

Journey Idea to Ecuador & The Galapagos Islands

17 Days



Magnificent Frigate Birds

Prepared for
Steppe Travel Clients

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly UK/Quito
Day 2	Quito
Day 3	Quito/Amazon Rainforest
Days 4 & 5	Amazon Rainforest
Day 6	Amazon Rainforest/Cotopaxi
Day 7	Cotopaxi
Day 8	Cotopaxi/Quito
Day 9	Quito/Galapagos
Days 10 - 15	Galapagos
Day 16	Fly Galapagos/Guayaquil/Madrid, flying overnight
Day 17	Fly Madrid/UK

steppes travel
travel beyond the ordinary

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

UK/Quito

Depart the UK on a flight to Quito, journey of approximately 15 hours.



You will be met upon arrival by the Steppes Travel representative at the airport and transferred to your hotel. All transfers are private (unless stated otherwise) and included in your trip, however it will not detail every transfer on this itinerary.

Quito, at an altitude of 2,850 metres, is the second highest capital in Latin America after La Paz. The city lies in a dramatic setting in a long narrow valley, with the slopes of Pichincha Volcano at 4,794 metres to one side and the gorge of Machangara on the other.

The old city is a UNESCO World Heritage Trust site, with beautiful colonial buildings, ornate churches, plazas and cobbled streets. The new city comprises broad avenues, colourful parks, private residences and villas. Quito is a vibrant city, offering a choice of activities and is a good blend of everything South American.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Quito on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 2

Quito



Day at leisure to enjoy the sights of Quito or explore the surrounding area.

There are a number of different excursions to choose from including the market town of Otavalo, travel down the Avenue of the Volcanoes, visit a traditional hacienda and watch the local cowboys, the equatorial monument, Cotopaxi National Park or the Cloud Forest.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Quito on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 3

Quito/Amazon Rainforest



This morning your driver will collect you from the hotel in time to depart on your flight to Coca in the Northern Amazon Rainforest. The flights are private charters, and have their own terminal at Quito airport. The flight takes approximately 25-30 minutes over the Andean mountains and the rainforest.

On landing in Coca, you are transferred to the port, and the adventure begins! First is around a two hour motor canoe trip, followed by a walk along a raised boardwalk through a dense flooded palm forest to Pilchicocha lake, where the staff paddle you by dugout canoe to your Lodge. You are treated to welcome cocktails and an introduction to the rainforest, along with details of what the next few days has to offer, including animals to see in the local area.

Overnight at your chosen rainforest lodge on a full board basis.

Day 4



Amazon Rainforest

Today you have the opportunity to see a vast variety of animals including monkeys, caiman, anteater, armadillo, sloth, giant otter, pink and grey dolphin, and birds such as toucans, parrots and macaws, as well as endless species of butterfly and insect.



Activities are spread out over a wide area and allow visitors to explore several distinct but equally fascinating habitats. Several trails lead through pristine *terra firme* forest, where 45m (150 ft) kapok trees tower and where roots form huge buttresses to give the trees support. Others follow strategically raised boardwalks in seasonally flooded forests, where walking on the ground would be nearly impossible during most of the year due to groundwater.

An outing may lead the possibilities of spotting animals, from the tiny pygmy marmoset to the feared ocelot or puma.



For adventurous souls, the day does not necessarily end with dinner. Night walks and canoe trips, with the aid of flashlights, often reveal creatures seldom seen during daylight.

Overnight at your chosen rainforest lodge on a full board basis.

Day 5



Amazon Rainforest

Early start to be paddled by dug-out canoe around the surrounding lagoon and through the flooded palm forest. Opportunity to fish for the notorious piranha or perhaps climb the canopy tower. It is also possible to visit the Yasuni parrot lick where several different species gather in the early morning.

Overnight at your chosen rainforest lodge on a full board basis.

Day 6



Amazon Rainforest/Cotopaxi

Early departure to begin the journey back to Coca in a motorised canoe, spotting for monkeys and birds as they begin a new day in the Amazon rainforest. Here you will be assisted for your flight to Quito.

Upon arrival in Quito you will be met and will drive south to Cotopaxi, it is only around 2 hours, along the 'Avenue des Volcanoes' a road that literally winds its way between Andean foothills. Fantastic views of the snow-capped volcanoes and very lush and green valleys. Cotopaxi is one of the highest active volcanoes in the world, where you will be able to admire the flora and fauna of the Cotopaxi National Park.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Cotopaxi on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 7



Cotopaxi

Day at leisure to explore Cotopaxi National Park and the local area with your guide. Here are just a few idea's of activities you may wish to do:

- Follow one of many trails throughout the park by foot or horseback and enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Andean Paramo.
- Enjoy a trek around Quilotoa Lake, this is a volcanic crater filled by beautiful emerald water. From the rim of the crater, snowcapped volcanoes can be seen all around.
- With magnificent panoramic views across the valley from the snow-peaked summit, experienced climbers may find the challenge of climbing Cotopaxi itself irresistible.
- Shop for souvenirs at an authentic Indian market such as Pujili or Saquisili and observe a fantastic array of colours, scents and sounds of people selling and buying animals, fruits, vegetables, medicinal plants, flowers, prepared food and all imaginable goods beside.



Overnight at your chosen hotel in Cotopaxi on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 8

Cotopaxi/Quito

After a leisurely breakfast, retrace your scenic journey back to Quito.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Quito on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 9

Quito/Galapagos

Depart Quito this morning on a flight to Galapagos.



The Galapagos Archipelago

It was Charles Darwin's September 1835 exploration of the Galapagos, whilst serving as a naturalist on the British Ship HMS Beagle, and his subsequent 1859 publication *On the Origin of the Species by Natural Selection* that first brought the world's attention to the islands. The Beagle spent just 5 weeks in the archipelago but her itinerary took her to most of the principle islands. The collections made by Darwin during his short stay and the notes and impressions he carried away inspired him for the rest of his life. They contained the seeds which later produced a revolution in human scientific thought.

Today the Galapagos remain a living laboratory of evolution where birds and animals have no fear of man. Blue-footed boobies, flightless cormorants, land and marine iguanas and giant tortoises roam freely as they did thousands of years ago and anyone interested in natural history, wildlife and ecology will find a visit to these incredible islands an unforgettable travel experience.



Located some 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean, the archipelago is now a National Park and has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in an effort to preserve the islands just as they were centuries ago. The



National Park Administration and the Charles Darwin Research Station, founded in 1964 are responsible for this preservation and for ensuring that all native flora and fauna are fully protected. Thanks to the professionalism and commitment of these organisations, your experience of these enchanted isles will differ little from that enjoyed by Charles Darwin all those years ago. There are 13 islands (isles) in total and dozens of smaller islets and rocks - all the result of volcanic activity with exotic plant life, unique wildlife species and an extraordinary landscape fringed with blue sea.



'During my first jet-lagged swim, a pelican splashed down by my head and then kept me company wherever I swam. Next day, a penguin floated alongside me, gazing into my eyes.'
John Hatt - Travel Journalist.

After an early breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Galapagos via Guayaquil on the coast. It's a three-hour flight from Quito before landing in the Galapagos Islands. Here you will be met by the crew and the expert naturalist from the boat and start the odyssey of the Archipelago.



Firstly sail to North Seymour, a low flat island formed by the uplift of sub-marine lava formation. It is covered with scrub and bush vegetation and contains the largest colony of frigate birds. Blue-footed boobies are also abundant when the nesting conditions are right.

This evening watch the sun go down over these unique islands where the boat will anchor in a natural harbour overnight. Tropicbirds frequent these islands as do Galapagos owls. It may be possible to glimpse a view of these beautiful creatures whilst eating supper.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 10

Galapagos



Continue onto the pinnacle rock of Bartolome Island, one of the most famous vistas of the Galapagos and home to the small 35cm Galapagos penguin, the only penguin species to occur north of the equator. It is also the youngest island, said to be only five hundred thousand years old and still in its infancy as a living island where only a small number of pioneering plants exist, and a moonlike landscape. Walk up the 114 metre summit and enjoy the views and the lava flows of Sullivan bay, the beaches below and the pinnacle itself. Snorkelling off this island is very rewarding with friendly sea lions frolicking with you, Galapagos penguins and other visitors including green turtles and vibrant tropical fish. Alternatively, sunbathe on the beach.



This afternoon visit the nearby Sullivan Bay. This is the site of a wonderful lava flow where you can follow a fascinating 2kms geological and volcanological trail. Supper on board before departing for the island of Genovesa.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 11



Galapagos

Genovesa is known as 'Bird Island' for its profusion of bird life especially the blue-footed boobies and more uncommonly the red-footed boobies, some of the great birding characters on these islands. Frigate birds fill the skies and at night the only nocturnal gulls in the world, the swallow-tailed gulls, keeps the air alive with sound. It is necessary to be careful on the trail here as you can easily step on a bird going about their business.

The beauty of this island is that it can only be reached on faster vessels and therefore its remoteness adds to its tranquillity and its enjoyment. Snorkelling here is full of surprises with nutrient rich waters too. After the day is spent a long voyage awaits you towards the south-west to Santiago Island.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 12



Galapagos

Today you find yourself at dawn on the island of Santiago in St James Bay. This time the landing is on a black beach, with eroded rock formations and occupied by land iguanas feeding on the algae, bright sally lightfoot crabs and a fur seal grotto. This is a perfect island to photograph at dawn where the light is superb with the sea and beach seeming to catch fire. This has historic interest as a site where pirates sought refuge for repairs and restocking.



After lunch move to the island of Rabida or Jervis. Here lies an extraordinary dark red beach and a saltwater lagoon where flamingos feed. The nearby cliffs serve as perfect nesting sites for a host of bird species. Overnight head towards the main island of Santa Cruz.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 13



Galapagos

Santa Cruz is the main inhabited island with a population of up to 10,000. Enter the harbour at Puerto Ayora, with its wonderful panoramic views of rolling green hills and extinct volcanic cones. Onwards through the main town of the island, Puerto Ayora, with its main thoroughfare and souvenir shops walking to the Charles Darwin Research Station, where the staff will greet new arrivals. An audiovisual presentation on the Foundation and the islands awaits you along with the opportunity to meet Lonesome George. Be shown the secrets of incubating and raising young tortoises as well as shown the giant adult tortoises that are in the captive breeding programme.

There are trails across arid zone vegetation such as prickly pear and other cacti and mangroves. A variety of land birds, including Darwin's finches can be seen. Lunch is taken in Puerto Ayora and the afternoon includes a scenic and dramatic drive into the Highlands, a welcome contrast to the



other arid smaller islands. Here enjoy the lava channels and the twin craters and hopefully see such wonderful sightings in the surrounding trees such as the endemic, rare and magnificent vermilion flycatcher and the Galapagos dove.

Moving on to the wild giant tortoise enclave on the island for a visit to this controlled area. Monitored by the Research Centre, gain an understanding of their efforts to conserve and increase the populations of these noble and aged creatures. As the sun goes down perhaps head to a local restaurant for dinner.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 14

Galapagos



In the morning sail to the Isla Española, this rocky promontory sustains one of the most impressive and varied colonies of sea birds in the islands. It is an island less visited as only the better long distance boats will sail to this furthest south island. The best site is Punta Suarez which you visit in the morning. There is trail of some 2kms which takes you through masked and blue-footed booby colonies and past a beach full of marine iguanas, before reaching the main attraction, the waved albatross colony next to wonderful blowholes. To watch their courting ritual is to live every naturalist's dream, as they clash their beaks together in rhythm, as well as watching seabirds performing aerial ballet.



In the afternoon sail to the small Gardner Bay. This is a beautiful white sand beach at the east end of Española, home of the hood mockingbird, red billed tropicbirds, swallow-tailed gulls, and the large cactus finch. There is a lovely beach to swim off here with a large sea lion colony, where you may find stingray and stray fish. An island a short distance off-shore provides good snorkeling and you can experience all the underwater wonders of the sea here, from huge diamond stingrays, green sea turtles, red lipped batfish, king angelfish and giant damselfish. There may be a chance to Kayak this afternoon to explore other nooks and crannies off the island too.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 15

Galapagos



Santa Fe is one of the most beautiful coves in the Galapagos with a turquoise lagoon. This is not a volcanic island but an island that has been lifted through tectonic activity. The trail takes you through prickly cactus forests, the haunt of the Santa Fe species of land iguanas with their long spikes along their spines. On the landing beaches there are a mass of sea lions which will greet you or follow as you snorkel in the bay.

Continuing on to the Plazas Islands well known for their unusual vegetation including the succulent opunia cactuses and sesuvium plants, food for the greenish-yellow iguanas that sit waiting for the paddles to fall. The southern shore of this tiny island is a perfect spot to watch the crashing seas

and the daily activities of a huge number of birds including Audubon shearwaters, red billed tropicbirds, brown pelicans and swallow-tailed gulls. Huge sea lion bask down by the water's edge.

Overnight on your chosen Galapagos vessel in a cabin on a full board basis.

Day 16

Galapagos/Guayaquil/Madrid



Visit Black Turtle Cove in the morning prior to breakfast; a choppy landing onto a flat landscape of trees, but this island is alive with huge colonies of black vampire-like magnificent frigate birds, with their huge red pouches which they inflate to attract females. It is a fabulous finale to one's stay in the Galapagos; to be amongst this perennial display and the crowded skies mixed with the courtship dances, exaggerated high steps and honking and whistling of the quaint blue-footed boobies. The sea lions completely ignore the antics around them.



A trip to the mangroves will enable one to see spotted eagle and golden rays, black and green turtles and even young white-tipped reef sharks. This is the perfect way to remember these most memorable of islands before you motor to the harbour and then transfer back to the airport, for your flight to Guayaquil.

Please note this is a classic itinerary around the Galapagos Islands. Each boat has a different itinerary, and all itineraries are flexible due to National Park restrictions. Therefore the above is only a guideline for a visit to the Galapagos Islands.

Depart Guayaquil on a flight to the UK, flying overnight.

Day 17

Arrive UK

TRIP PRICE

In each location there is a variety of different category of hotels, lodges and guest houses, therefore as a guide we have broken these down into 3 categories; Traveller, Deluxe and Superior Deluxe. It is difficult to categorise each property as they vary so much therefore this is a general price guide only.

Traveller price from £3,795 per person + flight taxes

Deluxe price from £4,230 per person + flight taxes

Superior Deluxe price from £4,875 per person + flight taxes

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes return flight from UK, internal flights, local transport, airport-hotel transfers and tours on a shared basis (or can be organised on a private basis), accommodation (twin/double with private facilities where available) and board. Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis, unless staying in a remote lodge when normally this will be on a full board basis.

The price excludes entrance charges to sites, parks and museums, extra local excursions and guided tours, international and domestic airport taxes. Travel insurance, visas, single supplements (if applicable) and items of a personal nature, such as laundry, drinks, etc.

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer. We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout

this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact the Latin America team on 01285 885 333 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

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