels in Isabela Island**
  Snorkel through volcanic lava tunnels off Isabela Island in the Galapagos, Ecuador. Swim among sea turtles, penguins, sea lions and tropical fish.
- **Kayaking Tintoreras in Isabela Island**
  Kayak through the Tintoreras area near Isabela Island, Ecuador. Paddle past mangroves and volcanic rocks while spotting penguins and marine iguanas.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Isabela Island hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 4 Hike Sierra Negra, Kayak in Tintoreras and snorkel at Concha y Perla

Experience Isabela Island’s dramatic landscapes through a mix of hiking, paddling, and snorkelling. The day begins with a hike on Sierra Negra Volcano, where vast caldera views highlight the island’s volcanic scale and geology. Time on the water follows with kayaking in the bay, offering a calm perspective of the shoreline and surrounding wildlife. Snorkelling at Concha y Perla reveals clear waters and rich marine life close to shore. This varied experience connects volcanic terrain with coastal and underwater environments in a single day.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike the Sierra Negra Volcano – Isabela Island**
  Hike across Sierra Negra Volcano on Isabela Island, Ecuador, one of the largest volcanic calderas in the world. Enjoy panoramic views over lava fields and highland terrain.
- **Kayaking off Isabela Island**
  Kayak along the coastal bay of Isabela Island in the Galapagos. Look for sea turtles, rays and seabirds in calm protected waters.
- **Snorkelling Concha y Perla in Isabela Island**
  Snorkel at Concha y Perla near Puerto Villamil on Isabela Island, Ecuador. The clear lagoon is home to fish, sea lions and marine iguanas.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Isabela Island hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 5 Head to Santa Cruz Island and visit the Charles Darwin Research Station

Travel by boat from Isabela to Santa Cruz and then visit the Charles Darwin Research Station for an introduction to ongoing conservation and scientific work. Continue into the highlands afterwards and look for giant tortoises in their natural habitat. Wildlife encounters remain dependent on natural conditions and cannot be guaranteed. The day combines transport, conservation education and highland exploration without adding unrelated coastal or marine activities.

ACTIVITIES

- **Boat from Isabela Island to Santa Cruz Island**
  Travel by boat from Isabela Island to Santa Cruz Island in the Galapagos, Ecuador. The crossing connects two of the archipelago's key islands.
- **Explore Charles Darwin Research Station in Santa Cruz Island**
  Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island, Galapagos, Ecuador. Learn about endemic

species and conservation efforts in the islands.

- **Giant Tortoise Walk in Santa Cruz Highlands**
  Walk through a private ranch in the Santa Cruz highlands, Galapagos, searching for giant tortoises in their natural habitat. Observe these iconic animals up close.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Santa Cruz Island hotel	Breakfast

DAY 6 Free time before flying back to Quito

Depart the Galápagos Islands with a flight from Baltra Island back to Quito, transitioning from the remote Pacific archipelago to Ecuador's Andean capital. The journey marks a return to the mainland after days shaped by wildlife, volcanic landscapes, and island travel. Upon arrival, free time allows for a relaxed pace, whether resting, exploring nearby neighbourhoods, or enjoying local cafés. This unstructured time provides a gentle adjustment back to city life. The day offers a smooth and flexible close to the Galápagos portion of the journey.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Flight Baltra Island to Quito**
  Fly from Baltra Island in the Galapagos back to Quito, Ecuador. Return from the islands to the mainland capital.
- **Free Time in Quito**
  Spend free time in Quito, Ecuador on your final evening. Relax at the hotel or enjoy the city atmosphere.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Quito hotel	Breakfast

DAY 7 Tour ends in Quito

The journey concludes in Quito, bringing together experiences from the Galápagos Islands and the Ecuadorian mainland. This final moment marks the end of a diverse exploration shaped by wildlife, landscapes, and cultural encounters. Quito's historic setting and Andean backdrop provide a fitting place to reflect on the route completed. The city serves as a calm and practical endpoint for departure or onward travel.

ACTIVITIES

- **Tour Ends in Quito**
  Conclude your journey in Quito, Ecuador. Continue onward travel independently after breakfast.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	Breakfast	Quito Departure airport transfer, Extra Night in Quito - 5-star (post-tour)

INCLUDED

- 5-star hotels in Quito, 3-star on the Galapagos Islands
- All transport and transfers per the itinerary
- Roundtrip Domestic flights between Quito and Galapagos Islands
- Airport transfers in Quito (for the Galapagos flights on days 2 & 6)
- Services of Naturalist Local Guide whilst in Galapagos
- Snorkelling Gear (masks, fins & life vest)
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

EXCLUDED

- International flights (available on request)
- Quito airport transfers on days 1 & 7
- Visa fees
- INGALA transit card: USD 20 p/p
- Galapagos National Park fee USD 200 p/p
- Wetsuit Hire USD 20 p/p
- USD $10 pier-use fee at Puerto Villamil
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tipping
- Any other items not mentioned above

Tour Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements , full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Quito Arrival Airport Transfer

Min numbers: 1

This option provides an airport arrival meet & greet and transfer service on day 1.

Note: The price of this transfer is per person based on a minimum of 2 travellers. Iff you are travelling alone, a single passenger rate will apply.

Quito Departure airport transfer

Min numbers: 1

This option provides a departure airport transfer service on the final day of our trip.

Note: The price of this transfer is per person based on a minimum of 2 travellers. Iff you are travelling alone, a single passenger rate will apply.

Extra Night in Quito - 5-star (pre-tour)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Quito - 5-star (post-tour)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Half Day Quito City Tour

Min numbers: 1

Immerse yourself in Quito's unique history and culture with a local guide. Wander the charming, narrow streets, exploring architectural gems such as the opulent Golden Church, the bustling San Francisco Square, and the vibrant Main Square. Experience the tradition of "Colaciones" at Luis' "Cruz Verde" workshop, a family legacy spanning 100 years. Finally, share a delicious, authentic lunch with locals, enjoying the rich flavours of Quito.

What’s Included?

- Comfortable transportation
- Lunch with locals
- “Colaciones” and ice cream taste
- Local guide

What is not included?

- Tips
- Souvenirs
- Drinks

Full Day Quito and Equator Line Tour

Min numbers: 1

Immerse yourself in Quito's rich history with a guided walking tour led by a local. Navigate the city's charming narrow streets, admiring architectural gems like the opulent Golden Church, the bustling San Francisco Square, and the vibrant Main Square. Step into Luis's "Cruz Verde" workshop, a century-old family tradition of crafting "Colaciones" sweets. Savour a delicious lunch with locals, enjoying fresh, regional flavours. Finally, stand astride the Equator Line and test your dexterity by balancing an egg on a nail.

What's Included?

- Comfortable transportation
- Lunch with locals
- "Colaciones" and ice cream taste
- Local guide
- Entrance Fees

What is not included?

- Tips
- Souvenirs
- Drinks

Important Notes

1 Accommodation

We use good quality 5-star hotels on this tour whilst in Quito. On the Galapagos Islands, we use comfortable 3-star propertis. Please see the accommodation tab for details of the hotels most commonly used on this tour (specific hotels are subject to change).

Hotel accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms. All couples will stay in a private double room.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

2 Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. On our trips to the Galapagos Islands, we include the cost of a roundtrip flight between Quito and the Galapagos Islands. Whilst travelling between the Islands of the Galapagos, we'll make use of local ferries and speedboats.

Please note that whilst partaking in waterbased activities, the vessel on which you travel may be shared with passengers who are not customers of Encounters Travel, however you will remain accompanied by your local tour leader.

3 Airport Transfers

As many of our travellers choose to combine our Galapagos adventures with further travel through Ecuador, we have not included the cost of arrival and departure airport transfers on this tour, though they can be added if required.

4 International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don’t include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we’ll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Our Galapagos tours start and finish in Quito and if you are flying in immediately prior to joining this tour, you should fly into Mariscal Sucre Quito International Airport (UIO)

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

5 Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There’s no point in us providing great guides if you’ve got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won’t ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our Galapagos group departures to have a minimum of 2 and maximum of 12 travellers (averge of around 6).

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local guides and reps wherever possible. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. On our Galapagos tours you'll be accompanied by a local naturalist guide.

6 Galapagos fees & permits

When visiting the Galapagos Islands, you should be aware of additional fees and permits which are required, please find details below:

INGALA Transit Card - USD 20 per person (cash only):

In essence, this is simply a fee to obtain authorization to visit the Galápagos Islands.

You pay a small fee of 20 USD in cash at the INGALA booth at the airport in Quito or Guayaquil to receive a "Transit Control Card" (TCC or TCT in Spanish). This card tracks your entry and exit from the islands, helping to protect the delicate ecosystem from unauthorized immigration.

Introduced in 2012, this system is a requirement for all non-resident visitors. If you're taking a cruise, you can often pre-book this card through the cruise line, and a representative will meet you at the airport with it.

Remember to keep your Transit Control Card safe throughout your trip, as you'll need to present it upon departure.

Galapagos National Park Fee - USD 200 per person (cash only):

To visit the Galápagos Islands, all tourists must pay an entrance fee, which varies depending on age and nationality. Most foreign adults pay $200, while children pay $100. Visitors from certain South American countries enjoy reduced rates (these are updated rates which came into force on 1st August 2024).

While the fee may seem high, it's crucial to remember that these funds directly support the conservation of the islands' unique biodiversity. The Galápagos National Park, along with other agencies, uses these resources to protect the delicate ecosystems, improve local services, and ensure the sustainability of this natural wonder.

The entrance fee contributes to a wide range of initiatives, from safeguarding marine life to supporting education and healthcare in local communities. By paying this fee, you're not only gaining access to an unforgettable experience but also actively participating in preserving the Galápagos Islands for future generations.

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7 Tipping

Whilst the amount you tip should ultimately be determined upon your satisfaction of the service you've received whilst on tour, we are often asked for advice on this. For the team involved in operating your tour on the ground (from drivers to guides), we would recommend budgeting approximately 20 USD per person per day for tips, though it is at your discretion if you wish to tip more or less than this.

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8 Language and Customs

The Galapagos Islands, being a part of Ecuador, have Spanish as their official language. However, due to the significant influx of tourists, English has become widely spoken and understood in the tourism industry. Other languages like German and French might also be spoken by some locals.

The customs of the Galapagos Islands largely mirror those of mainland Ecuador, with a strong emphasis on family and community. The locals are known for their warmth and hospitality towards visitors. One unique custom observed by some crews sailing through the Galapagos is a special tradition when crossing the equator. Additionally, a local folk dance called the "Galapagos Dance" showcases the unique biodiversity of the islands through rhythmic movements inspired by the behavior of local birds.

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9 Passports & Visas - Ecuador

Passports:

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months AFTER the date your trip finishes. This is a general requirement for all of the countries we travel to on our trips. If you have dual nationality you can only use one passport for the entire trip. It is your responsibility to ensure you have a valid passport.

Visas:

Many nationalities (including UK, European, Australian, New Zealand, South Africa, USA) can travel to Ecuador visa free for stays of up to 90 days in each 12 month period. Other nationalities should check with their local consulate or embassy.

Galapagos Islands:

Please refer to the section with our tour notes titled 'Galapagos fees & permits' to ensure you are fully prepared for your time in the Galapagos.

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10 Time

The time in Ecuador is GMT minus 5 hours (minus 6 hours in the Galapagos islands).

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11 Voltage

Ecuador uses two types of electrical outlets, known as type A and type B. Type A plugs have two flat parallel prongs, while type B plugs have two flat parallel prongs and a round grounding pin. The standard voltage in Ecuador is 120 volts.

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12 Money

Ecuador uses the United States dollar (USD) as its official currency. This adoption occurred in 2000 following a period of high inflation and economic instability with their previous currency, the sucre. For many travelers, this is convenient as it eliminates the need for currency exchange and allows for easy budgeting. U.S. dollar bills are used throughout the country, and Ecuador also mints its own centavos coins, which are equivalent to U.S. cents.

ATMs are readily available in most cities, which dispense USD.

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13 What to take

The Galápagos Islands are a unique and diverse environment, so packing the right gear is essential for a comfortable trip. The islands are warm and sunny, but the weather can change, and you'll be active with hikes and snorkelling. The following list covers the key items you'll need.

- **Valid Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months from your date of entry. You will also need a **transit control card** (TCT) which is required for entry into the Galápagos and is usually issued at the airport in mainland Ecuador.
- **Clothing:** Pack light, breathable clothing made from natural fibres like cotton. You'll need clothes for warm weather, but it's wise to include a light, long-sleeved shirt for sun protection and for cooler evenings. Quick-drying fabrics are a good choice due to the humidity and potential for getting wet.
- **Footwear:** Bring comfortable walking shoes or sturdy trainers for the short hikes on uneven, volcanic terrain. Additionally, a pair of sandals or flip-flops for casual use and **water shoes** or reef shoes for

snorkelling and beach landings are highly recommended to protect your feet.

- **Swimwear:** Pack at least two swimsuits so one can dry while you wear the other. A **rash guard** or a T-shirt for snorkelling is crucial to protect your back and shoulders from the intense equatorial sun.
- **Sun Protection:** The sun here is very strong. Be sure to bring high-factor **sunscreen**, after-sun lotion, a wide-brimmed sun hat (with a chin strap to keep it from blowing away on boat trips), and polarised sunglasses to reduce glare.
- **Medical and Hygiene Items:** Bring any **prescription medications** you need, along with any supporting documents. A basic first-aid kit with plasters, antiseptic wipes, and motion sickness tablets is also a good idea for boat journeys.
- **Electronics:** A **universal power adapter** is needed as Ecuador uses the same voltage and plug types (Type A and B) as the US. Don't forget your camera, and make sure to bring plenty of batteries and memory cards. A **waterproof camera** is highly recommended for capturing the marine life you'll see while snorkelling.
- **Light Jacket:** A lightweight, windproof jacket or a rain jacket is useful for boat rides and any unexpected showers.
- **Binoculars:** Binoculars are excellent for spotting wildlife, especially birds, from a distance on the hikes.

Luggage Restrictions: Flights from mainland Ecuador to the Galápagos Islands have strict baggage allowances. The standard is typically **20kg to 23kg** for checked luggage and **8kg to 10kg** for hand luggage. As these rules can vary between airlines, it is always best to check the specific limits with your carrier before you travel.

Luggage will be inspected at the airport for any prohibited items, such as unprocessed food or seeds, to protect the unique ecosystem of the islands. All luggage must be clearly labelled with your name and address. Excess baggage fees can be very expensive, so it's worth sticking to the limits.

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14 Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please contact us if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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15 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.
We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel’s insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products

and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

16 Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

17 Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

18 Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

19 Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current official government travel advice for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

20 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can’t fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon’s efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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21 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

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22 Yellow Fever Requirement

Please note that new entry requirements for Ecuador & the Galapagos Islands in relation to Yellow Fever will apply from May 12th 2025.

If a traveler meets one of the following conditions, they must show proof of Yellow Fever vaccination when arriving in Ecuador:

- They are a citizen or resident of Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, or Brazil,
- Or they have spent more than 10 days in any of those countries before entering Ecuador.

The traveler must have received the Yellow Fever vaccine at least 10 days before their arrival in Ecuador. The vaccine must be shown with an International Certificate of Vaccination (often called the "yellow card"). This rule applies to everyone, including tourists and business travelers. People without the certificate may be denied entry into Ecuador.