Ecuador and Galapagos

November 19 - December 5, 2019
17 Days • 40 Meals
Escort by Jon and Sue Gurr

Learn of the fauna of the Galapagos
Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands provide for a fascinating and extremely varied experience. In Ecuador we shall discover Quito and the high Andes, an ancient Indian culture and a Spanish colonial history, magnificent scenery and delightful crafts. This is a photographer’s paradise with village and market scenes contrasted with the majestic peaks of the Andes Mountains. A major highlight of this journey will be the two nights spent in the cloud forest at Mashpi Lodge, likely the highest rated ecological preserve in Ecuador if not of all South America.

We shall journey 600 miles across the Pacific and embark on the beautiful Santa Cruz II to discover for ourselves the mystery of the Galapagos Islands, the origins of these volcanic islands, the stark beauty of their landscapes and the unique flora and fauna that inhabit their shores. The native population, consisting of seals, iguanas, tortoises, and a vast array of bird-life, play freely in the security of their environment, as if on show for us.

We have limited space on this very special journey (maximum membership will be 24) and we encourage you to enroll early. Previous departures have sold out in just a few weeks. This unique journey is truly a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

**Inclusive Features**

- Return economy group airfare from Canada to Quito
- Accommodations in deluxe and best available hotels as indicated, including world renowned Mashpi Lodge
- 5 day fully inclusive deluxe cruise on Santa Cruz II
- 40 meals as shown in the itinerary (B - 16 breakfasts, L - 12 lunches, D - 12 dinners)
- Services of your group escort, national and local guides
- All gratuities, taxes and service fees for included services
- Airport transfers in Canada or equivalent value with purchase of group airfare

**Highlights**

- Historic Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- 5 day cruise on the beautiful new Santa Cruz II to experience the wonders of the Galapagos Islands
- 2 days at Mashpi Lodge, experiencing the cloud forest
- Breath taking rail journey to the Devil’s Nose
- Colonial gem of Cuenca
- Lively markets of Otavalo

**Tour / Cruise Escorts**

We are pleased to have award winning photographer Jon Gurr and his wife Susan to escort this exciting adventure to Ecuador. For over 30 years, Jon and Sue have been travelling the world and capturing photographic images of their destinations. Some of Jon’s photographs are displayed in the National Archives, numerous publications and calendars as well as in galleries in Muskoka. Over the years they have travelled in Britain, Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, India and China. Jon hopes to teach some photographic skills and both plan to share their love of travel on this adventure.

**November 19, Tuesday Canada / Quito, Ecuador**

Our journey begins as travellers from across Canada gather in Toronto for our flights to Quito, capital of Ecuador. The northern capital of the Incas, and a 16th century Spanish colonial city, Quito has had a varied and fascinating history. Today the city is a storehouse of elegant churches, ancient monasteries, colonial mansions, fascinating antiques and hand-crafted Indian artifacts.

**Hotel Patio Andaluz (2 nights)**

**November 20, Wednesday Quito**

Our morning tour will provide insights into this beautiful Andean city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit impressive San Agustin Church and the Monastery of San Francisco followed by a panoramic view of the city from Panecillo Hill. A delight will be a visit to the Archaeological Museum, covering 10,000 years of history. This afternoon we return to our hotel with some free time. This evening we gather for our Welcome Dinner.

**November 21, Thursday Quito / Riobamba**

Today we begin our exploration into the Andean World and the awesome scenery of the Ecuadorian Andean Region. Our first stop will be at the village of Sangolquí to visit the traditional local market. Visit Cotopaxi National Park for close-up views of its unique flora and fauna and continue up the slopes of Cotopaxi Volcano for lunch. We continue along the Pan American Highway, up and down the slopes of the famous Avenue of the Volcanoes, to Urbina, at the foot of imposing Chimborazo Volcano. Visit a Tagua nut workshop and warm up with a canelazo and biscuits by the fireplace while enjoying an amazing sunset (weather permitting). On our way to quaint Riobamba, watch for grazing vicunas and marvel at the well-tended mountain fields. Hacienda Abraspungo (1 night) BLD

**November 22, Friday Riobamba / Cuenca**

Our morning drive takes us through spectacular scenery, surrounded by mountains and farmlands. At Alausí we transfer to rail for the breathtaking descent (800 metres) to the Devil’s Nose, a certain highlight of this adventure. At the station of Sibambe we visit the local museum "Condor Puñuna" built and run by the Nizag community. Returning to Alausí we rejoin our coach exploring the Andean world to the south, visiting the Inca Fortress of Ingapirca en-route to Cuenca. Hotel el Dorado (2 nights) BLD

**November 23, Saturday Cuenca**

With red tiled roofs, cobblestone streets, flowery plazas and museums, Cuenca, Ecuador’s third largest city, is filled with beauty. We will visit the Plaza of San Sebastián, the
Museum of Modern Art, the flower market and stroll in the Main Square. Then enjoy a relaxing drive along the Tomebamba River to admire the overhanging houses. After lunch, we will visit a ceramics handicraft shop as well as a Panama Hat factory.

**November 24, Sunday**  
_Cuenca / Guayaquil_

Today offers us another wonderful experience as we drive from the highlands to the coast, crossing through a series of climatic and vegetation zones. En route we will visit El Cajas National Park, a highland park noted from its many lakes and scenic beauty. On arrival in Guayaquil, enjoy a brief orientation drive through Ecuador’s second city and major port en route to our hotel.

_Hotel Oro Verde Guayaquil_ (1 night)  
_BLD_

**November 25, Monday**  
_Guayaquil / Galapagos_

This is the day that we have been anticipating, as we fly westward across the Pacific to the Galapagos Islands, some 600 miles away. On arrival we transfer to the beautiful Santa Cruz II. Designed to hold just 90 passengers, our ship is fully air-conditioned, has a comfortable lounge and dining room, and all cabins have private facilities. After lunch and our introductory briefing, we go ashore at Las Bachas, a glorious white beach backed by brackish lagoons, home to a variety of wading birds, from stilts to flamingos. Back on board gather for a welcome reception and a briefing before dinner.

_Santa Cruz II_ (4 nights)  
_BLD_

**November 26, Tuesday**  
_Santiago Island_

After breakfast, we explore the coastline by panga along the impressive cliffs of Buccaneer Cove, learning about the area’s distant and recent history. The cove is home to a large number of marine birds, sea lions, and inter-tidal organisms. Enjoy fantastic natural formations such as the “Elephant Rock”, “The Bishop” and an impressive natural cave. After lunch, disembark on the beach at Puerto Egas to enjoy a swim or snorkel, often with marine turtles. Our walk provides great opportunities to see land and marine birds amid landscape of tuff-stone layers and lava flows. At low tide, marine iguanas graze upon the algae beds and we may observe a colony of fur-sea lions.

_BLD_

**November 27, Wednesday**  
_Rábida / Bartolome Islands_

Enjoy a fascinating panga ride along the shores or join a walk on Rábida Island’s red-coloured beach, which is due to high iron content in the volcanic soil. We shall see a colony of sea lions, marine iguanas, mockingbirds, yellow warblers and several species of Darwin’s finches. Very close to the beach, a salt pond hosts migrating greater flamingos at certain times of year. This is a great place to snorkel from the beach, both for beginners as well as for experienced snorkelers, due to the unique combination of underwater species and submarine landscapes. During navigation to our next island, dolphins are sometimes spotted! This afternoon enjoy the wonderful golden beach on Bartolome Island, dominated by the imposing Pinnacle Rock. Enjoy snorkelling and swimming from the beach plus the views from the glass bottom boat. Later we can climb to the summit of this diminutive island that boasts fantastic views of the archipelago and take a panga to explore the rugged and volcanic shoreline.

_BLD_

**November 28, Thursday**  
_Rábida / Bartolome Islands_

After breakfast, we debark and visit the Tortoise Reserve. Drive into the central highlands where we hope to experience the giant tortoises in the wild; two different species live in this area. Enjoy the lush highlands with dense forests, Galapagos daisies, orchids. We continue to the airport for our flight back to Quito. Balance of day at leisure. _Hotel Patio Andaluz_ (1 night)  
_B_

**November 29, Friday**  
_Tortoise Reserve / Quito_

We drive north from Quito in the rugged mountains that separate the plains of the coast from the rainforest interior. Here we find a truly unique ecolodge, designed to blend with the environment and to bring us close to nature in the...
December 1, Sunday  Cloud Forest / Mashpi Lodge
A full day of activities awaits us with our dedicated naturalist and local guides. Enjoy walks through the pristine jungle, surrounded by 150 foot high trees, visit the butterfly farm to learn about these delicate creatures, take a ride on the tree top gondola, to enjoy the flora and fauna of the cloud forest. Be sure to visit the observation tower where you stand on top of the rainforest canopy and learn about this ecological wonder. Observe toucans, parrots and dozens of other birds and, with some luck, the infamous howler monkeys, foraging squirrel monkeys or the gentle three-toed sloth. This will be a day to remember!

December 2, Monday  Mashpi / Otavalo
Leaving our cloud forest reserve, we make our way north, passing through rich farmlands and past dramatic mountain scenery, to the village of Otavalo, with South America's most unique Indian market. En route, we will visit artisan village like San Antonio de Ibarra and Peguche famous for wood carvings and hand-woven textiles.

December 3, Tuesday  Otavalo / Quito
Visit the world famous silent market of Otavalo, where sellers barter with their hands, a marked contrast to the raucous babble of other markets. We will have ample time to bargain for colourful ponchos, woolen goods and Indian jewelry. Enjoy lunch in the area and a coffee break at a traditional hacienda as we make our way back to Quito.

December 4, Wednesday  Quito
Quito’s artistic trails offer some of the most rewarding roads you can follow. Pre-Inca peoples created among the South American continent the oldest and finest artifacts and jewelry. The Spanish conquest brought new skills and religious fervour to the creation of superb religious sculptures; while 20th century artists have produced dramatic and expressionist paintings. We will uncover three eras in the country’s history: pre-Colombian, colonial and contemporary, by visiting the iconic sights of Casa del Alabado Museum, the church of La Compañía de Jesús, and La Capilla del Hombre (Chapel of Man), a striking modern structure housing the works of Ecuador's most celebrated painter, Oswaldo Guayasamin. This evening we enjoy our Farewell Dinner.

December 5, Thursday  Quito / Canada
Our ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ journey draws to a close as we catch our flights to our homes across Canada.

CT Rating 4/5 – Very Challenging: Although close to the equator, the high altitudes in central Ecuador and the cooling currents near the Galapagos mean that we can expect pleasant temperatures. During the cruise we will travel to shore in small boats and will experience a number of wet landings. During the time in the central highlands we will be between 7,000 and 10,000 feet above sea level (altitude sickness is possible). Because of the many different and sometimes difficult conditions, it is vital that all members be fully mobile and in good physical health.

Tour / Cruise Cost in Canadian Dollars per person

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*Land/Cruise Only rate includes all internal flights.

Prices are based on taxes, surcharges, airfares and exchange rates effective November 2018 and are subject to change. Tour/Cruise prices are based on sharing a double room at hotels and a minimum of 20 participants travelling.

Prices DO NOT INCLUDE the cost of insurance which is available and is highly recommended. Premiums vary with the cost, length of the trip, and the traveller’s age. For passengers up to and including 74 years on departure date, premiums will range from $518 to $656 pp plus applicable taxes. Cost supplements for travellers aged 75-85 will range from $231 to $473 pp plus applicable taxes. Clients 86 years and older and/or clients residing outside Ontario - please contact our staff for procedures. This insurance is effective from the date of purchase and carries limitations on pre-existing medical conditions. Please discuss your insurance coverage prior to booking. Check our website for the most current information. Refer to the enrollment form for general information and conditions.

Final payment will be due on August 12, 2019
Deposit is $2,000 per person

To reserve your spot on this tour, complete the enclosed enrolment form, indicating the tour you wish to join and your home city, and forward it with your deposit to:

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