

Wildlife Ecuador

Galapagos & Amazon



Amazon jungle – Huaorani community – Galapagos Islands
land based exploration – responsible tourism - off the beaten track

Enjoy two of Ecuador's great highlights from off the beaten track.

Immerse yourself in the Huorani culture as you explore the Amazon from the perspective of its people.

Explore the Galapagos on the most comprehensive land-based.

Visit three islands for unique Galapagos wildlife: sea lions, giant tortoises, marine iguanas and much, much more.

This is a Pura *handpicked* holiday with an activity rating of *medium* and a comfort rating *first*.



Enjoy great wildlife, landscapes and private guiding to go at your pace.



Holiday Itinerary

Day 01 | Quito | arrive in Quito

Fly to Ecuador. *Please note: international flights are quoted separately for this holiday.*

On arrival you are collected for the transfer to your first class hotel.

Day 02 | Quito | explore Quito

Spend today exploring Quito in the company of your local guide.

The tour will include the recently renovated colonial centre of the city as well as one of the viewpoints high above the city.

Quito is surrounded by high Andean peaks so the landscapes are beautiful.



Stay with the Huaorani people of Ecuador's Amazon.

This afternoon is free for you to explore Quito – there are some particularly good museums.

Day 03 | Amazon | Huaorani community

Today is a full day of travel into the depths of the Amazon and your Huaorani community hosts.

You will be picked up after breakfast for the 3-4 hour drive down to Shell (named after the oil company) to catch your flight into the Amazon.

Enjoy the scenery as you travel south along the Avenue of the Volcanoes.

From the city of Tulcan in the north to Riobamba in the south, there are more than 60 volcanoes, eight of which are considered "active" (have erupted at least once since the Spanish conquest) and ten of which are "potentially active" (have erupted at least once in the past thousand years).

Join the Agoyan River and stop for a picnic lunch in view of one of the larger waterfalls that are easily visible from the roadside.

Afterwards catch your 45-minute flight northeast into the jungle, continuing by dugout canoe to Huaorani Ecolodge, your base for the next four nights.

On arrival you will be greeted by your guide and given a brief introductory talk about the Huaorani tribe before having dinner. (b,l,d)

Day 04 | Amazon | visit a clay lick

After breakfast your guide joins you for a morning walk through the forest.

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Two Huaorani kids.



Guides explain the issues around conservation and protection.



The simple but comfortable Huaorani Ecolodge.



Paddle out of the Amazon at the end of your stay with the Huaorani.

The trail winds through the trees and over quiet streams, opening out at a small oxbow lake. Standing on a small raised hill it is possible to see colonies of leaf cutter ants at work, along with various aquatic birds at the edge of the water.

White-collared peccaries frequently use this route and their tusk marks are clearly visible along the path. Return to the lodge by canoe for lunch and a siesta during the hottest part of the day.

This afternoon visit a salt-clay lick, a popular haunt for a variety of animals and birds who use it as a valuable source of nutrients.

Return to the lodge as the light begins to fade. Since most rainforest animals are nocturnal – especially mammals and amphibians - this is your best opportunity to see some of these elusive creatures, or at least hear them climbing through the trees or digging for food. (b,l,d)

Day 05 | Amazon | **the Huaorani People**

Visiting the Huaorani Ecolodge is a new and unique opportunity to experience the Amazon through the eyes of its inhabitants.

That isn't to say it will suit everyone.

Read on for a sense of what is involved but if you think a more traditional wildlife focused visit to the Amazon is better for you, we can include that instead.

On this trip you travel deep into the Huaorani lands to experience and learn about their way of life.

With a maximum of ten guests at the lodge, this is not a stage managed affair but a genuine opportunity to interact with members of the community.

While the community is at the heart of your time here, you also spend much time exploring the jungle on foot and by boat in the company of your guides.

There are no artificial noises here. No outboard motors, just poles. No generators, just solar panels.

Your lodge is designed to offer an intimate, harmonious and environmentally sustainable setting.

Over the course of your stay you will likely learn about the threats faced by the Huaorani particularly from logging, settlers and oil.

On your last day as you leave Huaorani territory along the so-called 'toxic highway' you are confronted with an all too stark illustration of just how immediate these pressures are.

The existence of the lodge and the income and awareness it generates allows the Huaorani to better withstand the threats to their land and their culture. (b,l,d)

Day 06 | Amazon | **Huaorani village**

You are taught how to set traps, make fire without matches, build a shelter in minutes, use a blowgun, practice the perfect swing of the machete, and catch fish in small creeks. Your guide may also show you edible insects, medicinal plants, the right clay to make pottery, and honey produced by stingless bees.

After all the hard work you have a chance to cool off with a dip in the local river. The Huaorani love swimming and playing in the water and may join you. Lunch is served on the beach.

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Enjoy the sandy beaches of the Galapagos Island.



Hike volcanoes and enjoy the views.



Visit the giant tortoise breeding program.

Spend this afternoon with the local community. Your visit is not intended to be a pre-planned activity as such, but rather a relaxing, informal social visit.

You may call on several houses, talk to family members while sharing a bowl of chucula (a sweet drink made of ripe bananas) or visit the families' gardens and learn how to grow edible plants.

You may even be invited to join in a game of soccer.

Some time is left aside to visit the handicraft market to buy handmade products if you desire.

You return to the lodge by canoe at the end of the afternoon to relax and have dinner, after which your naturalist guide offers a half hour talk, or charla, on a subject of interest. (b,l,d)

Day 07 | Amazon | **travel out of the jungle**

After breakfast, you wave goodbye to the lodge and set off poling down the Shiripuno River in traditional Huaorani style.

Travelling quietly by canoe means you have a better chance of catching a glimpse of any wildlife on the banks of the river.

This six-hour journey takes you close to the Huaorani village of Nenkepare where you camp for the night.

After settling in, set out walking to the local waterfall. Your guide will help you spot any wildlife en route.

If the weather holds, have dinner around a campfire this evening. (b,l,d)

Day 08 | Amazon | **leave the Amazon**

After several days enjoying pristine jungle, today brings the plight of the rainforest and the Huaorani tribe into stark reality.

After breakfast, continue downstream to the border between the traditional Huaorani territory and that of the petroleum companies (although it all used to be Huaorani territory).

Continue along the new road cut through the forest, passing alongside miles of pipeline carrying oil destined for the port of Esmeraldas.

The effects of deforestation are extremely vivid, with large stretches of barren land flanking the road.

Arrive at the small but growing town of Coca from where you catch a flight back to Quito. (b,l,d)

Day 09 | San Cristobal | **swim with sea lions**

Fly from Quito to San Cristobal Island.

On arrival transfer to your hotel in San Cristobal.

The normal level of hotels we use on this part of your holiday is perfectly comfortable, equivalent to a decent three star so it is these that we assume for most passengers. You can upgrade if you like.

For our *standard* trip you will have a different guide leading you on each island.

After dropping your things off at the hotel, enjoy a tasty lunch and then head for the National Park Visitor Centre on mountain bikes.

Here you will learn about the breeding program and their work to bolster the populations of giant tortoises throughout the Galapagos.

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Land based Galapagos vs. live aboard cruises

The short answer is that it depends on your interests. For a truly comprehensive and in-depth Galapagos wildlife experience then it is hard to argue against a full 14-night Galapagos cruise.

However, most people travel to the Galapagos islands out of a general interest and desire to experience the wildlife and the landscapes. In this case you will find that a week in the islands is enough.

For a week long trip the choice between land based and a live aboard boat becomes very relevant.

The following mini-guide might help.

What will I see?

The truth is that you are likely to see a greater variety of islands and species on a seven night cruise than on a land based trip.

However, even on the latter, you are going to see so much wildlife that you are highly unlikely to feel that you have missed anything.

In addition, on a land based trip you spend almost all of your time actually on shore and therefore interacting with the animals throughout the day.

On a boat you will find that your interactions are defined by your landings which tend to total around four or five hours a day.

On a land based trip you are also going to have far more interaction with the human side of the Galapagos islands which makes for an arguably more 'complete' experience of the Galapagos.

What will I do?

On a cruise activities will generally be limited to gentle walking and snorkeling.

On this land based exploration you will find that activities include more strenuous walking, mountain biking, sea-kayaking and snorkeling. It's ideal for people who are more energetic, particularly families.

How flexible is it?

This is the great advantage of this particular holiday, it is based on private guiding so you can really set the pace that best suits you.

On a Galapagos cruise you tend to be led by a guide with a guide to passenger ratio of 1:16. On this trip it's just you with your guide.

You can also start your holiday to the Galapagos Islands on any day you want as opposed to a boat which obviously operates on fixed departure days.

How responsible is this holiday?

Boats are very closely controlled by the Galapagos National Park authority, it's one of the great advantages of live aboard yachts.

Land based tours are subject to few such controls and can therefore be a source of some concern to those who protect the Galapagos Islands.

This makes the choice of operator all the more important. Our local partners have impeccable credentials in working in sensitive environments and supporting local community projects which ensure responsible, sustainable and positive tourism.

How much does it cost?

Surprisingly, even for just two people this private guided land based Galapagos wildlife holiday is actually cheaper than most boats.

The timescales involved are amazing since these tortoises can live to be hundreds of years old.

From here you cycle down to the Loberia, a beach home to large colonies of sea lions.

This will be your first chance to get in the water and swim or snorkel with the playful and fearless inhabitants of the islands. (l,d)

Day 10 | San Cristobal | watch birdlife

Start the day with a relaxed and fun sea kayak trip paddling from Puerto Baquerizo beach to Frigate hill. The hill gets its name from the large number of Frigate Birds that live and nest there.

Continue to Leon Dormido or Kicker Rock to enjoy some fantastic kayaking next to the cliff filled with Galapagos birdlife.

These activities are suitable really for any level of kayaker. The kayaks themselves are comfortable and stable. You can also relax knowing that there is a support boat with you at all times.

Slip into the water for a gentle drift around Kicker Rock, one of the best snorkel sites in the Galapagos.

See dozens of harmless sharks and colorful rock channel teeming with tropical fish. (b,l,d)

Day 11 | Isabela | see Galapagos penguins

This morning you fly from San Cristobal Island on the east to Isabela Island on the west of the Galapagos.

Check in to your hotel on the beachfront in the charming small town of Puerto Villamil.

While here you can take a swim in the turquoise waters as often as you like. There are usually sea lions and sea turtles to keep you company.

After breakfast take a boat across to the small Tintoreras Islands, a Galapagos in miniature.

Apart from the ever-present sea lions and pelicans, you will see a colony of the tiny Galapagos penguin. Not only the smallest of the penguin species but also the only one to live in equatorial waters.

From here, walk across surreal lava landscapes to a huge iguana colony. The mangrove-lined beaches are also home to sea lions, white tipped reef sharks, rays and turtles.

There's also the chance to snorkel in the clear, turquoise water of the bay to get a close up of the islands' famous underwater life. (b,l)

Day 12 | Isabela | walk on Sierra Negra

Today you hike up Sierra Negra, the largest crater of all Galapagos volcanoes, in fact it's the world's second largest caldera behind Ngorogoro.

Up here you should see lots of bird life, including short-eared owls.

The scenery is breathtaking as you look north along the line of volcanoes along Isabela's spine and across to Wolf where the recently discovered Pink Iguana live.

In the afternoon visit the giant tortoises breeding center before enjoying time to simply relax and wander along the golden sands of the beach. (b,l)

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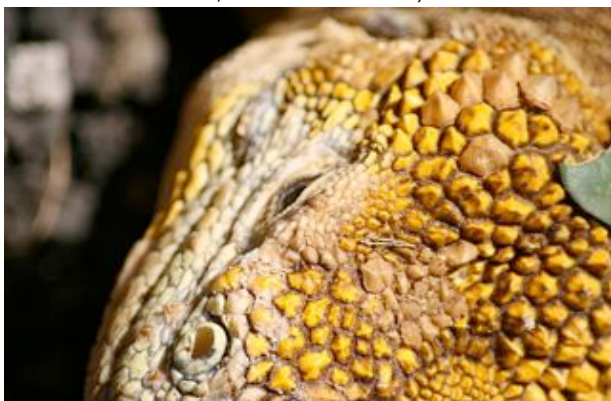


Wildlife Ecuador

Galapagos & Amazon



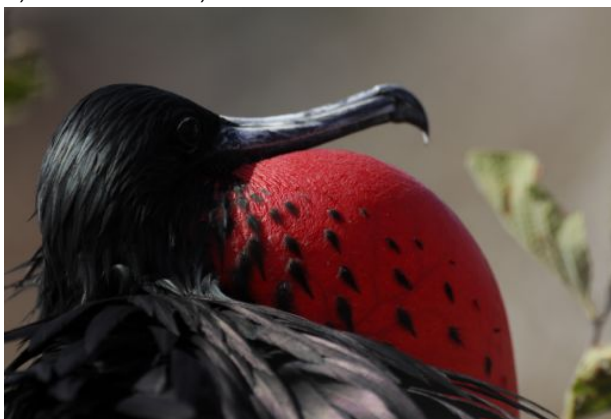
Snorkel and swim the clear, cool waters on most days.



A land iguana in close up.



Kayak to a sea lion colony.



A frigate bird with distinctive inflated throat.

Day 13 | Isabela | see marine iguanas

This morning leave directly from the white sandy beach in front of your hotel and paddle to Villamil Bay, passing rays, penguins, and blue-footed boobies. Watch the friendly sea lions that paddle alongside.

In the afternoon walk the Wetlands Trails through the mangroves and marine iguana colonies, to the Wall of Tears, built in the late 1940's by WWII prisoners housed at the island's US base. (b,l)

Day 14 | Santa Cruz | explore lava tunnels

Leave Isabela Island early this morning to travel by speedboat to Santa Cruz Island.

Please note that this boat journey is a fast two-hour crossing which can be bumpy.

The town of Puerto Ayora is the largest on the Galapagos, by far. It will be quite a culture shock after your time in two basically sleepy villages.

Head up to the highlands to see Giant Tortoises, and then explore lava tunnels and the "los Gemelos" a pair of giant volcanic craters.

In the afternoon drop back down to the spectacular white sand beach at Tortuga Bay to swim, snorkel, walk on the beach, and paddle amongst marine iguanas, sharks, and sea turtles.

Enjoy your last night on the Galapagos Islands. (b,l,d)

Day 15 | Santa Cruz | visit the Darwin center

Early this morning walk along the seafront road to visit the Charles Darwin Research Center.

Transfer to the airport for your return flight back to mainland Ecuador, either to Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil or back to Quito.

Check in for your flight early this evening. Depending on your flights home, you may need to add another night to your trip here.

Please note that international flights for this holiday are quoted separately. (b)

Day 16 | home | arrive back

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Holiday Information

How active?

In the Amazon you have opportunities to walk and explore on foot though distances are generally not very long. Since this is a tailor made trip, you are in control of how much or how little you do.

In the Galapagos Islands wildlife viewing is the main activity but there is quite a lot of walking on this itinerary as well as relaxed sea kayaking and mountain biking. There is also swimming and snorkeling.

Conditions underfoot in the Galapagos can sometimes be rough as the islands are volcanic. You should therefore be prepared for some walking over uneven terrain.

The sea kayaking is suitable for any level from beginners up as the kayaks are stable in the water. You also have a support boat with you at all times as well as a guide with you on the water.

How comfortable?

Accommodation in the Amazon is characterful, comfortable and very much in keeping with your surroundings.

Rooms are quite open to the surrounding forest but are set away from one another to give you a fair amount of privacy. All have en suite loo and shower.

In the Galapagos Islands because of the low permanent population, there is nothing luxurious!

Boat crossings between islands can be bumpy.

The comfort of the hotels varies by island but in all cases you can expect clean and comfortable rooms with en suite facilities: hotels of around a 3* standard.

How independent?

In the Amazon rainforest you are looked after by Huaorani guides based in the community.

In the Galapagos Islands you are fully guided by an expert guide authorised by the Galapagos Islands National Park Authority.

You can expect to be looked after a different guide on each of the three islands you stay on.

How responsible?

This holiday has sustainability and responsible travel at its very heart.

The Huaorani project is all about responsible and sustainable tourism being a force for positive action.

By visiting the Huaorani, you help their struggle to maintain their lands in the face of encroachment by the loggers and oil companies.

As community leader, Moi, said recently, "It is a very important way of protecting our land, please come."

Concerning the Galapagos Islands, land based tourism is not yet closely regulated by the National Park authority.

For this reason, it is imperative to be very selective with the services being delivered on the ground.

Our partners in the Galapagos have impeccable credentials built up over many years working in and around the islands.

We stay in small, locally owned and run hotels and inns, eating out in a range of restaurants.

Your guide is fully authorised and trained by the National Park authority so that you get the most out of your time on the islands but also to ensure that the impact of your visit is minimised.

When should I go?

You can do this trip year round although we would tend to advise against travelling during the rainiest months of February and March.

There are regional variations as listed below which might help you decide on the best time of year.

Quito lies within 25km of the equator, surrounded by snow-capped peaks at 3,000m. It enjoys a spring-like climate year round.

In the Amazon you can expect hot and humid conditions year round. July and August are the wettest times of year.

In the Galapagos, wildlife viewing is excellent year round. Weather and sea conditions do vary somewhat through the year.

September is the coolest and choppiest-sea month. From October onwards the weather warms up and the waters calm down until the hottest, calmest-sea month of February.

For a land based trip the sea conditions matter much less. You might find that September is an ideal month to travel, but for the possibility of sea mists, it's the quietest month for travel to the islands yet the wildlife is fantastic.

How do I book?

As a tailor made holiday we need to check availability and prices before taking your booking. If you would like us to prepare you a detailed proposal then simply email info@pura-aventura.com or call 01273 676 712 with your preferred dates plus any other changes you would like us to make.

Once you have the proposal and decide you would like to go ahead then please call in with the following:

- Full names
- Address
- Contact telephone numbers & email
- Deposit of 15%

Deposits can be paid by card, cheque or bank transfer, whichever suits you best (the balance of your holiday is due 60 days prior to travel).

2012 Prices & departures

2012	Daily £3,815pp
Price includes	Domestic flights; accommodation (twin or double); private transfers; full time guides on the Galapagos; transfers and transport within the islands; excursions and activities as mentioned; meals (b,l,d) as per itinerary except dinners on Isabela.
Not included	Galapagos park entrance fee (US\$110); personal expenses; tips.

Prices are per person based on two sharing.

Prices may be subject to change

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