

For tours departing beyond 2006, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2007 brochure (issued in Oct 06).

2006  
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!  
WORLDWIDE

ECUADOR • GALAPAGOS ISLANDS Dossier Ref. EC

## Ecuadoriana & the Galápagos

Amended 11 Nov 2005. Valid from  
01 Jan 2006 to 31 Dec 2006

### CONNECTING TRAVEL FROM LONDON

22 days/21 nights Tour including  
Connecting Group Flights  
London-Quito-Guayaquil-London

Depart Saturday from London Heathrow  
Airport on flight to arrive Quito the same day.  
Transfer to hotel (day 1 of Land Only itinerary).

Return Friday from Guayaquil (day 21  
of Land Only itinerary). Overnight flight  
arriving at London Heathrow Airport the next  
day, Saturday.

### JOINING TOUR ABROAD

21 days/20 nights Land Only  
Quito to Guayaquil

Join Quito on Saturday (day 1)

End Guayaquil on Friday (day 21)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements  
should make their own way to the joining point  
in Quito. Please refer to separate 'Joining  
Instructions' for name and address of hotel  
and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

### SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights on this tour, we  
particularly mention:

- \* **QUITO** Colonial Andean capital.
- \* **MINDO** Cloudforest famous for bird-life.
- \* **OTAVALO & SAQUISILI** Fascinating  
Indian markets.
- \* **VOLCANOES** The picturesque volcanic  
peaks of Cotopaxi, Chimborazo and  
Tungurahua.
- \* **AMAZON JUNGLE** Exploring the Amazon  
forest on foot and by canoe.
- \* **DEVILS NOSE RAILWAY** Spectacular  
railway journey.

### Climate Care

The biggest environmental impact of our  
holidays is the international flight due to the  
emissions produced by the aircraft's engines.  
At Explore we offset all the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions  
generated by our staff flights, thus making  
Explore 'climate neutral'. Information on how  
you can 'carbon balance' your holiday will be  
sent with your final invoice. See the Explore  
website for more details.

### Earth Matters

- All plastic water bottles used on this trip are  
collected by your Tour Leader and given to a  
local sugar cane processing company where they  
are reused, drastically reducing our impact on  
the environment and supporting local enterprise.
- The biggest environmental impact of our  
holidays is the international flight due to the  
emissions produced by the aircraft's engines.  
At Explore we offset all the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions  
generated by our staff flights, thus making  
Explore 'climate neutral'. Information on how  
you can 'carbon balance' your holiday will be  
sent with your final invoice. See the Explore  
website for more details.

\* **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** A week travelling  
from island to island on board a tourist  
class vessel.

From the snow-capped Andes to the dense  
Amazonian forests and the unique wildlife of  
the Galápagos Islands, diversity is the  
secret of Ecuador's charm. We'll spend  
some time at Mindo, famous for  
birdspotting, visit the colourful market at  
Otavalo and walk in the shadow of Cotopaxi  
volcano. We travel into the jungle, home to  
the Quichua Indians, exploring on foot and  
by canoe. The Cordillera is a breathtaking  
'Avenue of Volcanoes' within which we will  
encounter bustling Indian markets within  
the small traditional villages we visit on the  
way. We include a week exploring the world-  
famous 'Enchanted Isles' some 600 miles  
off Ecuador's coast. All these adventurous  
elements combine to make this trip an  
outstanding and imaginative journey.

### LAND ONLY ITINERARY

**Note:** While our intention is to adhere to the  
day-by-day route printed below, a degree of  
flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight  
stops may vary from those suggested.

**Accommodation and Included Meals:** please  
find a key to our accommodation ratings  
overleaf, and note that included meals are  
indicated in the itinerary below (BLD =  
breakfast, lunch, dinner).

**Day 1. Saturday. Join tour Quito**  
Arrive Quito and check into hotel. **2 nights  
hotel H+.**

**Day 2. In Quito**  
We begin with a walking tour of Quito,  
Ecuador's mountain capital and the second  
highest capital in Latin America. Quito is one  
of South America's most beautiful cities lying  
in a narrow valley at the foot of Pichincha  
volcano surrounded by snow capped  
mountains and extinct volcanoes. This  
fascinating city has a blend of colonial  
architecture, with imposing churches and  
busy local markets. We will visit some of the  
main sites including Plaza de la  
Independencia, La Compañía church with its  
gilded altars, walls and ceilings, and San  
Francisco church, Quito's largest. We also  
climb to the top of Cerro Panecillo for  
fantastic views of the city and the Andes.  
**(Included meals: B).**

**Day 3. Drive to Mindo**  
This morning we take a spectacular drive,  
dropping several thousand feet, through  
native cloud forest on the western Andean  
slopes, to the village of Mindo. The  
settlement is surrounded by dairy farms and  
a unique cloud forest and much of the area  
has been set aside as a nature reserve. This  
north western area is one of South America's  
most diverse places for birdlife with over 400  
species and also has some amazing flora  
and fauna, beautiful forest and waterfalls. In  
the afternoon we will have a short  
birdwatching walk. **Overnight hotel H+  
(included meals: D).**

**Day 4. In Mindo; drive to Otavalo**  
In Mindo, we'll spend some more time bird-  
watching before breakfast, and we will visit a



small butterfly farm (optional). Driving to  
Otavalo, we stop in the "Middle of the  
World", where we cross the equator and visit  
the interesting Solar Museum "Inti Nan" with  
fascinating exhibits and explanations of the  
importance of Ecuador's geographical  
location. Late this afternoon, after a drive  
with views of the dramatic Guayllabamba  
canyon, we arrive in Otavalo, a small market  
town situated in a fertile valley surrounded  
by imposing sacred mountains. **Overnight  
hotel H+ (included meals: L, D).**

**Day 5. In Otavalo; drive to Machachi**  
This morning we visit Cuicocha crater lake  
(3100m) for a short walk through wonderful  
alpine vegetation, surrounding a tranquil  
turquoise lake. Here we hope to see the  
"King of the Andes", the wide-winged condor  
in graceful flight. We return to Otavalo to visit  
the colourful craft market, where we might be  
able to pick up some vibrantly coloured  
locally woven textiles, many made with  
natural plant dyes. This is probably the best  
place to do some souvenir hunting, perhaps  
buying a locally made poncho to take home.  
From Otavalo we drive to the Indian village of  
Peguche. Our night stop is near the  
settlement of Machachi, where we stay in an  
atmospheric family-run hosteria. **Overnight  
hosteria H+ (included meals: B).**

**Day 6. Drive to Baños via Cotopaxi &  
Saquisilí**  
Leaving Machachi this morning, we drive  
south towards Baños. On the way, we drive  
into Cotopaxi National Park where we can  
see one of the world's highest active  
volcanoes – Cotopaxi 5897m. We plan to  
take a short walk around Limpiopungo, a  
glacial lake surrounded by flora and fauna of  
the páramo (high-altitude Andean  
grasslands). Then we proceed to the small  
town of Saquisilí, scene of Ecuador's largest  
rural market which attracts hundreds of  
Indians coming from remote villages  
throughout the region. Later we head for  
Baños – the base for our jungle exploration.  
**Overnight hotel H+.**

**Day 7. Drive to Amazonia via Misahualli**  
Today we drive towards the Amazon  
Rainforest taking in en route the beautiful  
scenery around Baños. We'll see the Pailón  
del Diablo waterfall (optional) and a view of  
the Tungurahua volcano if it is clear. We then  
drive to the small port of Misahualli, calling  
in at a balsawood carving workshop at Puyo  
and continue to our lodge, by the Misahualls

River. Over the next couple of days we will have time to explore this natural setting on foot and by canoe. **3 nights lodge L+ (included meals: B, L, D).**

#### Days 8 & 9. In Amazonia

Exploring the jungle on foot allows us the chance to marvel at the variety of plants, many with medicinal powers understood by the native Indians for millennia, but only just beginning to be discovered by modern day scientists. On our morning walk through the exotic flora of the Amazon forest, we observe tropical plants and listen to the strange shrieks that are part of the jungle atmosphere. Look out for iridescent butterflies, orchids and bromeliads. We may see many tropical birds nesting in the trees, and witness flocks of parrots, jays, a toucan or a hummingbird. Listen out for the crash of monkeys swinging through the canopy long before we spot them. Life in the Amazon follows the natural clock, red-gold sunsets burst from nowhere and then suddenly it is dark, bringing with it a whole new symphony of jungle sounds. On the second day we take a morning motorised canoe ride, followed by a walk through the rainforest. In the afternoon we ride back to Misahualli in the canoe, stopping on the way to visit a small Indian village and see craftwork such as hammocks, ceramics, and necklaces made from jungle seeds. We'll also learn about miracle cures, how to hunt with blowpipes, or we might even try chicha, the local brew.

**Note: the above is an example of the range of activities, these differ from visit to visit (included meals: Bx2, Lx2, Dx2).**

#### Day 10. Drive to Baños

Today we return to Baños about lunchtime. We have time to walk around the town and see the impressive Pastaza Canyon. In the evening you may like to visit the thermal baths (optional). **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

#### Day 11. To Riobamba via Chimborazo Fauna Reserve

En route to Riobamba, we stop near the volcano of Chimborazo. We have time here to walk around the slopes of this spectacular extinct volcano. Here the scenery is simply breathtaking, leaving participants with a feeling of having strayed onto another planet. Chimborazo reaches a snowy elevation of 6310m. From the volcano, our journey then continues along a dirt track past various Indian villages to Riobamba. **Overnight hotel H.**

#### Day 12. Bus to Guayaquil

Leaving early this morning we drive to Alausí from where we board the train for a ride to Sibambe, inaccessible by road. This famous railway is a triumph of engineering. From Alausí the track drops 800m down a ridge and into the gorge of the Río Chanchán. This almost sheer descent, known as the 'Devil's

Nose', was achieved by building a series of switch backs, making it one of the most exciting train rides in the world. The train returns to Alausí where we rejoin our bus. Driving to Guayaquil, we follow the course of the gorge and then the terrain starts to level off into the plain of the fertile Guayas Valley. Here are fields of coffee, mangoes, bananas, cocoa, rice, sugar cane, pineapples and wetlands dotted with stilt houses. Finally we arrive at Guayaquil in the late afternoon. *Should the train not operate, our journey to Guayaquil will be entirely by road.* **Overnight hotel H+.**

#### Day 13. Fly to the Galápagos Islands

This morning we fly from Guayaquil to the Galápagos island of Baltra where our cruise starts. Over the next week we join a charter vessel to travel from island to island, accompanied by a National Park guide. We sleep on board and sail between islands at night, thus maximising the time on the islands. We visit Bachas before rejoining our boat and sailing overnight to Plazas. We also visit Santa Fe, Española, Floreana and Seymour Norte. We plan to explore in a number of different ways to get the most out of our visit – we make an excursion by road and foot up to the highlands of Santa Cruz and have time to swim in some small sheltered bays. We spend a lot of time out in the sun so high factor sunscreen and a sunhat are essential; remember to keep your swimming costume and a towel handy. During the day we can stay out on deck, an ideal place to watch dolphins frolicking. *Please note: this itinerary is subject to change.* **7 nights on board tourist class boat (included meals: L, D).**

#### Days 14 to 19. Galápagos Cruise

Our exact day to day itinerary is left flexible but the overview below gives some idea of the highlights of your trip. **Day 14.** Visit Plazas; sail and visit Santa Fe; sail to Española. **(B, L, D).** **Day 15.** Visit Punta Suárez and Bahía Gardner; sail to Floreana. **(B, L, D).** **Day 16.** Visit Punta Cormorant and Post Office Bay; sail to Santa Cruz. **(B, L, D).** **Day 17.** Visit the Highlands and Interpretation Centre; sail to Rábida and on to Isla Santiago. **(B, L, D).** **Day 18.** Sail and visit Sullivan Bay and continue to Bartolomé. **(B, L, D).** **Day 19.** Return to Baltra via Seymour Norte. **(B, L, D).**

#### Day 20. Fly to Guayaquil

We spend some time on Seymour Norte before returning to Baltra and boarding the flight back to the mainland. We transfer to our hotel in town for our last night. **Overnight hotel H (included meals: B).**

#### Day 21. Friday. Tour ends in Guayaquil

**Please note** that our Galápagos Cruise is operated in conjunction with a local supplier, and is not exclusive to Explore passengers.

## PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, **airport taxes (approx. US\$25)**, souvenirs etc, and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Foreign Exchange

**Local Currency:** US Dollar.

**Recommended Currency:** Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollar Travellers Cheques/Cash (**NOT Sterling**, which is almost impossible to change). The US dollar is the currency used in Ecuador. It is advisable to bring some US\$300 – \$400 of your total spending money in cash, in small denomination notes (in good condition). 100US\$ bills are very difficult to use. Note: US dollar bills with the series CB-B2 year 2001 will not be accepted for exchange or in the local payment.

**ATM Availability:** There are ATMs in Quito but they are not very reliable.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Credit cards are of limited use, but may be brought along 'just in case'.

**Travellers Cheques:** It is possible to change traveller's cheques in Quito at the beginning of the trip: commission is about 2%. Travellers Cheques are often difficult to exchange, especially non-American Express.

### Local Payment

Payable in **US Dollars cash** to Explore tour leader, part on arrival in Quito and part (US\$100) on arrival in the Galápagos.

### Meal Plan

**Local Food and Drink:** 13 breakfasts, 11 lunches and 11 dinners are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Approximate meal costs are given below:

	UK	Ecuador
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	£0.45
Soft drink	0.80	0.75
Bottle of Beer	2.50	1.25
Bottle water	0.80	1.00
2 Course Meal*	10.00	7.50
3 Course Meal**	18.00	9.50
Wine (Bottle)	10.00	10.00

\*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

\*\*Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

### Tipping

**Local Staff:** In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will still look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$40 for the land portion of the trip and US\$60 for the Galápagos portion of the trip for tipping.

**Tour Leader:** At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## Booking a Single Room

All of our tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. On this particular tour we are pleased to be able to offer customers the option of pre-booking a guaranteed single room. Due to the variety of accommodation used on this tour, single rooms are available for a majority of the nightstops, however it would still mean sharing at the Galapagos.

**EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS :** The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

#### Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

**H+ :** Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

**H :** Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

#### Local Style Accommodation

**L+ :** Usually twin bedded rooms, may be some 3-4 bedded. Normally shared facilities.

**L :** Could be twin bedded but more usually multiple share or dorm style, sometimes mixed sex, sleeping arrangements. Normally shared facilities.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Galápagos Vessel

Please note that cabins located on the lower deck have smaller windows and may be subject to slightly more noise at times, due to their proximity to the engine room. We are unfortunately unable to guarantee the location of your cabin on board. Our vessel normally holds a maximum of 16 passengers plus crew. Accommodation is based on twin berth cabins with private facilities. As we travel at night, this allows us to make the most of our time in the Galápagos. There is a dining area and sundeck for relaxing.

### Seasonal Climate

Temperature ranges are similar all year round. **In the highlands:** the dry season lasts from June to mid-September. November and December are partially dry. The rainy months are October and from January to May, but showers are short and mostly in the afternoons. Temperatures range from 12°C to 24°C. Nights are cold at altitude (8°C - 10°C).

**The Coastal Region:** from December to May it is hot and wet. From June to November it is generally cool and misty with sudden light showers. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C.

**The Amazon Area:** it is humid all year round. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. From April to August the rainfall is heavier.

**The Galápagos:** On the Galápagos, the hot season is January to April with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers; the cool season runs from May to December and is generally more cloudy with much cooler seas. Please note that although it is windier from July to November the sea can be rough at any time of the year. On the mainland the dry season lasts from June to October, though September can be wet.

### Visa Requirements

No visa required for citizens of UK, AUS, CAN or USA. Please ensure your passport is stamped with the T3 permit (for 30 or 90 days) on arrival in Ecuador. New Zealand passport holders and all other nationalities should consult their travel agent or consular office.

### Vaccinations & Protection

We recommend protection against yellow fever, malaria, (for the Amazon & Coastal regions only) infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

**Special Note:** Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Further information regarding vaccinations for travel to this country can be found at [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) and from your local healthcare provider.

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## PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information**' booklet, available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

**Luggage:** One main piece of luggage, an overnight bag and a daysac. Total allowance **44lbs/20kgs**. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage – don't overload yourself. On our journey around the Galápagos islands, space is restricted and there is a weight limit of 33lbs/15kgs. Main bags can be left in Guayaquil and picked up on return from the Galápagos.

**Clothing:** Pack essentially for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'. Daytime clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting, but warmer clothing is needed at altitude and at sea, particularly at night. Long-sleeved lightweight clothes are useful for protection against sunburn. Bring a swimsuit, sunhat, sunglasses and a thick sweater or fleece. Lightweight waterproofs are essential. Remember that altitude can make places much colder, especially at night, so bring something to wrap up in, including a pair of gloves, hat and scarf.

**Footwear:** Comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals with a good grip. Plastic sandals (not flip flops) are useful for wet landings.

**Equipment:** A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, beach towel, binoculars, camera film/memory card, waterproof bag for camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. If intending to snorkel (which we highly recommend), please take your own equipment. You may find a trekking pole useful for hilly walks. Disposable waterproof cameras can be purchased locally.

