

THE GALAPAGOS AND ECUADOR

11 DAYS



- Each departure limited to 16 guests
- Luxury hotels and cruise cabin on M/S Santa Cruz
- 28 à la carte meals (table d'hôte, if unavailable) including beverages of your choice (except while aboard M/S Santa Cruz)
- Professionally escorted
- All sightseeing, including Galapagos National Park entrance fee
- Arrival and departure transfer by private car
- Gratuities are included (also your tour manager's) except naturalist-guide and ship's crew.
- Portage of 2 suitcases per passenger
- Airport departure taxes

COMBINE THIS TRIP WITH PERU !

Ecador is the smallest country in the craggy highlands of the South American Andes, but offers a wide array of fascinating sights. You are only a few miles south of the equator when you arrive in the capital city of Quito with its lovely, constant spring-like climate.

Fly to the fascinating Galapagos archipelago for your five-day cruise on the most luxurious ship sailing the islands, M/V SANTA CRUZ. You will land on the main islands by *pangas* (small boats), and your locally certified, naturalist-guide will show you animal and plant species found here, but nowhere else on earth. Travel along the Pan American Highway, past snow-covered peaks and mountain lakes, to picturesque Indian villages where you see textiles woven on stick looms designed by the ancient Incas, and observe master woodcarvers and leather craftsmen create unique pieces of art.

If you choose to extend your journey, fly on to Peru; visit Lima before traveling up to Cuzco and the legendary "lost city" of Machu Picchu, high in the Andes.



Iguana

Day 1 (Tuesday)

USA – QUITO

Depart USA on your afternoon flight to Ecuador. You are met upon your evening arrival in Quito and brought by private car to your hotel - the **Swissôtel Oro Verde** clearly outshines other luxury accommodations in the city. Centrally located, beautifully decorated, it offers every amenity for the discerning traveler.

Once you have settled in, join your tour manager for a welcome reception with cocktails in the plush surroundings of the hotel. (D)

Day 2 (Wednesday)

QUITO

Quito sits on the lower slopes of the Rucu Pichincha, an extinct volcano, in a narrow Andean valley at an altitude of 9,350 feet. In ancient times, this site was the center of the Kingdom of Quito, the

FOR RESERVATIONS, PLEASE TELEPHONE TOLL FREE: 1-888-377-8023



Marine Wildlife - Galapagos

largest tribe of an Indian confederation that left no recorded history. Today, Quito is considered by many to be the most beautiful South American city. There are many treasures from the colonial period, and modern construction is strictly controlled in the historical areas. The old town - with its whitewashed houses, red tiled roofs, and colonial churches - was designated a UNESCO world cultural heritage site in 1978.

You visit Quito's oldest monastery, San Augustin, the elegant Church of San Francisco, la Compania Church with its ornate façade and glorious gold altars, as well as the Presidential Palace and the Archbishop's Palace. You see the impres-

sive stone mural that records Ecuador's history at the Legislative Palace. From El Panecillo Hill, you have a wonderful view of the city and the enormous statue of the Virgin of Quito, as well as the surrounding snow-capped mountains. And there is time to wander through the open-air Indian market just below El Panecillo.

Driving a few miles north of Quito, you pass the quiet villages of the Andean Sierra on your way to the very interesting Museum of Ethnography, with exhibits of different Indian groups living in Ecuador. Here, a monument marks the equator; you can actually stand in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres simultaneously. Ecuadorean cuisine includes an original

combination of Latin and European seasonings. At dinner this evening, you are treated to rich, plentiful and varied dishes featuring local seafood - white sea bass, shrimp and lobster - as well as chicken and pork. (B,L,D)

Day 3 (Thursday)

CRUISING THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galapagos Islands archipelago is comprised of 13 main islands and 6 smaller ones, as well as more than 40 islets. Spread over 19,000 square miles approximately 600 miles west of Ecuador's coast, the islands form part of the Pacific Ocean's "Ring of Fire". They are actually the crests of enormous underground volcanoes that rise several thousand feet above the surface of the ocean. Ecuador claimed the Galapagos Islands in 1832; the naturalist Charles Darwin arrived three years later and began his study on evolution. In 1959 the archipelago became a national park. The Galapagos Islands are renowned for unique and relatively friendly wildlife. The ship anchors off each island and you are ferried to the landing point in small boats called *pangas*.

QUITO - BALTRA ISLAND

This morning, you fly from Quito to Baltra Island, where you board the cruise ship *M/V Santa Cruz*; for the next 5 days and 4 nights you will explore the Galapagos Islands. A four-deck, 237-foot vessel, the *Santa Cruz* carries 90 passengers; built in 1979 and renovated in 1998, she is one of the largest and most comfortable ships in the region. Air conditioned and fully carpeted, there are broad sun decks and facilities for dolphin and whale watching. The atmosphere on board is informal; six English-speaking naturalists conduct nightly briefings and accompany you to the islands each day.

In the afternoon, you visit the adjoining island of Santa Cruz for a visit to Dragon Hill. You observe flamingos and a variety of waterfowl, as well as a colony of land iguanas. (B,L,D)



M/V Santa Cruz



Handwoven Belts - Otavalo market

Day 4 (Friday)

BALTRA ISLAND – ISABELA ISLAND – FERNANDINA ISLAND

Today your cruise takes you westward to Isabela Island and the natural harbor of Tagus Cove, a haven for ships for over three hundred years. There are rocks here marked with the names of whaling ships and dates of their visits. Isabela is the largest of all the islands and consists of six different volcanoes connected by numerous lava flows. Its peaks are the highest, and some of the most varied natural habitats (including mangrove lagoons) are here. Various water birds, including flamingoes and white-cheeked pintails, can be seen here. Flightless cormorants nest along the rocky shore. Large colorful land iguanas have adapted to the arid conditions here; they can grow up to four feet long and are various shades of yellow, red and brown.

Nearby little Fernadina Island is the youngest in the Galapagos. The landscape is rather stark, streaked by various lava flows; but you see the green fringe of mangrove forests and the yellow-brown of the *Brachycereus* cactus. Along the shore, basking in the sun, are large colonies of marine iguanas, the only sea-going lizards in the world. Noisy sea lions laze on the beach or play in the tidal pools while penguins and pelicans keep close company. (B,L,D)

Day 5 (Saturday)

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND –FLOREANA ISLAND

This morning you sail into Academy Bay and stop to visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, where you learn of the conservation projects currently underway. You see giant tortoises here in their natural surroundings; originally found on numerous islands, they are now found in large numbers only on Santa Cruz and Isabela Islands. These marvelous creatures can weigh up to 600 pounds and some are more than 100 years old.

There are a colonies of land iguanas and marine iguanas on all the shores around the island. Look for the red vermilion flycatcher, a small insect-eating bird commonly living in moist highlands; the male is a brilliant red and the female is a pale yellow. The highlands of Santa Cruz have moist, green forests of Scalesic trees and a grassy pampa zone, which is typical of the highlands elsewhere in the Galapagos.

Cruising southward, you arrive at Floreana Island - known for its colorful history of buccaneers, pirates, whalers, convicts, and eventually, colonists. In the highlands, the vegetation is diverse and luxurious; as Floreana was the first colonized island in the 19th century, it contains many species of plants introduced by the settlers. Visit the beautiful salt lagoon of Point Cormorant, surrounded by two contrasting beaches - one of volcanic origin composed of olivine crystals which give it a greenish tinge and the other of very fine white sand formed by the erosion of coral and other marine organisms. You will notice the many wading birds, including the rose flamingo, as well as boobies, pelicans, frigates, red-billed tropicbirds, brown noddies, the Galapagos albatross and penguins. (B,L,D)



Quito - a UNESCO Heritage Site

Day 6 (Sunday)

HOOD ISLAND

Today you sail to Hood Island (also known as Española). It is a relatively small, flat island; unlike most in the Galapagos, there is no visible volcanic crater here. One of the oldest in the group – between 3 and 5 million years old – it is the most southern of the islands. There is a transient colony of sea lions and a major nesting of marine turtles on the long, fine white beach of the eastern coast. You see the Galapagos hawk, finches, and the Hood mockingbird.

Cruising around the island, you see colonies of the various sea birds of the archipelago – the blue-footed boobies and the masked boobies – as well as albatross. You may also observe Galapagos hawks, Galapagos doves and some the Darwin's finches – there are 13 different species. It is thought that all the finches come from a common stock of mainland finches that were marooned here long ago. Be sure to look for the brightly colored marine iguana and the lava lizard as well. (B,L,D)

Day 7 (Monday)

BALTRA – QUITO

You cruise around Daphne Major and Daphne Minor this morning on your way to Baltra. You board your flight from Baltra to Quito and check into the

ACCOMMODATIONS

Quito – Swissôtel Oro Verde (2 nights), *Leading Hotels of the World '01*

Known as "The Kindest Hotel of Latin America", it offers tastefully decorated and generously oversized rooms and suites. Four excellent restaurants offer a wide range of international cuisine. The hotel is located in a beautiful residential and commercial area right in the middle of the city.

Galapagos Cruise – M/V Santa Cruz (4)

The M/V Santa Cruz is the only first-class ship built exclusively for Galapagos Islands cruising. The 90 passengers enjoy magnificently appointed and equipped private cabins.

Quito – Swissôtel Oro Verde (1)

Otavalo - Hostaria La Mirage (2) - Member of *Relais & Chateaux*

Perched on an Andean hillside north of Quito, La Mirage is a contemporary inn built on the grounds of a 200-year old hacienda. Superb national and international cuisine are combined with exceptional service to make your visit an unforgettable experience.

Quito – Swissôtel Oro Verde (1)

Swissôtel Oro Verde in time for a relaxing dinner. (B,L,D)

Day 8 (Tuesday)

QUITO – OTAVALO

This morning you drive northward through the province of Imbabura - a land of lakes, snow-covered mountains, and terraced farmlands. Your journey takes you along the famed Pan-American Highway to the small town of Calderon, where miniature figures are creatively fashioned out of bread.

In the afternoon, you arrive at the

town of Cotacachi, famous for the manufacture of fine leather products, and San Antonio de Ibarra, notable for its artistic woodcarvings. Just outside the village, at the end of a cobblestone lane, set amid acres of landscaped gardens, is your hotel - the **Hosteria La Mirage**. The reception area displays a vaulted ceiling, beautifully carved furniture, oriental rugs, and an interesting collection of artifacts. This evening, the restaurant at the hotel offers you some of the most superb entrees in all of Ecuador, paired with wines from Ecuador, Chile and France. (B,L,D)



Indian tapestries - Otavalo Market

Day 9 (Wednesday)

OTAVALO

Regional markets have played a significant role in Indian life for centuries. They have provided gathering places for trade as well as socializing.

The Otavalo market offers rolls of cloth, tapestry wall hangings, embroidered dresses and blouses, sweaters, long patterned belts, Indian jewelry, and handicrafts. You have the opportunity to stroll along the square, dotted with numerous stands. Walk down picturesque cobbled streets alongside Otavalo Indians - the men are clad in their typical blue ponchos and white pants, and the women wear colorfully embroidered blouses, long black skirts, and shawls. (B,L,D)

Day 10 (Thursday)

OTAVALO – QUITO

Today, you return to Quito, where you could spend your leisure time walking through a favorite part of the city or shopping for souvenirs to take home. Along the Avenida Amazona, there are many shops with outstanding selections of folk art and clothing. This evening join your tour manager for cocktails and dinner at a local restaurant. (B,D)

Day 11 (Friday)

QUITO - USA

This morning, your journey comes to an end as you are escorted to the airport for your flight home. (B)

OR (JOURNEY EXTENSION) QUITO – LIMA

Those of you who have chosen to continue your journey, by including a visit to Peru, are escorted to the airport for your flight to Lima.

DATES

Depart-TUE (from USA)	Return-FRI
Jan 28, 2003	Feb 07
Aug 12, 2003	Aug 22

or

'TAILOR-MADE' departures throughout the year

COST PER PERSON

Land Portion (Double occupancy)	\$ 3,975
Single supplement	\$ 915
Domestic Airfare (Quito-Baltra-Quito)	\$ 355
International Airfare (Miami-Quito-Miami)	\$ 575

All airfares are subject to availability and to change by the airlines. Cancellation penalties and surcharges may apply. Fares from other U.S. cities, as well as First and Business Class rates, are also available.