

Galapagos Uncovered

Country(ies): Ecuador & Galapagos

Tour type: Small Group

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

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 10 days

Start Location: Quito, Ecuador

End Location: Quito, Ecuador

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 0

Highlights:

Kicker Rock, Sierra Negra Volcano visit, Lava trails, Snorkel with sea turtles, rays, penguins and sea lions, Tintoreras and Lava tunnels, Explore the Charles Darwin Research Station, Encounters with Giant Tortoises.



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

Day 2: Fly to San Cristobel Island. Afternoon wildlife viewing and snorkelling

Today, our adventure begins as we journey to the Galapagos Islands, the breathtaking archipelago that inspired Charles Darwin's groundbreaking theory of evolution. After a scenic morning flight from Quito to San Cristóbal Island, we'll settle into our hotel in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno and receive a briefing on the exciting days ahead (please note that this flight normally makes a touch down Guayaquil, though no change of aircraft is required).

This afternoon, we'll explore "La Loberia," a haven for Galapagos sea lions. Witness playful pups frolicking amidst the waves and adults basking on the sandy shore. Keep an eye out for yellow warblers, frigate birds, and diverse species of Darwin finches that call this beach home. As we venture further, we might encounter the unique marine iguanas, found only in the Galapagos. And of course, no visit to La Loberia is complete without a refreshing swim and snorkeling session in the crystal-clear waters.

OVERNIGHT: San Cristobel Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Snorkelling at Kicker Rock and Cerro Brujo

Today, we embark on a thrilling speedboat adventure to Kicker Rock, an iconic geological formation aptly nicknamed the Sleeping Lion (Leon Dormido) for its striking resemblance. Situated off the coast of San Cristóbal, this eroded lava cone presents two towering rock faces rising dramatically from the ocean, forming a narrow channel navigable only by small vessels. As we approach, we'll be greeted by a mesmerizing aerial display of tropicbirds, frigate birds, and boobies, who frequent this Galapagos Islands natural monument.

Beneath the surface, a vibrant underwater world awaits. The crystalline waters teem with a kaleidoscope of tropical fish, including the aptly named rainbow fish, and a variety of sharks, such as hammerheads, reef sharks, and white tips.

In the afternoon, we'll venture to Cerro Brujo, a lively island brimming with playful sea lions eager to welcome us. This enchanting locale not only offers fantastic snorkeling opportunities but also the chance to observe the iconic blue-footed and Nazca boobies.

OVERNIGHT: San Cristobel Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Exploring Isabela Island including Tortoise breeding centre

This morning, a short flight transports us to Isabela Island, the largest and most volcanically active island in the Galapagos archipelago. Formed by six shield volcanoes, five of which remain active, Isabela boasts one of the most dynamic volcanic landscapes on Earth.

In the afternoon, we'll delve into the island's remarkable ecosystem, encountering a diverse array of wildlife. We'll be captivated by the sight of flamingos and marine iguanas basking in saltwater lagoons, explore pristine white sand beaches, and wander through lush mangrove forests. This area teems with birdlife, from American oystercatchers and herons to flamingos, finches, and numerous shorebirds. Of course, we'll also encounter the ubiquitous sea lions and marine iguanas that call Isabela home.

A highlight of our day is the Tortoise Breeding Centre, where we'll witness the fascinating life cycle of giant tortoises, from tiny eggs to hatchlings, juveniles, and sub-adults. We'll also visit the Wall of Tears, a poignant reminder of the island's past as a penal colony. This imposing lava rock wall stands as a testament to the isolation and hardships endured by prisoners forced to build it in the 1950s.

As evening descends, we'll gather on the beach of Puerto Villamil to savor a spectacular sunset, a fitting end to a day filled with wonder and exploration.

OVERNIGHT: Isabela Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Snorkelling in Tintoreras

Today's adventure takes us to the Tintoreras Islet, a short distance from Puerto Villamil and a haven for diverse wildlife. Prepare for an unforgettable snorkeling experience in the islet's crystal-clear turquoise waters, where you'll encounter white-tipped reef sharks, Galapagos penguins, marine turtles, and playful sea lions.

Following our underwater exploration, we'll embark on a leisurely stroll along the islet's beaches, framed by lush mangroves. Tintoreras Islet is a unique nesting site for marine iguanas, offering us a rare opportunity to witness their breeding grounds.

OVERNIGHT: Isabela Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Exploring and snorkelling at the Lava tunnels

Today, we embark on an unforgettable journey to explore the mesmerizing lava formations sculpted by recent volcanic eruptions along the seashore. This enchanting location has even been featured in BBC and National Geographic documentaries! Prepare to be awestruck by a labyrinth of lava arches within the crashing waves, where crystal-clear waters teem with an abundance of marine life. Here, we'll encounter graceful sea turtles, majestic eagle rays, playful sea lions, a kaleidoscope of fish, white-tipped reef sharks, and countless other underwater wonders.

Witness the incredible sight of sea turtles navigating their own "highway" through the lava tunnels known as "Los Tuneles," as they journey from the mangroves to the open sea. This extraordinary site offers an unparalleled snorkeling experience, allowing us to swim alongside these magnificent creatures and even encounter the inquisitive Galapagos penguin.

Following our underwater adventure, you'll have the option to further explore the underwater world at "Concha de Perla" or simply unwind on the pristine white-sand beaches of Isabela Island.

OVERNIGHT: Isabela Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Santa Cruz and Academy Bay exploration

Today, we'll journey to Santa Cruz for a captivating half-day tour of Academy Bay. Be sure to pack your essentials, and don't worry about snorkel gear – we'll provide it free of charge for those who wish to explore the underwater world.

Our boat will take us to Academy Bay, a vibrant underwater paradise teeming with exotic fish and marine life. Here, you'll have the unique opportunity to swim and snorkel alongside playful sea lions, known for their curiosity and underwater acrobatics. Keep an eye out for the iconic blue-footed boobies as they grace the skies above.

Next, we'll ascend to a nearby viewpoint, where, with a bit of luck, we might spot white-tipped reef sharks patrolling the depths below. Our adventure continues with a scenic walk along Playa de los Perros, a haven for sunbathing sea iguanas. The stark contrast of giant cacti against the deep red rocks and turquoise waters creates a photographer's paradise.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cruz Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station

This morning, we visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, a hub of scientific discovery and conservation efforts in the Galapagos Islands. Here, we'll delve deeper into the unique endemic species we've encountered in their natural habitats, learning about their behaviors, adaptations, and ecological significance. We'll gain valuable insights into the challenges facing these vulnerable species and the innovative strategies being implemented to protect them. The station's dedicated researchers and conservationists will share their expertise and passion, offering us a comprehensive understanding of the delicate balance of this extraordinary ecosystem and the ongoing efforts to ensure its preservation for generations to come.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cruz Island hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Free time before flying back to Quito

Take advantage of a leisurely morning before we return to Baltra Airport 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 10: 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 flights between Quito and Galapagos Islands
- Domestic flight from San Cristobel to Isabela (includes 10kg checked luggage)
- Airport transfers in Quito (for the Galapagos flights on days 2 & 9)
- 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
- Isabela Fee 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. If 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. If you are travelling alone, a single passenger rate will apply.

Single room supplement (ECSGGU)

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 properties. 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 this tour includes a flight between the islands of San Cristobel and Isabela. The included luggage allowance on this flight is 25 lbs. (20 lbs. for check-in baggage and 5 pounds for carry-on baggage equals 25 pounds total). Extra baggage USD 2.00 per extra pound - it can be paid directly to the airline at check-in.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

10. Time

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

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.

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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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).

18. 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/encounterstravel> (yes, without the 'e')

19. 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.

20. 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.



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](#).

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.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
