

For tours departing beyond 2010, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2011 brochure (issued in Oct 10).

2010
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

ECUADOR • GALAPAGOS ISLANDS Dossier Ref. GPS

Volcanoes & Galapagos

Amended 12 Mar 2010. Valid from 01 Jan 2010 to 31 Dec 2010

Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: itinerary days 11 & 12; other sightseeing; tips

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

15 days/14 nights Land Only
Quito to Guayaquil

Join Quito (day 1)

End Guayaquil (day 15)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Quito. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

16 days/15 nights Tour including
Connecting Group Flights
London-Quito-Guayaquil-London

Depart from London Heathrow Airport to arrive in Quito the same day (day 1 of Land Only itinerary).

Return from Guayaquil (day 15 of Land Only itinerary) and arrive London Heathrow the following day.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights on this tour, we particularly mention:

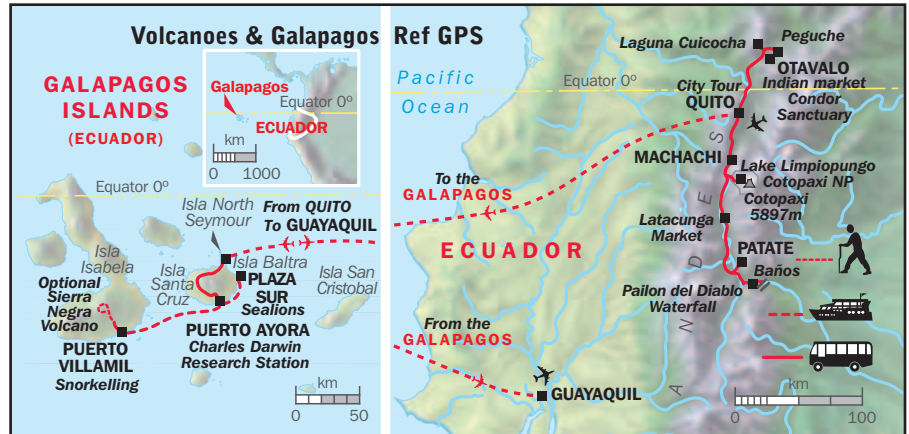
- * **QUITO** Majestic Andean colonial capital.
- * **COTOPAXI NP** The picturesque volcanic peaks of Cotopaxi and Tungurahua.
- * **BAÑOS** Dramatic gateway to the jungles of the Orient.
- * **OTAVALO & LATACUNGA** Fascinating Indian markets.

Carbon Offsets Included

As part of our responsible tourism policy we offset carbon emissions from all customer and staff flights booked by Explore. Our carbon offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to offset your carbon emissions through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

Earth Matters

- All plastic water bottles used on this trip are collected by your Tour Leader and given to a local sugar cane processing company where they are reused, drastically reducing our impact on the environment and supporting local enterprise.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>



* **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** 7 days visiting the remarkable wonders of Darwin's unique Islands.

From the magnificent peaks of the snow-capped Andes and the colourful Indian markets of the Central Highlands, to the incredible wildlife of the Galapagos Islands, diversity is the secret of Ecuador's charm. Small in comparison to many of its South American neighbours, this captivating country presents us with some of the most fascinating natural and cultural highlights on the continent. Beginning in the old colonial capital of Quito, set amidst the spectacular majesty of mountain vistas and dormant volcanoes, we drive through the splendour of Cotopaxi National Park and onto the Central Highlands, a region steeped in tradition and colour. We visit the vibrant markets of Latacunga and Otavalo, rich centres for indigenous culture, where we have the opportunity to mingle with the locals, immersing ourselves in an ever-changing tableau of colour and noise, and maybe picking up a bargain in the process. Crater lakes and huge condors, misty cloud forests and exceptional birdlife occupy our days as we travel from Patate near Baños exploring traditional villages and tumbling waterfalls as we journey from the lush landscapes on the edge of the Oriente, to the high mountains around Quito once more. A visit to the remarkable museum of Inti Nan sees us crossing through the Equator en route back to Ecuador's mountaintop capital. Flying on to the Galapagos, we then spend the next 7 days enjoying the breathtaking diversity of these 'enchanted islands'. Basing ourselves on the islands of Santa Cruz, Floreana and Isabela, we spend our days exploring the islands, marvelling at the fantastic scenery – lunar landscapes of black lava covered in strange flora and inhabited by creatures unknown anywhere else on the planet. We hope to see giant

tortoises, sea lions, frigate birds, marine iguanas, pelicans and blue-footed boobies. It's little wonder that Charles Darwin described the islands as a living laboratory of evolution. Journey's end sees us in the port of Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador and, somehow, a fitting finale for this most comprehensive insight into one of South America's glittering gems.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Strikes, rallies and road-blocks are quite common forms of protest in Ecuador and there are also certain areas prone to landslides and seismic activity. While we have excellent resources in place to minimise any disruption to the tour, occasionally we have to make changes to our planned route and/or itinerary.

The boat's exact itinerary is determined by the Galapagos National Park Authorities and this can make the route subject to change at any time of the year.

As of 7th November 2008 the Galapagos Authorities have introduced the Galapagos Transit Control Card, which each person visiting the Galapagos must have \$10, and it will be payable before entrance is permitted.

Please also note that there is an entrance fee to the Galapagos of US\$100 per person which must be paid individually on arrival in the Galapagos.

- Flight times to and from the islands can change at short notice.
- Tourism in the Galapagos is quite rudimentary, yet expensive.
- Please only use bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth in Ecuador and the Galapagos.
- All tours to the Galapagos must have a naturalist guide who is from the Galapagos – they are the only people allowed to guide.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

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**Day 1. Join tour Quito
2 nights hotel H+.**

Day 2. AM Quito city tour

We begin with a walking tour of Quito, Ecuador's mountain capital and the second highest capital city in Latin America. One of South America's most beautiful cities, Quito lies in a narrow valley at the foot of Pichincha volcano, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and extinct volcanoes. The fascinating UNESCO Heritage site of the Old City, with its rich blend of colonial architecture, imposing churches and bustling local markets, makes for a stunning introduction to this most enchanting of regions. We will visit some of the main sites, including the Plaza de la Independencia, the cultural heart of the colonial city, and La Compañía church with its magnificent gilded altars, walls and ceilings. At the church of San Francisco we are introduced to Quito's largest and oldest colonial church, built in 1553. A climb to the top of nearby Cerro Panecillo affords us one of the best views across the city and the surrounding mountains, presenting us with an unparalleled vista of the encircling Andes from the viewing platform offered by the statue of the Virgen de Quito. **(Included meals: B).**

Day 3. Drive to Patate (nr Baños) via Cotopaxi National Park

Leaving Quito this morning we head south, towards the Central Highlands and the small town of Patate near Baños. Our journey takes us through some of the most impressive mountain scenery in the entire country, into the landscapes so aptly described by the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt as the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes'. En route we drive into the spectacular Cotopaxi National Park, where we shall see one of the world's highest active volcanoes. Ecuador's second highest mountain, Cotopaxi is a classic volcanic cone, snow covered and rising an imposing 5897m from the valley floor below. We will take some time whilst we are here to walk around the Limpiopungo Plateau (1.5 hours), where a shallow glacial lake presents us with a perfect spot to explore something of the rich flora and fauna of the páramo (high altitude Andean grasslands). Set between the imposing masses of Cotopaxi and Rumiñahui, the plateau is a haven for birdlife, as well as wild horses and even the elusive mountain lion. From here we continue to our nightstop near Patate. We stay in a hacienda set amidst a valley with spectacular views of the Tungurahua volcano. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 4. AM visit to Pailon Falls, then drive to Machachi via Latacunga market

First thing this morning we plan to visit (subject to local restrictions due to recent eruptions of the Tungurahua volcano) the nearby Pailón del Diablo waterfall (the Devil's Cauldron), considered by many to be the

most beautiful in the area. If the weather is clear Tungurahua presents a stunning backdrop to the scene and a walk up to the viewing platform allows us to view these impressive falls from above (1.5 hours), looking down onto the whirlpool of foaming water below. From here we continue to Latacunga, where we find one of the largest markets in Ecuador, attracting hundreds of Indians from the surrounding villages. Capital of the Cotopaxi Province, this traditional mountain city has managed to retain much of its original character and charm and its streets present a picturesque mix of colonial architecture and indigenous colour. After exploring the market and maybe even finding a few bargains, we continue to the town of Marchachi, slap bang in the middle of cattle country. Set before the majestic grandeur of the imposing peaks of Paschocha, Rumiñahui and Corazón, Machachi is in the heartland of the traditional Ecuadorian cowboy, the Chagra, individuals who pride themselves on their skills on horseback, so much so that each year the town hosts its own version of a rodeo. We will spend the evening here, amongst a stunning landscape of fertile valleys surrounded by the dominating peaks of the Andes. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 5. AM drive to Otavalo; PM visit Laguna Cuicocha and Peguche village

Following the Panamericana Highway this morning we head north, towards the small market town of Otavalo, set within a beautiful fertile valley encircled by imposing sacred mountains. The town is one of South America's most important areas for ethno-tourism and its regular markets attracts traders and artisans from as far away as Peru and Bolivia. The Otavaleños are an incredibly dignified and assured people, proudly displaying their cultural traditions and ancient heritage for all to see and their market is a rich confusion of goods and styles from right across the region, with jewellery, rugs, woven linen bags, woodcarvings and leather goods on display throughout the town. Add to that the visual majesty of the setting and the colourful costumes of the protagonists and you have a truly remarkable cultural experience. This afternoon we take a drive out to the tranquil setting of Cuicocha, a turquoise crater-lake located at 3,100m and approached through a wonderful landscape of alpine vegetation. Located in the Western Cordillera, at the foot of Cotocachi, this now dormant volcanic caldera is a prime spot to find the "King of the Andes", wide-winged condors that soar high above the valleys in graceful flight. There may be the option to go for a walk around the lake (1.5 hours) before moving on to the indigenous village of Peguche, famed for its local families who make colourful weavings plus others who play traditional Andean music by using several types of panpipes made by themselves. We will stop and enjoy visiting one of the musician families before returning to Otavalo for the evening. **Overnight hotel H+.**

Day 6. In Otavalo

Today we have a full day to explore the environs around the town of Otavalo. We intend to visit the colonial town of Ibarra, and drive around Imbabura Mountain passing the traditional haciendas of Zuleta and Angochagua. Near San Pablo Lake we plan a gentle walk to take in the surrounding countryside (1.5hrs) with a stop for lunch en-route. Near the lake we may get an opportunity to visit a bird rescue centre that particularly looks after Condors – the largest bird in the Andes. Later in the afternoon we return to Otavalo. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 7. Drive to Quito via the Equator Line

This morning we drive to Quito via the Equator line, stopping off in the 'Middle of the World' to visit the interesting Solar Museum at Inti Nan. Some believe that the original meaning of Quito is the centre of the earth and it is commonly believed that the pre-Hispanic people of this region knew of the importance of their mountainous location. A monument left by the French is actually some 200 metres off track, whereas the wonderfully eclectic museum is actually slap bang on zero. A visit to this most entertaining of locations presents us with a range of interesting facts and figures about Ecuador's geographical position, as well as supplying us with some scientific experiments in the effects of spiralling bath water and the balancing of eggs on nails! We also plan to visit Mirador Pululagua and have lunch in a nearby restaurant before returning to Quito. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 8. Fly to Baltra; visit Highlands

Today we fly to the Galapagos island of Santa Cruz, our gateway to the wonders of nature at her most spectacular. The Galapagos are an isolated chain of volcanic islands supporting a distinct and unique flora and fauna, including prehistoric creatures found nowhere else on earth. On the way to Puerto Ayora we travel through the Highlands where we will visit a ranch for lunch. Here we can hopefully see some Giant Tortoise roaming around. After lunch we continue our journey and stop at Los Gemelos (The Twins), two "pit craters" that were empty magma chambers that collapsed in on themselves due to the weight of the overlying rocks,

Booking a Single Room

All of our tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. On this particular tour we are pleased to be able to offer customers the option of pre-booking a guaranteed single room. Single rooms are available for all the nightstops on this tour.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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before heading down to the harbour of Puerto Ayora where we check into our hotel and have time to relax and explore the town and look forward to the days ahead in this unique environment. Of the extraordinary animals to be found in the Galapagos many are reptiles, such as the great tortoise, large land iguanas, numerous lizards and three species of non-poisonous snakes. There are also several species of turtle, which come ashore to mate. Up to three quarters of a million seabirds flock to the islands, including a third of the world's blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, pelicans, cormorants, albatross and petrels. Most out of place of all the animals on the equator though is perhaps the penguin. Only 35cm tall, the Galapagos penguin can be seen swimming among tropical mangroves, whilst offshore it is common to see dolphins, sea lions and fur seals playing in the water. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 9. Boat to Isabela – visits on Isabela
This morning we depart Santa Cruz and journey west by boat, crossing the open waters to nearby Isabela Island where we will spend the next two days. The largest of the Galapagos Island, Isabela is formed from 5 volcanoes, of which 2 are still active. An idyllic paradise of white sand beaches and swaying palms it is home to the second largest caldera on earth and the highest point in the archipelago. As with Santa Cruz we will base ourselves here, in the small town of Puerto Villamil on the southern coast, and take excursions out around the island. On arrival we intend to walk to the 'Wall of Tears' (Muro de las Lágrimas), a grim reminder of the human presence on the islands. The wall dates back to a thirteen-year period between 1946-1959, when the island served as a penal colony. A local police chief ordered the building of the wall, resulting in the deaths of many of the prisoners, before a prisoner revolt in the February 1958 resulted in international pressure on the government of the day to close down the colony, ending the barbaric practice. En route to the wall we pass through a gentle landscape of lagoons and trails, where we find flamingos and other birds gathered around the shores of the lakes. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 10. On Isabela; AM walk up Sierra Negra Volcano; PM Tintoreras visit and snorkel trip (optional)
Our second day affords us the opportunity to explore the island more fully: we will take a walk up to the Sierra Negra Volcano, where we will find the aforementioned caldera, measuring in at an impressive 12kms (the largest caldera incidentally is the Ngorongoro Crater in Africa). The volcano dominates the southern half of the island, presenting us with some spectacular views from the top across the island and towards Santiago to the northeast. This afternoon we have the opportunity to take a small boat to the nearby Tintoreras Islands (optional) – these are formed from the lava flows from volcanoes and are fantastic for viewing wildlife. As we walk around we may see a vast array of bird life and an abundance of the famous marine iguanas (only found in the Galapagos) whilst in the water giant turtles, Galapagos penguins and sea lions may curiously swim around. Aside from the incredible diversity and unique qualities of the wildlife on these islands is their complete acceptance of our presence, making it possible to view reptiles, birds and mammals alike from as close as a few feet. We may also have the chance for snorkelling at Concha y Perla. **(Included meals: B, L).**

Day 11. Tortoise Breeding Centre, Boat to Santa Cruz
This morning we visit Tintoreras and tortoise breeding centre before taking the boat back to Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island where

we will spend the next 3 nights. **3 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 12. Visit Plaza Island
Today we plan to take a full day excursion to the National Park at Las Plazas Island. Here there are land iguanas, crabs, marine lizards and sea lions to view. We will also have the opportunity for some snorkelling before returning to Puerto Ayora. **(Included meals B, L).**

Day 13. AM visit Tortuga Bay; PM visit Charles Darwin station
This morning we take a walk to Tortuga Bay where we have the opportunity to swim at one of the most spectacular beaches of the entire chain and an important turtle nesting ground. After lunch we will visit the nearby Charles Darwin Research Station which has been responsible for conservation projects within the islands since 1959 (the centenary of the publication of Origin of the Species). During our time here we will visit the centre to learn more about the unique collection of animal and plant life that resides here. **(Included meals: B, L).**

Day 14. Fly to Guayaquil
Leaving the Galapagos behind we fly back to Guayaquil today. On arrival the rest of the day is free to explore at your leisure. The largest city in Ecuador and its principal port, Guayaquil is a bustling, lively city with a number of churches and museums you might like to visit. Alternatively you might like to wander through the old district of Las Penas, an area of cobbled streets, painted houses and cafes, where you can sit and watch the world go by and reflect on the wonders you have seen. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 15. Tour ends Guayaquil

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry. Please allow US\$26 for airport taxes on departure from Guayaquil; Galapagos Transit Control Cards (\$10 per person).

Please also note that there is an entrance fee to the Galapagos of \$100 per person which must be paid individually on arrival in the Galapagos.

Please be aware that if you purchase duty free on your return from your departing airport and are flying home via Madrid this will be confiscated as Madrid Airport check your hand luggage and you are not permitted bottled liquids over 100ml. We recommend you buy locally and pack in your main luggage.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: US Dollar.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollar Travellers Cheques/Cash (NOT Sterling, which is almost impossible to change). The US dollar is the currency used in Ecuador. It is advisable to bring some US\$400 – \$500 of your total spending money in cash, in small denomination notes (in good condition). 100US\$ bills are very difficult to use. Note: US \$100 bills with the series CB-B2 year 2001 will not be accepted for exchange.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns. Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. When changing money always keep your receipts for changing back money.

ATM Availability: ATMs widely available in Quito, Otavalo and Guayaquil. Not reliable in Galapagos.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are of limited use, but may be brought along 'just in case'.

Travellers Cheques: It is possible to change traveller's cheques in Quito at the beginning of the trip: commission is about 2%. Travellers Cheques are often difficult to exchange.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 12 breakfasts, 8 lunches are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Ecuador	Galapagos
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	\$1.00	\$1.00
Soft drink	0.80	1.50	2.50
Bottle of Beer	2.50	2.50	3.50
Bottle water	0.80	2.00	2.00
2 Course Meal*	10.00	15.00	18.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	19.00	25.00
Wine (Bottle)	10.00	20.00	25.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will still look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in Ecuador in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive. Accordingly, you should allow US\$50 for the land portion of the trip and US\$70 (\$30 for local guide & \$40 rest of staff) for the Galapagos portion of the trip for tipping.

Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Snorkelling equipment US\$4 per day plus US\$20 deposit.

SAN PABLO Condor bird rescue centre US\$4.
ISABELA BOAT RIDE to Tentoteras US\$12.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Ecuador: Temperature ranges are similar all year round. In the highlands the dry season lasts from June to mid-September. November and December are partially dry. The rainy months are October and from January to May, but showers are short and mostly in the afternoons. Temperatures range from 12°C to 24°C. Nights are cold at altitude (8°C - 10°C).

The Galapagos: The hot season is January to April, with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers. The cool season runs May to December and is generally cloudier with much cooler seas. Please note that although it is windier from July to November the sea can be rough at any time of the year. On the mainland the dry season lasts from June to October, though September can be wet.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/> weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

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Visa Requirements

No visa required for citizens of UK, AUS, NZ, CAN or USA. Please ensure your passport is stamped with a T3 permit (for 30 or 90 days) on arrival in Ecuador. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Please note: Please note that flights on the tour **may** transit through the USA. According to US law, passengers may have to disembark, collect luggage and clear immigration before re-boarding for the onward flight. Holders of the UK, AUS, NZ, CAN and several EU country passports can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) if they hold a machine readable passport. They must also be entering the country by sea or air on a carrier participating in the visa waiver scheme, holding a return/onward ticket. As well as being machine readable, if your passport was issued on or after 26 October 2005, it must contain both a digital photograph of the holder and also an integrated circuit chip that stores biographic information.

From 12 January 2009 all passengers travelling to the USA under the Visa Waiver Programme must provide their details online no later than 72 hours prior to travel. British travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be detained and sent home. In addition to passport information, you must also supply the full address of your first night's accommodation in the USA. This information can be obtained from your joining instructions which are sent out approximately 3 weeks before travel.

For more information, and to apply online, please visit the following website at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>. Once obtained, the application will be valid for a period of two years, or for the validity of your passport (whichever is shorter). At present, US authorities do not propose to levy a charge for this service, although they have reserved the right to consider doing so in the future.

For more information about who is eligible for the VWP, or any other questions you may have regarding your eligibility, or machine readable passports, please contact your local consular office, or visit www.usembassy.org.uk

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination including safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements and health. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information**' booklet, available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of luggage, an overnight bag (for overnight excursions in the Galapagos) and a daysack. Total allowance **44lbs/20kgs**. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage – don't overload yourself.

Clothing: Pack essentially for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'. Daytime clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting, but warmer clothing is needed at altitude and at sea, particularly at night. Long-sleeved lightweight clothes are useful for protection against sunburn. Bring a swimsuit, sunhat and a thick sweater or fleece. Lightweight waterproofs are essential. Remember that altitude can make places much colder, especially at night, so bring something to wrap up in, including a pair of gloves, hat and scarf.

Footwear: Comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals with a good grip. Plastic sandals (not flip flops) are useful for wet landings.

Equipment: A torch, water bottle, sunglasses, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, beach towel, plenty of camera film, waterproof bag for camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. If intending to snorkel (which we highly recommend), please take your own equipment.

Personal First Aid Kit: For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 283,520 sq km.

Population: 12 million.

Language: Spanish & Quichua (official).

Religion: 90% Roman Catholic

Local Time: GMT -5.

Electric Supply & Plugs: 120V 60Hz.

Recommended Books: Michael H Jackson: Galapagos: A Natural History Guide, Lonely Planet Guide: Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, Footprint Guide: Ecuador and the Galapagos, Charles Darwin: The Voyage of the Beagle, Andy Swash & Robert Still: Birds, Mammals and Reptiles of the Galapagos Islands.

GALAPAGOS CONSERVATION TRUST

Explore are members of the Galapagos Conservation Trust; a UK registered charity which raises awareness and funds for a variety of conservation and education projects in the Galapagos. GCT's projects cover not only research and conservation but also activities such as renewable energy and funding for students from the Galapagos; ensuring that the local people themselves can effect the future conservation of the islands.

What you can do

As visitors, it is imperative that we do our bit in helping to conserve the fragile ecosystem of the Galapagos for future generations. Respect visiting guidelines and become a member of the Galapagos Conservation Trust to ensure the support continues.

www.savegalapagos.org



Rainforest Alliance

Explore are partners with the Rainforest Alliance which works with local hotels and suppliers to promote best management practices that will help local business reduce negative impacts and potentially obtain certification in sustainable tourism. Through training, workshops and by providing tools and resources, the Rainforest Alliance encourages the tourism industry to conserve local environments and contribute in a positive way to their local communities. Explore supports the Rainforest Alliance by agreeing that a minimum of 50% of our nightstops on this tour will be in properties working towards certification in sustainable tourism, and by actively encouraging the other properties we work with to sign up to local sustainable tourism programmes. The Rainforest Alliance works in eight countries in Latin America, and we support their efforts in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

www.rainforest-alliance.org

To book please call 0844 499 0901 • www.explore.co.uk

For bookings outside the UK please contact your local travel agent representing Explore.

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