

Cultural Adventures Tours for the Young-at-Heart

Ecuador Adventure: Galapagos & the Andes Escorted Trip

13 days - \$3195 - July 6 - July 18, 2012

Cultural Adventures tours offer you the opportunity to learn about a fascinating culture as part of a small group. You'll enjoy select experiences away from the usual tourist sights during a visit that combines soft adventure with maximum comfort. In the Galapagos the tour is land-based providing a comfortable hotel each evening after a day of exploring the islands, viewing the incredible animals and birds, sailing, snorkeling and swimming. Our multi-lingual guides are Ecuadorian and have extensive knowledge about the history, culture, flora & fauna of Ecuador.

- * Focus on hiking, swimming, snorkeling, kayaking and horse back riding
- * Designed for travelers who want an active trip combined with an opportunity for independent exploration
- * Cultural Adventures tours use only local guides, food and services—supporting the local economy
- * Group size is limited to 14 or less travelers

* **Highlights:**

- Snorkel at Kicker Rock-view hammerhead sharks, manta rays, and red-billed tropicbirds
- Hike to Sierra Negra volcano on Isle Isabela, the second largest caldera in the world
- Enjoy hiking & horseback riding in the Andes through indigenous farming sites, primary forests, the ancient Inca trail and small hidden villages
- Bike ride along Cuenca's rivers in the southern Andes

Included: All hotels, flight from mainland Ecuador to the Galapagos, land and sea transportation, tours, bikes, horses, snorkeling and kayaking equipment, airport transfer, escort, guides & 26 meals

International flight to Ecuador, the \$110 Galapagos Park fee and airport taxes are not included.

Itinerary:

July 6 - Arrive in Guayaquil on your own. You'll be met at the airport and escorted to our hotel. Grand Hotel or equivalent

July 7 - Fly to San Cristobal, Galapagos Islands - Our first activity is a seashore expedition to Loberia Beach to view the marine iguanas that blend so well with the black, pitted lava coast. You'll also observe many sea birds, such as frigates and boobies. And you'll have your first opportunity to snorkel with the sea lions! We'll end the day with a lobster seafood grill welcome dinner was local musicians play for us. Casa Blanca or equivalent (B, L, D)

July 8 - After breakfast, we'll hike up Frigate Hill to enjoy a magnificent harbor view. Next is a visit to the Interpretation Center to learn about the history, biology, and geology of the islands. After lunch at the harbor, we'll cruise to Lobos Island and Kicker Rock to enjoy the colonies of sea lions, floating sea turtles and sea birds. You'll have time to snorkel at Kicker Rock or to relax on the beach. Before we return to town. Casa Blanca or equivalent (B, L)

July 9 - This morning we sail to Santa Cruz Island where we'll visit the highlands to walk through lava tunnels and among giant land tortoises - Lunch will be at a farm in the highlands - The evening is free for you to explore the town of Puerto Ayora. Mainao Inn or equivalent (B, L)

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July 10 - Morning walk along a path through a cactus forest brings us to Tortuga Bay so we can enjoy a beautiful, white sand beach with iguanas, pelicans, and flamingos. Lunch on your own. We'll take an afternoon harbor tour and explore some of the small inlets to observe the birds and animals close up. Dinner together. Mainao Inn or equivalent (B, D)

July 11 - A visit to the Charles Darwin Station where research focuses on how to preserve the islands starts the day. Free time and lunch on your own before we board a boat to Isle Isabela. Once you've unpacked, we'll walk along the beautiful fine sandy beach observing Booby's and other birds fishing for dinner. There'll also be time for a swim or to snorkel. Hotel Sol or equivalent (B, D)

July 12 - A hike to Sierra Negra Volcano for a fantastic view of the second largest caldera in the world starts the day. We'll hike for about 6 miles (9 km) on a moderate-gradual uphill trail before enjoying lunch at the top of Volcan Chico. This afternoon we'll take a dinghy tour to Tintorerias Inlet to see Galapagos penguins, the second smallest in the world, observe white tip sharks, marine iguanas, sea lions and boobies nesting. You'll have a final chance to snorkel before dinner together at the beach. Hotel Sol or equivalent (B, L, D)

July 13 - Today we return to the mainland of Ecuador. We'll tour Guayaquil before boarding our flight to Cuenca, a city in the southern highlands of the Andes. Hotel Victoria or equivalent (B, L, D)

July 14 - After a half hour drive from Cuenca, we reach Totorillas, a charming farm in an amazing natural spot, located in the area known as the mountains of Tarqui. Once on the horses, we will ride along countryside trails through indigenous and private farming sites, areas of primary forest, the ancient Inca trail and small hidden villages. The old trails from the colonial era follow the top of the mountain ridge, providing amazing views from the saddle. Horses are professionally trained for any level of experience. Hotel Victoria or equivalent (B, L)

July 15 - Today we'll take a fascinating and entertaining rural hike that passes through important historical sites and Chobsi canyon. At the village of Gualaceo, we'll visit its renowned markets where animals, hand-woven shawls, ponchos and lots of fruits and vegetables are on sale. Hotel Victoria or equivalent (B, L)

July 16 - The morning will be spent bike riding along the rivers of Cuenca. After a typical lunch, we'll visit a Panama hat factory and explore the charms of Cuenca. Then you'll have time to explore the San Francisco market on your own. Hotel Victoria or equivalent (B, L)

July 17 - We leave Cuenca and drive to El Cajas National Park located in the southern Andes where we'll hike for several hours before eating a trout lunch at the park. Then we'll continue the drive to Guayaquil enjoying amazing countryside Andean landscapes, You'll have the evening free to explore Guayaquil or to take an evening flight home. Grand Hotel or equivalent (B, L)

July 18 - Fly home or begin optional trip to the Amazon. (B)

This is an active adventure. Participants must be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 2-5 hours of physical activity everyday.

Optional visit to the Amazon rainforest is available after this trip. Contact Connie for details.

For more information go to www.culturaladventures.info or contact Connie Champlin at 317-908-1220; cchamp@culturaladventures.info.