



ADVENTUREWOMEN®, INC.

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The BEST of Ecuador revised 1/5/2016

The Galapagos Islands and Cuenca

Trip Summary

Dates

March 9 - 19, 2016

Cost

- From \$6,195 from Guayaquil, Ecuador (\$800 deposit)
- Cost for the entire 11 day/10 night trip (Galapagos and Cuenca) is based on the cabins you book on the Galapagos boat, and are as follows:
- Lower deck:
 - \$6,495 per person: 4 twin rooms (2 twin beds/room), for a total of 8 persons.
- Main deck:
 - \$6,795 per person: 2 twin rooms (2 twin beds/room), for a total of 4 persons
 - \$6,195 per person: 1 double room (1 king sized bed), for 2 people sharing
 - \$6,195 + \$1,500 single supplement charge for 1 double room (1 king sized bed) to use as a single room for 1 person

The boat takes a maximum of 15 paying passengers, and rooms above cannot be reconfigured.

Rating

Moderate

Activities

- Wildlife Viewing
- Natural History
- National Parks
- Cultural Exploration
- Sightseeing
- Boat Cruising
- Wildlife Cruise
- Walking
- Snorkeling
- Swimming
- Horseback Riding
- Photography

A Galapagos Islands cruise provides us with an intimate look at what Darwin called “a little world within itself,” a place where an amazing assortment of wildlife reigns in a peaceable kingdom. Created five million years ago as a result of volcanic activity, the Galapagos Island archipelago is the greatest natural wildlife show on earth! Stepping ashore on each island, we see wildlife and plant life as unspoiled as Charles Darwin found it to be when he was inspired to write the *Origin of Species* 150 years ago. The encounter between Darwin and the Galapagos served to convince him that the world was a constantly changing place. He viewed the Galapagos Islands as a living laboratory, a place where evolution was visible.

We travel by boat, as Darwin did aboard the *Beagle* in 1835, but the similarity stops there. We cruise the Galapagos Islands aboard the 16 passenger chartered and private First Class Motor Yacht, the *Majestic*, one of the newest boats in the islands. Seabirds follow in our wake and dolphins ride the crest of our waves. Snorkel among a dazzling display of brightly-colored tropical fish, play tag with sea lions, and watch Galapagos Island penguins frolicking all around.

Where else in the world can you find Antarctic fur seals living right on the equator and birds that swim but don't fly? Or sunflowers growing to treetop heights? Imagine the Galapagos Islands animals—iguanas, sea lions, blue-footed boobies, giant tortoises, and Galapagos penguins—that aren't afraid of humans. The photographic opportunities in the Galapagos are simply awesome and unlimited!

Add to our adventure in Ecuador an exploration of an exciting and new destination, the former Inca town of Cuenca and its surroundings, a land of beautiful green valleys, idyllic mountains, and Inca ruins. It boasts a gorgeous historical center with republican and French architecture, fresh cloud forests, and sparkling lakes. We'll hike in magic forest scenery and horseback ride through one of Ecuador's lush highland valleys; visit an old colonial luxury hacienda and fly back centuries into the history of the epoch; learn how to cook a typical Ecuadorian dish and take the recipe back home; then top off our trip at one of the most

luxurious spas in the country, with a relaxing, soothing body massage.

This adventure combines it ALL! A 5-day voyage on our own first class motor yacht in the Galapagos Islands viewing birds, reptiles, and mammals that are unique to the Galapagos alone, followed by 5 days in Cuenca, declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO in 1999, and one of Ecuador's less discovered cities and surroundings. This is the BEST of Ecuador.

Main Attractions

- Experience the rare opportunity in the Galapagos Islands to mingle up-close with some of the most unusual creatures in the world —where the photographic opportunities are *awesome!*
- Stay in luxury class accommodations on a privately chartered 16-passenger first class motor yacht in the Galapagos Islands.
- Experience Ecuador's 3rd largest city and former Inca town of Cuenca, designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.
- Horseback ride, explore Inca ruins, cook Ecuadorian food, and stay in 2 beautiful boutique hotels, one in the Gualaceo Valley outside Cuenca, and one in central Cuenca.
- Combine the BEST of Ecuador with a Galapagos Cruise and an exploration of Cuenca and its stunning Andean surroundings!

What's Included:

- 10 nights/11 days Galapagos Islands and Cuenca exploration in Ecuador.
- All transfers from hotels to airports, services and taxes, and all ground transportation throughout the trip.
- 2 nights at the luxurious and conveniently located Hotel Wyndham in Guayaquil, in twin-bedded double occupancy rooms with private facilities.
- 4 nights, 5 days aboard the privately-chartered, 16-passenger First Class Motor-Yacht, *Majestic*, in air-conditioned, spacious rooms with private bath in each room.
- Snorkeling equipment (flippers, masks, and snorkels).
- Darwin Research Station-trained English-speaking naturalist guide on board our boat and an English-speaking guide in Cuenca.
- City tour of Cuenca, Manglares Chururute boat ride, horseback riding, cooking class, all entrance fees and all other activities listed in the itinerary for Cuenca and the surrounding area.
- 2 nights accommodations at the Santa Barbara Hosteria in the Gualaceo Valley, in twin-bedded double occupancy rooms.
- 2 nights at the Hotel Boutique Santa Lucia in Cuenca, in twin-bedded double occupancy rooms.
- Bottled water.
- Tips for carriers and porters.
- ALL MEALS (breakfast, lunch and dinner) beginning with breakfast on Day 2, until breakfast on departure day from Guayaquil on Day 11.
- One Ecuadorian English-speaking guide throughout the Andes and Cuenca portion.
- One AdventureWomen Associate.

What's Not Included:

- International round-trip airfare from your hometown to Guayaquil, Ecuador. See our suggestions under TRAVELING TO GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR. Approximate airfare from Miami to Guayaquil, on American Airlines, is \$658.
- Internal airfare and park fees for the Galapagos Islands:
The entire group will need to fly together on the following routes within Ecuador. Our outfitter and the boat are responsible for obtaining these airline tickets. You cannot buy air on your own for these portions, and will pay AdventureWomen when your balance for the land portion is due:
 - Roundtrip airfare to/from the Galapagos Islands from Guayaquil (currently \$550, subject to change);
 - \$100 Galapagos National Park fee, and \$20 Transit Control Card (subject to change);
 - Internal flight from Guayaquil to Cuenca (currently \$110, subject to change).

Total airfare (international and domestic flights), and Galapagos park fee costs for the entire trip from Miami is approximately \$1,438, plus any booking fees.

- A wetsuit (if anyone wants to use for snorkeling). Cost is \$5 per day to rent on the boat.
- Departing from Guayaquil for the U.S., there is an airport tax of approximately USD \$35 at Jose Joaquin Olmedo Airport. (Check with your air agent to see if this IS included in your round trip ticket).
- Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature.
- Tips and gratuities for guides and staff. Suggested amounts are:
 - \$50 per person for your Galapagos interpreter-guide
 - \$60 per person to the Galapagos boat crew
 - \$50 per person for your Cuenca guide
 - \$10 per person to your Cuenca driver
 - \$3 per person city tour driver, and \$3 for the local guide

Your Boat: The First Class Motor Yacht *Majestic*

One of the newest motor yachts in the Galapagos Islands, this specially-built Galapagos *Majestic* Yacht went into operation in 2013, and it is an amazing option for visiting the Galapagos Islands. Seeing the “Enchanted Isles” from our own private yacht allows us a more intimate experience, with added flexibility and time for shore excursions. While we travel from island to island, we soak up the sun on the boat’s sundecks, where we also watch the sun go down and the stars pop out at night. Seabirds follow in our wake and dolphins ride the crest of our waves. You also find out that what is underwater is as interesting as what is above as you snorkel and play tag with sea lions, view dazzling tropical fish, and have Galapagos penguins frolicking all around you. Throughout our journey we are accompanied by a knowledgeable Galapagos-trained naturalist, an expert in all the aspects of this amazing corner of the world.

While the main deck has two double and two twin cabins, the lower deck has four cabins with twin beds. There are small upper windows on the lower deck and full-sized windows on the main deck.

Several amenities like a well-stocked bar, a spacious dining room, a flat screen TV, and a lounge are also provided on the yacht. There are plenty of social areas like a fantastic sundeck with a huge Jacuzzi. All fully air-conditioned cabins have lower beds with private bathrooms, including cold

and hot water showers. The yacht has certified, highly trained naturalist guides along with 10 crew members. Scrumptious meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are served in the main dining room.

MAJESTIC technical specifications

Built in 2013 as a First Class Motor Yacht

Length - 117 feet

Beam - 23 feet

Draft - 10 feet

Weight - 200 tons

Capacity - 16 passengers

- Sundeck: Jacuzzi and social area
- Main Deck: Dining room, bar, social area, 4 cabins (2 with twin beds and 2 doubles, each with a king bed) 183 square feet
- Lower Deck: 4 Cabins (twin beds) 183 square
- All cabins have private bathrooms, hot water and air-conditioning
- Crew: 10-12 members

Passports and Travel Documents

Citizens of the United States must possess a valid passport, which must be valid 6 months beyond your intended stay. No visas are required for travel in Ecuador. If you do not have a passport, GET IT SOON! When you get your passport, you should also get two extra photographs to take with you. You should always possess extra photos when traveling to use in case of an emergency.

No special vaccinations are required for travel to Ecuador. However, please consult your personal physician, local health department, travel clinic, or immunization center about any vaccinations you may need to update, or others that may be personally recommended for you based on your age, health, and past vaccination history. Hepatitis A and B are present everywhere in the world, so you should talk to your doctor about this.

Health Requirements and Physical Condition Required

This AdventureWomen trip is rated as **Moderate** and requires that you be in very good physical condition. Walks on the Galapagos Islands range from Easy-Moderate, and from 1-4 miles a day. Landings on the islands are either dry or wet, and you need to be able to negotiate getting into and out of small boats (pangas), and have good balance and mobility.

On the Cuenca portion in the Andes, we are at altitudes of 9,000-10,500 feet. Hikes and walks are rated as easy, and not more than 3 miles. But keep in mind, since we are at higher altitudes, we will go slower.

Please review each day of this itinerary for the activity levels required.

You MUST have your own health insurance and not have any physical problems or conditions that would be adversely affected by high altitude (in Cuenca, the altitude is between 9,000-10,500 feet) or the rigors of international travel.

Currency

The U.S. dollar is now the official currency of Ecuador. Your cash should be no bigger than \$50 bills. Credit cards can be used at ATM machines in Guayaquil to get cash.

Visa, MasterCard, and Diners Club are the most recognized credit cards in Ecuador. American Express is NOT widely accepted. Please note that when using credit cards, merchants often charge you a transaction fee in order to cover their costs.

You should bring enough cash for tips, and a few hundred dollars in cash for your spending money.

***Important information about credit cards! Please note:** You should bring **at least one smart card, usually referred to as a chip card, or chip-and-PIN credit card** for travel to Europe and to other overseas destinations. These new cards are more secure and you are more protected from credit card fraud.

These so-called smart cards have embedded microchips in them. You will see the silver or gold microchip on the front of your card. They also have the traditional magnetic stripe, so can be used the same as your regular credit/debit card. You'll either sign for purchases, or enter a 4 digit PIN into a terminal. (Confirm with your bank that your PIN, or 4 digit number, will be the number that you use the FIRST time that a PIN is required for use with your new card. So just make sure you remember it for all future transactions!)

It is best to have your chip card as a VISA or MasterCard, since American Express is often not accepted in many places. In Europe and in parts of Asia, they simply don't acknowledge magnetic-stripe cards anymore unless they are chip-and-PIN enabled. In addition, in any automated transactions such as train stations and gas stations, **ONLY** chip-and-PIN cards are accepted.

Chip-and-PIN cards have become standard in many European countries because of their superior fraud-prevention abilities. Now countries in Asia, North America and South America, and Canada are doing the same.

How To Register

First, call (800-804-8686) or email (trips@adventurewomen.com) the AdventureWomen office to determine space availability. As a courtesy, we will hold your space for 5 days while you are completing the registration process, and making personal and travel arrangements.

Next, complete and sign the Trip Registration and International Passenger Information forms on our Web site by clicking "Sign Up for this Trip" on the trip page. We can also fax or email them to you. Include, with your forms, the required deposit that can be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or Discover), personal check, money order, or cashier's check. You can also give us your credit card number over the phone. Once we receive **your deposit and BOTH forms**, we will mail you a trip confirmation/information packet verifying your registration.

Traveling to Guayaquil, Ecuador: Arrival and Departure

You are responsible for your own international air arrangements to Guayaquil. However, based on schedules and flight times, we suggest you book your air for the following flights:

March 9, 2016 from Miami: American Airlines #927, departs Miami at 6:20 pm and arrives Guayaquil at 10:44 pm.

March 19, 2016 from Guayaquil to Miami: American Airlines #948, departs Guayaquil 7:55 am and arrives Miami 12:24 pm.

Using these flights, you will most likely NOT have to overnight in Miami at the beginning or the end of the trip.

Our flight to the Galapagos departs at 8:40 am in the morning on March 10. You must be in Guayaquil by the evening of March 9. Your hotel on March 9 is included in the trip cost.

If you want to come into Guayaquil a day early (March 8), we can arrange that with our outfitter, for an additional cost: \$160 per person single room, or \$80 per person sharing a double room, with breakfast (on March 9) and taxes included.

Note: There are other airlines and schedules into and out of Guayaquil. If you choose to take another airline and arrive/depart at a different time, you will still be picked up on arrival and taken to the airport for departure.

Making Travel Arrangements to Guayaquil, Ecuador

We suggest you book your air reservations with our travel consultant soon after registering for this trip!

On this AdventureWomen **Galapagos Islands/Cuenca Adventure**, we ask that you work directly with our travel consultant at **Travel Café, Montana's Travel Agency**, to make your round trip travel arrangements into Guayaquil, Ecuador.

After booking your trip, please call **Ciretta Green** to discuss your air schedule based on the arrival and departure times we have set for the group pick-up and departure in Guayaquil.

1-800-247-3538 OR FAX 1-406-586-1959
email: ciretta@travelcafeonline.com
CANADIAN RESIDENTS, please call 406-587-1188

When calling, please identify yourself as an AdventureWomen traveler. If you leave a message on Ciretta's voice mail, she will return your call promptly.

NOTE: The recent trend in travel is for travelers to finalize their plans much closer to departure time than was customary in the past. While we try to be as flexible as possible booking last minute

registrants, we must often relinquish hotel space and air reservations up to 6 – 12 weeks prior to departure!

Please keep this in mind when making your travel plans.

Liability Form and Final Payment

Part of what AdventureWomen, Inc. hopes to foster is the taking of more self-responsibility for our own lives, health, and safety. Please read the LIABILITY FORM carefully, return it with the remainder of your balance due by **DECEMBER 11, 2015**.

Cancellations and Refunds

Notification of cancellations must be received in writing. Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date, and 50% of the registration deposit is non-refundable.

For cancellations received 60-89 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the total trip cost is non-refundable. For cancellations received 1-59 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the total trip cost is non-refundable.

You are highly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance to cover emergency situations. A brochure will be sent to you in your registration packet.

Switching Trips

Before your final balance due date, you may change your deposit to another trip within the same calendar year by paying a \$75 fee to switch. You may not switch your deposit to a trip in another calendar year.

No Smoking Policy

Beginning in 1995, our trips became smoke free. Please note that there will be no smoking by any participants on AdventureWomen vacations.

Trip Itinerary

** Note that the listed activities each day may differ depending of the time of the day of our visit, cruise itinerary and National Park regulations.

DAY 1

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

Depart from the United States for Guayaquil, Ecuador

Upon arrival at Guayaquil's Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport, a representative will meet, welcome, and assist you with luggage and transfer to the hotel.

Meals Aloft

Overnight Hotel Wyndham

Calle Numa Pompilio Llona S N
 Ciudad del Río, Puerto Santa Ana
 Guayaquil EC090313, Ecuador
 Tel: +59 34 3717800

Situated just steps from the historic Santa Ana Hill and its famous Lighthouse, as well as mere minutes to the impressive Malecon 2000 and Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport, the Wyndham Guayaquil hotel is ideal for business and leisure travelers alike. Boasting easy access to all of Guayaquil's many delights and a host of thoughtful amenities, guests at this non-smoking hotel in Guayaquil will also enjoy easy access to Las Peñas Neighborhood, the World Trade Center Guayaquil and Simon Bolivar Convention Center.

DAY 2**Thursday, March 10****Fly from Guayaquil to Baltra Island, the Galapagos. Board our First Class Yacht, the M/Y MAJESTIC. Afternoon Visit to the Giant Land Tortoise Breeding Center.**

In the morning we are transferred to the airport for our 8:40 am flight to Baltra, the Galapagos Islands. We arrive in Baltra at 9:30 am. Please refer to the map. Baltra is #1.

Arriving in Baltra, we pass through immigration and after claiming our baggage, we are met by the *Majestic* staff and transferred to the yacht. After checking into our cabins and settling into our rooms, we have lunch and a welcome briefing.

In the afternoon we'll visit "Fausto Llerena," the Giant Land Tortoise Breeding Center in Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island (#2), where giant tortoises are bred in captivity. This is home to tortoises ranging from 3-inches (new hatchlings) to 4-foot long adults. Subspecies of the giant tortoises interact with one another, and many of the older tortoises are accustomed to humans stretching out their heads for a photo opportunity. The babies are kept until they are about four years old and strong enough to survive on their own.

Activity: Walking

Difficulty: Easy

Type of landing: Dry Landing

Best Observation: Giant land tortoises, great blue herons, land iguanas, lava lizards, mockingbirds

Accessible only by small boats (rubber dinghies or "pangas") that are launched from our Motor Yacht, *Majestic*, the Galapagos Islands provides us with an intimate look at what Darwin called "a little world within itself"—the secret world where an amazing assemblage of wildlife reigns in a peaceable kingdom. It's an astounding opportunity to study, view, and photograph (awesome photographic opportunities!) flora and fauna communities in a completely natural state. We step over blue-footed boobies who have laid their eggs on our path, and are watched by prehistoric-looking iguanas as they turn an enigmatic eye on us. Sea lions lumber up to us, sometimes trying to untie our shoelaces, as we walk across bizarre lavascapes or stand in awe of a "blowhole."

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



DAY 3

Friday, March 11

M/Y MAJESTIC to Geneovesa Island: Darwin Bay and El Barranco

This morning arrive at the white-sand coral beach of Darwin Bay (#3), and walk a trail that winds through mangroves filled with land birds and seabird colonies. We see the cliffs from the seaward side, which is home to a large red-footed booby colony. Once ashore the number of birds seems overwhelming – Nazca boobies soar overhead, great frigatebirds display their pouches while resting on the nearby rocks and plants, and mockingbirds scamper quickly across the sand. Further down the path we find tidal pools where sea lions swim playfully, and there are spectacular cliff views.

Activity: Hiking 0.9 miles, snorkeling, dinghy ride

Difficulty: Easy

Type of landing: Wet landing

Best Observation: Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, swallow tail gulls, mangroves, great frigatebirds, mockingbirds, wandering tattlers, lava gulls, whimbrels, turnstones, yellow-crowned, black-crowned and lava herons, white and yellow warblers, sharp-beaked finch, large cactus finches, large ground finches, Galapagos doves, Madeiran storm petrels, marine iguanas, coral, pebble beach, rays, and colorful reef fish.

Our afternoon visit takes us to El Barranco, also known as Prince Phillip's Steps (#4). It is a steep, rocky path that leads up to a high cliff with a marvelous view. This site is also home to palo santo

vegetation as well as red-footed boobies, short-eared lava owls, Galapagos swallows, and Galapagos doves.

Activity: Hiking 0.9 miles

Difficulty: Moderate - Steep Path

Type of landing: Dry, difficult landing

Best Observation: Masked red-footed boobies, short-eared owls, storm-petrels, Galapagos doves, great frigatebirds, swallow-tailed gulls, red-billed tropicbirds, Madeiran storm petrels, Galapagos fur seals, lava gulls, marine iguanas, mockingbirds.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Saturday, March 12

M/Y MAJESTIC to Chinese Hat and Mosquera Islets

Sombrero Chino (#5) is named after its shape formed by volcanic rock giving it the name, Chinese Hat Islet. This small islet is located near the southeast coast of Santiago Island. Since it was given a maximum visiting capacity by the National Park Service it offers rare, up close viewing of Galapagos wildlife and well preserved remnants of fragile volcanic rock that can't be found in such a unique condition anywhere else, such as geological formations of lava tubes and lava flows. Some of the lava flows were formed underwater and subsequently raised above sea level. The presence of coral heads on the lava flow indicates this phenomenon.

The islet is home to a colony of sea lions on the white coral sand beach. Here you can see American Oystercatchers, Galapagos Penguins swimming along the shores, and Sally-Lightfoot Crabs in bright contrast to the dark volcanic rock.

Activity: Hiking 1.9 miles, and snorkeling with Galapagos penguins, playful sea lions and white-tipped sharks

Difficulty: Easy-Moderate. Good shoes necessary for walking on lava rock

Type of landing: Wet landing

Best Observation: Lava formations, great site for snorkeling with an abundance of marine species, marine iguanas, sea lions, Sally Lightfoot crabs, white-tipped sharks, Galapagos penguins.

This afternoon we motor to Mosquera Islet (#6) located between Baltra and North Seymour Islands. The island consists of a long narrow stretch of white sand, rocks, and tide pools. Created by geological uplift, Mosquera has a flat look to it rather than the conical shape of the volcanically formed islands. It is a great place to wander without the typical restrictions of the other islands, and is ideal for snorkeling, strolling on the beach, and enjoying the animal life.

There are always many sea lions resting on the beach. Be sure to keep your distance from the male sea lions, which can be a bit aggressive.

Activity: Panga ride, short walk on the islet's beach

Difficulty: Easy

Type of landing: Wet landing

Best Observation: White sandy beach with lots of sea lions, great blue herons, lava gulls, lava herons, lava lizards, marine iguanas.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Sunday, March 13

M/Y MAJESTIC to Wizard Hill and Kicker Rock on San Cristobal Island

In the morning we visit Wizard Hill, also known as Cerro Brujo (#7). Located on the northern coast, this eroded hill and its surroundings presents one of the most picturesque beaches in the Galapagos, with its white powdery sand and abundance of animals. Wildlife includes sea turtles, rays, and various types of booby birds. The clear water provides an excellent opportunity for enjoying swimming and snorkeling.

Activity: Hike, dinghy ride, snorkeling

Difficulty: Easy walk along the beach

Type of landing: Wet landing

Best Observation: Beautiful rock formations, sea lions, shore birds, finches and mockingbirds. Snorkeling: nice tropical fish, anemones, sponges, coral.

In the afternoon we visit Kicker Rock, or León Dormido (#8) from our pangas. This small, distinctive island, located off the western shore of San Cristobal, comprises two rocks which jut out of the ocean and stand vertically at hundreds of feet above the ocean, divided by a small channel.

It is home to a large colony of sea birds. It is an excellent site for advanced snorkelers, where you can see many reef fish as well as hammerhead and Galapagos sharks. Sightings of large rays and turtles are common but not guaranteed.

Activity: Snorkeling and dinghy ride

Difficulty: Advanced snorkeling.

Type of landing: No landing

Best Observation: Sharks, tropical reef fish, turtles, rays, spectacular rock formation, sea birds, blue footed boobies, Nazca boobies and frigate birds.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6

Monday, March 14

M/Y MAJESTIC to the Interpretation Center on San Cristobal Island. Fly back to Guayaquil to Connect with our Flight to Cuenca

On our last morning in the Galapagos, we'll visit the Galapagos National Park Interpretation Center. The tour of this center will explore the natural history of the islands including human interaction and conservation efforts. The Museum of Natural History explains the volcanic origin of the archipelago, ocean currents, climate, and the arrival of endemic species. The Human History exhibit chronologically describes significant events such as discovery and colonization of the islands.

Activity: Museum visit

Difficulty: Easy

Type of landing: Dry landing

Best Observation: Great exhibit about the archipelago's natural history!

After visiting The Interpretation Center we are transferred to the San Cristobal airport to catch our 1:20 pm flight, arriving in Guayaquil at 4:10 pm., where we connect with our short 40 minute flight to Cuenca (depart 7:10 pm and arrive at 8 pm).

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight **Santa Barbara Hosteria** in the Gualaceo Valley

Santa Barbara Hosteria

Av. Loja y Sucre esq.

Ecuador – Azuay, Cantón Gualaceo

<http://santabarbarahosteria.com.ec>

info@santabarbarahosteria.com.ec

Tel: + 5937 281 8896 / + 5937 225 5010

Only 40 minutes from Cuenca, the Santa Barbara Hosteria seems world's away, with its magnificent palm-tree lined entrance, enchanting pools and gardens, spa, and five-star restaurant. With grand views of the mountains, it is a peaceful and quiet retreat. The rooms are tastefully decorated and impeccably clean.

DAY 7

Tuesday, March 15

Hiking the Tushipungo Valley, Visit a Straw Hat Weaver, and Explore the Cojitambo Inca Ruins

Today we stretch our legs on an easy hike in the pretty Tushipungo Valley. Meandering through cattle farms we arrive at the spectacular El Cajas National Park, an area of protected land extending for 71,000 acres, and home to an incredible 230 glacial lakes. Here we traverse rolling paramo grasslands through wild quinoa and rosemary. And don't forget to bring your binoculars to watch an abundance of birds and mammals such as hummingbirds, teals, gulls, and llamas. Trout are also plentiful in several of the moorland's lakes. Our guide will explain the prehistoric glacial activity that contributed to the 'U' shape of the lake, the lowest elevation in El Cajas National Park. We'll walk a small hiking path through the cloud forest, along rippling brooks and around the lake, for excellent nature watching.

After our hike we drive to the city of Biblian to meet local artisans dedicated to weaving straw hats (Panama hats) and other handicrafts. We'll have a chance to interact and share time with the artists, and to find out how difficult it is to weave using the traditional Toquilla (*Carludovica palmata*) fiber.

From Biblian it's just a short drive to Cojitambo, one of the hidden gems of Ecuadorean tourism. Located 15 miles north of Cuenca at 9,800 feet above sea level, with a population of 3,500 inhabitants, this beautiful little town is home to the archaeological complex built by the Inca-Cañari in the 1400s. Cojitambo Mountain offers spectacular views of Inca ruins and rolling valleys from the

uppermost point. It comes as no surprise that this strategically placed town was so significant to the Inca-Cañari.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Activity: Hiking Tushupungo Valley

Distance: 1.24 miles (2 km.)

Difficulty: Easy

Hike time: 1 hour 30 min.

Elevation: 10,367 ft.

Note: National Park Guide is mandatory

Best Observation: Andean fox, whitetail deer, and spectacled bears.

Overnight **Santa Barbara Hosteria**

DAY 8

Wednesday, March 16

Horseback Riding and Hot Spring Therapy!

Whether you are a horse-lover or simply enjoy a ride on occasion, you will be welcomed at this equestrian center, which is a mere 20 minutes from Cuenca. Our expert guide will find a horse to meet your expectations and level of expertise, so not to worry! After gearing up, we'll ride to beautiful overlooks in the valley of Tarqui. Our horses are well trained and easy to ride. And, since safety is our top priority, you will be asked to wear helmets and follow the safety instructions from our local expert. Admire the local architecture, culture, and diverse ecosystems along the way.

Activity: Horseback riding Tarqui

Distance: 3 miles

Difficulty: Easy

Time: 2 ½ hours

Elevation range: 10,450 feet (3,185 m.) above sea level.

And what's better after riding than going to a hot springs spa!? Within a 15 minute drive from the equestrian center is the Piedra de Agua Thermal Springs and Spa. The hot springs are naturally heated by underground volcanic activity and are a great place to relax and enjoy the comfort and diversity of services that the spa offers. The Spa offers a steam room, mud bath, subterranean hot and cold pools, steam boxes, an outdoor hot pool, and a restaurant. The setting is amazing. You can choose from a select massage menu and enjoy food in the restaurant while surrounded by the beauty of the Andes.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight **Hotel Boutique Santa Lucia** in Cuenca

Hotel Boutique Santa Lucia
Antonio Borrero 8 44 Y Sucre,
Cuenca, Azuay, 010150, Ecuador
Tel: (593) 7 2828 000
Fax: (593) 7 2828 000 ext. 111
info@santaluciahotel.com

www.santaluciahotel.com/

Hotel Santa Lucía is located in the heart of Cuenca, in one of its most beautiful historic, commercial and financial areas, only a short distance from Parque Calderón. The building is a remodeled 19th century mansion, restored with beautiful details from that time. It has 20 modern and comfortable rooms and 3 restaurants, including a trattoria in the central patio and a tea room, all with the best Ecuadorian and international cuisine.

DAY 9

Thursday, March 17

Pumpaungo Inca Ruins, a Cooking Class, and Cuenca City Tour

Built in the late 15th c., the archaeological site of Pumapungo is located inside the colonial city of Cuenca, and is part of the Central Bank Museum. The archaeological park forms part of one of the most imposing and beautiful cities of the ancient empire of the Incas, which had buildings dedicated to political, administrative and religious use. The site shows terraces for cultivation, underground tunnels, a live exhibit of plants that were of great importance for Inca-Cañari cultures, for food and medicine. It also displays a native Ecuadorian bird exhibit that allows a close encounter with truly amazing birds.

Our next fun stop is a visit to a local family, where we learn to cook one of their most important typical dishes. To know a culture, you have to start in the kitchen! Ecuadorian cuisine is a fusion of traditional ingredients, colonial Spain, and Andean fare. Cuenca's privileged location, nestled high in the Andes but near the Pacific, offers a rare opportunity for culinary innovation. Today we'll learn how to rustle up some exquisite Ecuadorian culinary creations.

Nestled in the lush hillsides in the southern Andes is the former Inca town and beautifully preserved colonial city of Cuenca. Ecuador's third largest city, it is unarguably the center of culture and art in the country. It exudes a predominantly small town feel and boasts a distinctive Spanish architectural style dotted with French influences. With a spring-like climate throughout the year, Cuenca is steeped in rich Incan history, and is home to vestiges of Inca ruins and an Inca trail originating in Cusco, Peru, which connects the beautiful Ecuadorian coast and the famous Amazon Jungle. Its people are warm and inviting, sporting traditional dress and Panama hats. Cuenca is the heart of Southern Ecuador.

This afternoon we have a guided tour of this beautiful city, steeped in rich Incan history and Incan ruins. The arrival of the Spanish gave rise to a union of colonial and indigenous cultures, evident in the city's churches, murals, stained glass, ceramics, weavings and architecture. Proudly declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999, the city's colonial charm and warmth has contributed to its new status as an exciting and fresh destination that easily combines with visits to the Galapagos Islands.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight **Hotel Boutique Santa Lucia** in Cuenca

DAY 10

Friday, March 18

From Cuenca to Manglares Churute Mangrove Reserve, Visit a Local Cocoa Farm, and Continue to Guayaquil

Just 25 miles south of Guayaquil, the Manglares–Churute Mangrove Reserve spans 123,550 acres of two amazingly bio diverse ecosystems: tropical dry forest and the largest mangrove reserve in Ecuador. Mangrove trees grow in ecosystems that bridge the gap between land and sea along tropical coastal zones. They act as a kind of filtration system by removing sediment before it reaches open water, which protects coral reefs, controls pollution and provides food and habitats for fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds.

The mangroves grow in the muddy estuaries of the River Guayas and cover about two-thirds of the reserve. Manglares-Churute is also characterized by natural salt flats, which serve as popular feeding spots for a whole host of eye-catching shorebirds such as roseate spoonbills, ospreys, egrets, and laughing gulls. Vegetation rich in balsa and oak trees, punctuated with orchids and bromeliads, surrounds the mangroves. And, if we are lucky during our boat journey through this habitat, we may even spot the horned screamer bird!

Continuing on our way to Guayaquil, we stop at a local cocoa plantation, where all family members participate in taking care of the plants, harvesting the fruit, drying and toasting the beans, and later preparing their own chocolate! Here we learn about the process of chocolate making and more importantly, we'll eat the chocolate that we made ourselves!

Our typical Ecuadorian lunch today is hosted by the family who owns and works the cocoa plantation. After lunch, we drive to Guayaquil for our last night in Ecuador and celebrate this wonderful time together with our Farewell Dinner at the hotel.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight **Hotel Wyndham, Guayaquil**

DAY 11

Saturday, March 19

Transfer to the Airport for Flights Home

You will be met at the hotel and assisted with your luggage in time to be transferred to the airport to catch your flight home.

Breakfast

Electricity

Electrical current is 110V, the same as the United States. However, most hotels have 2-prong outlets. If you have any electrical appliances that have 3-prong plugs, you should bring an adapter that converts a 3-prong plug to fit a 2-prong AC outlet. These adapters are available in 2 packs at any electronics store for under \$5 or you can buy one in Ecuador for around \$3.

Local Time

The time in Guayaquil, Ecuador is the same as Eastern Standard Time in the U.S. In the Galapagos, the time is one hour earlier.

What to Bring

Baggage Restrictions

Passengers may take one bag of up to **44 lbs of checked luggage on flights to the Galapagos Islands**. If you want to bring more than 44 lbs, each airline does charge an overweight luggage charge. You are also allowed one carry-on bag in flight, which is limited to a maximum of 15 lbs.

Also, we recommend using soft-sided luggage as it is easier to transport and pack away in a closet or drawer on the boat than hard suitcases.

Our **flight from Guayaquil to Cuenca** has the same baggage restrictions and weight allowances. This information should help with your packing for the entire trip. This weight limit should be more than adequate for our time in the Galapagos and our time in Cuenca.

So, **TRAVEL LIGHT!** Your carry-on bag should contain everything you cannot live without (all camera equipment, toiletries, prescription medication, anti-diarrhea medication, all money, important travel documents, passport, one change of clothing, swimsuit, etc.). Please visit www.tsa.gov/travelers to read the airline regulations regarding what you can and cannot take in carry-on luggage.

Clothing and More

Select your clothing based on comfort. Clothes should be washable, cotton or the new fabrics (not synthetics like rayon), and loose fitting. Some of the new fabrics like Coolmax, supplex, and polypropylene are excellent.

The weather will be summer-like in the Galapagos, so during the daytime you should be in lightweight summer clothing. In Cuenca, at higher altitudes, you might need a sweater during the day, but it will be a must in the evening. So you need to take clothing for both the cool of the Cuenca Ecuadorian highlands and the warm days of the Galapagos.

- A well-broken-in, comfortable pair of lightweight walking shoes or boots for walking on the islands. They should be sturdy, as well as comfortable, because the lava terrain is hard on the soles.
- One pair of sneakers or sport sandals for evenings and other walks. Your feet will get wet on wet landings, so one pair of shoes/sandals should be fast drying.
- 2 long-sleeved shirts.
- 2 short-sleeved shirts and/or T-shirts.
- 2 pairs of shorts, or long pants that zip off for shorts.
- Underwear, socks, sleepwear.
- Rain poncho with hood.
- Toiletries, including Wash & Dries/hand sanitizer.

- Earplugs. Very important! We recommend Mack's Pillow Soft White Moldable Silicone Snore Proof Earplugs, which you can buy at most drugstores, or www.earplugstore.com. Good to 22 Decibels!
- A lightweight fleece jacket or sweater for cool evenings at high altitudes (Cuenca and the Andes).
- A lightweight day pack for carrying camera gear, hat, sunscreen, etc. (you can also use your day pack as your carry-on bag).
- Moneybelt or waistpack for money/passport.
- Washcloth (sometimes not supplied).
- 2-3 cotton bandannas (an AdventureWomen standard, for uses too numerous to mention!)
- Adequate supply of sweat-resistant sunscreen with at least an SPF 15 rating or higher, lip balm with SPF, and skin cream. Remember, we are close to the equator, so the sun is very strong. Also, due to Cuenca's higher altitude, the air is very dry.
- Bathing suit(s).
- Sunglasses with a neck strap.
- Lightweight, wide-brimmed hat (a must).
- A spare pair of glasses (if you wear glasses) and a neck strap.
- Insect repellent.
- Ziploc bags of various sizes.
- Small travel alarm clock.
- Small flashlight (so you don't wake your roommate at night if you have to get out of bed!)
- Water bottle.
- Good pens and a notebook.
- Small, lightweight binoculars (a MUST) for viewing animals and birds. You will be very disappointed if you do not have a good pair of binoculars. Nikon or Minolta make fine, lightweight, viewing binoculars. Try a general game-viewing 7 X 28, or 8 X 20 binocular.
- Field guides to the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador.

Personal First Aid Kit (bring in small amounts in small containers)

- Cloth, not plastic, Band-aids; about 10 individually-wrapped alcohol pads; and a small tube of Neosporin or other antibiotic cream.
- Benadryl cream for itchy bites.
- Aspirin/ibuprofen, etc.
- Dramamine or other motion sickness medication for the boat if you tend to get seasick. The [ear patch](#) is the best if you want to be totally safe. You will need a prescription from your doctor for this.
- Cold-symptom relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops.
- Tweezers.
- Systemic antibiotic (prescription), optional (but not a bad idea to always take this on international trips.)
- Prescription medicines in their original bottles.
- Acidophilus enzyme (available in capsules in health-food stores). This often helps your digestive system get into shape for "new" flora.
- Immodium, Lomotil, or similar anti-diarrhea medicine.
- Pepto-Bismol tablets and/or liquid (in leak-proof bottle).
- Laxative tablets.
- Visine or similar eye drops.

Camera Equipment

Since photography is such a large part of this trip, we suggest you bring the following: Digital camera, LOTS of extra memory cards and batteries, battery charger, and adapter. You can charge your digital batteries in hotels and on the boat.

- Digital camera, LOTS of extra memory cards and batteries, battery charger, and adapter.
- Most digital cameras have a built in converter so you only need to bring an adapter. Adapters can also be bought while in-country.

If you want to get great pictures of animals and birds, a long lens is a must. I have an 80-400 mm Nikon lens and I can get just about anything that you want to take photos of on this trip. There is really no need to have anything larger than a 400 mm lens. You will, of course, need a normal or wide angle lens (somewhere between 24 – 70 mm), to take pictures of people, villages, and general photography during the trip. Many lenses on newer cameras are “all in one” (i.e. 28 – 400-500 mm). Get advice from a good, reputable camera shop!

Electrical

Electrical current is 110V, the same as the United States.

Last Minute Reminders

- Make photocopies of your airline tickets and the first two pages of your passport, and put them in different locations (suitcase, carry-on bag, etc.).
- Bring 2-3 extra passport size photos to use in emergencies.
- Your valuables should be insured for the duration of the trip, but better yet, leave them at home.
- Remove extra credit cards, driver’s license, and personal items from wallet or purse.
- Make sure passport and airline tickets are valid and in the correct name.
- Check with airline to reconfirm reservations and departure time (most airlines want to hear directly from the client for confirmations).
- Please leave all valuable jewelry at home!!!

Some Extra Items to Add to your "What to Pack" List (if you can fit them into your 44lb weight limit!)

We think these items help make your long airline flights much more comfortable and even more bearable:

- Neck pillow - Inflatable neck pillow for blissful support and deep sleep. For packing, it folds into itself. Self-sealing valve means nothing to close. Soft microfleece cover removes for washing.
- Sleep mask /Comfort eye shade - Ultra lightweight and comfortable, the Comfort Eye Shade screens out light and distractions for a cozier flight. Ultra-soft micro fleece for comfort. Adjustable elastic strap for a perfect fit. Made of Molded Polyester Micro Fleece.
- Travel compression socks - Reduce ankle and leg swelling and reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis. These doctor-designed socks stimulate circulation through gradual compression that stops swelling and guards against (DVT). Made of coolmax®-lycra®-nylon. The TravelSox® cushion Walk Socks have extra-padded soles and are made of moisture wicking SoftPrim®.
- Noise canceling headphones - Block out unwanted sounds of children crying and airplane engine drone, and/or enjoy great audio sound. Reduce distortion and increase perceived

loudness so you can enjoy sound at a lower volume. Get the around the ear design, which is very comfortable.

About Adventure Travel Today - Please Read Carefully!

At AdventureWomen, we would like to ensure that all participants understand that our excursions are *adventure travel vacations*, and not "tours." We define "adventure travel" as travel in which one *actively participates*, as opposed to a "tour," in which one is more or less a passive observer. AdventureWomen designs and organizes vacations all over the world for women who want to experience an *active, out of the ordinary vacation, and meet new friends*. Most of all, we want our trips to be fun!

In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a *good-natured realist* and have a *sense of humor!* *Adventure vacations, by nature, require that participants be self-sufficient, flexible, and able to accept situations as they exist*, and not just as they would have preferred or expected them to exist. The constraints of scheduled group traveling also necessitate that each of us be understanding of and sensitive to others. *Being on time is important*, and contributes to the congeniality, success and well being of both individuals and the group!

Thank you for choosing to travel with AdventureWomen! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call, write or email us.

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