EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Volcanoes and Galapagos (GPS 2016)

WILDLIFE

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
tour Code: GPS

Tour Highlights - Volcanoes and Galapagos

- ✓ Galapagos Islands - Spend one week getting up close to the remarkable wildlife of Darwin's unique islands
- ✓ Quito - Explore the majestic Andean colonial capital which boasts UNESCO World Heritage status
- ✓ Volcanoes - View the picturesque volcanic peaks of Cotopaxi and Tungurahua
- ✓ Banos - Dramatic gateway to the Amazon Basin
- ✓ Otavalo - Visit the fascinating Indian market

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	10 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Standard Hacienda 2 nights Standard Guesthouse 1 night Comfortable Hotel
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Quito
End Point:	Tour ends: Guayaquil
Transport:	Bus, Boat, Flight
Countries:	Ecuador

Volcanoes and Galapagos

On this trip we combine the main highlights of Ecuador with a visit to the 'Enchanted Isles' of the Galapagos, staying in hotels on Santa Cruz and Isabela Islands. We visit a bustling Indian market in Otavalo, tour the colonial capital Quito and explore the spectacular Avenue of the Volcanoes. We also discover the captivating world of the Galapagos Archipelago as we search for rare species of wildlife.

Why Book this tour

This tour is ideal for travellers who are interested in both culture and nature. Spend one week exploring the best of the Ecuadorian mainland and one week discovering the wildlife of the Galapagos on a land based tour. You will overnight on Santa Cruz and Isabela Islands and experience the Galapagos from a different perspective.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

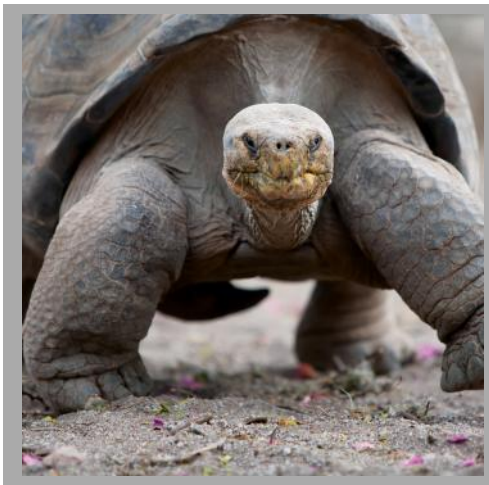
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.



Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

All tours to the Galapagos must have a naturalist guide who is from the Galapagos – they are the only people allowed to guide.

DAY 1 Join tour Quito

Join tour Quito and check-in at hotel.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 City tour of Quito including La Compania

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.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Patate 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 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 Tungurahu volcano.

Overnight: **Standard Hacienda**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Explore Pailon Falls, then head to Lasso

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 the town of Marchachi, in the middle of cattle country. Set before the majestic grandeur of the imposing peaks of Pasochoa, Rumiñahui and Corazón, Machachi is in the heartland of the traditional Ecuadorian cowboy, the Chagra, 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: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Travel to Otavalo; 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's regular markets attract 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, and their market is a rich profusion 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 different peoples taking part 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 though 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 Kings 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: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Walks in the countryside near Otavalo

Today we have a full day to explore the locality 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 specialises in looking after Condors – the largest species of bird in the Andes. Later in the afternoon we return to Otavalo.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7 Return 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 Ñan. 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 some 200 metres off track, whereas the wonderfully eclectic museum is actually 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: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Fly to the Galapagos; view giant tortoises in the Santa Cruz highlands

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. 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 bluefooted 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. Today we fly to the Galapagos island of Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz is the second largest island in the Galapagos and has the largest population, with Puerto Ayora as its main town. It also boasts the most varied of the islands' vegetation zones: coastal, transition, scalesia, miconia and pampa. We will travel through the highlands, stopping at Los Gemelos (the twins), two volcanic drepressions. Later, we will visit a ranch where we might see some giant tortoises roaming around. Here we will have lunch after which we will be transferred to our lodge in the highlands. In the evening, the lodge provides a free transfer to Puerto Ayora which you may wish to take to explore the town or have dinner there.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 9 Boat to Isabela Island, overnight in Puerto Vilamil

This morning we leave 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 Islands, Isabela is formed from five volcanoes, of which two 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. 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.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 On Isabela; walk up Sierra Negra Volcano; optional snorkelling

Our second day on Isabela affords us the opportunity to explore the island more fully: we will take a walk up the Sierra Negra Volcano. Measuring an impressive 12km, the volcano dominates the southern half of the island. The walk to the top is 6 hours return but the views from the top, presenting us with some spectacular views across the island and towards Santiago Island to the northeast, are well worth the effort. There is the option of a shorter walk to Sierra Chico Volcano instead (4-5 hours). This afternoon we may also have the chance for snorkelling at Concha y Perla.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11 Optional Tintoreras Islands trip, return by boat to Santa Cruz

This morning 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 famous marine iguanas (only found in the Galapagos) whilst in the water giant turtles, Galapagos penguins and sea lions may be swimming around. An asset to the incredible diversity and unique qualities of the wildlife on these islands is their complete acceptance of our presence, making it possible to view birds, reptiles and mammals from as close as a few feet. We may also have the chance to visit a tortoise breeding centre before taking the boat back to Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island where we will spend the next three nights.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Discover Seymour, Plazas, Bartolome or Santa Fe Island

Today we plan to take a full day excursion to Seymour Island. Here there are land iguanas, and sea lions to view playing in the water just off shore. The island is also renowned for its population of magnificent red throated frigate birds and the blue footed boobie. Time permitting we will also have the opportunity for some snorkelling.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 13 Visit Tortuga Bay; afternoon Charles Darwin Station visit

This morning we take a walk to Tortuga Bay (5km return walk) 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 (some rooms are under renovation until March 2016) 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.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Fly to Guayaquil on the mainland

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: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends in Guayaquil

The tour ends in Guayaquil this morning after breakfast.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 4 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Local Fees

The Galapagos Authorities have introduced the Galapagos Transit Control Card, which each person visiting the Galapagos must have. It costs $20 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. There is an additional entry fee of US$5 per person to visit Isabela Island. All these local fees to visit Galapagos are subject to change.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Ecuador

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 13.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Ecuador

Bottle of Beer £: 1.70

Water £: 1.3

Other Sightseeing & Activities

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 these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Snorkelling - Equipment US$6 per day plus US$20 deposit.
San Pablo - Condor bird rescue centre US$4.50.
Isabela Boat Ride - To Tentoteras US$40 (Entry Fee to Isabella Island US$5)
Rose Plantation - US$3 ; Kayak rental US$30 for 2 pers.

Tipping - Tour Leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

You should allow US$60 for the land portion of the trip and US$90 ($50 for local guide and $40 rest of staff) for the Galapagos portion of the trip for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Ecuador

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: US Dollar.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollar 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.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Ecuador: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Please ensure your passport is stamped with the T3 permit (for 30 or 90 days) on arrival in Ecuador.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Galapagos Islands: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

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.

USA (If flights transit): According to US law, passengers will have to disembark, collect luggage and clear immigration before re-boarding for the onward flight.

Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). This applies if you enter the country by sea or by air on a carrier participating in the visa waiver scheme, holding a return/ onward ticket. The passport requirements are that it must be machine readable, and must contain a digital photograph of the holder and also an integrated circuit chip that stores biographic information.

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.

When completing an application for transit you should enter the words 'In Transit' with your final destination location in the address line. Anyone applying for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ESTA) to travel under the Visa Waiver system will be charged a fee of 14USD (9GBP).

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).

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

Vaccinations & Protection

Ecuador

We recommend protection against yellow fever, malaria, (for the Amazon & Coastal regions only) infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. 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. Please note - if your trip to Ecuador includes a Galapagos boat trip you will be required to fill in a medical information card where you have to add your blood type.

Preparing for your Tour

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 (4°C - 10°C). The Coastal Region: from December to May it is hot and wet. From June to November it is generally cool and misty with sudden light showers. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. The Amazon Area: it is humid all year round. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. From April to August the rainfall is heavier. The Galapagos: On the Galapagos, the hot season is January to April with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers; the cool season runs from May to December and is generally more cloudy 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.

Clothing

Daytime clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting, but warmer clothing is needed at altitude and at sea, particularly at night, so bring something to wrap up in, including a pair of gloves, hat and scarf.
Long-sleeved lightweight clothes are useful for protection against sunburn. Bring a swimsuit, sunhat and a thick sweater or fleece. Lightweight waterproofs are essential.

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, sunglasses, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, beach towel, 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.

Footwear

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

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack.

You will need an overnight bag for the two nights on Isabella Island, your main luggage will be stored in your hotel in Santa Cruz.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Ecuador

Population: 15,007,343

Size of Country: 272,046

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -5

Electric Supply & Plugs

Ecuador

2 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

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: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

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