ECUADOR and GALAPAGOS
With an Amazon Adventure
March 3 - 20, 2014
18 Days • 43 Meals
Escorted by Ian Noseworthy

Photos by D & R Craig
Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, provide for a fascinating and extremely varied experience. In Ecuador we shall discover Quito and the high Andes, an ancient Indian culture and a Spanish colonial history, magnificent scenery and delightful crafts. This is a photographer's paradise with village and market scenes contrasted with the majestic peaks of the Andes Mountains. We visit the incredible Ecuadorian Cloud Forest on a four day excursion to Mashpi Lodge, a tour highlight!

From Quito we shall journey 600 miles across the Pacific and discover for ourselves the mystery of the Galapagos Islands, the origins of these volcanic islands, the stark beauty of their landscapes and the unique flora and fauna that inhabit their shores. The native population, consisting of seals, iguanas, tortoises, and a vast array of bird-life, play freely in the security of their environment, as if on show for us.

We have limited space on this very special tour and we encourage you to enroll early. This unique journey is truly a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

INCLUSIVE FEATURES

- Return economy class airfare to / from Quito, Ecuador with Copa Airlines and all domestic flights in Ecuador
- Accommodations in Deluxe and best available hotels as indicated (or similar)
- 43 meals included as noted in the itinerary (B - 17 breakfasts, L - 13 lunches, D - 13 dinners) plus in flight meals
- 4 night Galapagos cruise on the La Pinta Yacht
- Services of your tour leader and local guides
- All gratuities, taxes and service fees for included services
- Comprehensive insurance coverage
- Airport transfers in Canada or equivalent value

TOUR / CRUISE ESCORT

We are very pleased to have Ian Noseworthy escorting this exciting adventure. A native of Newfoundland, Ian is an inveterate traveller, having spent a good part of his life visiting various parts of the world including the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Greece, South America and most recently China. He has escorted groups on our behalf to numerous destinations and is looking forward to sharing this wonderful experience with you.

March 3, Monday

Depart CANADA

Members gather in Toronto for the fights to Quito, capital of Ecuador, the northern capital of the Incas, and a 16th Century Spanish colonial city. A World Heritage Site, it is a storehouse of elegant churches, ancient monasteries, colonial mansions, fascinating antiques and hand-crafted Indian artefacts. Our hotel is the finest hotel in Old Quito, a delightful restoration from the colonial era overlooking Plaza San Francisco. Hotel Casa Gangotena (3 nights)

March 4, Tuesday

QUITO

Enjoy the panoramic view from El Panecillo Hill en route to the Central Bank Museum, which contains South America’s oldest and finest artifacts and jewelry, created by the Pre-Inca peoples. We drive north to the Equatorial Monument (where we can straddle the line) and the impressive Intimina Museum, learning how the country earned its name. Enjoy some free time this afternoon until we gather for our Welcome Dinner.

March 5, Wednesday

QUITO

Today we will explore on foot the Old Quarter of Quito. Our first stop will be the exceptional Casa del Alabado Museum, followed by the Monastery of San Francisco, one of the most impressive religious buildings of the New World. The chapel, with its Moorish influences and Baroque interior is exceptional, the winged Virgin of Quito at its main altar. Nearby is Independence (Grande) Plaza, flanked by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building and the Archbishop's Palace. Following lunch our walk continues with visits to the 16th Century San Agustin Church and the church of La Compañía de Jesús, with its magnificent façade and interior carvings from the early Spanish era. Returning to our hotel we have the evening at leisure.

March 6, Thursday

QUITO / RIOBAMBA

Departing the capital we head south along the Pan American Highway, the backbone of Ecuador. In the village of Sangolquí we will stroll through the busy local market. Explore Cotopaxi National Park for close-up views of its unique flora and fauna and a drive up the slopes of Cotopaxi Volcano. We shall stop for lunch at a most impressive hacienda and the spectacular scenery as we make our way up and down the slopes of the Avenue of the Volcanoes, to Urbina, at the foot of imposing Chimborazo Volcano. Visit a Tagua nut workshop and warm up with a canelazo and biscuits by the fireplace while enjoying the sunset (weather permitting). On our way to quaint Riobamba, watch for grazing vicunas and marvel at the well-tended mountain fields.

March 7, Friday

RIOBAMBA / CUENCA

Enjoy another day of spectacular scenery, surrounded by mountains and farmlands. At Alausí we transfer to rail for the breath-taking 800 metre descent to the Devil’s Nose, a certain highlight of this adventure. At the station of Sibambe we visit the local museum ‘Condor Pufuna’ built and run by the Nizag community. Returning to Alausi we rejoin our coach exploring the Andean world to the south, visiting the Inca Fortress of Ingapirca en route to Cuenca. Hotel Santa Lucia (2 nights)

March 8, Saturday

CUENCA

With its red tiled roofs, cobbledstone streets, flowery plazas and museums, Cuenca is a worthy World Heritage site. On our morning walk we will visit the Plaza of San Sebastian, the local market, the old and new Cathedrals as well as the Main Square. Stroll by the Tomebamba River to admire the city’s overhanging houses and visit the ceramic workshop of Eduardo Vega.

March 9, Sunday

CUENCA / GUAYAQUIL

Today we shall cross over the Andes highlands and continue to the coastal plain, passing through a series of
climatic and vegetation zones. En route we will visit El Cajas National Park, a very special highland park noted from its many lakes and scenic beauty. On reaching the coastal plain, we enter a different world of tropical temperatures, lush vegetation and extensive plantations of cocoa, bananas, sugar cane and more. We continue to Guayaquil where we will have an orientation drive around the city en route to the hotel.

**Hotel Oro Verde Guayaquil** (1 night)  
BL

March 10, Monday  
**GUAYAQUIL / GALAPAGOS / BALTRA / SANTA CRUZ**

Following our morning flight to Baltra Airport in the Galapagos, we transfer to the Itabaca Channel, taking a small ferry across to the north shore of Santa Cruz Island. We board our bus to the highlands where we’ll learn about the unique montane ecosystems and biodiversity. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before we continue on to one of the best places in the archipelago to see giant tortoises in their natural habitat. The tortoises are easy to spot, lumbering around, eating grass and leaves and wallowing in the small pools. There are several lava tunnels in the reserve, too. A short bus ride takes us down to Puerto Ayora to board our ship.  
**La Pinta Yacht** (4 nights)  
BLD

March 11, Tuesday  
**EDEN ISLET (SANTA CRUZ ISLAND)**

After breakfast, a panga (zodiac) ride takes us to Eden Islet, located off the coast of Santa Cruz, where we can observe blue footed boobies diving into the water, reef sharks and frigates. There’s a chance to snorkel and, if weather conditions permit, ride in the glass-bottom boat. Visit the tiny island of Sombrero Chino which gets its name from its appearance: a Chinese hat. This islet, only formed fairly recently, makes a beautiful visit as one explores the wildlife along its 400-metre long trail, which begins at a crescent-shaped white sandy beach. The cove offers excellent swimming and snorkeling opportunities with white-tipped reef sharks and Galápagos penguins.  
BLD

March 12, Wednesday  
**BARTOLOMÉ ISLANDS / SULLIVAN BAY**

This morning, a Galápagos icon awaits: Bartolomé Island. A great way to start the day, with a steep climb up a wooden staircase: the view from the top is worth the effort! Following the walk, we take to the dinghies for a ride around colossal Pinnacle Rock, followed by time to enjoy the beach and some snorkeling. We can also ride in the glass-bottom boat for great views of the underwater world. After lunch, we board the panga to land at Sullivan Bay on the east coast of Santiago, a white coral sand beach great for swimming and snorkelling, and with a trail over a lava field that flowed here less than 100 years ago. This is the perfect place to see and feel the volcanic origin of Galápagos while observing its wildlife.  
BLD

March 13, Thursday  
**DARWIN BAY / PRINCE PHILIP’S STEPS (GENOVESA ISLAND)**

In the morning, we begin our exploration of this island with an easy stroll to observe marine and land birds. There is an optional walk over sharp lava and uneven terrain for dramatic views, or else we can return to the beach to enjoy swimming and snorkelling at this beautiful natural harbour. The more adventurous can snorkel along the cliffs or paddle sea kayaks. The afternoon starts with a very interesting panga ride along the cliffs before we disembark for a steep climb up some stairs. Once at the top the land flattens, allowing for a captivating walk of about a mile to the other side of this small island. On the way observing large colonies of Nazca boobies, frigate birds and storm petrels and the elusive short eared owl.  
BLD

March 14, Friday  
**BALTRA ISLAND**

Our cruise journey ends at Baltra Island. After our flight to Quito, we head north, passing through rich farmlands and dramatic mountain scenery en route to Otavalo, home to South America’s most unique Indian market.  
**Hacienda Cuzin** (2 nights)  
BD

March 15, Saturday  
**OTAVALO**

Early this morning we will visit the livestock market, followed by visits to both the local and the world famous silent markets of Otavalo, where sellers barter with their hands - a marked contrast to the raucous babbles of other bazaars. We will have ample time to bargain for colourful ponchos, woollen goods and Indian jewellery. This afternoon we enjoy lunch in a delightful restaurant overlooking the lake and then visit artisan villages like San Antonio de Ibarra for wood carvings, Cotacachi for leather products, and Peguche for hand-woven textiles.  
BLD
March 16 Sunday    OTAVALO / MASHPI LODGE
From our hacienda in Otavalo it is a relatively short drive, climbing up to the western pass, to the beautiful new Mashpi Lodge, an eco-lodge set in the pristine cloud forests of Ecuador. En route we will stop at the viewpoint of the Pululahua Crater, a dormant volcano. This afternoon we will meet our naturalist guides and plan our activities for the next few days, followed by the first of those activities.

Mashpi Lodge (3 nights)    BLD

March 17, 18, Monday / Tuesday    MASHPI LODGE
As we enter the realm of the rainforest, we will become aware of life at every step: mushrooms and fungi below, tree trunks festooned with liverworts, lichens and mosses, giant ferns reaching up to the light above, swirling mists and clouds of moisture. And then, from nowhere, comes the sound of rushing water, a waterfall amid this glistening, green world, where you can revive your senses. Enjoy walks through the pristine cloud forest, surrounded by massive trees and dense foliage. Take a ride on the Canopy Gondola with your naturalist guide, exploring both the high canopy and the dense mid forest. At the Life Centre, we will learn about the many creatures than live in the reserve and can relax to enjoy the experience. Climb to the heights of the Observation Tower, 85 feet over the cloud forest for magnificent views of the region and forest. The forests of Mashpi boast 22 different hummingbird species and over 200 species of butterfly – many of which can and will be seen by guests at the lodge. Take a night walk in the forest, which literally comes to life when the sun sets. Observe toucans, parrots and dozens of other birds and, with some luck, the infamous howler monkeys, foraging squirrel monkeys or perhaps even the gentle three -toed sloth. The reserve abounds in fresh water streams, waterfalls and pools.

BLD / BLD

March 19, Wednesday    MASHPI LODGE / QUITO
Following a final morning of activities we will enjoy lunch before heading back into the real world. En route we will visit the archaeological site-museum of Tulipe, where we stop to explore the grounds and learn about the Yumbo people who created the waterpools and structures here. We then make our way back along the PanPacific Highway to Quito and the beautiful Casa Gangotena where we will spend our final night.

Hotel Casa Gangotena (1 night)    B

March 20, Thursday    QUITO / CANADA
Following some free time this morning for last minute shopping, our once-in-a-lifetime journey draws to a close as we return to the airport and catch our afternoon flights to Toronto and our homes across Canada.

CT RATING 4 - Very Challenging: We will spend most of our time close to the equator. However, due to high altitudes in Ecuador and the cooling currents near the Galapagos, we can expect pleasant temperatures. During the cruise we will travel to shore in small boats and will likely experience a number of wet landings. During the time in the central highlands we will be between 7,000 and 10,000 feet above sea level (altitude sickness). In the Amazon, expect high temperatures and humidity and some difficult walking conditions. Because of the many different and sometimes difficult conditions, it is vital that all members be in good physical health.

Tour / Cruise Cost in Canadian Dollars (per person)

Ocean View Suite (La Pinta) TWIN

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SINGLE Supplement...........................................$3,305

Land / Cruise Only rate includes all internal flights. Rates are per person based on sharing an Ocean View Suite on La Pinta Yacht. Airfares from other gateways are available on request. Airfares and air carrier are subject to change and will be confirmed prior to final payment. Refer to Inclusive Features for details.

Tour price is based on sharing a twin-bedded room at hotels. Prices are based on a minimum 20 members and on rates, taxes and fees effective May 2013 and are subject to change due to factors beyond our control.

The price includes the cost of comprehensive insurance ($423 - $493pp) for passengers up to and including 74 years on departure date (rate varies by the cost of the trip). Cost supplements will apply for members aged 75 - 85 (from $220 - $432pp). Clients 86 years and older and/ or clients residing outside Ontario – please contact our staff for procedures. This insurance is effective from the date of confirmation and carries limitations on pre-existing medical conditions. Please discuss your insurance coverage prior to booking. Please check our website for the most current information.

Final payment will be due on December 13, 2013. Deposit is $600 per person plus the cost of the insurance.

To reserve your spot on this tour, complete the enclosed enrollment form, indicating the tour you wish to join and your home city, and forward it with your deposit to:

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