



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA

| ALUMNI

The Galapagos Islands

EXPLORE DARWIN'S ENCHANTED ISLANDS

October 13 – 23, 2025 | 11 Days

16-passenger
yacht



Exclusively for
U of A Alumni
Travel Program
travellers and
friends



Land Iguana

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS BY:

WorldwideQuest
Alumni Expeditions



Challenging ourselves to distinguish the “Darwin’s Finches” based on their bill shape and size!



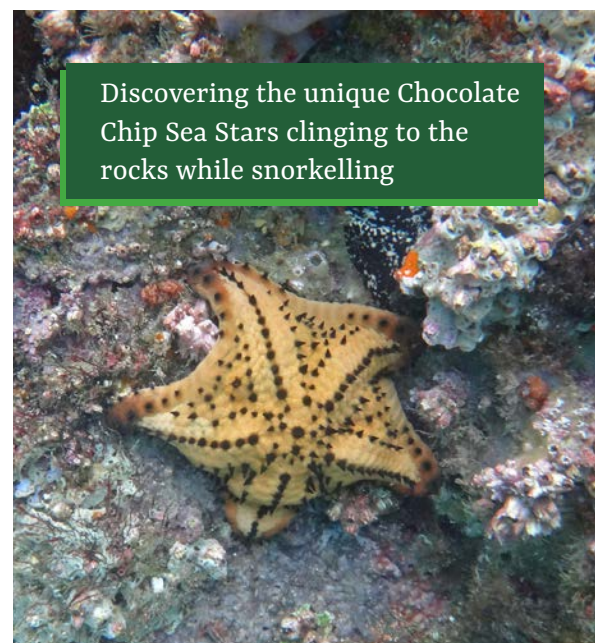
Walking amongst dozing Galapagos Sea Lions



Observing Galapagos Giant Tortoises foraging peacefully on Santa Cruz



Watching the interactions among the bizarre Swallow-tailed Gulls



Discovering the unique Chocolate Chip Sea Stars clinging to the rocks while snorkelling



Our Galapagos private yacht expedition remains one of our most highly rated natural history programs and is consistently our travellers' "trip of a lifetime."

Our study leader and our Galapagos naturalist guide are on board to lead island walks as we set sail to discover these remarkable island ecosystems, skirting past nesting boobies, scouting the seas for breaching whales, and snorkeling among colourful fish. Desolate at first sight, these rough and rocky isles are home to wonderfully strange and abundant wildlife. As Charles Darwin did almost 200 years before us, we will marvel at the highly adapted creatures found nowhere else on Earth.

All of the reptiles, half the birds, 32% of the plants, and 25% of the fish are unique to this amazing archipelago. It is a living museum of evolutionary changes.

What is so special about the Galapagos experience is that these creatures act as though humans are nothing more than a passing interest, allowing us to observe them up close. Undisturbed by our nearness, they engage in intriguing courtship displays, groom one another, forage for food, and nurture their young. Giant Tortoises graze in the lush highlands and dinosaur-like Marine Iguanas sun themselves on black lava rocks along the shores. Tiny Galapagos Penguins and playful Galapagos Sea Lions dart through the waters like torpedoes, while frigatebirds patrol the skies.

Join fellow *U of A Alumni Travel Program* travellers and friends for this intimate and exclusive experience of the Galapagos!

Tour Leader



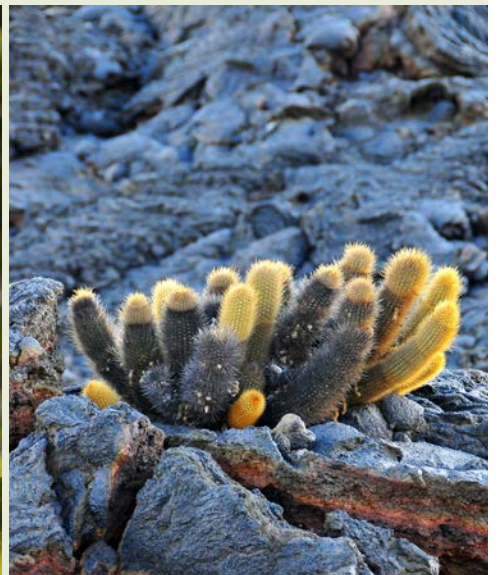
"Dan was exceptionally good. Knowledgeable and organized. Good personality and looked after everyone."

– Kathleen D.

Dan Riskin, PhD, is a television personality, scientist, and author. He is best known as the co-host of Discovery Canada's flagship science program, *Daily Planet*, and as the host of Animal Planet's hugely successful show about parasites, *Monsters Inside Me*. He has published more than 20 papers in scientific journals, mostly about bats, but since 2011 or so has been focused full-time on science journalism. He is CTV's Science and Technology Specialist, the Bell Media iHeartRadio science correspondent, and a sometimes guest-host for CTV's W5. Dan's travels feed his passion to see bats in their natural habitats, but he also branches out to learn about and photograph birds, insects, and much more. His first popular book, *Mother Nature is Trying to Kill You* (2014) was a Canadian bestseller, and his first book for kids, *Fiona the Fruit Bat* was published in September 2022.

"Dan was wonderful! Very enthusiastic, always willing to answer questions and offer help. His lectures were informative and fascinating! He added much to our experience, and I enjoyed having him as our tour leader."

– Gillian L.



Detailed Itinerary

Monday, October 13: Arrival in Quito, Ecuador

Our adventure begins on our arrival in Quito, a dazzling old colonial city nestled in the snow-capped Andes Mountains. After clearing airport customs, we'll be met and taken to our hotel for a good night's rest before the next day's tour. Those participants who have just completed a pre-trip extension will also join us when we arrive.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito

Tuesday, October 14: Quito City Tour

After breakfast, we will depart for a city tour of Quito. We will visit the colonial centre of one of South America's oldest capitals with its narrow streets and hanging balconies. Our tour will include Independence Plaza, La Compañía Church — one of Quito's most beautiful religious buildings — and San Francisco Church with its monastery, the first great colonial building. We'll also drive to El Panecillo Hill for a panoramic view of the city. After lunch, we'll visit the Quito Botanical Gardens, located within Parque La Carolina. Here, we can enjoy an array of plants as well as become acquainted with some of Quito's beautiful birds such as the Southern Yellow-Grosbeak, Black Flowerpiercer, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sparkling Violetear, Hooded Siskin, and a number of northern birds here to spend the winter.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

San Francisco Church in Quito



Wednesday, October 15: Flight to Baltra, Galapagos / Visit Santa Cruz

After an early breakfast, we'll transfer from our hotel to the airport for the morning jet flight to the Galapagos Islands. The flight will take us to the airport on the small island of Baltra and, after going through the entry formalities, we'll meet our Ecuadorian naturalist guide. From here, we will take a very short ferry ride to Santa Cruz Island and have a fitting introduction as we drive across Santa Cruz, going from sea



level into the highlands. We'll stop at the El Chato Tortoise Reserve, home to the Western Santa Cruz Tortoise, one of the many species of famous giant Galapagos tortoise found in the archipelago. The cloud forests here are also home to various Darwin's Finches, including two species of tree finch, the Green Warbler-Finch and the Vegetarian Finch. Later, we'll descend to the far side of Santa Cruz and Puerto Ayora. This town is the home of the Charles Darwin Research Station, the operations centre for wildlife and conservation programs in the Galapagos.

Overnight: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Thursday, October 16: South Plaza Island and Santa Fe Island

This diminutive, crescent-shaped island of South Plaza hosts a variety of wildlife, including breeding Swallow-tailed Gulls, the world's only truly nocturnal gull. A short walk will allow us to visit the south side of the island, which is a cliff that drops off directly into the ocean. We may see numerous Galapagos Land Iguanas. On Santa Fe, we find the endemic Santa Fe Land Iguanas, Galapagos Sea Lions, and a forest of impressively tall Opuntia cactus "trees," being the endemic barringtonensis subspecies of the Galapagos Giant Prickly Pear. We'll also find the Galapagos Mockingbirds, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Pelicans, and several Darwin's finches.

Overnight: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Friday, October 17: San Cristóbal Island

We'll visit the beach at Cerro Brujo ("sorcerer hill") on the north side of the island. This is the first place where Charles Darwin landed. We may see the Chatham Mockingbirds here and view a number of endemic plants. We'll also snorkel at the impressive Kicker's Rock (León Dormido). We'll also visit the western tip of the island, landing at the town of Baquerizo Moreno. Depending on the weather, we may take a bus ride to Junco ("HOONG-co") Lagoon, which is one of the few permanent freshwater Galapagos lakes. It sits in the caldera (collapsed cone) of an extinct volcano. The area is surrounded by a unique shrubland habitat of Miconia and tree ferns. A climb up to the lake can provide a fantastic panoramic view of the surroundings in good weather. Because of its fresh water, El Junco is one of the few places where you can see frigatebirds bathing, which they do on the wing.

Overnight: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Saturday, October 18: Española Island

At Gardner Bay, nocturnal Green Sea Turtles bury their eggs in the white sand beach, Hood Mockingbirds may peck at your camera bag, and the swimming is excellent. We'll also sail to the other side of the island and enjoy the Blue-footed Boobies and the most intensely-coloured Marine Iguanas of all of the islands. Nazca Boobies also nest along the cliffs overlooking a well-known blowhole through which sea water is dramatically projected due to the strong surf. Because of the rocky terrain on the trails of this island, hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes and perhaps a trekking pole are recommended.

Overnights: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Nazca Booby



© Justin Peter



Sunday, October 19: Floreana Island

Flamingos feed in the island's large salt-water lagoon and colonies of Galapagos Sea Lions line the beach. This is also a good area for snorkelling and enjoying some of the wonderfully diverse and colourful Galapagos fish. Floreana is best known for its colorful history of buccaneers, whalers, convicts, and early colonists. It is the home of a famous wooden mail barrel at Post Office Bay, where letters are dropped off and picked up. You can drop off a letter or postcard here as well! We may snorkel at Devil's Crown just offshore. The site is a completely submerged volcano that has eroded to create the appearance of a jagged crown.

Overnights: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

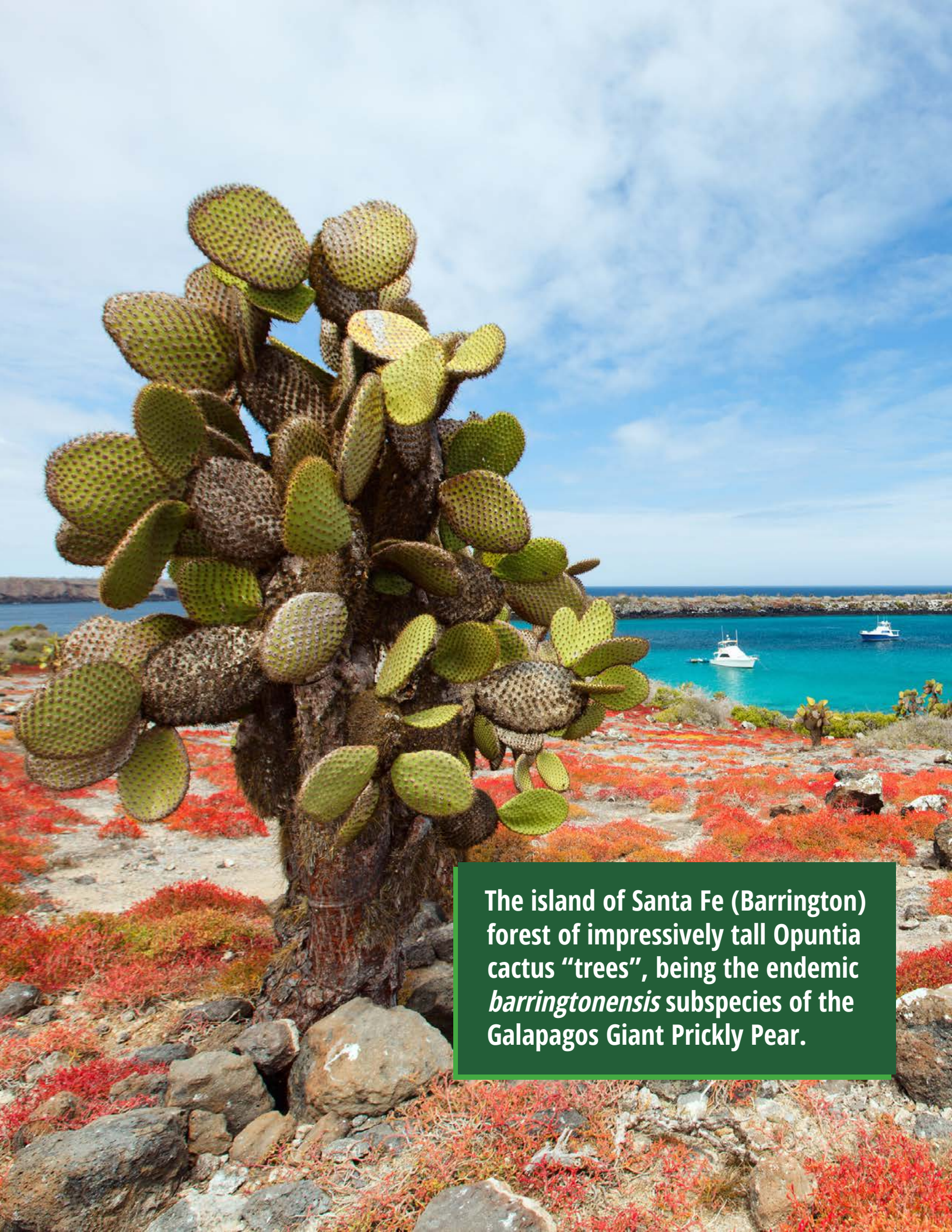
Monday, October 20: Santa Cruz Island and James Island

In addition to the activities on our arrival day, during which we'll drive north to south through the centre of the island, we will also visit Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill) on the island's northwest corner, where we visit a beach and lagoon. We may see flamingos here again and other wading birds. Dragon Hill is the only place on Santa Cruz where Galapagos Land Iguanas endure. Though we won't climb the hill, it is possible that some of the iguanas may wander down around the fringes and that we may spot one.

Santiago Island has very interesting landforms that attest to the volcanic origins of the Galapagos. We have an opportunity for a walk at Sullivan Bay that allows us to explore recent and less recent lava flows, view the plants that begin the colonization efforts of the flows, as well as see the wildlife that can at times blend in remarkably well with the ground. We have the best chance of seeing Galapagos Penguins here.

Overnights: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



The island of Santa Fe (Barrington) forest of impressively tall *Opuntia* cactus "trees", being the endemic *barringtonensis* subspecies of the Galapagos Giant Prickly Pear.

Tuesday, October 21: Genovesa Island

Located in the northeast part of the Galapagos Islands, this relatively small island is also known as “Bird Island” due to the large numbers of birds here. We’ll find Red-footed and Nazca Booby colonies, Lava Gulls, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Great Frigatebirds, and various finches (including Gray Warbler Finch and Genovesa Ground Finch) near the white coral sands of Darwin’s Bay. We’ll also search for the endemic subspecies of Short-eared Owl and Galapagos Fur Seals. We can snorkel in the bay for a chance to see rays, small sharks, and more!

Overnights: M/Y Beluga

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Wednesday, October 22: Turtle Cove / Baltra / Fly to Quito

This is our last day in the Galapagos Islands. We’ll spend an hour first thing in the morning, paddling silently through a tranquil lagoon surrounded by mangroves. This lagoon is a nursery area for Hammerhead, Black-tipped, and White-tipped Sharks. Golden (Cownose) and Spotted Eagle Rays glide slowly by our pangas, and Green Sea Turtles are everywhere. This is a magical location. Our boat will return to Baltra, and the crew will transfer us to the airport for our flight to Quito. A farewell dinner in Quito is planned for the evening.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Farewell Dinner

Thursday, October 23: Departure Day

We will be taken to the international airport for our flights home.

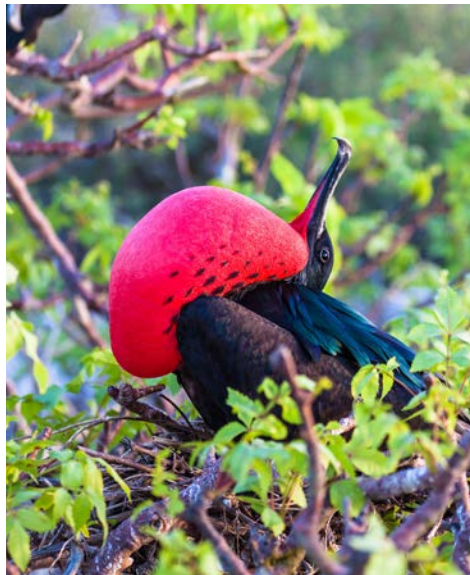
Meals: Breakfast

**The itinerary and accommodation described in these notes are subject to change due to logistical arrangements and to take advantage of local events.*

© Dan Riskin



Galapagos Flamingo

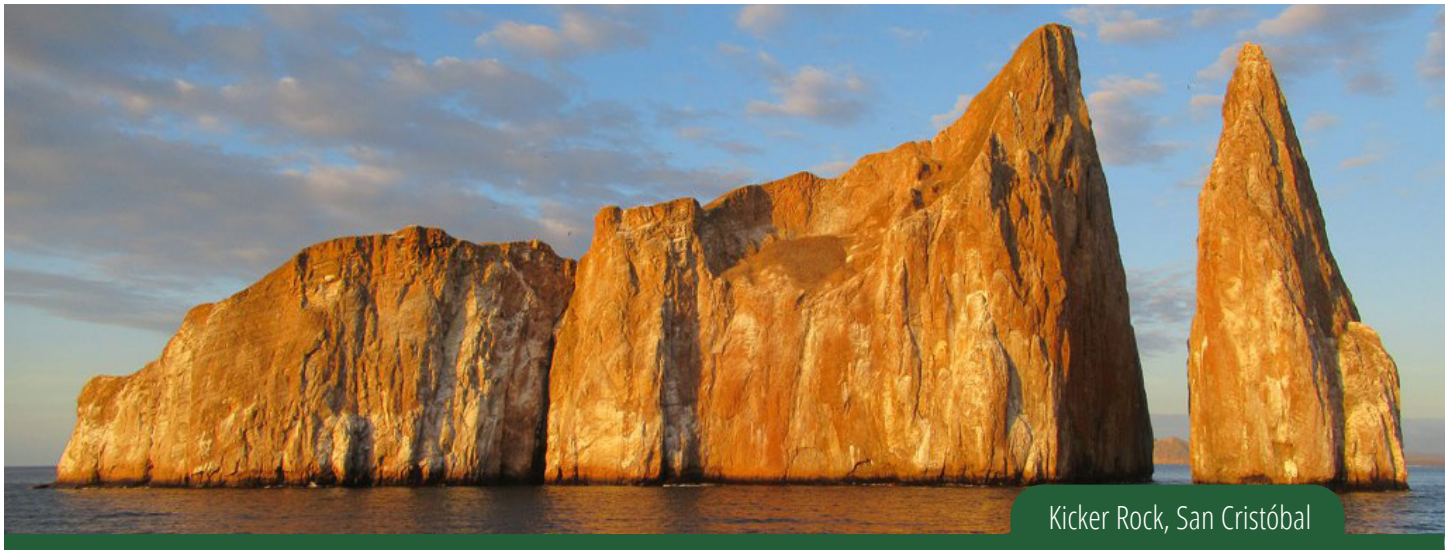


Male Great Frigatebird



Marine Iguana

© Dan Riskin



Kicker Rock, San Cristóbal

Tour Details

Tour Cost (per person): US\$7895 (classic) to US\$8095 (premium)

Includes all taxes and gratuities

Single Supplement: If you wish guaranteed single accommodation, the single supplement for this trip is the tour cost plus an additional 50%. If you are travelling alone and you are willing to share, we will match you up with an appropriate roommate.

If we cannot, the single supplement will apply. This will be collected at 90 days prior to departure.

Group Size:

12 – 14 participants

What's Included:

- 3 nights at a hotel in Quito, in double occupancy (in hotel listed or similar)
- Services and meals as listed in the itinerary
- Ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- Airfare from Quito to the Galapagos / Return to Quito
- 7-night Galapagos cruise aboard the M/Y Beluga based on double occupancy
- Equipment for snorkelling excursions on each full day in the Galapagos
- Airport transfers on tour start and end dates
- Porterage of one standard piece of baggage per person
- Services of bilingual naturalist guide on board, trained at the Charles Darwin Research Station
- Services of your Study Leader Dan Riskin

Not Included:

- International airfare from your home to Quito / return from Quito
- Fuel surcharges on the boat or flights (if applicable)
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Day room in Quito (if required due to flight schedules)
- Galapagos National Park Fee (US\$200 per person)
- Galapagos Transit Control Card (US\$20 per person)
- Quito international airport departure tax
- Airport transfers if arranging independent plans prior to or following main tour
- Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transportation required due to any emergency situation
- Any item not mentioned in "What's Included"

Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$1000 per person is required to reserve your space on this tour. A payment of US\$2000 is due six months prior to departure. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

What to Expect



Joining Instructions

Arrival: Monday, October 13

Our tour starts upon arrival in Quito on October 13. All travellers arriving on the start date of the tour will be met on arrival and transferred to the group hotel. This transfer is included in the cost of the tour. When you book the designated pre-trip accommodation with Worldwide Quest, your transfer from the airport to our group hotel on arrival is included. If you are making your own pre-trip arrangements, this transfer can be provided at additional cost.

Departure: Thursday, October 23

The tour concludes with an included transfer to the Quito airport on October 23. Transfer times will be settled once your flight arrangements have been finalized. Please contact us if you have any questions.



Weather

Although the Galapagos Islands straddle the equator, the tropical heat is tempered by Pacific Ocean breezes and cold ocean currents. We will be visiting during the “cool and dry” season when air and water temperatures are relatively cool, with a maximum averaging 25°C. Mornings will generally be cloudy in the lowlands, while skies generally break and begin clearing in the afternoon. Fine mist and drizzle are possible in the highlands during this time of year.



Travel Documents

You will require a passport for your trip to Ecuador. Please make sure it is valid for six months after the date of your return home. A visa is not required for Canadian or US passport holders at this time.



Accommodation

Garden Hotel San José de Puembo is a 17th-century hacienda-style hotel on the eastern edge of Quito and conveniently close to the airport. The grounds are beautifully kept with extensive gardens, and there are stunning views of surrounding mountains. Rooms are bright and comfortable with free WIFI. Ecuadorian and international cuisine are served at the two restaurants.

M/Y Beluga chartered vessel (see below)



Transportation

During the airport transfers in Quito, the Quito city tour, and the land transfer on Santa Cruz island, we travel in a comfortable, air-conditioned bus driven by a professional driver.



Level of Activity: Moderate

You will be getting in and out of Zodiacs (*pangas*) for wet and dry landings, with assistance from the crew, walking at a leisurely pace, with frequent stops, on ground which is sometimes rough/rocky and hilly. Sturdy hiking shoes or boots are strongly advised. A trekking pole is also useful for extra balance. If you have any concerns about being able to participate in this trip, please contact us for further information.



COVID-19 Entry and Travel Requirements

All travellers should be prepared to comply with local regulations. Please refer to these websites for current requirements:

Ecuador: <https://ecuador.travel/en/travel-safe-in-ecuador-2/>
Canada: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid>



#SafeTravels

Worldwide Quest has been awarded the World Travel and Tourism Council's #SafeTravels Stamp for adopting health and hygiene global standardized protocols. [Learn more.](#)

Additional Info

Extend Your Stay

Many of our travellers like to arrive a day or two earlier or extend their stay to take advantage of being in the region. We have three exciting extensions that may interest you: an ***Amazon Rainforest Lodge*** extension; an ***Ecuador Cloud Forest Birding*** extension; and a ***Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas*** extension in Peru. The two first extensions are best done as pre-trips and the third could be done as a post-trip. We will be happy to send along details on any or all of these extensions, so please don't hesitate to write. We can also suggest other options, based on your time available, budget and interests.

Terms and Conditions

For additional information about our terms and conditions, please refer to your booking form, the current brochure or our website. All participants booking with Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946). See full details [here](#)

Cancellation Policy

All payments are non-refundable; however you may transfer your initial deposit for any land tour to another tour 90 days or more prior to your scheduled departure date. Initial deposits for cruises are non-refundable and non-transferable. Your second payment and your final payment are non-refundable and non-transferable. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing. See full details [here](#)



How to Book

Please contact the Worldwide Quest office for more information and to secure your booking.

1-800-387-1483 | 416-633-5666
travel@worldwidequest.com



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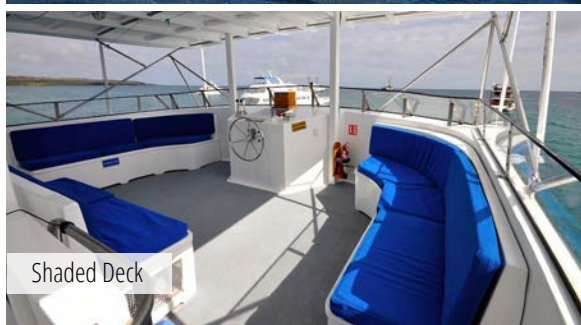
OUR EXCLUSIVELY CHARTERED VESSEL



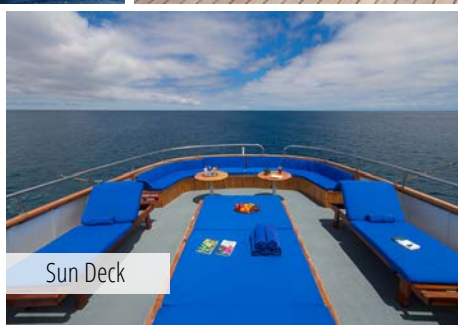
M/Y Beluga



Bow Lounge



Shaded Deck



Sun Deck



Dining Room



Cabin 7



Cabin 2



Salon and Dining

We charter the *M/Y Beluga* exclusively for our Quest group.

This steel-hulled motor yacht is 33.5 metres long, accommodating 16 passengers and eight crew. She travels at a speed of 12 knots, allowing us to get to eight islands comfortably during our eight-day expedition cruise. She is well-appointed with comfortable air-conditioned private cabins and ample lounge and observation deck space.

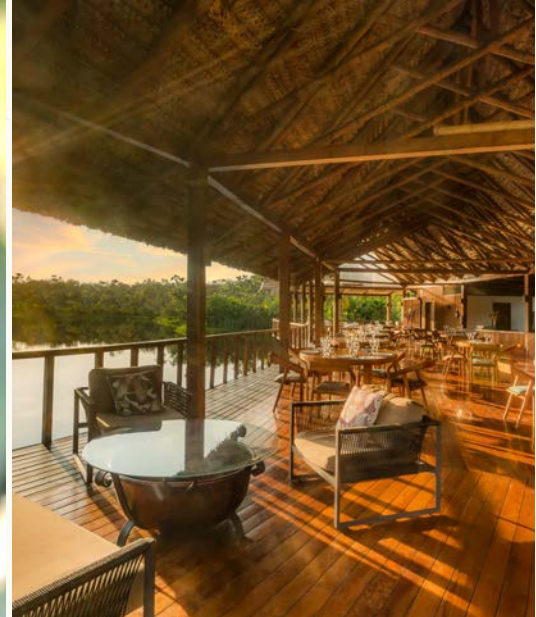
Here are your cabin options:

Classic

Cabin #1 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
Cabin #2 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
Cabin #3 (Lower Deck): one double bed and portholes
Cabin #4 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
Cabin #5 (Lower Deck): one queen-size bed and portholes

Premium

Cabin #6 (Main Deck): two lower beds and windows
Cabin #7 (Main Deck): two lower beds and windows
Cabin #8 (Upper Deck): two lower beds and windows
(opens onto sun deck)



Amazon Rainforest Explorer

An Optional Pre-trip Extension to our Galapagos Islands Tour

October 8 – 13, 2025 | 6 Days

Though it is among South America's smaller countries, Ecuador is host to a diversity of habitats including extensive lowland tropical rainforest. This forest is remarkably close to Quito, nestled high in the Andes. As an optional extension to your Galapagos Islands cruise, we would like to take you on a short 30-minute flight over the Andes into the Ecuadorian Amazon. Here, you get to experience its phenomenal biodiversity first-hand while staying in a place quite unlike any you have visited before: Sacha Lodge.

Situated deep in the rainforest beside the pristine black water Lake Pilchicocha, you find a forest sanctuary with lodgings carefully designed to offer comfort while preserving the rainforest environment and ambience. All of our cabins, with their high-thatched roofs and private shaded terraces, are constructed with traditional materials and nestled in the lush surroundings. These surroundings are replete with an array of flora and fauna. A staff of bilingual naturalists is here to enhance your enjoyment and understanding of the birds and other wildlife and to make your stay all the more enjoyable.

Whether this is your first visit to the Amazon rainforest or a return visit, you are sure to appreciate the variety of experiences available to you here. Call or e-mail us to make this extension a part of your South American discovery!

Note: This extension is based on availability at the time of booking and is offered prior to the Galapagos cruise. This standard schedule may be modified if you would like to combine this with the Cloud Forest Birding extension. There is an opportunity to tailor activities at Sacha Lodge to your particular interests. Please advise us of your interests when speaking with us.

Detailed Itinerary:

Wednesday, October 8: Arrive in Quito

On arrival in Quito, you are met at the airport by a local representative and transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito



Thursday, October 9: Flight and Boat Ride to Sacha Lodge

You are picked up from your hotel in the morning and driven to the airport for your short flight to the town of Coca in the Amazon Basin. On arrival, enjoy a quick lunch in Sacha's private house in town. Next, you are driven to a dock on the banks of the Napo River, an important tributary of the Amazon River, to board one of Sacha's large, motorized canoes for a scenic two-hour journey downriver to the lodge.

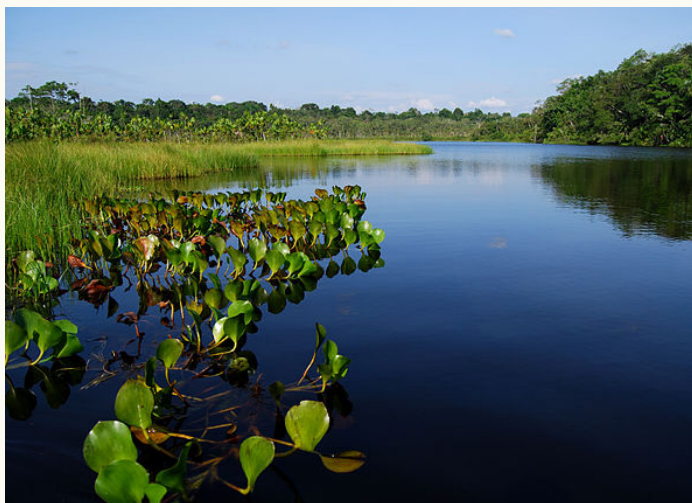
Disembark at the Sacha dock and take an easy 30-minute walk to Lake Pilchicocha, which you cross by paddle canoe to Sacha Lodge. Along the way, you may spot giant dragonflies, huge iridescent Giant Blue Morpho butterflies the size of your palm, and tiny yellow epiphytic orchids blooming in long sprays, as well as hear the peculiar and haunting vocal mimicry of Lawrence's Thrushes. Later, you may have a chance to observe several of the more conspicuous bird species from the mini-tower, which is also a great place to watch the sun set. There is also a butterfly house nearby, which you may visit with your naturalist guide to view the beautiful colours and patterns of many different species of butterflies, including fantastic Idomeneus Giant Owls. You may be lucky to spot slumbering Noisy Night Monkeys as they rest nearby, and you may encounter energetic Black-mantled Tamarins as they scramble in the trailside vegetation.

After dinner, you may accompany your naturalist guide on a night walk to see and hear some of the multitude of animal species that can only be encountered at night; alternatively, you may take a canoe ride to view the Spectacled and Black Caimans with their glowing orange eyes as you silently paddle across the lake to get a closer view.

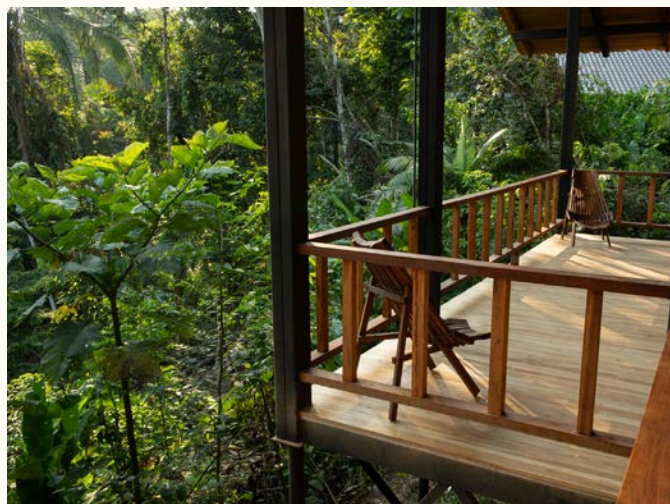
Overnight: Sacha Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Lake Pilchicocha



© ggaice



Friday, October 10: Sacha Lodge

Today, you have an opportunity to do a canopy walk for spectacular bird's-eye views of the rainforest canopy. This walk takes you across one of only a few free-standing, rigid suspension canopy walkways in the world! At 36 metres in height and 275 metres in length, it provides unprecedented opportunities for discovery. From here, look for Red Howler Monkeys sunning in the tree tops. You should have a chance to see various colourful songbirds such as Purple Honeycreepers, Purple-throated Fruitcrows, and incomparable Paradise Tanagers. Using a scope, your guide can zoom in on White-throated Toucans or other larger birds that may be present in the canopy. The diversity of plant forms we witness here is equally impressive — various palms emerge from the understory before us; seemingly countless tree branches are festooned with epiphytes.

Later, walk a trail through secondary forests where you have the chance to witness the subtle but important distinctions between the terra firme (never flooded) and varzea (seasonally flooded) ecosystems. Our Indigenous guide is along to identify and interpret various species of medicinal plants that have been used by locals for hundreds of years. Our walks takes us to pristine (primary) forest with huge Kapok and fig trees towering well over 100 feet overhead.

After lunch, you may take a leisurely hike along the Rio Napo, or perhaps a little more challenging hike on the Leoncillo Trail to search for elusive Dusky Titi Monkeys. Either way, the trails all lead you back to the main boardwalk for your final hike and canoe ride back to the lodge.

Overnight: Sacha Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Saturday, October 11: Sacha Lodge

We will begin our hike on Lagartococha Trail after breakfast. Here, we have the opportunity to learn more about the relationship that the Indigenous people have with the forest. We may learn about the trees where locals believe the spirits of their ancestors live as well as the mysterious “dwende” or devil-man of the forest. After arriving at Lake Lagartococha, we can take a tranquil canoe ride through a natural swamp, which is the home of Green Anacondas, Capybaras, and two species of caimans. Spotting birds here is a challenge, but we could see “skulkers” such as Gartered Trogons as they sit and wait for insect prey to fly by. After the canoe ride, a walk on the other side of Lagartococha may give us the opportunity to spot Brown Capuchins or Common Squirrel Monkeys jumping through the trees.

Later, we return from the walk or canoe ride and head back to the lodge where you can relax in your personal hammock on your balcony. You could also elect to take a refreshing swim in Lake Pilchicocha from the dock. In the mid-afternoon, we have arranged a gentle canoe ride through the flooded forest en route to Sacha’s excellent viewing tower. As we move along, keep watch for elusive Neotropical River Otters as well as the Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths. Upon landing, we find a phenomenal 135-foot wooden tower built around a giant Kapok tree. A climb up the staircase brings us above the surrounding canopy for a spectacular appreciation of this area. The limbs of this great tree are strewn with a myriad of epiphytic plants, including figs whose roots droop down dozens of feet into the empty space below, bromeliads, as well as epiphytic cacti! This is a good place to spot forest birds such as Spix’s Guans and marvelous Chestnut-eared Araçaris. We may see the sun set with an amazing view of Mount Sumaco and possibly a view of the snow-capped Andes. There could also be euphonias, honeycreepers, and other songbirds foraging among the Kapok branches directly overhead and Crested Oropendolas entertaining us with their antics and peculiar vocalizations.

The return canoe ride after sunset is another experience altogether as we enjoy the night chorus of frogs and insects. Hopefully we see the large resident troupe of White-fronted Capuchins as they clamber through the tree tops en route to their night-resting location. We may also see various species of bats flying overhead and hear the eerie calls of nocturnal birds such as Crested Owls, Spectacled Owls, and Common Potoos.

Overnight: Sacha Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Sunday, October 12: Sacha Lodge

Early this morning, we head for a 30-minute motorized canoe ride down the Napo River to Yasuni National Park. At the not-to-be-missed parrot lick, the birds will come to consume essential minerals that serve to neutralize toxins that they ingest in the plants they eat. Depending on how much time we spend here, you could see various species of parrot simultaneously and up close, including White-eyed Parakeets, Blue-headed Parrots, Orange-cheeked Parrots, Yellow-crowned Amazons, Cobalt-winged Parakeets, and possibly Scarlet Macaws!

Returning to the lodge around 11:00am, you have a chance to relax before lunch is served. In the afternoon take the Pantano Trail, which visits various rainforest ecosystems, including secondary and primary forest as well as flooded and swampy forest. This is an excellent trail for birds and monkeys.

Overnight: Sacha Lodge

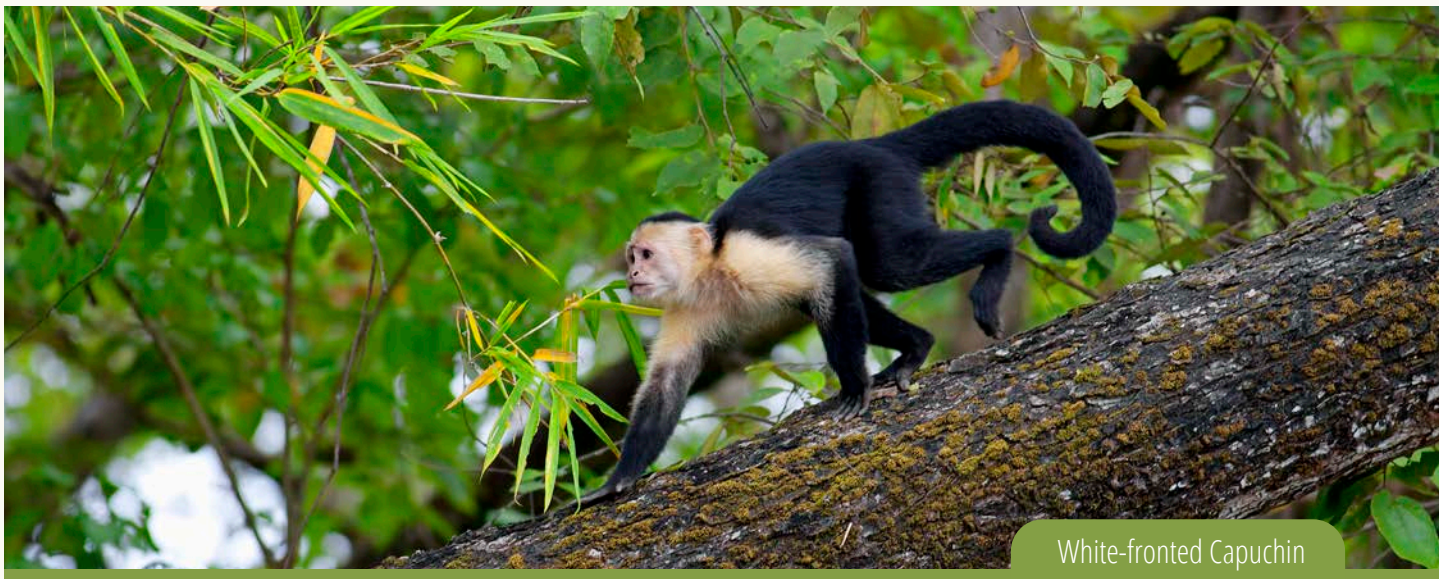
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Monday, October 13: Return to Quito

After breakfast, we return by motorized canoe to the town of Coca for a late-morning flight to Quito. Your Amazon extension ends upon arrival in Quito, whence your Galapagos Islands adventure begins. You are met and taken to the Hilton Colon Hotel with your afternoon and evening at leisure. The main Quest Galapagos group is set to arrive late this evening at your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast

**Note that the activities presented here are weather-dependent. The itinerary is also subject to change due to logistical arrangements and to take advantage of local events.*



White-fronted Capuchin

Extension Tour Details

Extension Tour Cost (per person): US\$2810

Includes all taxes and gratuities.

Single Supplement: US\$600

The cost listed is based on a minimum of two people on the extension. If you wish single accommodation or we cannot match you up with a roommate, the single supplement for this trip is approx. US\$600. This is payable at 90 days prior to departure.

What's Included:

- Accommodation in hotels listed or similar based on double occupancy
- Ground transportation
- Meals as described in itinerary
- Domestic flights from Quito to Coca to Quito
- Airport transfers in Quito and Coca
- Services of Sacha Lodge naturalist guides

Not Included:

- Airfare from your home to Quito and return
- Extra meals and hotels in Quito (if required)
- Entrance fee to Yasuni National Park and (approx. US\$25 — payable locally — subject to weather conditions)
- Fuel surcharge, if applicable
- Gratuities
- Airport departure taxes
- Optional activities
- Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transport required due to any emergency
- Any item not mentioned in "What's Included"

Bird and mammal lists available!

Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$750 is required to reserve a space on this extension. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.



Ecuador's Andean Highlands and Cloud Forest: A Bird Extravaganza

An Optional Pre-trip Extension to our Galapagos Islands Tour

October 7 – 13, 2025 | 7 Days

For many years, we've been introducing our travellers to the wonders of Ecuador's Galapagos Islands and the Ecuadorian Amazon. Now, we'd like to offer you another way to add enjoyment to your travels: an exploration of Ecuador's Highlands and Cloud Forests. Within a short driving distance from Quito, we visit both the Andes' East and West slopes, whose epiphyte-strewn forests are home to a phenomenal diversity of birds that helps give Ecuador the fifth highest number of bird species of any country in the world! From admiring Plate-billed Mountain-Toucans to Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and from Violet-tailed Sylphs to Giant Antpittas, you get to enjoy searching out and observing the variety of forms and colours that abound here along with the accompanying variety of interesting behaviours and vocalizations. In the company of an expert Ecuadorian bird expert, travel the gamut of ecosystems from the high-altitude *páramo* through true cloud forest with its moss-covered branches, and skirting the edge of lowland tropical rainforest.

For a more complete Ecuadorean wildlife experience, consider taking this extension in conjunction with our Amazon Rainforest Explorer extension. Please note that we can further tailor this extension to your needs if you have any specific target species in mind. Call or e-mail us to join this amazing trip.

Violet-tailed Sylph

Detailed Itinerary:

Tuesday, October 7: Arrive in Quito

On arrival, you are met by a local representative and transferred to your hotel. The local representative can advise you of the pick-up time for tomorrow morning.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito



© Doug Ward

Wednesday, October 8: Yanacocha, Tandayapa, Milpe, and Mindo

This morning, you are met by your guide at the hotel to start your tour, first heading to the west slope of the Andes toward the famous Mindo region and the Tandayapa Valley. We begin by travelling the famous, bird-rich Nono-Mindo Road, birding some of the great locations along the way and eventually passing the crest of the western Andes and down into more humid forests at an elevation of approximately 1500 metres. Here, you have an opportunity to search for a great assortment of birds, including such species as Sickie-winged Guans, Barred Hawks, Red-billed Parrots, Golden-headed Quetzals, and an astounding number of hummingbirds, including White-booted Racket-tails. We spend two nights at a strategically-located lodge in beautiful surroundings. This area also has an impressive variety of orchids!

Overnight: Séptimo Paraíso or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Golden-headed Quetzal



© Doug Ward

Thursday, October 9: Paz de las Aves Reserve

Today, you head out early to enjoy a visit to the wonderful Paz de las Aves ("Peace of the Birds") nearby. This 120-hectare private nature reserve contains some grassland and second-growth forest in addition to a large area of primary forest covering 70 hectares. It is known for hosting certain specialties such as four species of antpitta that the reserve owners have managed to attract to the grounds: Giant Antpittas, Yellow-breasted Antpittas, Moustached Antpittas, and Ochre-breasted Antpittas. In addition, the owners maintain hummingbird feeders that attract a variety of local beauties, allowing us a chance for some close views! Heading out early also gives us an opportunity to view splendid Andean Cock-of-the-rock at a spot where multiple males may be lekking.

Overnight: Séptimo Paraíso or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Friday, October 10: Mindo area birding, through Tumbaco Valley to Papallacta Pass

Today, we have an early-morning excursion in the Mindo area to search for any other local specialties that we may like to see. Afterward, we'll head eastward through the Quito region and then climb up the Eastern Cordillera to reach the Papallacta pass at an altitude of 4100 metres, birding along the way at prime locations. The pass itself is an excellent example of the open, high-altitude páramo ecosystem, which is a tropical alpine habitat located above the timberline. There are many wonderful hummingbirds in this region, including Mountain Avocetbills, Blue-mantled Thornbills, Andean Tit-Spinetails, and spectacular Sword-billed Hummingbirds, among many others. Other birds we could see include Torrent Ducks and local specialty Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe.

Enjoy a walk in Papallacta and spend the evening relaxing at Termas de Papallacta, where you have a chance to unwind in the hot springs by your cabin.

Overnight: Termas de Papallacta

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Sword-billed Hummingbird



Saturday, October 11: Guango Lodge birding

This morning, you make your way east toward the Guango area and Guango Lodge, where you can spend time walking the lodge's trails. There is an excellent variety of hummingbirds that can be spotted in this area, with hundreds of individuals of over 10 species. Many other bird species can also be seen in these montane forest habitats, including beautiful Masked Flowerpiercers and Turquoise Jays. We bird along the Guango Trail and continue our drive eastward down the Eastern Andean cordillera to Cosanga. The Baeza-Cosanga area includes the Guacamayos Ridge and is brimming with bird species. We might observe, among others, Solitary Eagles, Black-and-chestnut Eagles, Orange-breasted Falcons, Rufous-breasted Wood-Quails, Military Macaws, Band-bellied Owls, White-capped Parrots, Vermiculated Screech-owls, Andean Potoos, and Black-mandibled Toucans.

After lunch, we continue along our route toward San Isidro Lodge. San Isidro is located in a private nature reserve in the Cosanga cloud forest. It lies at an elevation of approximately 2000 m above sea level in a region still containing extensive forest cover. You can find a variety of habitats within, and the trails provide great access to this unspoiled location.

The birding is great, even right at the front porch of San Isidro Lodge, with an adjacent hummingbird garden where you can enjoy a fine array of hummingbirds. Eighteen of the known 30 hummingbird species of the area are either resident or seasonal visitors to the feeders: Sparkling Violetears, Speckled Hummingbirds, Fawn-breasted Brilliants, Bronzy and Collared Incas, Buff-tailed and Chestnut-breasted Coronets, Tyrian Metaltails, Long-tailed Sylphs, and Gorgeted Woodstars can be found at the feeders for much (or all) of the year, while species such as Brown and Green Violetears, Rufous-vented Whitetips, Violet-fronted Brilliants, Rufous-gaped Hillstars, Mountain Velvetbreasts, and Wedge-billed Hummingbirds show more seasonality and tend to be present in smaller numbers. This is a great place to relax!

Although it is unlikely that we see any of them, you may be interested to know that there are a number of mammals that reside in the reserve, including Spectacled Bears, Mountain Tapirs, Northern Pudús, Spix's Night Monkeys, White-fronted Capuchins, Oncillas, Pumas, Jaguarundis, and Tayras.

Overnight: San Isidro Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



© Charles J. Sharp

Sunday, October 12: Guacamayos Ridge

This morning, explore the Guacamayos Ridge, well known for a number of specialty birds like Black-billed Mountain-Toucans, Andean Motmots, Black-and-chestnut Eagles, Lemon-browed Flycatchers, and White-capped Tanagers. We have more opportunities to continue birding around our lodge as well! We have a great chance of seeing many of the hundreds of birds that live here while quietly strolling along the forest trails and forested roadsides. Besides the hummingbirds mentioned above, some showstoppers or otherwise interesting birds may include Speckled-faced Parrots, Powerful Woodpeckers, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatchers, Smoky Bush-Tyrants, Green (Inca) Jays, Black-billed Peppershrikes, Andean Solitaires, and Saffron-crowned Tanagers.

Overnight: San Isidro Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Monday, October 13: San Isidro, Return to Quito

This morning, we spend a bit more time exploring the trails at San Isidro. In the afternoon, we return to the hotel in Quito for either the beginning of your Galapagos Expedition program or your next pre-trip extension.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

**Note that the activities presented here are weather-dependent. The itinerary is also subject to change due to logistical arrangements and availability and to take advantage of local events.*



Mindo, Ecuador

Extension Tour Details

Extension Tour Cost:

Minimum of 2 people: Approx. US\$3150

Minimum of 4 people: Approx. US\$2795

Single Supplement: US\$275

The cost listed is based on a minimum of two people on the extension. If you wish single accommodation or we cannot match you up with a roommate, a single supplement for this trip is approx. US\$275. This is payable at 90 days prior to departure.

What's Included:

- Accommodation in hotels listed or similar based on double occupancy
- Ground transportation
- Meals as described in itinerary
- Services of an Ecuadorean expert bird guide

Not Included:

- Airfare from your home to Quito and return
- Extra meals and hotels in Quito (if required)
- Entrance fees to private reserves (approx. US\$100 — payable locally — subject to weather conditions)
- Fuel surcharge, if applicable
- Gratuities
- Optional activities
- Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation
- Any item not mentioned in “What’s Included”

Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$750 is required to reserve a space on this extension. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.



Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas

An Optional Extension to our Galapagos Islands Tour

October 23 – 30, 2025 | 8 Days

Many of the participants on our Galapagos Islands program have requested that we add an extension to Peru that includes Machu Picchu, the fabulous Lost City of the Incas. We have now run this extension very successfully for the last few years. It is fully escorted by bilingual guides who are very knowledgeable about the archaeology and culture of the region.

On this one-week trip, we'll tour two of the most interesting cities in South America – Lima and Cusco – and the Sacred Valley of the Incas in addition to Machu Picchu. We'll also explore the most important Inca ruins in the Andes, such as Sacsayhuamán and Ollantaytambo. While moving through the country, we'll be able to visit craft shops, extraordinary museums and have a wonderful opportunity to stroll through village markets where time-honoured traditions live on in the hearts of the Andean people.

This is an easy-paced week-long journey that is perfect for anyone with a sense of curiosity and adventure. Call or e-mail us to make this extension a part of your trip!

Detailed Itinerary:

Thursday, October 23: Arrive to Lima (from Quito)

On arrival in Lima, you meet a local representative (holding a Quest Nature Tours sign) and are transferred to your hotel by the airport, where you have the rest of the day at leisure.

Overnight: Costa del Sol Wyndham

Friday, October 24: Lima – Cusco – Sacred Valley

Early this morning, you are picked up at your hotel and driven to the airport for your flight to Cusco, the archaeological capital of South America. You are met on arrival by your local guide and taken to the Sacred Valley of the Incas on a drive of approximately one-and-a-half hours. The Valley is located 500 metres lower than the

Cusco City, allowing you to better acclimatize to the high altitude. After another 45 minutes by car, you arrive at the Pisac archaeological site before dining at a local restaurant.

After lunch, explore explore Pisac's archaeological treasures and then travel downhill to the town of Pisac. Another 45-minute drive brings you to your charming hotel. Once there, spend the latter part of the afternoon at leisure enjoying the beauty of the hotel's gardens filled with hummingbirds and colourful flowers.

Overnight: Hotel El Albergue (Superior Garden View) or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Saturday, October 25: Pumamarca and Ollantaytambo

Today after meeting your guide, you get to explore one of the most compelling Inca archaeological sites in the Sacred Valley. First, there is a chance to walk to Pumamarca, a small archeological complex that was built by the Wari people, who populated this area long before the Incas. This hike takes us through elfin forests, crystal-clear creeks, high mountains, ancient water channels, and beautiful Inca terraces. There are various alternate tours to reach Pumamarca, so your guide can help you decide which one to choose.

Later, visit Ollantaytambo, a still-occupied Inca village set below ancient ruins that retains the stonework, narrow streets, and family courtyards of pre-Columbian times. Ollantaytambo is an important ceremonial site and the scene of an important battle between the Incas and the Spanish conquerors. Here, you have a chance to walk up the monument's steps. This is a steep ascent, offering great views to the valley as a final reward for the effort. Bird lovers can watch out for Giant Hummingbirds, which may be foraging along the steep slopes around the site!

Today's lunch is a memorable experience during which you visit an organic farm set on an old Inca terrace and participate in the preparation of a traditional Pachamanca. The Pachamanca is an ancient Peruvian cooking technique involving an earth-oven in which native ingredients such as different kinds of tubers, vegetables, and meats are wrapped in local herbs and cooked underground using wood-fire-heated stones. The owner of this place just started a tiny traditional distillery, where he is developing fascinating products using different Andean ingredients. You may want to have a look at it and perhaps try one or two sips of the Andean whisky!

Later, enjoy some free time before dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Hotel El Albergue (Superior Garden View) or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Pachamanca Lunch, Dinner

Ollantaytambo



© Justin Peter

Sunday, October 26: Sacred Valley – to Machu Picchu

Early this morning, your guide meets you at the hotel and takes you to the train station. The ride aboard a Vistadome train to Aguas Calientes is approximately two hours in length, giving you the opportunity to admire how the landscape changes dramatically from atypical Andean valley surrounded by mighty snow-capped mountains such as the Verónica to a cloud-forest valley full of exuberance and life. We can watch for supremely adapted Torrent Ducks in the river along the way. Upon arrival, your guide leads you straight to the bus station to take the bus for a 25-minute ride up to the dramatic Machu Picchu citadel. Pause for a stop at the Sanctuary Lodge Hotel for an early lunch before entering the citadel.

The Incas worshiped nature and built many of their structures in harmony with the dramatic landscapes around them. The afternoon is definitely the best time of the day to explore Machu Picchu Inca Citadel, as most people have already left the area. This fact combined with the saturated late-afternoon sunlight allows you to appreciate one of the “New Seven Wonders of the World” in a very stirring way. Follow your guide slowly through the citadel, as they explain the different theories about the buildings and temples. You then board the bus and return to your hotel in Aguas Calientes.

Note: Because of very limited space on the train, we are only allowed to take a small bag or backpack with us for our one-night stay by Machu Picchu. You can leave your excess luggage with our hosts and then retrieve it upon your return.

Overnight: Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel (Superior Deluxe) or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Monday, October 27: Machu Picchu – Cusco

After breakfast, you can join a nature walk of your choice with one of the expert resident guides from the hotel. Watch for some of the over 160 different birds (36% of all the bird species recorded at the Machu Picchu Sanctuary) right in or just adjacent to the hotel gardens. These include 16 hummingbird species and other show-stoppers like Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Golden-headed Quetzals, Andean Motmots, and White-capped Dippers. You may spot (or at least hear) an endemic Inca Wren. The hotel is also home to the largest native orchid collection in the world with a total of 372 species, a world record. There are over 100 butterfly species, more than 200 tree species, and a great variety of reptiles and mammals.

After lunch, return to the train station to board the train back to Ollantaytambo. On arrival, transfer to your hotel in Cusco. Here, your extra luggage is returned back to you. We dine this evening at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Antigua Casona San Blas

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tuesday, October 28: Cusco City Tour and Nearby Ruins

Your guide meets you at your hotel and takes you to the most representative sites of the city, giving you the chance to appreciate the subtle complexity of Peruvian history. Visit the 16th-century Cathedral and the rich colonial treasures it houses. Another highlight is the Santo Domingo Convent, once the Sacred temple of the Sun (also known as the Qoricancha), whose inner walls were, according to the chronicles, once completely covered in gold and home to life-sized gold statues. You then continue driving to the outskirts of Cusco where you can visit the surrounding archaeological Incan sites. On the way, you have the opportunity to view Cusco from above, allowing you to appreciate the original Inca design of the city, over which the Colonial and Modern Cusco have been built. You then visit Sacsayhuamán, commonly called “fortress” because of the huge stone blocks that make up its walls despite its being designed as an important worship area. We may have time to visit the Qenqo, Puca Pucara, and Tambomachay archaeological sites. San Pedro local market and San Blas district are two other places that you may find quite interesting. Dinner is at a local restaurant this evening.

Overnight: Antigua Casona San Blas

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Wednesday, October 29: Cusco – Lima

Early this morning, you are picked up at your hotel and driven to the airport for your flight to Lima. Upon arrival, you are met and driven to your hotel for check-in. Continue onward to Larco Herrera Museum to gain a broader perspective of the different stages of cultural development on Peruvian territory, establishing at the same time a parallel chronology with the most significant civilizations around the world. Among the priceless pieces you find here are ancient textiles as well as gold and silver objects, but the focus at this museum is its pottery collection. In fact, this museum owns the largest collection of erotic pottery belonging to the Moche Culture. Enjoy lunch at the charming restaurant located at the museum. Afterward, continue to Lima’s colonial centre. Lima has been the capital of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru and then the independent Peru for over four centuries, so visiting places like the main plaza or Casa Aliaga allows you to get a sense of its impressive past. Casa Aliaga is an exceptional colonial house that was once inhabited by one of the conquistadors and is still owned by the same family today.

Overnight: Villa Barranco or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Thursday, October 30: Departure

You are transferred to the airport for your homebound flight.

Meals: Breakfast

**Note that the activities presented here are weather-dependent. The itinerary is also subject to change due to logistical arrangements and availability and to take advantage of local events.*



Antigua Casona San Blas, Cusco

Extension Tour Details

Extension Tour Cost:

Minimum of 2 people: Approx. US\$5625

4 people: Approx. US\$4895

6 people: Approx. US\$4695

Single Supplement: US\$1075

The cost listed is based on a minimum of two people on the extension. If you wish single accommodation or we cannot match you up with a suitable roommate, the single supplement for this trip is approx. US\$1075. This is payable at 90 days prior to departure.

What's Included:

- Accommodation in double occupancy from Lima in hotels listed or similar
- Ground transportation and train fare Ollantaytambo – Aguas Calientes – Ollantaytambo
- Meals as described in the itinerary
- Activities as described in the itinerary
- Airfare from Lima – Cusco – Lima
- Airport transfers if arriving and departing on scheduled dates of extension
- Park and site entrance fees (one entrance fee to Machu Picchu)
- Services of local English-speaking guides

Not Included:

- International airfare
- Fuel surcharge, if applicable
- Any additional accommodations required due to air schedules
- Gratuities
- Optional activities
- Beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transportation required due to any emergency or other situation
- Any item not mentioned in “What’s Included”

Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$750 is required to reserve a space on this extension. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.