



EQUINOX

Mainland and Galapagos for Wildlife Lovers

**Day 1: Arrive and settle in to
Quito lodgings**

Day 2: Papallacta Hot Springs and Polylepis Forest

7:00 Breakfast in the hotel

8:30 Head toward Papallacta. Stop to check out an ancient polylepis forest.

10:00 Walk the short "island" trail and relax in the volcanic springs.



Polylepis are the highest altitude flowering trees in the world and some of the oldest. Some grow as slowly as a half inch in diameter every 160 years.

This is one of the few remnants of the native forests of the sierra, which were burned for fuel within 200 years of Spanish arrival.

13:30 Lunch in Papallacta

14:00 Travel to Yanacocha Wildlife Rescue Center in Puyo (Amazon Region) 4 hours

18:00 Arrive, eat dinner, and relax

Day 3 Amazonian Animals!

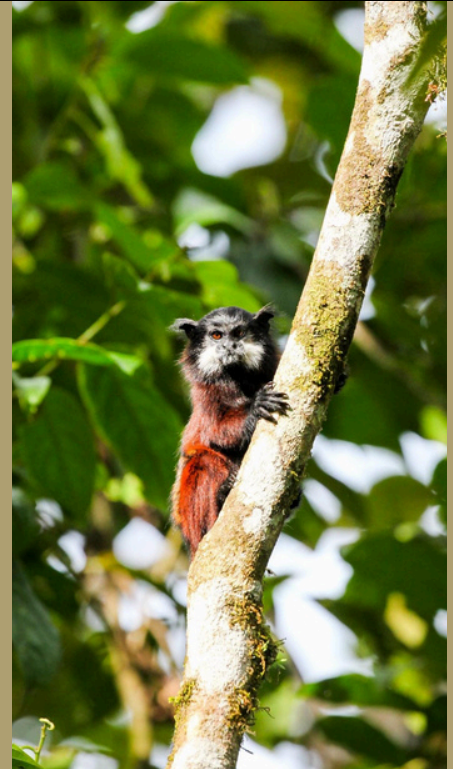
Yanacocha Animal Rescue Center is named for the black lagoon where caimans dwell. The center is run by dedicated, passionate workers and volunteers who care for the over 250 animals who have been rescued locally. Some be reintroduced to the wild, and others will live out their days in happy retirement. They will always have multiple species of monkeys, caimans, snakes, the tricolor ecuadorian poison frog, a fox, owls, parrots, macaws, arapaima, piranhas and the incredibly rare short eared forest dog (*Atelocynus microtis*). We may also see sloths, agutis, ocelots, capybaras, tapirs, and who knows what else. We will also meet the world's sweetest blind puma.





7:00 Breakfast

8:00 After a chat with animal biologist Raúl Cuatrecasas, take a tour around the center to learn about the joys and challenges involved in the care, rehabilitation, breeding, reintroduction, or training of each animal in the center.



13:00 Lunch

14:00 Free Time

15:00 Activities which may include chocolate processing, using native plants to make handicrafts, animal training, etc.

18:00 Dinner

Day 4 Amazonian Plants and More

7:30 Breakfast at Yanacocha and depart for Tamandua Reserve (1.5 hour drive).

9:30 Hike to a waterfall with a wildlife guide

13:00 Lunch and activities in the center

Tamandua Reserve functions as a scientific research station, preserved section of primary forest, and an area for the release of forest animals from Yanacocha.

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14:30 Medicinal and useful plant walk with a local, indigenous guide. The Ecuadorian Amazon is the home of an enormous number of useful plants including quinine, ayahuasca, floripondio, dragon's blood tree, paja toquilla, pambil, cuya, tagua, coca, and more.

18:00 Dinner

20:00 Night walk around the lake to see insects, amphibians, reptiles, hopefully some nocturnal mammals, and enjoy the frog concert!



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Day 5 Return to Quito

8:00 Breakfast, enjoy final moments in Tamandua.

9:00 Begin the ascent to Quito

On the drive enjoy the spectacular scenery in the folds of Tungurahua Volcano with views of Cotopaxi, Pichincha, and other volcanoes. Option to stop at Pailon del Diablo Waterfall or the town of Baños on the way.



12:00 Lunch

18:00 Arrive at our lodgings in Quito



Day 6 Acclimatizing in Quito

8:00 Breakfast

9:00 Head to Quito's historic center

1:00 Lunch

With its fabulous art, architecture, and history, Quito is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the western hemisphere.



2:30 The Quito Botanical Gardens

5:00 Return to lodgings for dinner and rest

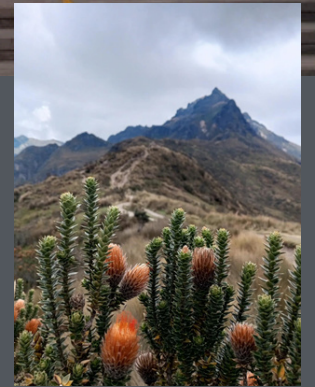
5:00 Return to lodgings for dinner and rest



The Quito Botanical Gardens give an excellent overview the various bioregions and flora of Ecuador. You can also get a good look at Parque Carolina and modern Quito.

Day 7 The Equator and Volcán Pichincha

At the equator just north of Quito there is a monument and educational center which covers all kinds of subjects from geology and geography, to indigenous Ecuadorian culture, to art, beer production, and trains.



8:00 Breakfast

8:45 Head to Mitad del Mundo (the Equator)

12:30 Ride the Teleferico Cable Car

13:00 Picnic Lunch on Pichincha

17:00 Stop at a shopping center to resupply, and return to lodgings for dinner



Pichincha is an active stratovolcano which last erupted in 1999. The cable car will bring us up to 3,945 m (12,943 ft), to see a prime example of high altitude paramo grassland. The Paramo acts as a giant sponge and filter for rainfall, as well as providing habitat for incredible animals such as high-altitude hummingbirds, alpacas, and andean spectacled bears. It also has plants with special adaptations which allow them to survive extremes of temperature and radiation. If you are feeling spry, you can attempt to reach the first summit (Rucu Pichincha). The trail will take you through the paramo and above the line of vegetation to the peak at 4,698 meters (15,413 ft), higher than any point in the continental United States. There is a scree slope and a bit of rock scrambling, but the trail is not difficult.

Day 8 Cuicocha Lake and Otavalo Market

7:00 Breakfast

8:00 Head north to visit the profoundly beautiful Lago Cuicocha.

13:00 Lunch in Otavalo and explore the town

15:30 Peguche Waterfall is peaceful and considered sacred to the local community.

6:00 Return to Rancho San Carlos. for dinner and to prepare for Galapagos



200 meters deep and extremely alkaline, Cuicocha itself supports almost no life, but the surrounding grassland has an abundance of native plants and animals including the andean spectacled bear.



Nestled in the shadow of Volcán Imbabura, the town of Otavalo is built around the largest market in South America. The town has become an economic powerhouse and tourism destination by marketing their strongly traditional indigenous culture and incredible scenery.



Day 9

Galapagos! San Cristóbal



Morning: Arrival, transfer from the airport to the hotel, lunch.

Afternoon: Travel by car to *Laguna del Junco*. This hike passes through a miconia forest where frigate birds and pintails peacefully feed. On the way you'll be able to observe agricultural areas and wind turbines.

Next visit *The Cerro Colorado Breeding Center* to see San Cristobal tortoises. Finally, head to *Puerto Chino Beach* to see blue footed boobies and sea lions. Dinner and return to the hotel.



Day 10

San Cristóbal/Santa Cruz



Morning: Breakfast, visit the *San Cristóbal Visitor's Center* to learn about the formation, climatic patterns, ocean currents, history, and conservation challenges of the archipelago.



A brief hike will take you to *Cerro Tijeretas* with a spectacular view of the port. Continue on to *Bahia Darwin* to snorkel and swim with sea turtles and playful sea lions.

Afternoon: 3:00
boat transfer to *Isla Santa Cruz*, hotel, dinner.





Day 11

Santa Cruz/Isabela
/Tintorettes

Morning: 7:00 boat transfer from *Santa Cruz* to *Isabela*, breakfast en route. Your transportation will bring you to the *Arnaldo Tupiza Breeding Center* where we can check out the native tortoises of Isabela. Continue on to *The Flamingo Pool* and wetlands. Lunch

Afternoon: After lunch head to the pier to begin a 2 hour tour of the bay, then take a small open boat to *Tintorerias Islet*. The trail and canal are great places to spot sharks, sea lions, marine iguanas, and more. On the way back to *Isabela*, stop to see penguins, blue footed boobies, and go snorkeling. Dinner.

Day 12

Isabela



Morning: First thing, head to *Sierra Negra* (1,124m), the largest and oldest volcano on the island. The trail will take you from the area known as “La Cura” to the rim of the crater and you will be able to observe flora typical of the higher altitude areas of the island. Box Lunch. If time permits, continue on to *Volcan Chico*.



Afternoon: Visit the spectacular *Laguna de Concha Perla*, notable for its incredible number of marine species, where you can snorkel and enjoy a refreshing afternoon at the beach with the animals. Dinner and return to the hotel.

Day 13

Isabela/Santa Cruz

Morning: 6:00 departure for for *Santa Cruz*, breakfast en route. Arrive at the hotel. Next visit *The Charles Darwin Nature Center*, which is the primary center for scientific investigation, conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and breeding, as well as a conservation oriented education center. Lunch.



Afternoon: A short hike will bring us to the magnificent *Tortuga Bay Beach*, which is known for its white sand and a longitudinal dune that divides the beach into two contrasting beaches. One side has calm waters perfect for kayaking, while the other has strong currents, large waves and is known for surfing. This beach is a nesting site of the marine black turtle, from which it takes its name. Dinner and return to the hotel.

Day 14

Isabela/Baltra/Mainland
Breakfast, transfer to Baltra
Island for flight Quito

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