



Ecuador 2016

Origins: Galapagos, Quito and the Cloud Forest

July 20-30, 2016

Andean Endeavors
8618 Bronson St
Houston, TX 77034

Day 1—Wednesday, July 20

Depart Houston Intercontinental around 6pm

Arrive in Quito around 11pm



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

Colonial Quito City Tour
Quito, the city of eternal spring, is nestled in the Andes mountains at about 10,000 feet above sea level. Today's tour puts us in touch with Quito's colonial past.



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

San Francisco Church

Started in 1536, the same year that Quito was founded, San Francisco is a colonial marvel with a highly ornate interior and Ecuador's best collection of religious art.



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

La Compañía Church

La Compañía is another beautiful, ornate church in colonial Quito. Famous for its golden altar and Quiteño School of Art, it was founded by Jesuit priests in the 16th century.



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

La Plaza Mayor

Quito's Plaza Mayor has the cathedral and presidential palace. Arches, white-washed buildings, red tiled roofs and balconies take you back in time to colonial Quito.



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

Equator

We will also visit the “Mitad del mundo” (Middle of the Earth) monument, built on the “equator” determined by a French expedition in 1769. The monument is actually not on the equator but is off by about 240 feet. Still not bad for 1769.



Day 2—Thursday, July 21

Equator Museum—Quito

We make a stop at the Equator museum where you can stand in both hemispheres at the same time. At this interactive museum, you can balance an egg on top of a nail and watch how water drains differently in each hemisphere.



Mindo Cloud Forest

Located only 33 miles from Quito, this transitional region covers an area of 103 square miles and ranges from 3,150–11,290 feet above sea level. Three rivers (Mindo, Saloya and Cinto) and hundreds of streams irrigate the landscape. The area is typified by frequent low-level cloud cover, ample rain and moderate temperatures. As a result, a wide diversity of fauna and flora call the cloud forest home. Mindo has hundreds of different species of butterflies, birds and orchids and dozens of different kinds of hummingbirds. Exotic birds such as the cock of the rock, the quetzal and the toucan all call the cloud forest home.



Day 3—Friday, July 22

Ecuadorian Cloud Forest

1. Orchid Reserve
2. Hummingbird watch
3. Butterfly Museum
4. Zipline or Cablecar Ride

Ecuador's Cloud Forest is contains a dizzying array of birds, butterflies and flowers. We begin our trip exploring the cloud forest



Day 3—Friday, July 22

Mindo Region

Our day begins with a visit to an orchid reserve where you can see dozens of Ecuador's 4500 varieties of orchids. Shown here is a Dracula Orchid, which has what appears to be the face of a monkey inside the orchid itself.



Day 3—Friday, July 22

Mindo Region

Ecuador is home to over 130 types of hummingbirds. Several dozen species call the Cloud Forest home.



Day 3—Friday, July 22

Mindo Region

Another highlight of the Cloud Forest are the butterflies. Blue Morpho and dozens of others dot the skies of the cloud forest.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

Otavalo Region

Otavalo is the handicraft center of Ecuador. Our day starts at the Otavalo market where a wide variety of crafts can be purchased. Shown here is one vendor's colorful display of local spices and grains.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

Otavalo Region

Peguche is our next stop. Here we will visit an Andean musical instrument factory and a weaver's studio. At both sites, you can watch the artisans at work and purchase completed crafts.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

Peguche

In the weaving shop, you will see how wool is spun and dyed. You will also see both the hand an backstrap looms in use.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

Cotacachi

Cotacachi is the leather center of Ecuador and our next stop during today's handicraft tour.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

San Antonio de Ibarra

Woodworking is San Antonio de Ibarra's specialty. Watch artisans craft beautiful sculptures and select souvenirs to take home.



Day 4—Saturday, July 23

Calderón

Our final stop is a Quito suburb called Calderón, famous for its “guaguas de pan” (bread babies), tiny sculptures made from corn meal and glue. Here an artisan makes bread parrots.



Day 5—Sunday, July 24

Cotopaxi National Park

Today we visit the world's highest active volcano, Cotopaxi, 19,347 feet. The national park is a treasure trove of Ecuadorian highland fauna and flora.



Day 5—Sunday, July 24

Cotopaxi National Park

With 125 square miles, the park encompasses a vast area of biological diversity. Here you may see wild horses, Andean condors, wolves, deer, and a wide array of smaller animals. The fauna is just as diverse as is the geography—canyons, mountains, lagoons and more...



Day 5—Sunday, July 24

Cotopaxi National Park

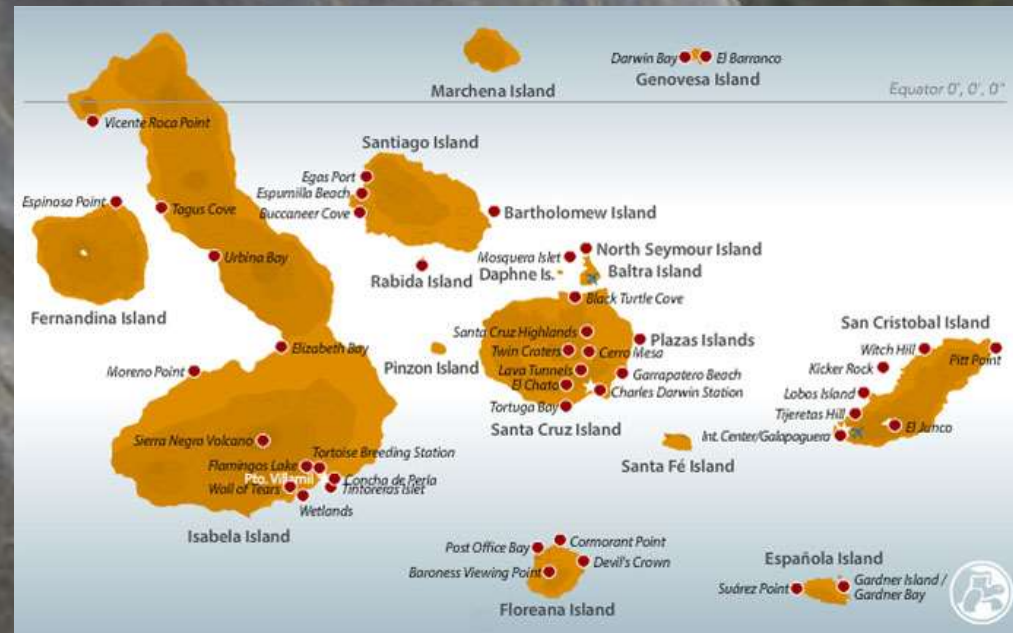
The car takes us up to almost 15,000 feet. From there, there is an optional hike up 1200 more feet to the Refugio Jose Rivas. More adventurous climbers can go even higher to the base of a glacier on Cotopaxi.



Day 6—Monday, July 25

Galapagos Islands

Today we head off to the Galapagos Islands, in the Pacific Ocean, a 90 minute flight from Quito. The Galapagos Islands are a Province of Ecuador, a National Park and a biological marine reserve.



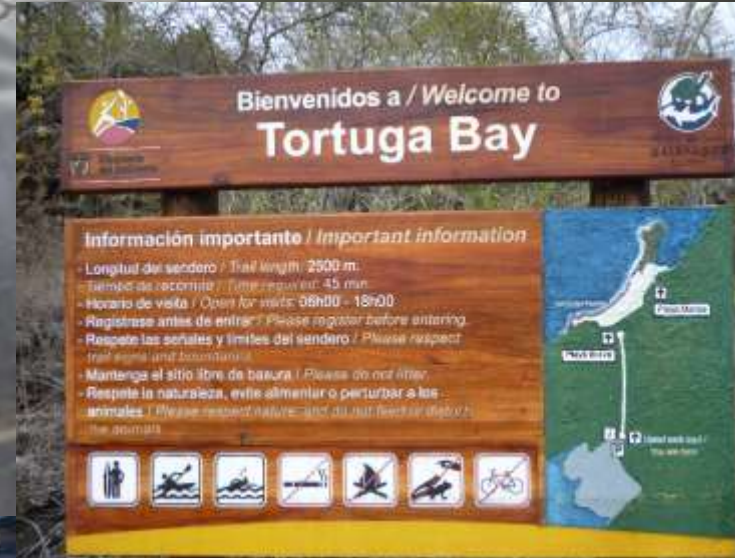
A Map of the Galapagos



Day 6—Monday, July 25

Baltra

We arrive in Baltra and Tortuga Bay where we will get our first introduction to the geology and zoology of the archipelago before retiring for the evening.



Day 7—Tuesday, July 26

North Seymour, Plazas or Bartholome Island

Take launch ride to one of three visitor sites: North Seymour Island to feast your eyes on countless frigate birds, sea lions and other unique species, or Plazas Island for land iguanas or Bartolome Island for an expansive view of the geology of Galapagos and more.



Day 8—Wednesday, July 27

Santa Cruz Island

Today's boat tour takes us to Garrapatero, a sandy beach surrounded by mangroves. A fresh water lake near Cerro Dragón, behind the beach is home to flamingos, herons, stilts and other shore birds. The beautiful turquoise waters provide a good opportunity for swimming and snorkeling. Shown here is the blue-footed booby.



Day 8—Wednesday, July 27

Santa Cruz Island

The Highlands of Santa Cruz offer exuberant flora and are famous for the lava tunnels. Large tortoise populations are found here. Black Turtle Cove is a site surrounded by mangroves, which sea turtles, rays and small sharks use as a mating area. Along the trail one may see land iguanas foraging.



Day 9—Thursday, July 28

Isabella Island

Our tour begins at the Wall of Tears, built by prisoners at a now closed penal colony. Next, we visit the Tortoise Breeding Center and wetlands. Our next stop is Tintoreras, with turquoise, crystalline waters inhabited by white-tipped reef sharks, Galapagos penguins, marine turtles and sea lions.



Day 10—Friday, July 29

Sierra Negra Volcano

Morning hike to Sierra Negra Volcano in the highlands of Isabella to see the magnificent geological features that make Galapagos unique - moreover, it is the second largest caldera in the world!



 Bienvenidos a / Welcome to  Volcán Sierra Negra

Información importante / Important information

- Longitud del sendero Volcán Chico / Trail length: 8.000 m.
- Tiempo de recorrido / Time required: 5 h.
- Longitud del sendero Minas de Azufre / Trail length: 12.000 m.
- Tiempo de recorrido / Time required: 7 h.
- Horario de visita / Open for visits: 06H00 – 18H00
- Respete las señales y límites del sendero / Please respect trail signs and boundaries.
- Mantenga el sitio libre de basura / Please do not litter.
- Respete la naturaleza, evite alimentar o perturbar a los animales / Please respect nature, and do not feed or disturb the animals.



Day 10—Friday, July 29

Concha Perla

In the afternoon we head for Concha Perla , a bay where you can snorkel and/or just swim and enjoy some downtime.



Day 11—Saturday, July 30

Santa Cruz

Los Gemelos (Twin Craters) are located in the highlands of Santa Cruz Island. They are not actual craters caused by impact, but are sink holes that were created when the volcanic roof of empty magma chambers collapsed from tectonic shifts and erosion over time.



Day 11—Saturday, July 30

Santa Cruz

This area has very different climate from other parts of the island. It is the habitat for bromeliads, orchids, mosses, lichens and many birds. Here you may see the famous vermillion flycatcher, eight species of Charles Darwin finches, and every so often short-eared owls.



Day 11—Saturday, July 30

Return to Quito and Home

An afternoon flight returns us to Quito. You have several hours of relaxation and day privileges in a Quito hotel to rest and freshen up before our late night flight back to Houston.



Day 12—Saturday, August 29

Return Home

We arrive back in Houston at
5:30am.

