



Pinnacle Rock, Bartolomé Island, Galápagos

Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands

28 April – 10 May 2023

With Amazon Extension

28 April – 14 May 2023

2 nights Quito – 2 nights Mindo, Cloud Forest – 3 nights Papallacta
– 4 nights Galápagos Islands – 1 night Quito



Jon Baines
tours



Cotopaxi Volcano

Ecuador is a land of enormous cultural and natural diversity. Its cultural legacy encompasses the descendants of Spanish conquistadores and many distinct indigenous communities. Its bio-diversity is extraordinary, the jewel in its crown being the incomparable Galápagos Islands. This remote island group encompasses cool lava landscapes, cactus forests, lush green highlands, turquoise coves and perfect white sand beaches, and is the only place in the world where it is possible to swim with penguins and tropical parrot fish at the same time.

This tour encapsulates the great variety to be found within this compact country, alongside a wide ranging professional programme of dental visits and talks. Experience colonial Quito, the exquisite cloud forests of Mindo, the high country thermal springs at Papallacta in the Andes, and finally, the incomparable Galápagos islands on a private charter first-class yacht. There is also the option to extend at an eco lodge in the Amazon jungle after the tour. This tour is strictly limited to a total of sixteen people, with fifteen spaces available to fill.

Tour Leader

Jan Beccaloni is a museum curator specialising in spiders and their relatives and a respected natural historian. She is the Meetings Secretary of the British Arachnological Society, the former Secretary of the Wallace Memorial Fund and the author of the acclaimed book "Arachnids". Jan is an experienced and popular tour leader who enjoys travelling and has conducted scientific fieldwork in the UK, Brunei, Madagascar and Costa Rica. She is an experienced and popular tour leader.



A traditional Andean market

2 nights Quito – 2 nights Mindo Cloud Forest – 3 nights Papallacta
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Day 1: Quito (Fri, 28 Apr) **D**

Pm: Arrive Quito, a beautiful city containing superbly preserved colonial architecture, and transfer to the Sheraton Hotel.

Eve: Welcome dinner

Day 2: Quito (Sat, 29 Apr) **D**

Am: Explore Quito on a guided tour. Walk through the attractive, palm-shaded Plaza de la Independencia, visit the gorgeously ornate 16th century church of La Compañía de Jesús and visit Monasterio de San Francisco, one of the oldest churches on the American continent.

Eve: Enjoy dinner at Urku, a modern Ecuadorian restaurant.

Day 3: Quito / Mindo (Sun, 30 Apr) **B D**

Am: Drive to El Mitad del Mundo - the 'Middle of the World' - and straddle the equatorial line. Drive up to the rim of the biggest volcanic crater in South America, the extinct Pululahua Volcano, for wonderful views and lunch.

Pm: Lunch by the crater with spectacular views. Continue to Mindo cloud forest, where you will stay at the Bellavista Lodge, and take a nature walk.

Eve: Talk: *"The Beautiful World of Butterflies"* - JB

Day 4: Mindo (Mon, 1 May) **B L D**

Am: The cloud forests are a unique ecosystem fed by the misty clouds sitting on the slopes of the Andes. Rise early the following morning to watch an incredible variety of birdlife, including hundreds of species of jewelled hummingbirds. Visit the Mariposario Mindo Butterfly Farm.

Pm: Take a cable car high above the cloud forest valley and the Rio Nambillo below. Walk with a naturalist guide along trails through delicate clusters of wild orchids, ferns and waterfalls wreathed in silver mists, amidst swarms of vivid birds and butterflies.

Eve: Take a night walk to see spiders and other nocturnal creatures. Talk: *"An introduction to spiders and their relatives"* - JB

Day 5: Mindo / Papallacta (Tue, 2 May) **B D**

Am: Rise early again to spot the early bird activity in Mindo. After breakfast, drive to the high Andes of Ecuador, into the paramo and the montane forest, rich in unusual flora and fauna such as the rare, gnarled Polylepis tree - one of the oddest and rarest trees on the planet.

Pm: Continue to Papallacta, a thermal area high in the Andes where hot springs bubble up next to the Papallacta River. Check in to Termas de Papallactas thermal resort, where the waters reputedly have healing properties.

Day 6: Papallacta (Wed, 3 May) **B D**

Am: Visit the Antisana Ecological Reserve in the central highlands, located at the feet of the 5705 metre volcano, Mount Antisana. Explore the dramatic altiplano landscapes with spectacular snow capped mountains as backdrop and look out for the various species of birds, and the Andean condor that inhabit the area.

Pm: Return to Papallacta and spend the rest of the day at leisure enjoying the hot springs.

Eve: Have dinner at Guango Lodge before setting out on a nocturnal nature walk.



Day 7: Papallacta (Thur, 4 May)

B D

Pm: Visit the local market at Sangolqui, a pretty colonial village in pastel hues, and browse among the stalls with the locals.

Eve: Talk: *"Darwin and Wallace - the pioneers of evolutionary biology"* – JB.

colorful tropical fish. Walk along the beach to see sea lions and opportunity to snorkel. Take a panga ride around Osborn Inlet and the islets of Gardner to see sea lions, corals and colourful fish including parrotfish.

Pm: Land at Punta Suarez and see marine birds, including the nesting waved albatross.

Day 8: Papallacta / San Cristobal Island, Galápagos (Fri, 5 May)

B L D

Am: Your next stop is Ecuador's ecological wonderland – the Galápagos Islands. Fly to San Cristobal Island and board the MY Solaris private yacht for four nights cruising around Española, Floreana, Santiago, Bartolomé and Santa Cruz Islands.

Pm: Tour the Interpretation Centre and see giant tortoises. Cruise to Kicker Rock, a nesting site for many sea birds. Optional snorkelling. Cruise on to Cero Brujo to walk on a white sand beach, and observe sea lions, brown pelicans, marine iguanas and blue footed boobies. Options for swimming, snorkelling or kayaking.

Day 10: Floreana Island (Sun, 7 May)

B L D

Am: Visit the historic site of Post Office Bay, where you can still post a postcard in the historic post barrel, and see the ruins of the house of Baroness Eloisa von Wagner. Visit the Devil's Crown, a submerged volcano and the best site for snorkelling in the Galápagos.

Pm: Visit Cormorant Point to see Galápagos flamingos and many other birds. Continue to Champion islet to see marine turtles, sea lions and many fish. Options for swimming and snorkelling.

Day 9: Española Island (Sat, 6 May)

B L D

Am: Wet landing at white-sand Gardener Bay, home to sea lions, three species of Darwin's finches, Española mockingbirds, green sea turtles,

Day 11: Santiago Island: Sullivan Bay and Bartolome (Mon, 8 May)

B L D

Am: Visit Sullivan Bay on Santiago Island, which is located next to Bartolome Island and features a dramatic lava field. Option to snorkel in the bay's calm waters.

Pm: Visit Bartolome Island for spectacular views and lava cones. See lava lizards, sea lions, Galápagos penguins, herons, finches.

Day 12: Santa Cruz / Quito (Tue, 9 May) B D

Am: Visit Black Turtle Cove, a mangrove estuary on Santa Cruz Island, naturally protected and virtually untouched by man, Black Turtle Cove is home to some truly remarkable species of animals and plants.

Pm: Transfer to airport for flight back and transfer to the Hilton Colon Hotel.

Eve: Farewell dinner.

Day 13: Quito (Wed, 10 May) B

Am: At leisure or take extension.

Pm: Transfer to the airport.

Extension into the Amazon

10 – 14 May 2023

Day 14: Quito / Sacha Lodge, Amazon (Wed, 10 May) B L D

Am: Transfer to the airport for flight to Coca.

Pm: Transfer by river to Sacha Lodge.

Eve: Nocturnal guided tour.

Day 15: Sacha Lodge, Amazon (Thur, 11 May) B L D

Am: Take dugout canoes past bromeliads and palm trees, looking for wildlife such as the pygmy marmoset, the ocelot and puma.

Pm: Trek through pristine forest, with 150-foot kapok trees and roots forming huge buttresses. Look out for the crest owl and howler monkeys.

Eve: Optional night walk.

Day 16: Sacha Lodge, Amazon (Fri, 12 May) B L D

Am: Motorised canoe along Napo River to visit the traditional Yasuní community. See the parrot disco on the clay lick.

Pm: Take the treetop canopy walk.

Eve: Optional night canoe trip to see caiman.

Day 17: Sacha Lodge / Quito (Sat, 13 May) B

Am: Transfer to Quito and Hotel Hilton Colon.

Day 18: Quito (Sun, 14 May) B

Pm: Transfer to the airport.

NB: All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.

Basking sea lions





Sacha Lodge

Amazon extension at Sacha Lodge

The Sacha Lodge team will meet you in Coca and guide you to the lodge, which blends seamlessly into its forest surroundings. You could see giant otters duck, dive and call to each other as you eat breakfast; caimans glide under the walkway as you head back to your room; hear monkeys chattering outside your balcony; or see giant sloths hanging out on trees by the cabins.

A typical day at Sacha begins at sunrise or earlier, taking advantage of the cool morning hours when the rainforest's animals are most active. Each day you will return to the lodge after the morning activity for lunch. Relax until the afternoon excursion between 3pm and 4:30pm, which often continues into the evening when the nocturnal insect and frog chorus begins. Days at Sacha Lodge do not end with the fading of the light, or even with dinner. Night walks and canoe trips, with the aid of flashlights, often reveal creatures seldom seen during daylight.

Between excursions, you are at leisure to enjoy the lodge, lounging on sun chairs on the Balsa with a book or cooling off in the Lake Pool.

* Please note: activities are subject to weather, though Forest Walks, the Kapok Tower and Canopy Walk are the keystones of the Sacha Lodge experience.



Inside a room at Sacha Lodge (top);
A toucan in the Amazon (above)



Solaris at sea

Galápagos Yacht - Solaris

This first class motor yacht is on private charter for this tour. Built in 2019, Solaris accommodates just 16 passengers in 11 cabins with private facilities. This spacious and comfortable yacht has large and bright cabins on the main and upper deck with panoramic sea view windows and is both stable and stylish. Facilities include lovely open deck areas with lounge chairs and shade, an indoor dining room and bar and comfortable lounge area. There are eight experienced crew members and a bilingual naturalist guide.



Sun deck



Sun deck dining area (top); Shaded seating area; Cabin (above)

Facts on the Galápagos Islands

- The first recorded visitors to the Islands were the Spanish. Bishop Tomás de Berlanga arrived in 1535 and nicknamed the giant tortoises he saw 'Galápagos', after a popular type of saddle.
- The Spanish also called them 'the Enchanted Isles' as treacherous currents and swirling mists caused sailors to frequently lose sight of islands right in front of them.
- The Galápagos Islands were home to the only surviving giant Pinta tortoise, 'Lonesome George', who sadly died in June 2012.
- The convergence of three major oceanic currents brings an incredible mix of marine life to Galápagos.
- The endemic Galápagos marine iguana is the only lizard to swim in the ocean.
- Darwin's research in Galápagos led to his theory of *The Origin of Species*.
- In 1978 UNESCO designated Galápagos as the first World Heritage site.
- Due to the early presence of both Spanish and English inhabitants in Galápagos, the Islands now have both Spanish and English names.
- The Galápagos penguin is the only penguin species to be found in the northern hemisphere and to breed in the tropics.
- A Galápagos tortoise can weigh up to 595lb (270kg) with a carapace length of 4ft (1.2m) and outlive most humans.
- The Galápagos Islands are home to the world's largest cormorant and the only one unable to fly.
- Galápagos has one of the world's rarest ecosystems in which the herbivores at the top of the food chain are reptiles.
- Galápagos swallow-tailed gulls are the only gulls in the world to feed at night.
- The scolopendra centipede is an 11-inch (28-cm) long carnivorous centipede. It's not unusual for it to devour whole lava lizards or baby rats.

Galápagos weather in April and May

There is nowhere else in the world like the Galápagos Islands, where each island and season is distinct with its own landscapes, flora and fauna. The rainy season is ending in April and lush green vegetation abounds. The weather is pleasant, rainfall is almost non-existent and humidity is decreasing, with clear, warm waters for snorkelling and the birth of baby turtles. May marks the transition time between the warm season and the cooler dry season. This transition results in dynamic wildlife activity on both land and sea. Air temperatures range from 24 - 31°C and the water temperature is a pleasant 25°C.

This month sees the waved albatross, who have spent the previous months out at sea feeding, return to Española, where their courtship displays begin. These birds mate for life, and can live for up to 50 - 55 years, and their courtship displays are really quite something to see. It is the start of the

hatching season for both the green sea turtles and the Galápagos land iguanas, the season for blue-footed boobies to perform their mating dance and for the magnificent frigate birds to inflate their red throat sacs in an irresistible display.



An imperious marine iguana



Termas de Papallacta Resort

Hotels

Sheraton Quito Hotel (Quito)

This modern 5-star hotel is a typical Sheraton venue – stylish, very comfortable with excellent amenities and a central location. Sheraton Quito Hotel is strategically located in front of Quicentro shopping center and features a restaurant and spa with panoramic views of the city.

Las Terrazas de Dana Boutique Lodge Spa (Mindo)

This beautiful eco-lodge is the best property in Mindo. It offers sensitively designed and spacious rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows looking out onto pristine rainforest. The food is excellent, prepared by their top-rated chef, and the rooms are both comfortable and stylish. Your stay here provides the best possible window onto the cloud forest.

Termas de Papallacta (Papallacta)

Termas de Papallacta is perched in a high Andean valley, surrounded by green mountains. The spa resort offers relaxing natural thermal baths, spa treatments, an excellent restaurant and attractive rooms.

Sacha Lodge (Amazon extension)

Each cabin, built of traditional materials with a high thatched roof and private shaded terrace with hammock, blends into the lush

surroundings. The cabins provide a spacious private bathroom with flushing toilet and hot shower, some with floor-to-ceiling windows for an immersive jungle experience. All cabins are screened against insects and contain ceiling fans above two comfortable double beds. There is the lovely 'Balsa', a covered al fresco lakeside lounge, as well as a bar, restaurant and shop.



Las Terrazas de Dana Boutique Lodge Spa, Mindo (top);
A cabin at Termas de Papallacta Resort (above)



Rooftops of Quito



See the jewelled hummingbirds of Mindo

Tour cost is US \$8,526 per person sharing a room

Tour cost is US \$9,089 for a room to yourself *

The cost includes:

- Comprehensive pre-departure information
- The services of experienced tour leader and speaker, Jan Beccaloni

In Ecuador the cost includes:

- Eight nights' accommodation in twin bedded rooms with private facilities in a five-star hotel, a cloud forest lodge and an Andean resort
- Breakfasts and dinners daily and one lunch
- Drinks with meals (soft drinks, water, tea and coffee) and water throughout
- A full programme of sightseeing, walks and talks as per the itinerary, admission fees and tips
- Services of experienced English-speaking guide
- All transportation services including internal flights

In the Galápagos the cost includes:

- Four nights' accommodation in twin bedded rooms with private facilities aboard the M/Y Solaris in twin or double bedded cabins
- Full board including soft drinks with meals
- Visits to Islands with English-speaking naturalist guides
- Galápagos National Park tax, dock fee and tips

* Up to four single rooms on the Galápagos yacht

The extension to Sacha Lodge costs US \$2,062 per person sharing

The extension to Sacha Lodge costs US \$2,553 with a room to yourself

The cost includes:

- Three nights' accommodation in twin bedded rooms with private facilities in a 5-star jungle lodge and one night in a 5-star hotel
- All meals at Sacha Lodge, breakfast in Quito
- Soft drinks with meals
- A full programme of activities as per the itinerary
- Services of experienced English speaking guides
- Return flights from Quito into the Amazon region
- All transportation services including bus transfers and boat trips
- Tips

Room upgrades:

The cost of upgrading to a suite at the Sheraton for the three nights per room is **USD \$249**

The cost excludes:

- International flights
- Personal extras such as laundry etc.
- All optional excursions, tours and visits.
- Travel insurance

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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See condors in the Andes (top); The Andean highlands in Ecuador;
A Galápagos giant tortoise; Red footed booby, Galápagos
(photo credit Mike Shepherd) (above)



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