Galápagos & Ecuador Experience



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Walking with sightseeing	Ecuador & Galapagos	4	4068kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Ecuador is bursting with contrasts, from the Andean foothills to one of the world's most celebrated wildlife-watching - the Galápagos Islands. You'll visit the UNESCO-listed Ecuadorian capital, Quito, hike through the waterfall splashed jungles of the Mindo Cloud Forest and drive down the Pan-American Highway to marvel at the snow-capped peak of Cotopaxi volcano. And on the Galápagos, you'll encounter incredible wildlife, including giant tortoise, great frigate birds, marine iguana, Galápagos penguin, and more.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Visiting the wildlife-rich Galápagos Islands
- Exploring the lava tunnels of Santa Cruz
- Swimming with turtles in Tortuga Bay
- Hiking through Cayambe Coca Eco Reserve
- Spotting exotic birds in Mindo Cloud Forest
- Taking part in community projects
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 16 people)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Heathrow including baggage and transfers

- Guided walks and sightseeing with local leaders
- 12 nights' touring accommodation across Ecuador and the Galápagos
- 12 breakfasts, 3 lunches & 11 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport and internal flights

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrival Day – Quito

Welcome to Quito - the best-preserved historical city of the Americas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and cultural capital of South America. And to top it off, it's located on the equator in the foothills of the Pichincha volcano. Depending on when you arrive, you can spend your day exploring the old town of Quito. Then in the evening, there'll be a welcome briefing at the hotel lobby to go through everything and help with anything you need.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 2,850 metres above sea level

Day 2 Cotopaxi National Park

Distance: approx. 3.5 miles (5.6km)

Ascent/Descent: negligable

Duration: approx. 2hrs

We'll drive south on the Pan-American Highway to the highest active volcano in the world, Cotopaxi. This snow-capped volcano is surrounded by the Cotopaxi National Park, home to abundant plant life and Inca ruins. We'll drive across the páramo to Limpiopungo Lake for short walk to birdwatch and admire the almost symmetrical cone of the Cotopaxi volcano.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 3,850 metres above sea level

Day 3 Quito – Middle of the World - Mindo Cloud Forest

This morning, we'll head north of Quito to visit the middle of the world - a mandatory stop once you're in Ecuador – where you're able to stand on both sides of the hemispheres at the same time. On our way, we'll stop for a view of the Pululahua crater, the third largest inhabited volcanic crater in the world. Then we'll reach Mindo, which is nestled in the cloud forest - a true birdwatcher's paradise. In the afternoon we'll visit a chocolate distributor to understand how they process cocoa, from harvesting the seed to the final product.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 2,500 metres above sea level

Day 4 Mindo Cloud Forest – Waterfall Hike

Distance: approx. 2 miles (3.2km)

Ascent/Descent: 290m / 250m

Duration: approx. 1hr45m

Explore the pristine cloud rainforest of Mindo, crossing by cable car and hiking along waterfalls surrounded toucans, hummingbirds, and other colourful birds. The afternoon's yours to enjoy some optional outdoor activities like whitewater rafting, tubing, or ziplining over the forest canopy. Then we'll make our way to the butterfly nursery to watch them emerge and land on your hand.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 1,400 metres above sea level

Day 5 Otavalo Market & Sacha Warmi Local Community Project

We'll drive back up into the highlands, heading north to the town of Otavalo. We'll visit Pijal, a small village in the heart of the Andes, to visit one of the sustainable projects called Sacha WarmiKuna (women from the mountain). You'll prepare 'Aji' (a local spicy salsa) together, have lunch, and learn more about the weaving process of their textiles. In the afternoon, you'll get to explore the handicraft market, full of textiles, alpaca throws and rugs, knitted clothing, paintings, ceramics, jewellery, and tapestries. Later we'll arrive at the historical hacienda of Cusin where we'll stay overnight.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 2,700 metres above sea level

Day 6 Cuicocha Crater Lake

Distance: approx. 4.5 miles (7.2km)

Ascent/Descent: 581m / Descent: 90m

Duration: approx. 2hrs

Our first stop today will be the Cuicocha crater lake in the Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve. We'll trek around this active volcano before taking a boat to the centre of the crater where you'll witness the forces at play beneath the surface.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 3,100 metres above sea level

Day 7 Agua Y Vida Hike

Distance: approx. 11 miles (17.5km)

Ascent/Descent: 200m/800m

Duration: approx. 5-6hrs

One hour from Quito, we'll be in amongst the Andean páramo surrounded by lagoons, waterfalls, and the most incredible views. We'll hike in the Cayambe Coca National Park to soak up every detail. Then at the end of the day, we'll check in to our hotel for a relaxing final night.

Maximum Daily Altitude: 4,000 metres above sea level (highest point of the trip)

Day 8 Galápagos Islands – Santa Cruz Tortoise Reserve

We'll fly to the island of Baltra, part of the Galápagos Islands, and transfer to Santa Cruz, a nearby island, by crossing the narrow Itabaca channel by ferry. We'll head into the highlands, home to the iconic giant Galápagos tortoises, where we'll have lunch at a private ranch before going in search of these famous residents. Along the way, you'll spot lava tubes, too. The evening's yours to enjoy at your leisure.

Day 9 Santa Cruz – Bay Tour – Tortuga Bay

Today is all about wildlife encounters as we firstly head for a boat ride to Academy Bay. You'll swim and snorkel with the exotic fish and sea lions that frolic in the waters and search out blue-footed boobies. Afterwards, we'll climb to a nearby viewpoint to see white-tipped reef sharks before walking along Playa de los Perros to spot the iguanas basking in the sun. We'll spend the afternoon at Tortuga Bay, a perfectly preserved beach where you're surrounded by turtles, crabs, and iguanas.

Day 10 Santa Cruz Charles Darwin Station – San Cristóbal

Spend the morning learning about conservation at the Charles Darwin Research Station and seeing the famous Lonesome George. Then in the afternoon we'll take a boat to the island of San Cristóbal where the rest of the evening's yours to enjoy as you wish.

Day 11 Isla Lobos - San Cristóbal – Tijereta Trail

A quick boat ride takes us to nearby Isla Lobos to see the wildlife that inhabits the island and surrounding waters including manta rays, sea lions, frigatebirds, and even sharks. Enjoy strolling along the white beaches of San Cristóbal before we return to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. Then we'll head to Cerro Tijeretas to hike to the beautiful Playa Baquerizo beach, passing a hilltop viewpoint, the horseshoe-shaped Punta Carola beach, and Muelle Tijeretas on the way. We'll round off the day with a sunset cocktail.

Day 12 Final day in Ecuador

After breakfast, we'll say our goodbyes to the Galápagos Islands and transfer to the airport to catch a flight back to the mainland. After arriving in Quito, we'll transfer to a hotel and spend our final evening in Ecuador.

Day 13 Departure Day

Our tour finishes here and we bid farewell to our without flight guests. After breakfast, with-flight guests transfer to Quito airport to begin our return journey back to the UK.

Day 14 Arrive UK

With flight guests arrive back in the UK

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Fiesta, Santa Cruz (Galapagos)

The 3-star Hotel Fiesta puts you in a prime position for exploring the Galápagos Islands. Situated on the western side of Santa Cruz, this hotel is well placed for wildlife-watching boat trips around Academy Bay and up-close encounters with giant tortoise. Relaxing is easy here, too. There's a small pool surrounded by sun loungers, and a huge hot tub ideal for a post-adventure soak. Bright, fresh-faced rooms come with air-conditioning, TV, and Wi-Fi, and most look out onto the hotel's manicured gardens.

Hotel Blue Marlin, San Cristobal (Galapagos)

What's most pleasing about this small and friendly hotel is its standout location. You'll be in strolling distance of San Cristobal's biggest town, Puerto Baquerio Moreno, and its charming port. Back at base, a handful of rooms with simple but homely touches create a comfortable stay and centre around a small pool. As for facilities, there's a pint-sized bar area and a buffet where breakfast is served.

Septimo Paraiso, Mindo

A handful of jungle lodges hidden in the middle of the Mindo Cloud Forest, El Septimo Paraiso is a real away-from-it-all experience. Wake up to the sounds of wildlife in the trees with a stay in one of 23 comfortable cabins – all of which overlook the tropical scenery. Made from 100% ecological materials, rooms are decked out in dark-wood, bamboo furniture, and individual touches. Outside you'll find two pools surrounded by shade-giving trees, a safari-style bar, and an excellent restaurant serving both Ecuadorian and international cuisine.

Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

You might find it tough to leave Termas Papallacta – even with a whole host of Ecuadorian adventures on your doorstep. This mountain spa hotel boasts an enviable location on the edge of the renowned Cayambe Coca Eco Reserve. Comfortable lodge-style rooms are kitted out in wooden furnishings and after a full day of exploring, you can enjoy a hot spring soak and hydrotherapy massage surrounded by knockout views of the Andean mountains.

Sheraton Hotel, Quito

Located in the bustling retail district of Ecuador's capital, Quito, this modern hotel sits in easy reach of the area's top attractions. Quito's UNESCO-listed old quarter is just a 12-minute taxi ride, or you can stick around to take advantage of the Sheraton's fully equipped gym and fitness centre. Spacious rooms are smartly decorated, and all come with TV and free Wi-Fi, and a selection have standout views over the city. The hotel has two excellent restaurants serving local dishes and international cuisine, plus a bakery that provides fresh bread and cakes.

Hacienda Cusin, Otovalo

Furnished with 17th century antiques, wall tapestries, and colourful tiles, this lavish 400-year-old Spanish estate ranks among the finest haciendas in Ecuador. Characterful rooms come with the feel of an authentic Spanish casa while hearty Ecuadorian cuisine is served in the candlelit dining room. Alongside five acres of beautifully landscaped gardens to explore and a host of activities on offer, the hotel also makes a great base from which to visit Otavalo's famous craft market.

Casa Opuntia, San Cristobal (Galapagos) 18-October Group only

Conveniently located on the seafront promenade of the stunning Playa de Oro beach, this boutique hotel combines modern comforts and natural beauty. After a day of incredible wildlife watching adventures, freshen up with a swim in the outdoor pool and unwind in elegantly designed rooms with ocean views. One of the hotel's star attractions is the garden restaurant where guests can dine on delicious local cuisine whilst overlooking the bay. (18 October

departures only)

Hotel Galapagos Planet, San Cristobal

The Galapagos Planet Hotel offers a charming experience with warm hospitality in a prime location in San Cristóbal, just 120 metres from the area's scenic boardwalk and 200 metres from the beach. The hotel features a restaurant, terrace, garden and the 24 hour reception offers complimentary tea & coffee and a water refilling station. Cozy air-conditioned rooms feature a TV and fridge.

SAFETY ON YOUR HOLIDAY

Safety information

Please inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders must consider both group and individual safety at all times.

Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you:

- Please listen to any safety instructions and other directions from the leader
- Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor
- Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you.

Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List).

In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services.. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information for Ecuador & Galapagos

This information is subject to change. In all cases, we **highly recommend** you consult your GP both for up to date details and for more information on what is appropriate to your situation. As a rule, travellers should be up to date with their routine vaccinations and boosters as recommended in the UK - including, for example, the MMR and diphtheria, tetanus, polio vaccines.

It is recommended for most travellers to have:

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus vaccinations.

Some travellers may require:

- Hepatitis B
- Rabies
- Typhoid
- Tuberculosis/TB
- Yellow Fever

If you will be arriving into Ecuador from a country with endemic Yellow Fever you will need to provide a Yellow Fever certificate. If you have recently travelled to a country with Yellow Fever - including Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda - you must be vaccinated at least 10 days prior to entering Ecuador and you must always carry an International Yellow Fever Vaccination card.

Requirements can change, and we recommend you check in good time ahead of your holiday.

On mainland Ecuador there is a low risk of malaria; the recommendation is to be aware of the risk and prevent/avoid bites. There is no risk of malaria in the Galápagos Islands.

Parts of Ecuador (including Quito at 2,800m) are at high altitude. Discuss the health risks associated with travelling to high altitude and how this relates to your health specifically with your GP before you travel. The Travel Health Pro website has a factsheet with more information and advice on how to reduce the risk of altitude sickness and recognise symptoms.

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism requires all travellers to the Galápagos to provide the following mandatory information before travelling to the islands:

- Pre-existing medical conditions and/or allergies
- Emergency contact information
- Medical/travel insurance information
- Advance Passenger Information

This information will be collected on the holiday; your local guide(s) will advise you further.

Please note: the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is banned in some countries. If you will be carrying medication, please check with the country's embassy/consulate prior to travel. As an extra precaution, it is recommended to:

- Keep medication in its original packet
- Take a copy of your prescription
- If possible, ask your chemist to write the name of your medication in the language of the country you're visiting

For further information on country specific advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information for Ecuador & Galapagos

Passports

Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of entry – this is a legal requirement and you may be denied entry if your passport does not have this.

Visas

Visas are not required for British Citizens, Australian, Canadian and US passport holders. Other British passport holders and nationalities should check the entry requirements in advance.

As of July 2025, all visitors will need to complete a registration card before travelling. The instructions on how to do this are below:

1. Visit the official website: www.aduana.gob.ec
2. Navigate to: Servicio al Ciudadano → Para viajeros: Formulario de Registro Aduane
3. Create an account using your passport or ID number and a secure password
4. Complete the entry or exit form with your personal details and declare any goods, if applicable
5. Once submitted, you will receive a QR code, which must be presented at customs control

The registration card may be submitted up to 3 days before your travel date.

Additional Information:

If you are travelling with over $10,000 in cash, jewellery, or high-value documents, you are required to declare them. This measure is in accordance with Ecuador's Law on the Prevention, Detection, and Combat of Money Laundering and aims to enhance border security and streamline customs procedures.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Travel independently

If you prefer to book the holiday without flights and make your own travel arrangements you will still be able to make use of the return group transfers between the airport and hotel, which are included in the cost of your holiday. You must contact us on +44 (0)20 3974 8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date to provide your flight details if you wish to join the transfers. If you do not contact us, we will assume you are making independent travel arrangements.

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Useful information

Please be aware that many of Ecuador's most spectacular destinations are located at high altitude, with some excursions reaching up to 4,000 metres above sea level. At these elevations, the air is thinner and you may experience shortness of breath, fatigue, or mild altitude sickness. We recommend allowing time to acclimatise, staying hydrated, avoiding heavy exertion on arrival, and consulting your doctor before travel if you have any health concerns. Our team will support you throughout your journey, but it's important to travel at your own pace and listen to your body. Preparation helps ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

Language Information for the Ecuador & Galapagos Wildlife Adventure

Spanish is the main language. You'll most likely find many Ecuadorians speak at least some English but a few words in Spanish won't go amiss – people in Ecuador typically greet one another on the street, wishing each other good day ('Buenos días'), good afternoon ('Buenas tardes') or good evening ('Buenas noches').

LUGGAGE

Luggage information for Ecuador & Galapagos Wildlife Adventure

Luggage allowance

Please check details of your airline's baggage allowance, as shown on your e-ticket. Remember to also check any connecting flights you may have booked.

If you have chosen to upgrade your international flight, please be aware that any internal or connecting flights may have a lower baggage allowance. In these cases, the baggage allowance of the internal flight will apply for the whole journey.

Lost/damaged luggage

If your bag or its contents are damaged or lost while in the airline's care, this should be reported to the baggage service agents at the airport on arrival. They will assess the damage; in some cases, the airline may decide to settle your claim immediately.

You will be given a reference to quote to your insurance company if an immediate settlement is not possible - in many cases, baggage claims can only be accepted in writing. A baggage claim form must be obtained from the airport.

LOCAL CURRENCY

Local currency for Ecuador & Galapagos

The unit of currency in Ecuador is the US dollar. Bills of $20 or more are harder to change so please make sure you bring some cash in smaller denominations for any extras such as drinks and souvenirs. You should ensure that you have access to emergency funds, a credit card being the most convenient.

Spending money advice for Ecuador & Galapagos

Your budget will depend on your own spending habits – you will need some money for drinks and any souvenirs you may wish to buy, but US$ 200 may be enough.

LOCAL TIME

Local time for Ecuador & Galapagos

Ecuador mainland: GMT/UTC -5 hours

Galápagos Islands: GMT/UTC -6 hours

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Ecuador & Galapagos

Electricity is 120V, frequency of 60hz. Flat two-pin plugs and three pin plugs with two flat and one round pin are used. We suggest you take a universal adaptor.

ATM AVAILABILITY

ATM availability for Ecuador & Galapagos

Credit and debit cards are generally accepted in cities, but a fee is often added to the cost by the merchant. ATMs are available at most banks in urban areas; make sure you know your PIN.

We recommend you take cash with you to the Galápagos Islands - most businesses won't accept cards so have cash as a backup for any small purchases in case your card isn't accepted. Visa and Mastercard are the best options; a fee is likely to be charged as on the mainland. ATMs can be found in Puerto Ayora.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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