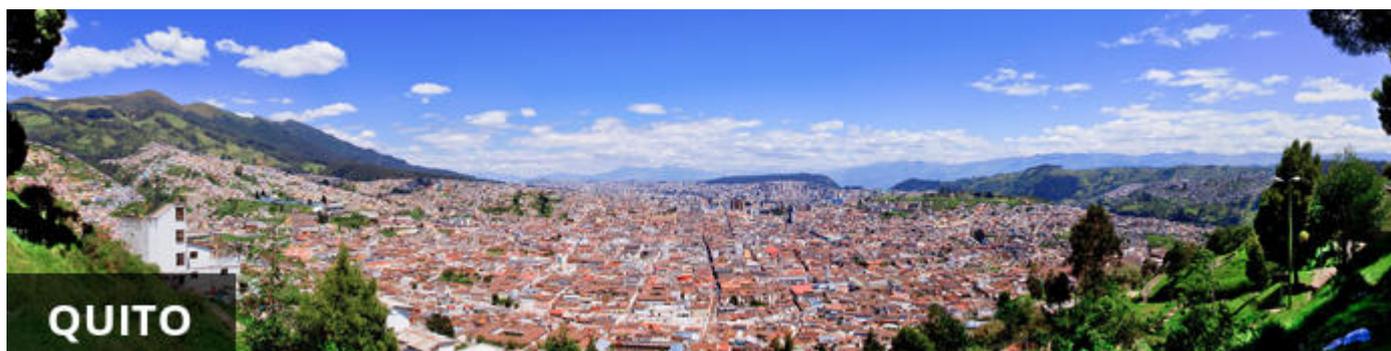

Ecuador and Galapagos





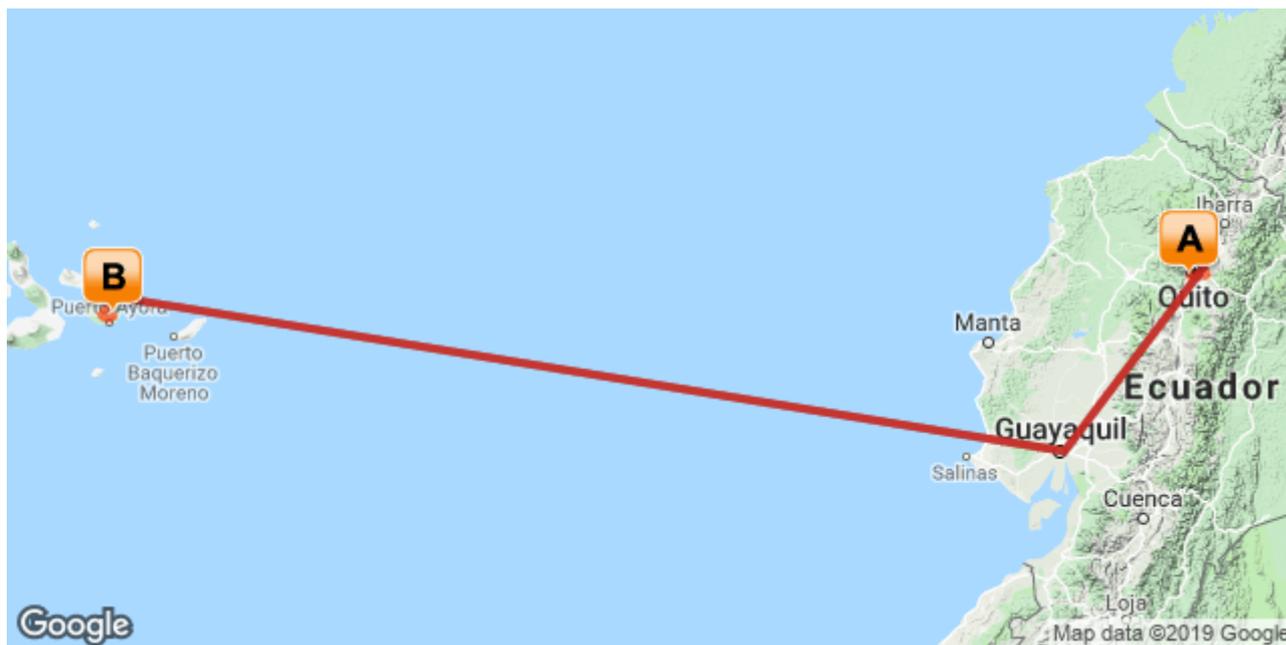
BARTOLOMÉ ISLAND

Ecuador and Galapagos

Quito - Santa Cruz Island

7 Days / 6 Nights

Date of Issue: 01 February 2019



[Click here to view your Digital Itinerary](#)

Introduction

Experience a taste of magical Ecuador and the glorious Galapagos, on this grand 7-day itinerary. Ecuador boasts varied landscapes and territories between the Andes, the Amazon, beautiful coasts and of course: the Galapagos islands.

Your journey begins in the second highest capital and most scenic city in the world, Quito. This bustling capital of Ecuador is steeped in a rich cultural history perfectly juxtaposed with a contemporary ambiance. Historically fascinating, the iconic Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, showcases an astounding array of monuments and colonial architecture, all built on the ruins of an Incan city. Bustling markets give way to a flourishing commercial centre, while tranquil neighbourhoods offer insight into the everyday life of its inhabitants.

The next leg of your adventure takes you to a mecca for nature enthusiasts, Situated 972 kilometres (604 miles) west of the mainland. Made famous by Charles Darwin who studied the island's fantastic array of species, which ultimately contributed to his theory of evolution, the island's endemic fauna and flora are as fascinating today as they were in 1835. The islands' moonlike landscapes, interspersed with rugged vegetation, certainly create an ethereal atmosphere, yet they are haven to a flourishing population of marine iguanas, sea lions, giant tortoises and an exceptional array of birds such as the bluefooted boobie, frigate bird and flightless cormorant.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ITINERARY:

- Private explorations in Quito
- Chocolate tasting and cooking class led by a resident gourmet chef
- A close encounter with the wildlife of Galapagos Islands
- Specialist guides during your Island visits
- Amazing photographic opportunities
- Combination of lodge stay and exploration by yacht.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR ADVENTURE:

- Extend your stay by adding Amazon or Cloud forest

SPECIALLY CREATED FOR:

- Photographic enthusiasts
- Travellers with a passion for wildlife and biology
- Travellers looking for a luxurious adventure experience
- Nature lovers

Start	Accommodation	Destination	Basis	Duration
Day 1	Plaza Grande Hotel	Quito	B&B	2 Nights
Day 3	Pikaia Lodge	Santa Cruz Island	FB+	4 Nights

Key

B&B: Bed and Breakfast

FB+: Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, Lunch and Activities Daily

Price

USD 10,848 per person sharing.

Total program: USD 21,696

Valid for travel dates until 20 DEC 2019

Included

- All nights of accommodation mentioned in the program
- Private transportation in the best available vehicles in each city
- Private English speaking local guide in Quito.
- Naturalist English speaking guide in Galapagos in sharing basis
- Meals as indicated in the program
- Daily excursions according to the itinerary in sharing basis
- Private transfers in Galapagos upon arrival and departure
- Entrance tickets to enter in Galapagos and all sites mentioned in the itinerary.
- Migratory Card
- VIP Lounge in / out Baltra airport
- Taxes included, where applicable
- Air tickets Quito / Galápagos / Quito

Excluded

- Early check in or late check-out charges
- Items of personal nature like laundry, phone calls, etc.
- Any video/still camera fee during the trip
- Tipping Quito,
- Drinks in Quito
- Excess of baggage,
- Insurance

Day 1

Plaza Grande Hotel, Quito

Quito

Everything about Quito – from its setting along the slopes of Pichincha volcano to its having the best preserved, least altered historic centre in Latin America – makes it a capital city worth visiting. (The ‘old town’ as the centre is known was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978.) Stroll along its narrow streets and enjoy the buskers, vendors and locals going about their everyday business. Visit the monasteries of San Francisco and Santa Domingo, the Church and Jesuit College of La Compañía, the Cathedral of Quito or the hill of El Panecillo where you can view the 45m high statue of the Virgin Mary. Mariscal Sucre offers a taste of modern Quito with its trendy bars, restaurants and night life.

Day Itinerary

Upon arrival at Quito Airport, you will be welcomed by your English-speaking guide, and transferred to your hotel. The land on which The Boutique Hotel Plaza Grande Hotel resides belongs to prestigious and aristocratic families, who decided to build the first luxury hotel in the city. The legendary building, a marvel of eclectic architecture broke

the mould of colonial houses. Boasting a unique location in the main plaza of the historic centre of Quito, breathtaking views reveal the Government Palace, Cathedral, ancient domes of old churches, the Panecillo and the Town Hall.

Situated in a circle of Andean peaks, Quito is the world's second highest capital, with arguably one of the finest settings in the world. Originally established by the Quito tribe in the first millennium, Quito was an important part of the Inca Empire, before being destroyed and re-founded by Spanish conquistador Sebastián de Benalcázar in 1534. The colonial centre - declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1978 - is one of the largest and best preserved in Latin America. It is home to excellent museums, churches and art galleries..

Transfers

Date	Company	Pick Up	Drop Off	Time	Vehicle
		Mariscal Sucre International Airport [UIO]	Plaza Grande Hotel		Transfer

Overnight: Plaza Grande Hotel

The Hotel Plaza Grande sits in the Plaza De La Independencia, in front of the Cathedral Church and the Presidential Palace. The location of the Hotel Plaza Grande is unique as it's very close to the iconic buildings of colonial Latin America.

Hotel Plaza Grande has 15 suites furnished with fine woods and following patterns of Spanish colonial times. The suites combine a taste of vintage times with minimal detail and modern 5-star amenities. The 2 hotel restaurants serve gourmet cuisine as well as Ecuadorian dishes. Diners at the La Belle Epoque can enjoy a live opera show while admiring the old city views from the balcony. And diners at the Café Plaza Grande get to enjoy the sounds of an Ecuadorian soul guitar duo show.



Basis

Bed & Breakfast

Day 2

Plaza Grande Hotel, Quito

Day Itinerary

Today, your city tour begins downtown, passing through the modern section of Quito towards the city's historic district. Sit in Independence Square, flanked by the Presidential Palace, the Cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace and the City Hall. Stroll past El Sagrario Church and marvel at the exquisite stone facade of La Compañía Church. Visit the

San Francisco Church, built over the ruins of an Inca Palace in the 16th century. Ride up the road to the Panecillo or the Itchimbia hills for a breathtaking view of Quito. Your private guide will enlighten you on the history of Quito.

During this tour, savour a delicious chocolate tasting in Galeria Ecuador, where you will learn how to cultivate cacao plants, and the process of transforming the cacao plant into chocolate. Play an interactive game, where kids and adults can practice how to sow and cultivate cacao. You will be provided with cooking implements to prepare chocolate truffles, and a variety of delectable ingredients including cinnamon, salt from Cuzco, chocolate nibs, peanuts, almonds, cacao, sugar, etc. A guide specialising in chocolate will teach you how to prepare these ingredients, and in just a few minutes, you will be relishing scrumptious self-made truffles.

After this tasty activity, you will be driven to the Café Plaza Grande where you will participate in a Cooking Class with the opportunity to create two typical Ecuadorian dishes. A professional chef will be your teacher during this activity, and he will show you how to prepare "ceviche" and the famous "helado de Paila" (an ice-cream made with fresh typical pulp fruits, considered one of the most iconic foods of Ecuador). The Chef will guide you and once your ceviche is ready, you will continue with the preparation of the dessert. Then it will be time to sit down and enjoy your delicious lunch.

Afterwards, you will visit the Equatorial Monument, built as a tribute to the French scientists who determined the shape of the earth in the 1700's. Visit the Ethnographic Museum inside the monument, where the colourful way of life of the different ethnic groups of Ecuador is on display. There is also the Intiñan interactive museum that reveals the different theories around the Incas.

Activities

Exploration with private guide of the city, visiting the highlights of the historical district of the city of Quito, Chocolate making and tasting in Galeria Ecuador, Cooking class , Visit to Equatorial Monument, the middle of the world

Quito

Everything about Quito – from its setting along the slopes of Pichincha volcano to its having the best preserved, least altered historic centre in Latin America – makes it a capital city worth visiting. (The 'old town' as the centre is known was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978.) Stroll along its narrow streets and enjoy the buskers, vendors and locals going about their everyday business. Visit the monasteries of San Francisco and Santa Domingo, the Church and Jesuit College of La Compañía, the Cathedral of Quito or the hill of El Panecillo where you can view the 45m high statue of the Virgin Mary. Mariscal Sucre offers a taste of modern Quito with its trendy bars, restaurants and night life.



Basis

Bed & Breakfast

Day 3**Pikaia Lodge, Santa Cruz Island****Santa Cruz Island**

The island of Santa Cruz (Indefatigable) is home to Puerto Ayora, the largest and most developed town in the Galapagos. While many visitors use this island as merely a springboard for the more remote surrounding islands, those who dig a little deeper will discover that this island has plenty to offer. With numerous visitor sites, easily accessible beaches and remote highlands in the interior, Santa Cruz makes an excellent base for adventurous activities. The most popular attractions is undoubtedly the Charles Darwin Station which offers an impressive turtle breeding area and interesting information about the conservation of the unique biosphere of the Galapagos. Don't miss the opportunity to swim or snorkel at one of the island's magnificent beaches where you will find white sand and turquoise waters as well as an abundance of fascinating wildlife including: pelicans, blue-footed boobies and marine iguanas.

Day Itinerary

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport in Quito for your flight to the Galapagos Islands.

Once in Baltra Airport, you will have access to the VIP Lounge, and a Pikaia representative will meet you. Cruise through the Itabaca Channel, for a seven-minute ferry crossing to Santa Cruz Island, followed by a 50-minute private scenic trip to Pikaia Lodge.

Perched on top of two extinct volcanic craters, Pikaia Lodge offers one of the most spectacular view points in the Galapagos.

Following check-in at the lodge, lunch will be served at their Evolution Restaurant or on the Pool Terrace.

In the afternoon, you will have the chance to relax and familiarize yourself with the lodge surroundings. Enjoy a range of activities at your own pace and leisure, including walking, jogging, cycling trails, or a swim in the pool. It is very common to encounter the property's giant resident tortoise.

You will be briefed on the following days' activities in the DNA bar, while enjoying complimentary welcome cocktails.

Flight Information

Date	Flight	Airline	Departure Airport	Time	Arrival Airport	Time	Class	Ref
	Scheduled		Mariscal Sucre International Airport [UIO]		Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport [GYE]			
	Scheduled		Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport [GYE]		Baltra Airport [GPS]			

Transfers

Date	Company	Pick Up	Drop Off	Time	Vehicle
		Plaza Grande Hotel	Mariscal Sucre International Airport [UIO]		Transfer
		Baltra Airport [GPS]	Pikaia Lodge		Transfer

Overnight: Pikaia Lodge

Located in Santa Cruz, Ecuador, Pikaia Lodge is perfect for the physically active and adventurous traveller, who seeks close contact with the unique natural wonders of the Galapagos.

Rooms at the lodge range from terrace rooms to suites, each featuring airconditioning, private bathroom, safe, minibar, and TV.

Guests can enjoy dining at the onsite Evolution Restaurant which offers an unrivalled view of the infinity edge pool and the pristine Galapagos National Park with mist covered volcanic cones. Lodge amenities include two lounges, a spa, bar, and wine cellar.



Basis

Full Board and Activities
Drinks (Local Brands) Included

Day 4

Pikaia Lodge, Santa Cruz Island

Day Itinerary

Take to the water on a yacht cruise, onboard the M/Y Pikaia I, where a private cabin has been assigned to you. Enjoy a delicious breakfast onboard the yacht, and upon arrival on the island, get adventurous with hiking or snorkelling activities until midday. Relish a lunch buffet of traditional Ecuadorian food as the yacht sails to North Seymour for an afternoon exploration.

The island of North Seymour is fascinating for flora and fauna, with abundant birdlife such as blue-footed boobies, colonies of frigate birds, and others marine species. Watch colonies of sea lions frolic in the deep, spot hammerhead sharks, marine turtles, land and marine iguanas, and the endemic beauties of the endangered Palo Santo (Holy Wood) dry forest.

At Bachas Beach, walk along pristine white sandy beaches, separated by outcrops of lava rocks. Enjoy the opportunity to view pacific green sea turtles, flamingos, lava gulls, and red Sally lightfoot crabs. If you like you can enjoy a swim and snorkel.

Two hours before sunset, the yacht will set sail for Pikaia Lodge. While sailing, you can rest, shower, or freshen up in the airconditioned private cabins, soak in the Jacuzzi, watch a Galapagos documentary, join a discussion with guides, sunbathe, or look out for dolphins.

Activities

Las Bachas Beach

A full-day yacht exploration to North Seymour and Bachas Beach Islands

Las Bachas Beach

In addition to its inviting crystal waters that lure visitors to swim amongst the sea turtles, Bachas Beach also offers sightings of flamingo and migratory birds.

North Seymour Island

Despite its small size, North Seymour Island, in the Galapagos archipelago, is certainly worth a visit for its astonishing abundance of wildlife. Visitors to the island are typically treated to the sight of sea lions riding waves all the way into shore, marine iguanas basking in the sun and flocks of pelicans and swallow tailed gulls feeding just off the coast.

The island is also renowned as a natural haven for some of the most sought after residents in the Galapagos Islands, the Blue-Footed Boobie. During mating season, the island is an ideal place to witness the intriguing mating rituals for which these birds are famous. Must-see site include Bachas Beach where you can enjoy some excellent snorkelling and the island's lagoon where you are likely to witness flocks of feeding flamingos. With its extraordinary profusion of wildlife and close proximity to Santa Cruz, North Seymour island makes an ideal destination for an adventurous day tour.



Basis

Full Board and Activities

Drinks (Local Brands) Included

Day 5

Pikaia Lodge, Santa Cruz Island

Day Itinerary

Enjoy an early breakfast, and then embark on a morning exploration program. Each morning activity is planned according to satellite weather imagery and tidal charts. You will join a group of maximum 16 people for the land tour, and two or three activities will be chosen from the list below.

- Los Gemelos Sinkholes & Scalesia Forest
- Giant tortoises farm in Rancho Chato II
- Volcanic craters and giant tortoises at Cerro Mesa
- Lava tunnels
- Tortuga Bay Beach
- Charles Darwin Scientific Research Centre
- Garrapatero Beach

If you prefer you can relax and enjoy your day at the lodge. Mountain bikes, helmets, snorkelling equipment, and wetsuits are available without extra charge at the front desk or onboard the yacht. (Early pre-booking is recommended.)

Lunch will be served at Pikaia Lodge, and in the afternoon there will be further excursions.

Activities

Choice of one or two half-day explorations led by Pikaia Guides

Basis

Full Board and Activities

Drinks (Local Brands) Included

Day 6

Pikaia Lodge, Santa Cruz Island

Day Itinerary

Start the day early at the coffee station at the Pikaia Lodge reception, before a 50-minute transfer to the port. Board the M/Y Pikaia I, and sail through the Ithabaca Channel to Bartolomé Island while enjoying breakfast.

Bartolomé Island is the most recognized, most visited, and most photographed of all the Galapagos Islands. It is most notably famous for Pinnacle Rock, a towering spear-headed obelisk jutting out of the ocean – perhaps the best known landmark throughout the entire Galapagos National Park.

You need to climb more than 300 stairs to the summit of Bartolomé; here you can find some of the most beautiful landscapes in the entire archipelago including pink and whitesand beaches. Dive into the deep for an unforgettable snorkelling experience, complete with Galapagos penguins, perhaps whitetip and Galapagos sharks, rays, multitudes of sea lions, a kaleidoscope of tropical fish, and green sea turtles.

Buffet lunch will be onboard M/Y Pikaia I and in the afternoon you will visit Sullivan Bay, a site of great geological interest. Located on the south-east side of Santiago Island, originally named James Island, the area is covered by solidified and waveshaped lava flows.

Enjoy a walk here finding pockets of green trees in the volcanic rock surrounds, and unique vegetation.

Conservation work over the last decade, has rehabilitated much of the vegetation, and many of the native species.

The Sullivan Bay's famous lava is known as Panoehoe, which is Hawaiian for string. It gets this name from the string or ropeshapes formed by the cooled lava eruptions.

Head back to Pikaia Lodge where dinner will be served at Evolution Restaurant.

Activities

A full-day yacht exploration to Bartolomé Island and Sullivan Bay

Sullivan Bay

Bartolomé Island

Bartolomé Island

As one of the world's foremost destinations for wildlife-viewing, this volcanic islet in the Galápagos Islands group makes an ideal stomping ground for avid nature enthusiasts. Charles Darwin was famously inspired to write his seminal work, 'The Origin of Species', after witnessing the veritable treasure trove of natural wonders exhibited on this extraordinary archipelago. Darwin was so intrigued by the unique landscapes, colourful rock formations and exotic wildlife of these islands that he named one of its most unusual islets after his close friend and fellow naturalist, Sir Bartholomew James Sullivan. Today, Bartholomew Island is no less fascinating that it was in 1835 when Darwin first arrived. Visitors typically swim and snorkel around the iconic Pinnacle Rock where they are treated to an impressive natural world of penguins, marine turtles, white-tipped reef sharks, and other marine creatures, many of which are found nowhere else on earth.



Sullivan Bay

Sullivan Bay is situated on the beautiful island of Galapagos. The majestic volcanic site was named after Bartholomew James Sullivan who was the first lieutenant on HMS Beagle that brought the famous Charles Darwin to the Galapagos Islands. The landscape is made up of eroded scoria lava cones which were swallowed up by pahoehoe lava flow and is considered one of the finest in the world. The lava flow is over 170 years old. Pioneer plants are colonising on the dark rocks and lava making way for other plant species.

Basis

Full Board and Activities

Drinks (Local Brands) Included

Day 7

End of Itinerary

Day Itinerary

Your adventure comes to an end, and after breakfast your check-out time and transfer will be arranged according to your flight. You will be driven to Baltra Island Airport and assisted with check-in for your return flight to Guayaquil. Relax in the VIP lounge pending your flight departure.

Upon arrival at Guayaquil Airport from Galapagos Islands you will be met by an English-speaking guide, who will assist you with your international flight connection.

Flight Information

Date	Flight	Airline	Departure Airport	Time	Arrival Airport	Time	Class	Ref
	Scheduled		Baltra Airport [GPS]		Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport [GYE]			
	Scheduled		Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport [GYE]		Mariscal Sucre International Airport [UIO]			

Transfers

Date	Company	Pick Up	Drop Off	Time	Vehicle
		Pikaia Lodge	Baltra Airport [GPS]		Transfer

Urgent Contact Numbers

Company Name	Telephone	Email Address	Contact Person
Experiential Travel	+61 418 325 812	info@experiential.travel	Neville Jones

Service Provider Directory

Service Provider	Ref. Number	Telephone	Address
Pikaia Lodge			Barrio El Camote a 100 m de Cerro Mesa Santa Cruz Island Galápagos, Ecuador

Travel Information

The information in this document is provided by the operators and other parties. It may not accurately reflect your experience.



Neighbouring Colombia and Peru, Ecuador is a relatively small country that nevertheless offers an enticing array of scenic landscapes, diverse wildlife species and interesting cities. Dense Amazon rainforest, towering Andean mountain peaks, palm-fringed Pacific Coast beaches and fascinating historical sites are all part and parcel of Ecuador's prolific charms. The former Inca town of Cuenca is the nation's third-largest city and a Unesco World Heritage Site. This alluring city, with its cobbled streets, beautiful architecture and photogenic plazas, boasts a huge variety of museums and art galleries. The vibrant capital city of Quito is also worth a visit. Arguably the most dazzling jewel in Ecuador's crown is the Galapagos Archipelago in the Pacific, about 1000 kilometres west of the mainland. Their magnificent, pristine landscapes and prolific wildlife, which inspired Charles Darwin, have made this cluster of islands a world-famous travel destination.

Banking and Currency

Currency

US Dollar (USD; symbol US\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of US\$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of US\$1 and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 cents. Some coins are usual US cents and some are Ecuadorean centavos. They have the same value.

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency. However, amounts exceeding US\$10,000 must be declared.

Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks and at casas de cambio (exchange houses), the latter being generally the best option. It may be difficult to exchange money in the Oriente. The rate of commission varies between 1 to 4%, so it is worth shopping around.

Banking

Banking hours: Generally Mon-Fri 0830-1600/1700 and Saturday mornings.

Major credit/debit cards are accepted in most businesses. ATMs are available at most banks in urban areas. On the Galápagos Islands, currently only Mastercard is accepted.

ATMs are available at most banks in urban areas. Note that dirty or torn notes will not be accepted. Try to keep cash in smaller denominations; shopkeepers tend to refuse \$50 and \$100 bills as forgeries of these notes are common.

Traveller's cheques are generally accepted in the larger cities and can be exchanged into currency at most banks and casas de cambio.

Travel, Transport and Getting Around

Ecuador is a small country and internal flight times are usually less than one hour, making air travel a quick and easy way to get around. Most flights operate out of Quito although Guayaquil also has direct services to main centres such as Cuenca, Loja and Galapagos. TAME (EQ) (www.tame.com.ec) flies frequently between Guayaquil, Quito and other destinations throughout the country. The airline has recently launched direct flights from Quito to Tena, cutting out the 5 hour bus journey between destinations. A number of small airlines serve the coast and eastern part of the country. Flying is the usual mode of transport for intercity travel.

Galapagos Islands: There are daily flights to the Galapagos Islands on national airlines from both Quito and Guayaquil; note that airfares to Galapagos are much higher than to any other domestic destination, although there are discount fares on offer for Ecuadorian nationals and residents of Galapagos. There is also a national park admission charge, payable in cash only. If you don't have a ticket there is the option to go along to the airport and join a waiting list for the flight as people frequently don't turn up.

Cars are driven on the right hand side of the road in Ecuador. The Panamericana or Pan-American Highway is largely in good condition; there are still plenty of potholes in places though and some roads are more akin to rough tracks. Roads in the highlands can be especially bad due to the weather and cracks or holes here can be sizeable.

An extensive network of roads spreads out from the main north-south axis of the Pan-American Highway. There is a lack of road markings and signage, so driving at night is particularly best avoided.

Since getting around by public transport is so easy, few people rent cars in Ecuador. Nonetheless there are international and local car hire companies operating in Ecuador, with cities such as Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca the places to arrange pick-up and drop off. It may be difficult to hire a vehicle in smaller towns and even in main cities you should arrange your vehicle hire in advance. 4-wheel drive is necessary for some areas.

Drivers need to be at least 25 years old and have a major credit card for the deposit. Some companies will hire cars to those aged 21-25 but the surcharges are much higher. Check for existing damage and make sure the car comes with a spare tyre and a jack. Drive carefully, make sure the car is always secure and check what the car rental insurance policy covers.

The national speed limit is 100kph (63mph) on highways and around 50kph (30mph) in urban areas, unless otherwise indicated. There are strong penalties for even the most minor driving offences. An International Driving Permit is not required, but insurance is.

Taxis are widely available, particularly in larger cities and towns. Fares tend to be low but should be negotiated in advance. Taxis are metered in Quito, but rarely elsewhere. Taxis may be hired for a whole day. Drivers do not expect tips. All licensed taxis have a registration number prominently displayed.

Increasingly popular, cycling is a good, if somewhat strenuous way of seeing Ecuador. Mountain bikes are recommended and you should ideally bring your own as bike hire services are scarce outside of Quito. Bring your own spares too. Bikes can also be taken on buses, canoes and almost every other type of transport if you find you've run out of energy. Organised bike tours in Ecuador tend to be one day trips, and mostly downhill, having been ferried to the top of the descent in a car by the company you book with.

Ecuador's bus and coach service is extensive and affordable. Taking a bus can be an exhilarating, exciting way to see the country although it can also be cramped and scary too given the recklessness with which some drivers tackle corners and overtake. There are a number of different companies throughout the country and services to almost anywhere that you might want to go. Some of the most established have their own bus stations separate from the

main terminals (terminal terrestres) and operate air-conditioned, comfortable buses, ideal for longer distance journeys.

Frequent landslides and lack of funding are some of the causes of Ecuador's railway system becoming almost completely redundant. The Empresa de Nacional Ferrocarriles del Estado (Ecuador State Railways) runs the famous Nariz del Diablo (Devil's Nose), which makes a spectacular mountain descent on its route between Riobamba (tel: (03) 961 909) and Sibambe. The only other service of note is the weekend excursion from Quito to El Boliche, near Cotopaxi. Tickets for the Devil's Nose ride can be bought a day in advance. Reservations for the Boliche service are not necessary. People tend to ride on the roof of the train for the most exhilarating experience.

Ecuador's rocky coastline makes coast-hopping an inefficient and even dangerous means of transport for visitors. Several navigable rivers flow eastwards into the Amazon basin. Dugout canoes, which carry up to about 25 people, are widely used as a means of transport in roadless areas, particularly in the Oriente jungles and in the northwest coastal regions. Tourist boats, luxury cruisers, converted fishing boats and hired yachts can all be used to travel between the Galápagos Islands.

Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice

It is advisable to drink only bottled or sterilised water in Ecuador. Avoid unpasteurised dairy products. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Ecuadorian dinner tables are blessed with some of the finest produce in South America; a testament to the country's fertile soil, varied typography and wildly different climates.

There are three main regions in Ecuador, each with its own style of cooking: highland cuisine revolves around warm, hearty dishes such as roast guinea pig and locro, a soup of potato, cheese, corn and avocado; coastal cuisine is dominated by seafood; and Oriente dinner tables typically feature rice, banana, yucca (a type of manioc root) and fish, including piranha. Most food isn't spicy, but is inevitably accompanied by a bowl of aji, a hot pepper sauce for the bold to add at their peril.

Climate and Weather

Ecuador has a highly changeable climate, which means that it can be variable at any time. Generally though, in the Sierra, there is little variation by day or by season, with changes occurring as you climb or descend instead. The coastal and Amazonian lowlands have a wet equatorial climate, but the higher you climb the colder it gets.

Rainfall is primarily affected by proximity to the eastern or western slopes of the Andes; in the west, June to September are drier with October to May typically wetter; in the east the opposite is true with October to February drier and March to September much wetter. There is also a variation in the amount of rainfall as you journey north to south, with the southern highlands much drier than the landscapes in the north. The coast can be enjoyed all year round, although it is cooler between June and November, when a sea mist known as garua sets in. January to May are consistently the hottest and rainiest months here. The Galapagos are also affected by garua between May and December; January to April here are the hottest months, with heavy but brief rainfall also possible. In the Oriente you can be affected by rainfall at any time, but it is wettest from March to September. Most cities are located in a comfortable subtropical zone. Taking all of this into account, Ecuador's high season is June to early September.

Clothing and Dress Recommendations

Lightweight natural fabrics; rainwear in subtropical areas. Warmer clothes are needed in upland areas. Make sure that you have good-quality, well-broken boots with plenty of ankle support for trekking or walking on uneven terrain.

Electricity and Plug Standards

Electrical sockets (outlets) in Ecuador are very similar to the electrical outlets found in the United States and Canada, and if your appliance has a North American plug, it's possible that you won't need any adapter at all in order to plug in there. However, there are two potentially very important physical differences that may need to be addressed with an adapter: grounding and/or polarization. If your plug has one or both, and the socket doesn't, then the plug may not physically be able to fit into the socket without an adapter.

In the case of a North American appliance plug, grounding is accomplished by the third, round pin beneath and below the two vertical blades on the plug. Polarization is accomplished by the left vertical blade being taller than the right, so that the plug can't be inserted upside down. U.S. and Canadian sockets are required to be both grounded and polarized. But in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Japan and other areas which use U.S. style sockets, grounding and polarization often are not required, and in fact, the majority of sockets in many of these areas do not accept the taller blade and/or the third grounding pin. This will prevent a North American appliance plug from being able to plug into these sockets, if the plug is either grounded or polarized.

Electrical sockets (outlets) in Ecuador usually supply electricity at between 110 and 120 volts AC. If you're plugging in a U.S. or Canadian 120 volt appliance, or an appliance that is compatible with multiple voltages, then an adapter is all you need.

But travel plug adapters do not change the voltage, so the electricity coming through the adapter will still be the same 110-120 volts the socket is supplying. If your appliance is from another part of the world, and it is built only for 220-240 volt electricity, or a Japanese appliance built for 100 volts, then a travel plug adapter by itself won't be sufficient. The voltage will have to be changed from 110-120 volts at the socket, to whatever voltage your appliance requires. This is accomplished with a voltage transformer.

Terms and Conditions

Experiential Travel Terms and Conditions

Please be sure to read our full Terms and Conditions at www.experiential.travel/Legal.php