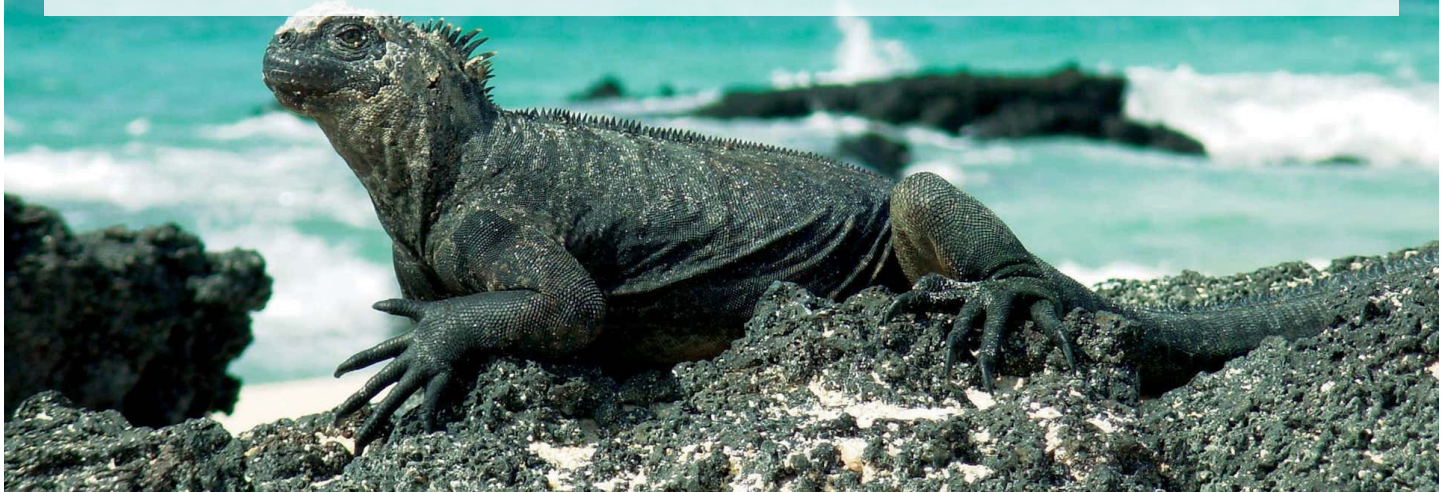


EXPLORE!

Galapagos Extension - West and Central Islands

7 days

Ecuador - Trip code GM4A



Galapagos Extension - West and Central Islands

On this tour we spend four nights on the Monserrat embarking on a Galapagos cruising adventure through the archipelago's western and central islands. Join us as we snorkel with playful sea lions, discover the unusual endemic marine life in secluded bays, visit the tortoise breeding centre on Isabela Island and hike the Sierra Negra Volcano. Please note that this tour is operated in conjunction with a local specialist company and is not exclusive to Explore customers. Your fellow passengers may come from a number of different countries although all guiding is done in English, and may include families.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Galapagos Cruise** - Four nights exploring the Galapagos Islands aboard the comfortable Monserrat boat
- ★ **Sierra Negra** - Hike the Sierra Negra Volcano, the largest basaltic caldera in the Galapagos
- ★ **Snorkelling** - Snorkel with the wildlife at Chinese Hat and Mosquera Islet
- ★ **Playa Espurmilla** - Visit one of the most idyllic beaches in the Galapagos, on Santiago Island

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**14 - 20**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour Quito

Quito is Ecuador's mountain capital and the second highest capital city in Latin America (2850m). One of South America's most beautiful cities, Quito lies in a narrow valley at the foot of the Pichincha Volcano, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and extinct volcanoes. Quito is separated into the old and the new cities. The old city is a UNESCO Heritage site due to its rich blend of colonial architecture, imposing churches and bustling local markets. Some of the main sites include the Plaza de la Independencia, the cultural heart of the colonial city which is home to the Catedral de Quito, and La Compania church which is considered one of the most beautiful churches in the Americas with its magnificent gilded altars, walls and ceilings. The church of San Francisco, Quito's largest and oldest colonial church built in 1553, is also worth a visit. A climb to the top of Cerro Panecillo affords one of the best views across the city and the surrounding mountains, presenting you with an unparalleled vista of the encircling Andes from the viewing platform offered by the statue of the Virgen de Quito.



Accommodation: Hilton Colon (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Fly to Baltra Island, transfer to the Monserrat

Today we transfer to the airport early for our flight to the Galapagos Islands via Guayaquil (refueling stop only, you will not disembark the plane). Lying on the Equator, 970km west of the Ecuadorean coast, the Galapagos National Park is a unique collection of islands, formed by volcanoes over hundreds of thousands of years and consists of six main islands, 12 smaller islands as well as over 40 small islets, supporting a distinct and unique flora and fauna, including prehistoric creatures found nowhere else on earth. This desolate and fantastic habitat was discovered in 1535 by Fray Tomas de Berlanga. One of the original designations by him was Las Islas Encantadas, the Enchanted Isles. Charles Darwin visited the islands on the Beagle exactly three hundred years later, in 1835. He observed the total isolation of the giant reptiles and other creatures, and this played a substantial part in his formulation of the theory of evolution. The Galapagos have never been connected with the continent. Gradually, over many hundreds of thousands of years, animals and plants from over the sea somehow migrated there and as time went by they adapted themselves to Galapagos conditions and came to differ more and more from their continental ancestors. Thus many of them are unique: a quarter of the species of shore fish, half of the plants and almost all the reptiles are found nowhere else. In many cases different forms have evolved on the different islands. Of the extraordinary animals to be found in the Galapagos many are reptiles, such as the great tortoise, large land iguanas, numerous lizards and three species of non-poisonous snakes. There are also several

species of turtle, which come ashore to mate. Up to three quarters of a million seabirds flock to the islands, including a third of the world's blue-footed boobies, frigatebirds, pelicans, cormorants, albatross and petrels. Only 35cm tall, the Galapagos penguin can be seen swimming among tropical mangroves, whilst offshore it is common to see dolphins, sea lions and fur seals playing in the water. Fearless though not tame, the extraordinary wildlife can be easily approached and the opportunities for photography are superb. The Galapagos National Park charges a visitor fee of \$110 USD, payable on arrival, which funds park maintenance and supervision in the Galapagos, as well as ecological study, conservation and infrastructure development in Ecuador's other national parks. Entry fees and the funds they generate for the national park system are among measures taken by the Ecuadorian government to protect its natural heritage. On arrival in Baltra, we will meet our naturalist guide and transfer to our home for the next four nights, the Monserrat. After lunch, we will enjoy our first snorkelling trip to Mosquera Islet.



Accommodation: Monserrat (or similar)



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Hike the Sierra Negra Volcano and visit the tortoise breeding centre at Puerto Villamil

In the morning, we will hike the Sierra Negra Volcano, considered to be the oldest volcano in the Galapagos. The volcano boasts the largest basaltic caldera in the Galapagos at an impressive 12km and dominates the southern half of the island, presenting us with some spectacular views from the top across the island and towards Santiago to the northeast. The volcano last erupted in October 2005, making it the most recent eruption of the Galapagos. In the afternoon, we will visit the Tintoreras Islands. These islands were formed from the lava flows from volcanoes and are fantastic for viewing wildlife. The bay in front of the islands is home to a colony of white tip sharks. You will also have the opportunity to see the 'Wall of Tears' which pays homage to prisoners forced to build the wall of huge blocks of lava between 1946 and 1959 when a penal colony was on the island. Many prisoners died during its construction. Finally, we will visit the tortoise breeding centre at Puerto Villamil (Isabela Island) to see some of the famous giant tortoises of the Galapagos.



Accommodation: Monserrat (or similar)



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Snorkel at Chinese Hat, afternoon trip to Rabida to see a sea lion colony

In the morning the boat arrives to a small little island off the southern tip of Santiago Island called Sombrero Chino or 'Chinese Hat', named for its unique shape. Chinese Hat comprises of a tilted cone and lava flows that run down to the coast. Here it is often possible to see Galapagos penguins and the abundant marine life, including rays, turtles and sea lions, make for great snorkelling possibilities. There is also a large sea lion colony here as well as many marine iguanas that can be seen on our guided walk among the volcanic scenery which offers good views to the cone of the island's volcano. In the afternoon we will take an excursion to Rabida Island, where we will land on a red sand beach. From here a short trail leads to a salt water lagoon, often home to wading flamingos. Another trail goes past the lagoon to the interior, where the revered Palo Santo trees grow. When burned, the branches of this tree give off a pleasing aroma and ward off mosquitoes. Back on the beach among low-lying bushes nest the prehistoric-looking pelicans. This is the best area for close viewing of these nesting birds, and it's a rare treat to watch parent pelicans return with gullets full of fish for the squawking youngsters.



Accommodation: Monserrat (or similar)



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 5 - Explore Puerto Egas, continue to Playa Espumilla and Buccaneer Cove

Today is spent on Santiago Island. This island has seen its share of human activity from whalers and pirates over the years, and despite the introduction of goats to the island many years ago, the wildlife of Santiago has flourished and provides outstanding viewing opportunities. The island boasts marine iguanas, sea lions, fur seals, land and sea turtles among others, which provide great wildlife viewing both on land and in the water. In the morning we will visit Puerto Egas to see the salt crater as well as a dark sand beach and tidal pools and the ever friendly fur seals. Next, we will travel to Playa Espumilla, one of the most idyllic beaches in the Galapagos Islands, boasting thick mangroves along with flamingo and sea turtle nesting sites. Then we continue to Buccaneer Cove to witness its towering cliff wall rock formations.



Accommodation: Monserrat (or similar)



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 6 - Visit North Seymour for guided walks, fly back to Quito

Today we set sail for North Seymour Island, just north of Baltra Island, which is home to sea lions, marine iguanas, swallow-tailed gulls, Magnificent frigatebirds and blue-footed boobies. North Seymour Island is probably the most exciting island photographically. Birdlife abounds, and close to the trail you will find many nesting pairs and young chicks. North Seymour is also home to the Galapagos' largest colony of Magnificent frigatebirds. Their mating ritual is an ostentatious display; males expand the red sack at the base of their throat and perch atop a bush with wings fully extended, flapping furiously. Interested females circle overhead, and if so inclined, may join the male on terra firma. Further along the trail we can observe a colony of sea lions. Then we transfer to the airport for our flight to Quito via Guayaquil (refueling stop only, you will not disembark the plane). On arrival back on the mainland, we transfer to the hotel for our final night in Ecuador.



Accommodation: Hilton Colon (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Tour ends Quito

The tour ends in Quito this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 6
Lunch: 4
Dinner: 4



Transport

Bus
Boat
Flight
Zodiac



Trip staff

Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Naturalist(s)



Accommodation

4 nights boat
2 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Ecuador Trips

Climate

Temperature ranges are similar all year round. In the highlands: the dry season lasts from June to mid-September. November and December are partially dry. The rainy months are October and from January to May, but showers are short and mostly in the afternoons. Temperatures range from 12°C to 24°C. Nights are cold at altitude (4°C - 10°C). The Coastal Region: from December to May it is hot and wet. From June to November it is generally cool and misty with sudden light showers. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. The Amazon Area: it is humid all year round. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. From April to August the rainfall is heavier. The Galapagos: On the Galapagos, the hot season is January to April with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers; the cool season runs from May to December and is generally more cloudy with much cooler seas. Please note that although it is windier from July to November the sea can be rough at any time of the year. On the mainland the dry season lasts from June to October, though September can be wet.

Time difference to GMT

-5

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Quito city tour (Half Day) - US\$50 (1 pers) / US\$40 (2+ pers), Plus entrance fees approx. US\$ 9pp Quito city tour + Equator Line (Half day) - US\$60 (1 pers) / US\$45 (2+ pers) Plus entrance fees approx. US\$ 9pp Equator line museum US\$9 Equator Line (Half day)- US\$50 (1 pers) / US\$40 (2+ pers) Museum ents. US\$9 Mindo Cloudforest (Full day) - US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+ pers) plus entrance fees US\$20 Otavalo Market (Full day) inc visit to Calderon - US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+pers) Cotopaxi Volcano (Full day) US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+pers) plus Park Entrance fee \$35 USD per group (this can be split between group) Papallacta Hot Springs (Full day) - US\$100 (1 Pers) US\$50 (2+ pers) plus US\$7 Entrance fee per person. This is transport only Spa treatments are extra. Cable Car - US\$3 taxi ; Entrance US\$8 You can get from 2.800 m to 4.200 m in 10 minutes and view Quito at your feet. Please note that optional activities will need to be paid in cash and do not include lunch - please allow US\$10 accordingly. Galapagos - wetsuit hire - US\$5 per day

Clothing

We recommend that you do not bring too much clothing as space is limited in the cabins. We would recommend you bring a fleece top, waterproof jacket, 4 shirts/T shirts, 1 pair of shorts, 2 pairs of trousers and 1 pair of hiking trousers. You will also need a swimsuit.

Footwear

Bring comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals with a good grip. Plastic sandals (not flip flops) are useful for wet landings.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend the use of a duffel bag or backpack (whichever you find easiest to carry). A good size daypack is also essential. If you don't wish to take your entire luggage with you to Galapagos, please ensure you have an extra bag you can leave behind at hotel storage and pick up on your return. Please note that the amount of luggage you can bring on the boat is LIMITED due to small cabin size. We recommend travellers use soft sided duffel bags of 40-50 litres in capacity. We will accept luggage types onboard, however if you are a single traveller sharing with another traveller, it's especially important to keep in mind that cabins are small in size and it's best to pack light.

Equipment

Pack a torch, water bottle, sunglasses, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, a beach towel, waterproof bag for camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. You may also wish to take binoculars.

Tipping

Local crew

Onboard the Galapagos yacht, tipping the naturalist guide and boat crew is customary. There will be two envelopes presented at the end of the voyage, one for the guide and one for crew members. The recommended amount is \$15-18 USD per day from each traveller (\$5-7 USD for the guide and \$10-11 USD for the crew members). This is only a suggestion as we understand that tipping is a personal choice.

Local fees

The Ecuadorian government currently levies a Galapagos Islands Park entry fee of \$100 USD per person. This is payable at the airport upon arrival in the park. It is not included in the cost of the tour, and must be paid in CASH. This fee funds park maintenance and supervision in Galapagos, as well as ecological study, conservation and infrastructure development in Ecuador's other national parks. Entry fees and the funds they generate for the national park system are among measures taken by the Ecuadorian government to protect its natural heritage. The Galapagos National Park authorities have implemented a system of Transit Control Cards at a fee of \$20 USD per person. This card is to be purchased in CASH at a counter in the Quito airport before boarding the flight to the Galapagos. Please retain this card along with your passport as you will be required to present this upon arrival to the Galapagos Islands. Please note that this applies to all tourists entering the Galapagos Islands and is a supplement to the existing entry fee to the national park and is not controlled by tour operators or travel agencies. It is the first of a number of initiatives to track, control and maintain the sustainable tourism targets set out by the Galapagos National Park and the Ecuadorian government in an attempt to preserve the fragile environment of the archipelago.

Ecuador Trips

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£10

Dinner price

£13

Beer price

£1.7

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

US Dollar.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollar Cash (NOT Sterling, which is almost impossible to change). The US dollar is the currency used in Ecuador. It is advisable to bring some US\$400 - \$500 of your total spending money in cash, in small denomination notes (in good condition). 100US\$ bills are very difficult to use.

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight, Zodiac

Ship description

Featuring a spacious top deck with a bar, a large sundeck and a comfortable dining room and lounge area for briefings and relaxing, the Monserrat's common spaces are as roomy as her cabins. All cabins have side by side berths, private bathrooms and air conditioning. All meals are provided and are served aboard the vessel. The Monserrat boasts our highest passenger to expert ratio including a cruise director and a naturalist guide for every ten passengers. Snorkelling equipment and beach towels are included at no extra charge and wetsuits are available to rent. At times, when the Monserrat is being serviced, we will use another boat of equivalent standard and size.

Cabins

Please note that the rooming on our Galapagos yachts is done on a first-come, first-serve basis, and we are not able to guarantee the specific cabin you will receive on board. The cabins are comfortable and clean, all with private bathrooms. Due to the specific location of the cabins on board, the window sizes vary as well as the noise at times when the boat is navigating, given the proximity of the cabins to the engine room. Our friendly and competent crew will ensure a smooth and comfortable journey for the duration of your tour. On this tour, the price is based on a lower deck cabin. You can upgrade to an upper deck cabin if you wish for £100.

Ship dining

On our Galapagos yachts, food is included, plentiful and made of fresh local ingredients. Dining is casual, tables are unassigned and the dining room is capable of seating the entire passenger compliment at one time. There is always a selection of different meals available, and vegetarians will find plenty of options. Special dietary requirements can be accommodated with advance notice, please advise us at time of confirmation. Coffee, tea and water are all provided free of charge. All other beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic are not included and can be purchased at the bar.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Ecuador: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. In order for your visa to be granted on arrival, you will be required to show proof of travel insurance valid for the duration of your trip. Please also ensure your passport is stamped with the T3 permit (for 30 or 90 days) on arrival in Ecuador. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. Galapagos Islands: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html> Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Ecuador Trips

Vaccinations

We recommend protection against malaria, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.