

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Comfort Itinerary Version (TMEC5)



TOUR DURATION
9
DAYS



Tour Type: Tailormade

tour Code: TMEC5

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 3 nights Hotel
2 nights Guesthouse
2 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 3
lunches, 0 dinners

Transport:

Countries: Ecuador

Tailormade Galapagos On Shore

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.

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

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Depart UK and arrive in Guayaquil

Depart UK and arrive in Guayaquil later the same day. Depending on the arrival time of your flight you may wish to explore Ecuador's largest city. Guayaquil is a bustling, lively city with a number of churches and museums you might like to visit. Alternatively you could 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.

Overnight: **Hotel**

Why Book this tour?

Ecuador's mainland climate varies according to altitude. The highlands are drier from June to September and are at their best from July to August with clearer skies caused by higher winds. The jungle has rain all year round but the wettest months are from April to June. The coast is especially hot, humid and wet from January to April.

The Galapagos climate is influenced by ocean currents. It is most popular to visit from December to May as the seas tend to be calmer, warmer for snorkelling, the sun shines and it is generally very hot with sudden showers. The temperature drops from June to November as the Humboldt current reaches up from the south bringing much richer seas and an increase in wildlife activity. However in August and September the sea and land temperatures drop, it is often cloudy and the sea is especially choppy (when many boats put in to dry dock).



 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Fly to the Galapagos

Today you fly to the Galapagos island of Santa Cruz, your 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 arrival on Santa Cruz you take a local bus to Puerto Ayora harbour, from here you will take the ferry west, crossing the open waters to nearby Isabela Island.


Overnight: **Guesthouse**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Day trip to Los Tuneles

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. Today you embark on a full day trip to Los Tuneles, an area of unique rock formations both above and below the water, created by a series of lava flows. You'll have the opportunity to walk through the incredible landscape and spend some time swimming and snorkelling with the sea turtles, manta rays, white tipped sharks and sea horses that can be found here.

Overnight: **Guesthouse**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4 Wall of Tears

Between 1945 and 1959 Isabela Island was a penal colony where around 300 prisoners were forced to build a 25 metre high wall for no better reason than to keep the prisoners busy. Working in horrific conditions, many prisoners lost their lives and locals still claim to hear their cries from the surrounding area. The name Wall of Tears comes from the guards who use to say 'Here, the strong will cry and the weak will die'. You will have a guided walk around the area before taking the boat to Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz Island is a main stopping point for most visitors to the Galapagos and is where the largest and most developed town can be found. There are many sights to be enjoyed and after settling in at your hotel you may have some free time to explore the area.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Santa Fe, Plazas or North Seymour Islands

Today you have the choice of three excursions: Santa Fe was formed from an uplift (rather than a volcano) giving the island a relatively flat surface rather than the typical conical shape of the other islands. Along the island's northern shore you can view the forest of giant prickly pear cactus (Opuntia). A member of the cactus family their name comes from the pear shaped fruit the plant produces. Santa Fe is also home to a number of endemic species which have bounced back from various threats to their survival. You may get a chance to see the Galapagos hawk, Galapagos snake, a variety of finches and the Galapagos mockingbird. After the hike you can swim and snorkel in the beautiful bay area where you may find playful sealions in the turquoise waters. Plazas Islands are two islands, although the larger Plaza Sur is the only one which can be visited. Here you will find many colourful green, yellow and orange land iguanas which feed off the island's cacti. Plaza Sur home to a unique hybrid of iguana created by marine and land iguanas breeding. This is also a bird lover's paradise with the steep cliffs being home to swallow-tailed gulls, masked boobies, blue-footed boobies, tropical red bill birds, frigatebirds and pelicans. North Seymour is located north of Baltra Island and has a surface area of less than two square kilometres. This is a breeding ground for frigatebirds, blue-footed boobies plus swallow-tailed gulls and is a bird lovers paradise. The island is also home to marine iguanas, sea lions and occasionally fur seals, lava lizards and Galapagos snakes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6 Free morning, transfer to San Cristobal

This morning is free to explore at your leisure. Why not walk to Tortuga Bay where you have the opportunity to swim at one of the most spectacular beaches of the entire chain, and an important turtle nesting ground. Or you could 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). Here you will visit the centre to learn more about the unique collection of animal and plant life that resides here, including the Galapagos tortoises, which may live up to two hundred years. This afternoon you'll take the ferry to San Cristobal Island, the eastern-most island in the Galapagos containing the capital of the province of Galapagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. Your afternoon is free, you may wish to visit the Interpretation Centre which showcases the geology, history and science of the Galapagos.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Isla Lobos or Kicker Rock

Today you will embark on a trip to either Lobos Island or Kicker Rock, depending on availability and park regulations at the time. Isla Lobos is a tiny, rocky outcrop where you can observe frigatebirds and blue-footed boobies and walk among the sea lion colony. Afterwards visit Canal Lobos a protected channel where you can enjoy swimming and snorkelling with sea lions, tropical fish, rays and sea turtles – an unforgettable and magical experience. Leon Dormido, or 'Kicker Rock', rises hundreds of feet above the ocean and resembles a sleeping lion. Your boat will circle the rock formation so you can observe the birds that use the rock as a nesting site. Kicker Rock quite striking and if conditions are right you may be able snorkel through the narrow channel which splits the rock in half. Kicker Rock is home to an incredibly diverse set of marine life in the nutrient-rich water, including sharks, turtles and rays. After these tours you will sail to Playa Ochoa or Manglecito beach, depending on tides and weather conditions, for lunch, relaxation and swimming opportunities.

Overnight: **Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Galapagos highlands, fly to the UK

An early start this morning takes you to El Junco Lagoon, a lake within a caldera of an extinct volcano. Located in the highlands of San Cristobal, El Junco has some fantastic views over the islands and is one of the best places to spot white-cheeked pintail ducks and the endangered Chatham mockingbird. Following El Junco Lagoon you head to Puerto Chino, past sea lions lazing on the beach and blue footed boobies on the rocks, to a beautiful white sandy beach. Your journey then continues to La Galapaguera, a tortoise breeding centre where visitors learn about the origin, evolution and habitat of the giant tortoise. You then transfer to the airport for your flight to Guayaquil and on to the UK.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Arrive UK

Arrive in the UK.

 **Included Meals:** None

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 3 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.

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

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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

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.

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.

Luggage allowance on tour:

Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company

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 & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of 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 traditions, 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 <http://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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/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 Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. 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: 5 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 5. 6/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 6.

These tour notes were printed on 28/02/2015 05:43:52