

LUXURY GALAPAGOS CRUISE & ECUADOR TRAIN TOUR

See the Highlights of Ecuador

14 DAYS / 13 NIGHTS

The Luxury Ecuador Galapagos and Train Tour is a 3-for-one special! Start your journey visiting some of Quito's best highlights, on a guided city tour. Then embark on a luxury Galapagos Cruise aboard the Petrel Catamaran. Cruise around the exotic islands and enjoy close-up encounters with blue-footed boobies, iguanas, giant tortoises and more. As your days at sea come to an end, continue by rail on South America's most exciting train, the Tren Crucero. Sit back and relax on the Tren Crucero and travel past the Avenue of the Volcanoes, Cotopaxi and descend along the mythical "Devil's Nose," to more charming Andean villages. This Luxury Galapagos Cruise & Train Tour is the perfect introduction to Ecuador.

Note: The Petrel Catamaran & Tren Crucero have set departure dates & are subject to availability.

FROM
**GET CUSTOM
PRICING**
per person

THIS TOUR INCLUDES:

13 nights accommodations
7 transfers
Daily breakfast
24/7 phone support

HIGHLIGHTS

- Colonial Quito
- Otavalo Indigenous Market
- Galapagos Islands Cruise
- Tren Crucero
- Avenue of the Volcanos
- Cotopaxi National Park
- Guayaquil

ITINERARY



Day 1 **ARRIVE IN QUITO**

Your luxury Ecuador tour starts in Quito, the beautiful capital city of Ecuador. Upon arrival, your local guide will take you to your hotel where you can relax and unwind. Spend the rest of the day at your leisure and wander around the city. Quito is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and continues to impress travelers as being one of the best-preserved cities in Latin America. The monasteries and Churches are prime examples of the "Baroque school of Quito," combining indigenous Spanish and European styles. Spend some time admiring the colonial architecture and then return to your hotel for a night of rest.



Day 2

QUITO CITY TOUR

Following an early morning breakfast, get ready for a city tour starting in Quito's old town, *Centro Histórico*, declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 1978. Tour Alameda Park and admire the staggering hills in which the city was founded. Walk down one of Quito's oldest streets, *García Moreno* (also known as the Street of the Seven Crosses). As you reach Quito's main square, Independence Plaza, glance inside the Presidential Palace and *La Compañía Church*, this church is considered one of the continent's most spectacular monumental buildings. Then, continue to San Francisco Church, most famous for being the oldest Basilica in Quito and the largest religious complex in South America. The Church and monasteries in Quito are prime examples of the Baroque school of Quito, which combines Spanish, Italian, Flemish and Moorish styles with indigenous art.

After an exciting day of exploring Quito, return to your hotel and spend the rest of the day at your leisure.



Day 3

MINDO CLOUD FOREST EXCURSION

After an early breakfast, leave Quito and travel northwest towards Mindo. Follow the Nono-Tandayapa-Bellavista Road/La Ecoruta El Paseo del Quinde, an old scenic route, world-famous amongst birding aficionados. Take in the wonderful stunted elfin and lush subtropical cloud forests. Around midday, stop for lunch.

The town of Mindo is nestled amidst the exuberant presence of dense montane forests, filled with bromeliads and other epiphytes; a true tropical wonder, where nature thrives at every turn. Visit a lovely orchid garden to see many diverse and fascinating varieties; spectacular hummingbirds, frogs and butterflies are also a common sight here. Take the town's cable-car across the Nambillo River gorge into a waterfall-laden forest, ideal for hiking and birding.

In the late afternoon, return to Quito and transfer to our hotel



Day 4

FLY TO THE GALAPAGOS & BOARD THE PETREL LUXURY CATAMARAN

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before meeting your guide that will escort you to the Quito Airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. Upon arrival, transfer to Santa Cruz Island and go on a short hike before boarding the Petrel, a luxury Galapagos Islands catamaran. Hike to the highlands of Santa Cruz to see the volcanoes, ferns and abundant wildlife. This area is home to giant tortoises, mockingbirds, Bahama ducklings, White-cheeked Pintail ducklings, Darwin finches, and many other species. For a unique and surreal experience, ask the guide to take you to the underground lava tubes. In the afternoon board the ship and get ready for your luxury Galapagos Islands cruise.

Note: The Petrel Catamaran has fixed departure dates & is subject to availability.



Day 5

GALAPAGOS CRUISE TO SOUTH PLAZA ISLAND & SANTA FE

Today the Petrel visits the South Plaza Island; a small island with steep cliffs originally formed from rising lava, but now covered by Opuntia cacti. South Plaza Island is home to the largest sea lion colonies and colorful yellow and red land iguanas. The most native plant is the Sesuvium. During the rainy season, its color is a greenish to yellowish tone and in the dry season (end of June through January) a bright red.

Continue towards Santa Fe (Barrington), a picturesque bay and anchorage on the island's northeast coast. The bay has two visitor trails, one leading to a scenic viewpoint atop a cliff, and the other spanning from a small beach to a tall prickly pear cactus forest. Whichever direction you choose, you will get a taste of the natural beauty of the Galapagos Islands.



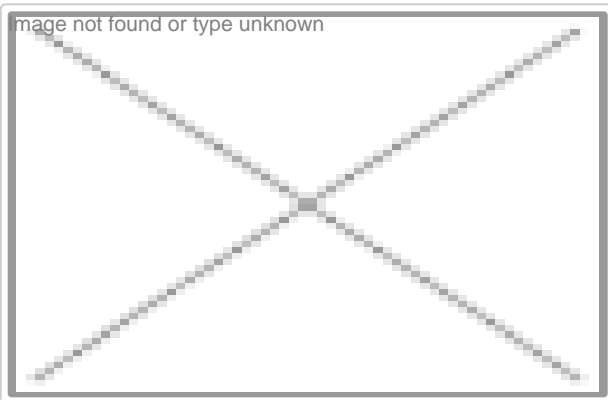
Day 6

GALAPAGOS CRUISE TO ISLA DE LOBOS

Enjoy breakfast on the catamaran before the first shore excursion to Isla de Lobos. Isla de Lobos is an island named after the sea lions that play on the rocky shores. Look for the cute blue-footed boobies, magnificent frigate birds, brown pelicans, lava gulls, common noddies, yellow warblers and ground finches. After spotting wildlife on land, venture into the ocean for some snorkeling. The clear waters and channels make for some of the best snorkeling in the Galapagos. Swim with friendly sea lions and snap some underwater photos.

Next stop is the Interpretation Center, which opened in 1998 as a phase of the project "Interpretation and Environment Education Project." Learn about the conservation efforts taken to protect the wildlife. Continue to San Cristobal Island and go on a lovely hike to see land birds like warblers, finches, and mockingbirds. Along the hike look for giant tortoises.

Spend the rest of the evening on the luxury catamaran and reflect on your experiences thus far in the Galapagos Islands.



Day 7

GALAPAGOS CRUISE TO GARDNER BAY, OSBORN ISLET & SUAREZ POINT

Today your luxury Galapagos cruise takes you to the eastern side of Gardner Bay, a breeding site of nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of Waved Albatrosses. Choose between relaxing on the white sandy beaches, diving or snorkeling. Later, visit the Osborn Islet. Visit a nearby sea lion colony or go diving with adorable sea lion pups.

The final stop today is Suarez Point, perfect for spotting blue-footed boobies, albatrosses and nazca boobies. Visit the impressive blowholes, spurting water high into the air and try to capture some photographs. Then, return to the ship and relax with some of your fellow cruisers.



Day 8

GALAPAGOS CRUISE TO CORMORANT POINT

After enjoying breakfast on the catamaran, depart for Cormorant Point, home to a large flamingo lagoon where other birds such as common stilts and white-cheeked pintails are found. Walk to "Green Beach," nicknamed for its olivine crystals found in the sand and "Four Sand Beach" a pristine white beach.

Later, go snorkeling in the volcanic crater and explore the coral reef as you search for marine life. For an exhilarating experience, swim with the currents as they rush through the crown.

The final stop today is Floreana Island. In the 18th century, whalers placed an unofficial mailbox on the island, and today the tradition continues. Get your postcard stamped and send a postcard to your friends back home.



Day 9

CHARLES DARWIN RESEARCH CENTER & FLIGHT TO QUITO

Spend your last day in the Galapagos at the Charles Darwin Research Station. The Charles Darwin Research Station protects turtles ranging from 3-inches (new hatchlings) to 4-feet long. Sub-species of turtles interact with one another. Many of the older turtles are accustomed to humans and will stretch out their heads for people to pet them. The babies are kept here until they are about four years old and can prove to be strong enough to survive on their own.

In the afternoon, transfer to the airport and return to Quito. Once you arrive in Quito, transfer to your hotel and spend the rest of the night at your leisure.



Day 10

TREN CRUCERO TO QUITO, OTAVALO, IBARRA & QUITO

After breakfast at your hotel, depart Quito early in the morning. You will travel north for about an hour until you reach Otavalo. In Otavalo, a small town surrounded by mountains is a carefully restored steam engine awaiting your arrival. As the train travels at a slow pace, experience the many wonders hidden in this region of the country. Visit and greet musicians, painters, weavers and the skilled woodcarvers who keep the renowned Quito School style alive. Later, taste the local flavors of traditional Andean cuisine and take a short visit to a beautiful rose plantation. After your class at the estate, return to Quito.

Note: The Tren Crucero has fixed departure dates & is subject to availability.



Day 11

TREN CRUCERO TO QUITO & URBINA

Board the train at the Quito Chimbacalle station and begin your journey south along the Avenue of the Volcanoes. With clear weather, you can spot up to twenty volcanoes from the train. The Andes mountain range splits into two paths running parallel down south. Between the two paths is a fertile valley, hosting an abundance of biodiversity. Watch the landscape change from your panoramic car, as the train gradually ascends the Andean highlands to Urbina. Urbina is the highest point on the itinerary at 11,800 feet above sea level. Later, nearby Mount Chimborazo, you will meet the last ice merchant and learn his family history in the world of trade.



Day 12

TREN CRUCERO TO RIOBAMBA, THE DEVIL'S NOSE & BUCAY

In the morning, depart Riobamba and head towards Colta, a province where the Spanish conquerors built their first settlement in Ecuador. Travel by colorful quinoa fields ranging from purples, yellow, and reds. Marvel at the various species of flora and wildlife, the historic indigenous settlements, and the last structures of ancient cultures.

Be sure to visit the Guamote market as it is one of the last indigenous markets in the Andes. After, continue south towards the mythical Devil's Nose pass. The Devil's Nose is a steep, zig-zag railway that will take you from the Andean highlands down to the coastal plains. The curving path offers up views of the mountains from every perspective. Continue your descent along the narrow Chanchán river gorge and cross a deep, lush cloud forest towards the city of Bucay.



Day 13

TREN CRUCERO TO BUCAY & GUAYAQUIL

The landscape will change once again as the train leaves the tropical forest behind. Outside your window will be rice, sugarcane, pineapple, and banana plantations. For lunch, stop at a traditional hacienda, where you will learn about growing and harvesting the best cocoa bean in the world from the locals. After your visit, board the steam engine once again. Travel across the fields towards the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Your Tren Crucero trip will end at a hotel in Guayaquil for the night.



Day 14

TRANSFER TO GUAYAQUIL & DEPARTURE

After breakfast at your hotel, transfer to the Guayaquil Airport and continue home or to your next destination in South America.