

ECUADOR QUITO & GALAPAGOS CRUISE 8 days

Itinerary:

Day 1 : Arrive Quito

Upon arrival in Quito transfer to hotel.

Lodging: Hilton Colon Quito

Day 2 : Quito - City and middle of the world tour (B)

After breakfast start your with a panoramic tour through the banking and financial areas, shopping malls and La Mariscal neighborhood. Continue to the historic center where El Panecillo, the San Francisco Church, La Ronda, and Plaza de la Independencia (Independence Square) await you. Walk through the colonial streets, passing the Cathedral, the Government Palace and La Compañía Church. Then head to the Middle of the World, geographically located at 0 degrees and 0 minutes, 0 seconds and marks the division between northern and southern hemisphere as established by French Geodesic Mission in the eighteenth century.

Lodging: Hilton Colon Quito

Day 3 : Quito - Galapagos cruise

Transfer to airport for domestic flight to Galapagos. Upon arrival at Baltra Island transfer to board M/V Santa Cruz. North Seymour Island is a great site full of bird colonies, sea lions and marine iguanas.

Lodging: MN Santa Cruz

Day 4 : Galapagos cruise

Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela Island)

After breakfast, explore the coast by panga, while your naturalist guide explains the dramatic geology of the area, nesting place for a Galápagos highlight: flightless cormorants. Depending on weather conditions, you can snorkel along the cliffs of this area rich in marine life, seasonally visited by green sea turtles and oceanic sun fish (Mola mola)

Punta Espinoza (Fernandina Island)

The afternoon is dedicated to exploring the youngest island of the archipelago, Fernandina, which, having no introduced mammals, boasts a very unique environment with a very high density of marine iguanas, who share their space with sea lions, Sally lightfoot crabs, hawks, penguins and the flightless cormorants.

Lodging: MN Santa Cruz

Day 5 : Galapagos cruise

Tagus Cove (Isabela Island)

After breakfast land at this cove on the northwest of Isabela. It provided a favorite anchorage for

pirates and whalers over the centuries. An uphill hike takes you to the rim of a crater, Darwin lake, filled with salt water and to a dramatic viewpoint. After the walk take a panga ride to spot local wildlife with the possibility of swimming or snorkelling.

Urbina Bay (Isabela Island)

After lunch disembark at Urbina Bay, the fascinating result of an uplifting of the ocean in 1954. Here admire corals, shells and many other calcareous organisms exposed above water. First enjoy a snorkel from the beach, with the chance of swimming with flightless cormorants and penguins. This area is also home to a large and very colorful Galápagos land iguanas, and occasionally to giant tortoises.

Lodging: MN Santa Cruz

Day 6 : Galapagos cruise

Puerto Ayora and the Charles Darwin Research Station (Santa Cruz Island)

In the morning disembark (dry landing) for visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station's giant tortoise Breeding Centre within an impressive giant prickly-pear cactus forest home to many land birds. These are the headquarters of scientific investigation, conservation and the National Park administration. Following your visit enjoy lunch in the cooler highlands of Santa Cruz Island, a completely different ecosystem.

Santa Cruz Island

Several options are available for the afternoon to choose from.

Lodging: MN Santa Cruz

Day 7 : Galapagos cruise

Post Office Bay and Baroness Cove (Floreana Island)

A short walk leads to the historic barrel where postcards are traditionally left for guests from other vessels to hand deliver to their destinations. Near Post Office Bay explore the north shore of Floreana along narrow channels teeming with life. After a wet landing and a short walk reach Baroness Cove where all will be revealed about the fascinating "murder mystery" on Floreana. Swimming and snorkeling off the beach is a good option. Head back on board for lunch.

Champion Islet and Cormorant Point (Floreana Island)

Onwards to the pangas and glass-bottom boat to explore the underwater wonders around Champion Islet, an extinct shield volcano, regarded as one of the best snorkeling spots in the archipelago. From there it's on to Cormorant Point, beginning with a wet landing on the olivine-crystal beach for an easy walk that includes a brackish water lagoon where bird species like greater flamingos, pintail ducks, common stilts, herons, sandpipers, and others gather. Continue over to a white sand beach, where sea turtles emerge from the sea at night to nest

Lodging: MN Santa Cruz

Day 8 : Galapagos - Guayaquil - Departure

Disembark at Baltra Island and transfer to the airport to take the flight back to the continent for international return flight.