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travel

ECUADOR & GALAPAGOS

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SAVE \$500 PP



JOURNEY LEADER: DONNA ROMBOUGH
OCT 8 - 24, 2024 | 17 DAYS | 41 MEALS

Blue-footed boobies can be spotted in the Galapagos

Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands offer an incredibly diverse and captivating experience. In Ecuador, we'll explore Quito, the breathtaking Andes, ancient indigenous culture, rich Spanish colonial history, stunning landscapes, and exquisite artisan crafts. This destination is a haven for photographers, featuring charming villages and bustling market scenes set against the majestic backdrop of the Andes Mountains. A major highlight of our journey is the two nights we'll spend at Mashpi Lodge in the cloud forest, renowned as one of the top ecological preserves in Ecuador, if not all of South America.

Our adventure continues as we board the beautiful Yacht Isabela II to unravel the enigma of the Galapagos Islands. We'll delve into the origins of these volcanic wonders, and marvel at the stark beauty of the landscape and its unique flora and fauna. Seals, iguanas, tortoises, and an astonishing variety of birds freely roam in their natural habitat, seemingly putting on a show just for us.



Inclusive Features

- Return economy group airfare from Canada to Quito
- Accommodations in deluxe and best available hotels as indicated, including world renowned Mashpi Lodge
- 5 day fully inclusive deluxe cruise on Yacht Isabela II
- 41 meals as shown in the itinerary (B - 16 breakfasts, L - 12 lunches, D - 13 dinners)
- Services of your journey leader, national and local guides
- All gratuities, taxes and service fees for included services
- Airport transfers in Canada or equivalent value with purchase of group airfare

Highlights

- Historic Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- 5 day cruise on the beautiful Yacht Isabela II to experience the wonders of the Galapagos Islands
- 2 days at Mashpi Lodge, experiencing the cloud forest
- Wonderful views along the Avenue of Volcanoes
- Colonial gem of Cuenca
- Lively market of Otavalo

Journey Leader

Having spent her entire career in various management positions within the travel industry, **Donna Rombough** has an insatiable love for travel. Retired from Craig Travel several years ago, she continues to be involved as a consultant and journey leader, and is always thrilled at the prospect of discovering yet another new destination. She has led countless tours and cruises to many parts of the world and delights in sharing new experiences and cultures with her travellers. Join her on this thrilling adventure!



OCT 8, Tuesday

Canada / Quito, Ecuador

Travellers from across Canada gather in Toronto for our flights to Quito. Known as the northern capital of the Incas and a 16th century Spanish colonial city, Quito has had a varied and fascinating history. Today, the city is a storehouse of elegant churches, ancient monasteries, colonial mansions, fascinating antiques and hand-crafted native artifacts. **JW Marriot** (2 nights) D

OCT 9, Wednesday

Quito

Gain a deeper understanding of this beautiful Andean city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with visits to the impressive San Agustin Church, the Monastery of San Francisco and the church of La Compañía de Jesús. Afterward, savour a sweeping vista of the city from the heights of Panecillo Hill. Complete the excitement of the day with a delightful welcome dinner. BD

OCT 10, Thursday

Quito / Riobamba

We begin our exploration of the Andean World and the awesome scenery of the Ecuadorian Andean Region. After visiting a traditional local market at the village of Sangolquí, enjoy close-up views of unique flora and fauna at Cotopaxi National Park while making our way up the slopes of Cotopaxi Volcano for lunch. We continue along the Pan American Highway, up and down the slopes of the famous Avenue of the Volcanoes passing by quaint rural towns. **Hacienda Abraspungo** (1 night) BLD

OCT 11, Friday

Riobamba / Cuenca

The llama is perhaps one of South America's most iconic camelids. The Palacio Real Community created an exclusive space dedicated to teaching visitors about the significance, history, and relevance of this noble animal to the indigenous peoples of the region. The llama's flesh is used as meat for nourishment, their wool for textiles and clothing, and fur for keeping warm and decorating homes. Walk along the trails and visit the community museum which delves into the fascinating Andean worldview. The Inti Sisa Foundation offers visitors the chance to appreciate Andean life up-close. Located in the small community of Guamote, the project offers a way of sharing some time with the friendly inhabitants of the town while learning about the organization's programs that are focused on providing the community with workshops and lessons in music, English, computer science, and sewing, amongst other topics. Continue exploring the Andean world by road to the south, passing through stunning landscapes before visiting the Inca Fortress of Ingapirca en-route to Cuenca. **Four Points by Sheraton Cuenca** (2 nights) BLD

OCT 12, Saturday**Cuenca**

Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city, is sure to charm and captivate you with its red-tiled roofs, cobblestone streets, flowery plazas, and museums. We will visit the Plaza of San Sebastián, the Museum of Modern Art, the flower market and stroll in the Main Square. Then enjoy a relaxing drive along the Tomebamba River to admire the overhanging houses. After lunch, we will visit a ceramics handicraft shop and a Panama Hat factory. BLD

OCT 13, Sunday**Cuenca / Guayaquil**

Today offers us another wonderful experience as we drive from the highlands to the coast, crossing through a series of climatic and vegetation zones. En route we will visit El Cajas National Park, a highland park known for its many lakes and scenic beauty. On arrival in Guayaquil, enjoy a brief orientation drive through Ecuador's second city and major port. **Hotel Hilton Colon Guayaquil** (1 night) BLD

OCT 14, Monday**Guayaquil / Galapagos**

This is the day that we have been anticipating! We fly westward to the Galapagos Islands, some 600 miles away. After landing, we cross the Itabaca Channel to Santa Cruz Island. We head inland to the highlands, where we will learn about its unique ecosystems and biodiversity. After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit a nearby reserve that is home to the archipelago's most famous inhabitants, the giant tortoise. A short bus ride takes us down to Puerto Ayora to board the Yacht Isabela II. Designed to hold 40 passengers, our ship is fully air-conditioned, has a comfortable lounge and dining room, and all cabins have private facilities. **Yacht Isabella II** (4 nights) BLD

OCT 15, Tuesday Santiago Island / Chinese Hat Islet

Following a wet landing on the black sandy beach, our trail takes us to enjoy the close-up encounters with recently reintroduced land iguanas, plus land and marine birds amid a landscape of tuff stone layers, jagged rocks, and lava flows. At low tide, marine iguanas graze upon the algae beds. We can also observe a colony of fur seals, unusually dozing in the shade of some rocks. The Chinese Hat Islet was formed relatively recently and makes a wonderful afternoon visit along its 400m trail. The cove offers excellent swimming and snorkeling opportunities amid white tipped reef sharks and Galapagos penguins. BLD

OCT 16, Wednesday**Genovesa Island**

Experience a panga ride along the cliffs of Genovesa Island, affectionately nicknamed 'Bird Island'. Once onshore, we climb a steep staircase and follow the trail through large colonies of Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, great frigate birds, and storm petrels. With luck, we shall also spot the short-eared owl. Those who wish may stay on the panga to enjoy a longer boat ride along the cliffs. After lunch, we land at the white beach of Darwin Bay to get close with the diverse avian species of the island. BLD

OCT 17, Thursday Santa Fe Island / South Plaza Island

Santa Fe Island is home to colonies of sea lions often lounging on the white sand beach. Galapagos hawks fly over iguanas sunbathing along the shore. Following a walk, we can enjoy a swim along the natural wave barrier or take a ride on a glass bottom boat. The turquoise waters contrast brilliantly with the white sand and black lava shoreline of the South Plaza Island. Inland, a carpet of scarlet sesuvium succulents serves as groundcover for the grove of luminescent green prickly pear cactus. Along the coast, we'll find sea lions, frigates, swallow-tailed gulls, and shearwaters. BLD



Colourful textiles in a market in Otavalo



Blue Domes of the Cathedral in Cuenca



Colourful Sally Lightfoot crab, Galapagos Island



A giant tortoise enjoying a snack

OCT 18, Friday **Baltra / Quito**
Disembarking at Baltra, we catch our flight back to Quito, with the afternoon free to explore the city or simply relax.
JW Marriot (1 night) B

OCT 19, Saturday **Quito / Mashpi Lodge**
Heading north from Quito, we navigate through the rugged mountains that divide the coastal plains from the rainforest interior. Our journey leads us to an exceptional eco-lodge, meticulously crafted to harmonize with its surroundings and provide a close-to-nature experience in the Cloud Forest. In the afternoon, a welcome briefing awaits, offering us the chance to explore our interests with on-site naturalists and receive an introduction to this extraordinary environment.
Mashpi Lodge (2 nights) BLD

OCT 20, Sunday **Cloud Forest / Mashpi Lodge**
A full day of activities awaits us with our dedicated naturalist and local guides. Enjoy walks through the pristine jungle surrounded by 150-foot-high trees, visit the butterfly farm to learn about these delicate creatures, or take a ride on the tree-top gondola to enjoy the flora and fauna of the cloud forest. Be sure to visit the observation tower, where you can stand on top of the rainforest canopy and learn about this ecological wonder. Observe toucans, parrots and dozens of other birds and, with some luck, the infamous howler monkeys, foraging squirrel monkeys, or the gentle three-toed sloth. This will be a day to remember!
BLD

OCT 21, Monday **Mashpi / Otavalo**
As we depart from our cloud forest reserve, we journey northward through lush farmlands and awe-inspiring mountain vistas until we reach Otavalo, home to South America's most unique market. En route, enjoy lunch in a traditional hacienda, and visit the artisan village of Peguche, famous for its hand-woven textiles and sacred waterfall. **Hacienda Pinsaqui** (1 night) BLD

OCT 22, Tuesday **Otavalo / Quito**
Following an early visit to the stunning Cuicocha Lake, we'll have the pleasure of exploring the renowned leather goods and exquisite woodcarvings of the artisan villages of Cotachichi and San Antonio de Ibarra. Lunch today will feature a gourmet interpretation of common Ecuadorian homemade recipes. Visit the world-famous silent market of Otavalo, where sellers barter with their hands, a welcomed contrast to the raucous babble of most markets. We will have ample time to bargain for colourful ponchos, woolen goods, and native jewelry. **JW Marriot** (2 nights) BL

OCT 23, Wednesday **Quito**
Quito's artistic pathways lead to some of the most rewarding cultural journeys you can embark on. The pre-Inca people crafted the oldest and most exquisite artifacts and jewelry, the Spanish conquest introduced new skills and religious fervor resulting in the creation of superb religious sculptures, and 20th-century artists have produced dramatic and expressionist paintings. Discover three pivotal eras in the country's history (pre-Columbian, colonial and contemporary) at the National Archaeological Museum and La Capilla del Hombre (Chapel of Man), a striking modern edifice that houses the works of Ecuador's most renowned painter, Oswaldo Guayasamín. This evening, we enjoy our farewell dinner. BD

OCT 24, Thursday **Quito / Canada**
Our 'once-in-a-lifetime' journey draws to a close as we catch our flights to our homes across Canada. B

CT Rating 4/5 - Very Challenging: Although close to the equator, the high altitudes in central Ecuador and the cooling currents near the Galapagos mean that we can expect pleasant temperatures. During the cruise we will travel to shore in small boats and 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 is possible). Because of the many different and sometimes difficult conditions, it is vital that all members be fully mobile and in good physical health.



**Book by December 28, 2023
and save \$500 per person**



Tour & Cruise Cost in Canadian Dollars Per Person

Land & Cruise Only* (Join / Leave Quito Hotel)	\$12,865
Toronto	\$14,175
Ottawa / Montreal	\$14,335
Halifax / Winnipeg.....	\$14,585
St. John's.....	\$14,685
Regina / Saskatoon	\$14,695
Calgary / Edmonton / Vancouver.....	\$14,585
Victoria.....	\$14,695

*Land & cruise only rate is based on joining the group at the first hotel and leaving the group at the last hotel, and it includes all internal flights. International 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. Single supplement for both the cruise and land portions is CA \$3,995, with extremely limited availability. Alternatively, single supplement for the land portion only is subject to availability if a single traveller requests to share accommodation during the cruise portion.

Prices are based on taxes, surcharges, airfares and exchange rates effective September 2023 and are subject to change. Tour/Cruise prices are per person, based on sharing a double/twin room at hotels/cruise and a minimum of 20 participants travelling.

Insurance is NOT INCLUDED but is highly recommended. Premiums are calculated based on the individual's age, destination (country), trip length, and trip booking window – please contact our staff to receive a quote. Your coverage starts on the effective date of your confirmation of coverage. Please discuss your insurance coverage prior to booking. Check our website for the most current information. Refer to the enrollment form for terms and conditions.

**Final payment is due on June 4, 2024
Deposit is \$2,000 per person**

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



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