



Galapagos Essentials

Country(ies): Ecuador & Galapagos

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: domestic flight, ferry, speed-boat, mini-van

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 7 days

Start Location: Quito, Ecuador

End Location: Quito, Ecuador

Meals: Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 0

Highlights:

Explore the wildlife snorkeling with sea turtles, rays, penguins and sea lions, Visit highlands with the wild giant tortoises, Visit Academy bay, visit the lava tunnels and Isla Lobos, Relax on white sand beaches



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Quito. Evening welcome briefing

Welcome to Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and often referred to as the Cultural Capital of South America! This vibrant city, nestled in a valley on the equator at the base of the Pichincha volcano, boasts the largest and most well-preserved colonial center in the Americas. Upon arrival, you have the option to discover the captivating old town and its surroundings. Our team can assist with arranging a Quito City Tour if you'd like (please request in advance). This evening, join us in the hotel lobby at 6pm for a welcome briefing led by one of our trip leaders, where we'll discuss the exciting adventure ahead and answer any questions that may arise. Today is a day for acclimation and gathering information, so relax and enjoy your first taste of Quito!

OVERNIGHT: Quito hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Quito Arrival Airport Transfer Single room supplement (ECSGES) Extra Night in Quito - 5-star (pre-

Day 2: Fly to Baltra Island. Visit the highlands in search of Giant Tortoises

Today, you'll be transferred to the airport for your flight to Baltra Island in the Galapagos. Upon arrival, you'll be met and taken by ferry across the Itabaca channel to the neighboring island of Santa Cruz (please note that this flight normally makes a touch down Guayaquil, though no change of aircraft is required). From there, we'll drive to the highlands, home to the famous Galapagos giant tortoises. You'll enjoy lunch at a private ranch before setting out on a walk to spot these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat. We'll also explore fascinating lava tubes formed by solidified lava flows. Afterward, we'll continue to your hotel, where you'll meet your local guide who will brief you on the exciting itinerary ahead. The rest of the evening is yours to unwind and further discover the beauty of this unique island.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cruz Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Boat trip to Academy Bay for snorkelling. Afternoon hike and visit Playa de los Perros

After breakfast, get ready for an unforgettable half-day tour to Academy Bay. Don't forget to pack everything you need, and if you'd like to snorkel, we'll provide the gear free of charge. We'll take a boat to the bay, where you can swim and snorkel alongside vibrant fish, fascinating marine life, and playful sea lions known for their curiosity. Keep an eye out for the iconic blue-footed boobies as well! Next, we'll hike to a nearby viewpoint for a chance to spot white-tipped reef sharks gliding through the waters below. Then, stroll along Playa de los Perros, home to sunbathing marine iguanas. Don't forget your camera – the striking contrast of giant cacti, red rocks, and the turquoise ocean creates picture-perfect moments.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cruz Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. Speedboat to San Cristobel Island

This morning, we'll delve into the world of the Galapagos Islands at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Here, you'll gain deeper insights into the many endemic species you've encountered in their natural habitats, and learn about the ongoing conservation and management initiatives that safeguard this unique ecosystem. In the afternoon, we'll embark on an exciting speedboat journey to San Cristobal Island. During this crossing, keep your eyes peeled for playful dolphins and majestic whales, especially if you're traveling between July and October. Upon arrival, we'll settle into our comfortable hotel accommodations, ready for the next leg of our adventure.

OVERNIGHT: San Cristobel Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Exploring Isla Lobos

Following breakfast, we'll head to a nearby dock and hop on a boat for a short, scenic ride to Isla Lobos. Keep your eyes peeled during the journey, as you're likely to spot a variety of marine animals before even reaching the island. Upon arrival, we'll embark on a guided tour of this fascinating isle, home to a diverse array of wildlife. You'll have the opportunity to observe frigate birds with their impressive wingspans, the charming blue-footed boobies, graceful manta rays, playful sea lions, and even the occasional shark patrolling the surrounding waters. Afterwards, we'll take full advantage of San Cristóbal's pristine white coral beaches. You can choose to take a leisurely stroll, simply unwind in the warm sun, or take a refreshing dip in the crystal-clear water. As the day winds down, we'll return to the bustling Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, full of memories and remarkable encounters.

OVERNIGHT: San Cristobel Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Free time before flying back to Quito

Take advantage of a leisurely morning before we head to the airport in San Cristóbal for your flight back to mainland Ecuador (please note that this flight normally makes a touch down Guayaquil, though no change of aircraft is required). Upon landing in Quito, you'll be greeted and transferred to your hotel, where you can relax and enjoy your final evening before bidding farewell to this incredible adventure.

OVERNIGHT: Quito hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Tour ends in Quito

Cherish your memories, treasure your photos, and know that a piece of your heart will forever remain in Ecuador. We hope you'll be drawn back to explore more of this enchanting land soon. Until then, we wish you a fond farewell and a "buen viaje"!

Whilst an airport transfer is not included today, this can be arranged on a request basis.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: 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 flight from Quito to Baltra
- Airport transfers in Quito (for the Baltra 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
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tipping
- Any other items not mentioned above

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.

Single room supplement (ECSGES)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

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

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.

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.

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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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

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 tour leader. Whilst in the Galapagos, you'll also be joined at times by a local naturalist guide.

7. 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.

8. 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 budgetting 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Time

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

12. 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.

13. 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.

Printed on: Saturday 15th of November 2025

Note: Please $\underline{\text{download an up-to-date copy}}$ of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.