



CLASSIC GROUP TOURS

ALBATROSS: ECUADOR'S HIGHLANDS AND GALAPAGOS

15 days from **£7,136pp**

**ECUADOR & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS / QUITO / AVENUE OF THE VOLCANOES / CUENCA /
GUAYAQUIL / GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**

WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

A passion for the region runs through all we do

All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America

Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Fully bonded and licensed

ATOL-protected

On your side when it matters

Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks

We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions

Let us show you the Latin America we know and love



OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

This comfortable classic group journey takes you to Ecuador's contrasting landscapes, lifestyles and cultures. In addition, there's a week spent cruising the wildlife theatre of the Galápagos Islands.

	UK clients depart arriving Quito, Ecuador, the same day
DAY 1	Transfer to hotel in Quito, overnight in the capital.
DAY 2	Walking tour of the city.
DAY 3	Head south to Chilcabamba.
DAY 4	Continue down the Avenue of the Volcanoes to Riobamba.
DAY 5	Continue to Cuenca.
DAYS 6-7	Explore Cuenca, optional visits to Gualaceo and Chordeleg.
DAY 8	Drive from the Andes to the tropical coast at Guayaquil. Stop on the way at Las Cajas National Park.
DAY 9	Fly to the Galápagos Islands, embark on your motor cruiser.
DAYS 10-14	Land excursions from the cruise around the Galápagos Islands
DAY 15	Fly to Guayaquil, connect with your extension or your international flight home. UK clients arrive home the following day.

ITINERARY

Sitting at the crossroads of the equator and the high Andes, this small country encompasses an extraordinary diversity of geography and climate, and this comfortable journey takes you to its contrasting landscapes, lifestyles and cultures. The trip begins in the capital, Quito, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, which sits amid a bowl of snow-capped mountains and active volcanoes; and continues south, along the Avenue of the Volcanoes via the Inca ruins of Ingapirca, to the beautiful colonial city of Cuenca and the upland wilderness of Las Cajas National Park.

Leaving the mainland behind, fly 1,000km west over the Pacific to the Galápagos archipelago. This small cluster of islands is home to a wealth of birds and beasts, many of which are ancient and endemic, and your 7 day cruise will introduce you to the highlights of one of the world's most remarkable ecosystems.

UK clients depart arriving Quito, Ecuador, the same day

DAY 1

Transfer to hotel in Quito, overnight in the capital.

Those passengers arriving on an international flight will be met by the tour leader or local representative and escorted to the group hotel in the Andean capital of Ecuador.

The active volcano Guagua Pichincha, to the east, glowers over the dynamic city which, at 2,850m, is one of the highest capital cities in the world. Quito is divided into two contrasting districts. The modern zone is characterised by towering glass buildings and houses banks, international companies, hotels, shops and restaurants, while the central colonial area where your hotel is located has well-conserved and recently spruced-up white-washed architecture, open air markets and graceful Spanish-style mansions and churches.

DAY 2**Walking tour of the city.**

With its narrow cobblestone streets and white-washed buildings huddling beneath a skyline of extravagant steeples and cupolas, Quito was the first city ever to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its compact colonial core hides a wealth of architectural and historic treasures around almost every corner, and a short walking tour is an ideal way to begin exploring.

Quito's historic centre is one of the largest and best-preserved in the Americas, and you'll visit all the most significant sights including the monastery of San Francisco, the main plaza with its cathedral and governmental palace, and the Basilica del Voto Nacional, best known for its quirky gargoyles representing the native animals of Ecuador, from anteaters to marine iguanas.

The afternoon is free to further explore Quito and some of the museums it has to offer or to relax in your hotel.

DAY 3**Head south to Chilcabamba.**

This morning we head south towards Cotapaxi to spend the night in a lodge at Chilcabamba situated on an elevated plateau at 3,600m, but dwarfed by the much higher peaks which surround it. There are epic views of the volcano, and everything about the location invites you to step outside and explore. Activities on offer include walking trails and cycling. Outside there are two fire pits, allowing for some atmospheric stargazing as the day turns into night.

DAY 4**Continue down the Avenue of the Volcanoes to Riobamba.**

Early morning, we head south towards the 'Sultan of the Andes' – Riobamba. Travelling down the spellbinding Avenue of the Volcanoes. There will be a stop beneath magnificent Cotopaxi volcano and short walk around the lagoon at Limpiopungo before continuing onto Riobamba where you spend the night in a traditional hacienda on the outskirts of town.

DAY 5**Continue to Cuenca.**

Continue by private vehicle to Cuenca, via Ecuador's principal Inca ruins of Ingapirca. The remains of the buildings in this raised site date back to the end of the 15th century, before the Spanish conquistadors took hold of the region. The architecture bears all the hallmarks of Inca construction, with some fine mortar-less stonework and typical trapezoidal niches and doorways. Archaeologists believe that the main structure, known as The Temple of the Sun, was used for religious and ceremonial purposes. Today, however, it simply provides welcome shade for grazing llamas and the occasional tourist.

Cuenca is a beautiful 16th-century town, built on the site of an ancient Inca settlement, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.

DAYS 6-7**Explore Cuenca, optional visits to Gualaceo and Chordeleg.**

Tour the city as you wander the narrow cobblestone streets, marvelling at the architecture. The colonial centre has been beautifully restored; colourful flowers tumble from ironwork balconies and the whitewashed houses have grand wooden doors. The climate here is temperate and you'll enjoy relaxing with a coffee in a leafy square.

Cuenca is a great place to wander or relax in but if you want to get out of the city you could visit the nearby market towns of Gualaceo, Chordeleg, and colonial Sigsig, set in the foothills of the western cordillera. En route there is a chance to stop and barter for silver and gold filigree jewellery, and to see craftsmen making guitars and using nimble fingers to weave Ecuador's most famous export, the Panama hat.

DAY 8

**Drive from the Andes to the tropical coast at Guayaquil.
Stop on the way at Las Cajas National Park.**

Today we travel from the mountains down through the tropical lowlands to the port city of Guayaquil. It is a spectacular drive that truly contrasts the scenery in this small country, as you pass from Andean villages to banana plantations. On the way we stop at the Las Cajas National Park. Beautiful trails pass through this rugged, high-altitude wilderness of grasslands, jagged hills and glacial lagoons. You will be sure to pass herds of serene, grazing llama, and perhaps spot a spectacled bear, a puma or a tigrillo (relative of the ocelot), all of which inhabit the area, as do many species of bird, including the Andean condor and, at the other end of the scale, the tiny hummingbird.

Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, is situated on the banks of the River Guayas, and has gone through something of a transformation in the last few years. The expanse of waterfront has been made into an outdoor architectural showpiece, and restoration work has taken place along the city's main thoroughfare and in the historical neighbourhood of Las Peñas. Time permitting, you can take a walk from the frenetic, noisy open market at La Bahia, and past the colonial naval shipyard to the Malecón (the waterfront promenade), Guayaquil's crowning jewel. Stroll past tropical gardens, markets and street cafés, and head to Santa Ana Hill and Las Peñas, a district of brightly-coloured wooden houses and ramshackle streets dating back to the 16th century.

DAY 9**Fly to the Galápagos Islands, embark on your motor cruiser.**

You say goodbye to your Journey Latin America tour leader, who will take you to the airport for an early morning flight to Baltra Island (105mins), part of the Galápagos archipelago. Once you've paid an entrance fee, your naturalist guide will be waiting to take you to Puerto Ayora, around 40mins away, and here you board your motor yacht. The Galápagos Islands emerged 6 million years ago after a spate of volcanic activity, and have become home to unique animal and plant species. The islands were the inspiration for Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which formed the basis for his revolutionary book 'The Origin of Species', published in 1859. Although geologically these islands are constantly on the move, they remain suspended in time, with giant tortoises, iguanas, penguins, numerous bird species and a wealth of rare flora all thriving there. For many, the fascinating and unique wildlife and natural beauty of the islands are matched by the thrill of being at sea. Find a spot on deck as you make your way through the ocean, trailed by flocks of birds and playful dolphins.

The boats are relatively small, creating an informal atmosphere, and the service is of a high standard; the crew is attentive and the food very good. Cabins with en suite facilities are compact but comfortable for your six nights on board. There are common bar / lounge areas as well as a sun decks. Beach towels are provided, and basic snorkelling equipment can be borrowed.

DAYS 10-14**Land excursions from the cruise around the Galápagos Islands**

The itinerary for your days in the Galápagos is subject to change for operational reasons and according to the rules of the Galápagos National Park authorities. There are normally two landings a day, which will usually include chances to snorkel, on which you are accompanied by your guide in search of the different wildlife that inhabits the islands. Below is a summary of the islands that you visit on this journey, and the animals and birds that can be found on each of them.

Santa Cruz (Indefatigable):

This island has the largest human population of the five inhabited islands. Some 4,000 residents are distributed between the cattle farming communities in the lush highlands and the coastal town of Puerto Ayora, which is mainly dominated by tourism. The Charles Darwin Research Station here is staffed by international scientists conducting biological research and conservation projects.

Fernandina (Narborough):

The island is one of the world's most active and impressive volcanoes, having erupted at least 10 times in the last 150 years. The lava fields offer a 'land without time' landscape and the island is home to a huge colony of marine iguanas, flightless cormorants and some penguins.

Isabela (Albemarle):

The largest island in the archipelago, it has 5 volcanoes forming a chain down its spine. The most famous sites are situated on the western side, such as the impressive and spectacular inlets of Vicente Roca, with its high cliffs, lava formations and wonderful marine life. Urbina Bay offers an impressive array of birdlife including finches, warblers and mockingbirds, whilst Elizabeth Bay lined with mangroves is home to turtles and rays.

James (Santiago):

The island is one of black rocks and little shade, and the western coast is pitted with lava pools and caves which are home to a wealth of marine life. You may well see herons and oyster catchers as well as Galápagos fur seals playing in the deep, cool water pools, and marine iguanas grazing on algae beds alongside colourful Sally Lightfoot crabs.

Rabida Island (Jervis) is unique because the red colour of the rocks and sand. The volcanic material in this island is very porous and external factors as rain, salt water and sea breeze have acted as an oxidizing agent. A short walk along a trail lead us to a coastal lagoon behind the beach permits the observation of land birds as finches, doves, yellow warblers and mocking birds. At the lagoon there is a colony of flamingos.

DAY 15

Fly to Guayaquil, connect with your extension or your international flight home.

UK clients arrive home the following day.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Services of our team of experts in our London office

Services of Journey Latin America local representatives and guides

All land and air transport within Latin America

Accommodation as specified

Meals as specified

Excursions as specified, including entrance fees

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

Quito: guided city tour

Avenue of the Volcanoes: Cotopaxi and Limpiopungo

Avenue of the Volcanoes: guided tour of Ingapirca Inca site

Cuenca: visit to Las Cajas National Park

Galápagos Islands: 7 day cruise with guided land excursions and optional snorkeling everyday

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Tips and gratuities

Meals other than specified

International flights to Latin America

Airport taxes, when not included in the ticket

Optional excursions

ESSENTIALS

ABOUT OUR GROUP TOURS

To find out more about how our group tours including group sizes, solo travellers and why to choose us. Please click [here](#).

TOUR LEADER

On this tour, you'll be accompanied throughout mainland Ecuador by one of **our exceptional Journey Latin America tour leaders**. From the moment you land in Latin America until the day the tour leaves Guayaquil for the Galápagos, they will deal with all the practicalities, expertly adapting to the circumstances and individual needs of the group. Rather than different guides in different cities, your leader will get to know the group and keep you informed and entertained as you go. Once you land in the Galápagos Islands you will be in the capable hands of the crew and naturalist guides onboard the cruise.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

15 days, 14 nights: Quito 2; Chilcabamba 1; Riobamba 1; Cuenca 3; Guayaquil 1; Galápagos cruise 6

ACCOMMODATION

We use the following mid-range and upper mid-range hotels/haciendas on this tour. You will cruise the Galápagos Islands on a 16 person motor yacht.

- Quito: La Casona de la Ronda
- Chilcabamba: Chilcabamba Lodge
- Riobamba: Abraspungo
- Cuenca: Hotel Santa Lucia
- Guayaquil: Hotel Wyndham
- Galápagos Islands: MC Galápagos Seaman Journey 2026/Treasure by Oniric 2027

On very rare occasions these hotels can change, however please speak to one of our consultants who can provide full details for each departure if you have any doubts. Address and contact details will be sent out with your final documents.

TRANSPORT

2 flights (longest 3hrs); All land transport is operated privately for the group; 6 night Galápagos Islands cruise.

MEALS

Breakfast daily, full board days 9-14.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

On this tour the price includes excursions in all the places you visit as per the itinerary. There will however likely be some free time when you may choose to take part in an optional excursion. These are booked locally through your tour leader once you are in Latin America, however we are more than happy to advise you of what is on offer in advance of your holiday so you can best plan the excursions that suit you.

TRAVELLING ALONE

There is no extra cost for single travellers who are willing to share a room/cabin subject to availability. You will be accommodated with another same-sex member of the group who is also travelling solo. For single travellers who wish to have their own room/cabin there are a limited number of single rooms available, which carry a surcharge. If you do not wish to pay the single supplement for the cruise we do offer a single room in mainland Ecuador and share on the cruise option.

TRIP SUITABILITY

There are some early mornings and some fairly long days of travel. All walks are optional, as is swimming and snorkelling in and around the Galápagos Islands and you can discuss with your guide which are suitable for you. This holiday is suitable for all able, reasonably fit visitors. The sea can be choppy around the Galápagos islands.

ALTITUDE

Several days are spent at high altitude (over 2,500m). A small minority of visitors may suffer temporarily from altitude sickness. Symptoms vary; most common are mild headaches, slight nausea and breathlessness. If you don't recover in a day or two speak to our representatives; in very rare instances it is necessary to descend to lower altitudes. Most people are unaffected and if you drink plenty of water and allow your body to acclimatise (don't exert yourself or drink alcohol) in the first couple of days after arrival, you will minimise your chances of suffering any symptoms.

Please refer to our Briefing Dossier for further information.

CLIMATE

Given the proximity to the equator the climate is pretty steady and this tour can operate all year. Altitude is the determining factor with regard to temperature (cooler with height) with the wetter season on the mainland being from November to April. The warmest period in the Galapagos Islands falls between January and April but the archipelago can be visited throughout the year and the animals are non-migratory. A comprehensive overview of the weather in all the regions you are visiting can be found in our Destination pages. Our Travel Experts can answer your questions on climate and further details will be sent with your confirmation documents.

CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT AND LUGGAGE

A daypack is essential for carrying rainwear, snacks, books/tablet and a water bottle. For day-to-day wear you should take loose-fitting, breathable clothes. Comfortable shoes are important and sandals are useful. A sun hat, sun block and sunglasses are necessary, and you should take warmer layers for the cooler evenings, as well as swimwear and insect repellent. Binoculars are useful for wildlife spotting in the Galápagos.

The flights to and from the Galápagos Islands allow a checked luggage allowance of 23kg.

MONEY

Please see the Country Info tab on this holiday for our latest currency information and advice about how to take your spending money. Tipping in Latin America is almost always done using cash. It is customary to tip tour leaders, local guides, drivers, boat crews and other service providers such as restaurant staff and porters. Full tipping guidelines are sent with your confirmation documents as is advice on local costs.

HEALTH, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND INSURANCE

For health information on travelling to Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands including recommended vaccinations, please see <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports should be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Other nationalities should enquire with us or check with the consulates.

Travel insurance is essential. Details of our recommended policy can be found on the Travel insurance website.

Our full briefing dossier contains more information on vaccinations, visas and insurance and will be provided with your final travel documents or can be requested from your travel consultant at any time.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to chat

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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