

Gentle Walking Ecuador & Galapagos Safari

A selection of cultural walks in northern Ecuador followed by a thorough exploration of the Galapagos islands from the comfort of hotels and lodges in beautiful settings.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Style | Walking |
| Accommodation | Hotels, Lodge, Luxury camp |
| Grade | Gentle / Moderate |
| Duration | 16 days from London to London |
| Trekking / Walking days | Walks on: 7 days |
| Min/Max group size | 6 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 6 |
| Trip Leader | Local Leader Ecuador & Galapagos |
| Land only | Joining in Quito, Ecuador |
| Max altitude | 3,246m/10,650ft, Cuicocha Lake, Day 5 |

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2024 Dates:

Fri 16 Feb - Sat 02 Mar

Sat 23 Nov - Sun 08 Dec

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

Deposit

A higher deposit is required to secure your booking on this holiday, this includes a prepayment for your Galapagos accommodation and excursions. For full details please refer to our terms and conditions on our website <http://www.mountainkingdoms.com/essential-information> or contact us for a postal copy.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 6 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Your trip will be led by a fully trained English speaking local guide. In Ecuador these guides are enthusiasts for their mountains and are normally exceptionally highly educated, often in the States or in Europe and have lots of guiding experience. They can provide a fascinating insight into their country and an in-depth view of the area you are visiting.

Our Galapagos guides are fluent in English, and are incredibly passionate about their country's flora, fauna and history. They bring the Islands' fascinating birds, animals and landscapes to life in an entirely new way with their expert knowledge, and also share the incredible stories of the Islands' human inhabitants - a side of the Galapagos that many travellers never discover.

Our guides are trained to support the well-being of natural areas and the wildlife and people who live in and around them. They are highly qualified and experienced ecotourism specialists with a commitment to providing an unforgettable travel experience and top quality, personalised service.

Your trip highlights

- Spend four days exploring the nature & culture of northern Ecuador's Otavalo area
- Take a spectacular walk around Laguna Cuicocha
- Enjoy comfortable, handpicked accommodation with lots of character including a centuries-old, traditional hacienda
- Stay on three different Galapagos islands exploring the culture and traditions of the communities
- Experience close encounters with incredible wildlife of the Galapagos, on foot and in the water
- Snorkel or kayak with the amazing marine life of the Galapagos such as sea lions, penguins and rays

At a glance itinerary

| | |
|------------|--|
| Days 1-2 | Fly to Quito. Transfer to hotel. |
| Day 3 | Transfer to Otavalo. Stop at Guachala to step across the equator. |
| Day 4 | Hike to Otavalo. Visit the markets, Peguche Falls and a weaving workshop. Walk above valley. |
| Days 5-6 | Walk around Cuicocha Lake. Optional boat ride. Visit Zuleta Community and the Condor rehabilitation project. Take a cookery class. |
| Day 7 | Drive to Quito. Guided tour of the key sights of the old city. |
| Day 8 | Fly to Galapagos. Kayaking and snorkelling in the Itabaca Chanel. Transfer to Santa Cruz Highlands. Visit a nature reserve where giant tortoises live. |
| Days 9-10 | Boat transfer to Floreana Island. Walk to La Loberia to see Sea Lions and snorkel with turtles. Island hike guided by a local resident. |
| Days 11-12 | Boat transfer to Isabela Island, visit Wetlands & tortoise breeding centre. Travel to Tintoreras Island - walking & snorkelling. Volcano walk in highlands of Isabela. |
| Day 13 | Boat transfer to Santa Cruz Island. Visit the Darwin Centre. |
| Day 14 | Fly to Quito. At leisure. |
| Days 15-16 | Transfer to airport and fly to London. |

Trip summary

This fabulous trip is unique to Mountain Kingdoms and offers the perfect combination of five days in the Andes Mountains of mainland Ecuador with six days in the Galapagos, staying on three of the islands. The itinerary combines some easy walking in the lovely countryside of the Otavalo area of Ecuador with an exploration of the amazing wildlife and unique landscape of the Galapagos, where you will have a variety of walks, wildlife viewing and marine activities as well as the opportunity to learn how these communities have adapted to life on the islands.

Ecuador sits on the equator between Peru and Colombia and it is one of the smallest of the Andean countries. Despite its small size the country is an ideal destination for a gentle walking trip. After flying into Quito you transfer to Otavalo, an area famous for its craft market and workshops. Here you will walk through pretty pastoral countryside as well as visiting Cuicocha for a walk around this scenic crater-lake, and you will stay in a charming family run inn and a beautiful old hacienda. You will then drive to Quito's colonial Old Town and explore the streets and churches of this fascinating city.

Then it is off to the Galapagos for the next part of your exciting journey. During your week in the Galapagos you will stay in small, scenic hotels on three islands giving you the opportunity to understand how communities have survived and flourished despite the remoteness of the islands. By spending more time on land than on a cruise boat, you can start to understand how the communities on the inhabited islands really live. It opens your eyes a bit more to the human side of these extraordinary islands whilst having the added benefit of enabling you to go out and explore early in the morning and later in the evening when the light is good and the heat of the day is not so extreme. And once the 'cruise visitors' have departed for the day, the shops, restaurants, cafes and bars of the islands are all yours.

During the day, there will be easy-paced walks to explore volcanic landscapes and historic sites and to observe the unique, varied and seemingly fearless wildlife of the islands. There will also be numerous opportunities to snorkel, kayak, paddle board and generally be on the water witnessing the myriad of aquatic life going on all around you. In fact, every day will bring new and exciting experiences with memories to treasure long after you return home.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

You will depart London on your overnight flight to Quito.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Quito. Group transfer to Hotel.

On arrival in Quito you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax after your long flight.

Overnight: La Casona de La Ronda or Similar, Quito

Day 3: Transfer to Otavalo, 2,543m/8,345ft. Stop at Guachala on the way.

Today you will make the journey to Otavalo which is about a two hour drive away. You will stop en route to visit Guachala so you can straddle the equator. This is a touristy place but an experience to be had to cross the equator on foot.

Overnight: Las Palmeras Inn, Otavalo (Meals: BLD)

Day 4: Walk to Otavalo. Visit markets. Drive to Peguche and walk to view waterfall. Continue to Agato and visit a weaving workshop. Walk on the lower slopes of the Imbabura Volcano.

From your hotel you can follow the traditional paths of the Quichinche community that connect to Otavalo and make your first stop the food market. What better way to understand a culture than by learning about their food! Your expert guide will tell you all about the different fruit and vegetables on sale and about the crops that are produced in the surrounding farmlands that you will explore over the coming days. From the food market you head into the heart of the bustling city market - the Plaza de Ponchos. It is the biggest native Indian market and famous for its handicrafts including weavings, tapestry, bags, paintings and other artwork all made by the local indigenous community. You can wander through its many lanes and stalls on your own or with your guide.



After as much time as you need (within reason!) for shopping and enjoying the sights and sounds of the market you will meet up and walk to the sacred waterfall of La Cascada de Peguche. It is an easy walk up on good paths to the base of the 18m high falls, followed by steps up above them for some great views. It's a good place to stop and eat your boxed lunch, depending on the time of day.

Afterwards, your walk continues to the town of Agato where you will be hosted by an incredible family that preserves the tradition of weaving on a backstrap loom, an artform that is sadly slowly dying. The textiles produced here are of a very high quality and any income from purchases goes directly into the community and preserving this ancient artform.

In the afternoon you will walk in the foothills of the extinct Imbabura Volcano, looking down on several rural communities who farm in the valleys below. You may cross paths with some of the locals and find out more about their lives and the crops they grow. The scenery is delightful, and on a clear day you can see across to Cotacachi Volcano. At the end of your trail your vehicle will be waiting to take you back to your hotel.

Overnight: Las Palmeras Inn, Otavalo (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Walk round Cuicocha Lake, 3,246m/10,650ft - 5-6 hours.

After a good breakfast you drive to Laguna Cuicocha (Guinea Pig Lake) a spectacular crater lake situated in the collapsed crater of a volcano, at the foot of Volcán Cotacachi, at an altitude of 3,350m/11,000ft. Here you can make a pleasant walk right around the lake. You set off in a clockwise direction firstly on tarmac and then along a well-maintained trail which undulates along the crater rim with good views over the lake and its two

islands. From here, weather permitting, it is possible to see eight volcanoes - Cotacachi, Cuicocha, Imbabura, Cayambe, Antisana, Cotopaxi and Pichincha. You walk through lush vegetation and will see many native Andean plants including bromeliads, orchids and puyas (a handsome plant with a tall flower-spike). You will also see, among many other birds, humming birds, large thrushes (merlots) and down on the lake, coots and several species of duck. If you are lucky you may see an American kestrel and perhaps even a condor. You reach a high viewpoint from where there are excellent views over the lake. The trail then descends to some modern buildings, including an interpretation centre where Indian women often gather to sell souvenirs. It may be possible to take an optional boat ride out onto the lake from here if you wish.

You then return to the car park for the drive to historic, atmospheric, Hacienda Zuleta, where you will stay for the next two nights. This hacienda has an interesting story, the son of a liberal reformer and a wealthy, land-owning mother managed to create a community during his lifetime, a feat that no landowner in Ecuador had ever done before and perhaps has never done since. Your guide will teach you about the amazing and inspiring Plaza family and the continued work with the local community of Zuleta to help develop one of the best ecotourism destinations in the northern Andes of Ecuador.

Overnight: Hacienda Zuleta, Otavalo or Similar (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Walk to Condor Husai Project. Take a cookery class in the local Zuleta community.

After breakfast you will hike for around two hours to visit the hacienda's condor rehabilitation project stopping along the way to view some pre-Inca mounds. These are the largest and best preserved archaeological sites of the ancient Caranqui culture. There are 132 small earth mounds dating as far back as 700 A.D. and five large square truncated pyramids from 1200 A.D.

The Condor Husai is the only place in Ecuador licensed by the government to breed and release into the wild these amazing birds. You will be able to observe the eight condors they have in captivity and with some luck you might see wild Andean condors of Ecuador flying above you or even landing on the aviary.

The Zuleta community area is famed for its traditional embroidery, dairy products, alpaca farming and highland crops such as wheat, maize, potatoes and quinoa. "Zuletenos" and "Zuletenas", as the local people are known, keep their culture and traditions very much alive so keep an eye out for the way they dress here and how different it is from the traditional Otavalo clothing. For lunch you will visit a local house in the Zuleta community where you will receive a warm welcome and the chance to help cook a traditional meal. This provides an insight into local life as well as contributing directly to the local community. Having cooked the meal you will then proceed to eat it for lunch!

Later you will return to the hacienda and, time and energy permitting, will be able to explore more of the hacienda's grounds or undertake some of the activities on offer.

Overnight: Hacienda Zuleta, Otavalo or Similar (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Drive to Quito. Tour of the Old Town with chocolate experience.

Quito is a busy, vibrant city at an altitude of 2,850m/9,350ft and is the second highest capital in the world. The city is located just 20 miles south of the equator, in a valley high in the Andes and is over-shadowed by the dramatic Pichincha Volcano. Nowadays, Quito has two main sections, the old colonial town which is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the new town where most hotels and tourist facilities are located.

This morning you will drive to Quito and in the afternoon, you will have a guided tour of the Old Town with its fabulous array of colonial churches, monasteries and convents. Firstly, for orientation, you will visit El Panecillo a hill on the southern edge of the Old Town topped by a huge statue of the Winged Virgin. From here there are great views of the old city and the surrounding mountains. You will then take in some of the major monuments from Quito's colonial legacy, including the vast cobbled square of San Francisco with its adjoining church and monastery and the richly decorated, Baroque confection of the church of La Compañía. The streets of the Old Town throng with local people and there is a feeling of being in the real, vibrant, South America here.



Your tour will end with a chocolate experience. Ecuador's unique equatorial climate provides the perfect environment for growing the world's finest cacao - Cacao Arriba. Cacao has been revered in Latin America for over 5,000 years. In fact the Spanish explorers loved it so much they called it the 'Food of the Gods'. You will visit Republica del Cacao whose journey started over ten years ago when they set themselves an ambitious mission, to locally produce the most authentic chocolate, protecting and developing sustainable, fine cacao production. Your chocolate experience starts with a guided journey by story through the history of Ecuadorian cacao and of course the opportunity to taste the chocolate and buy some for later consumption. You are free for dinner whilst in Quito, so you may like to try one of the many cafes and restaurants near the hotel, or indeed dine in the hotel's lovely dining room. Your guide and the hotel can advise you on where to go if you would like suggestions. Taxis are very reasonably priced within the city if you decide to explore some of the great restaurants located in other areas.

Overnight: Hotel Patio Andaluz, Quito or Similar (Meals: B L)

Day 8: Fly to Baltra via Guayaquil. Visit the Itabaca Channel for kayaking & snorkelling. Drive to Santa Cruz Highlands.

Early this morning you transfer to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos. The airport on Baltra was built using the most advanced environmental techniques to reduce emissions and energy use, some of which you will notice upon arrival. You will be met by your guide and taken through to the VIP arrival area. Your bags will be collected for you whilst you relax in the lounge with a cool drink and prepare for the rest of the day's activities. Once you have cleared the bio-security at the airport you will take a short bus ride down to the Itabaca Channel where your boat will be waiting to take you for a kayaking and snorkelling trip.



There is no better way to start your Galapagos journey than by getting on the water upon arrival. After boarding your boat you will have the opportunity to kayak (sit-on-top-boats) and snorkel in the clear waters and see your first Galapagos wildlife. Afterwards you will disembark on Santa Cruz Island and drive south up into the highlands to a private nature reserve where the famous giant tortoises live in the wild. You might also visit some of the island's famous lava tunnels. These tunnels were formed as the outer skin of molten lava solidified but the liquid magma inside continued flowing, leaving behind a series of empty tubes. Some of these tubes are high enough to walk through.

In the late afternoon you will transfer to Magic Galapagos, a luxury tented camp in the Highlands. This is an exclusive giant tortoise reserve perched high on the hillside overlooking the ocean, far below. The tents are safari style with all modern amenities set in peaceful surroundings where the only sounds are of the surrounding nature. Dinners are a sumptuous three courses served in the main lodge area. There are two natural lava tubes a short walk away across the camp's grounds providing a perfect spot to relax around the fire with a drink.

Overnight: Galapagos Magic Tented Camp, Santa Cruz Island (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Boat transfer to Floreana Island. Walk to La Loberia.

After breakfast a short bus ride takes you into the main town of Puerto Ayora from where you take a boat trip of about two hours to reach the island of Floreana. Floreana, once a pirates' lair, was the first inhabited island of the Galapagos and today has a population of just 150. It is the smallest and least developed of the Galapagos's four inhabited islands and the local people have a very strong sense of community and a real desire to see their more relaxed way of life preserved. A trip to Floreana is about meeting the local people and helping this small community survive intact while protecting this precious area and its unique environment.

On arrival you will take an open-air 'Chiva bus' to the Lava Lodge overlooking one of the Galapagos' most beautiful and secluded bays and once you are settled in, you can walk or paddle (kayak or stand up paddleboard) to nearby Black Beach for some snorkelling. After a time in the water to whet your appetite, you will walk to a restaurant in the nearby village for lunch at a community cafe. Afterwards you can walk from your lodge for about 30 minutes along one of the island's trails to explore La Loberia, a sea lion breeding ground. Here you will have the opportunity to swim and snorkel with sea turtles, sea lions, rays and other stunning fish.

The Lava Lodge is operated by Claudio Cruz a descendent of one the island's original inhabitants. He is a fascinating man and will, over the next few days, share his deep knowledge of the island and its colourful history, giving a very special insight into life on Floreana.

Returning to your lodge there will be time to shower and relax, watching the sun set over the ocean, before you walk into the village for dinner at a local restaurant, part of the community tourist initiative which our partners helped to develop.

Overnight: Lava Lodge, Floreana Island (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Floreana highlands hike - 8 km, 3 hours. Wildlife and beach activities in the afternoon.

A short drive in a chiva takes you to the Floreana highlands where you will begin your walk to Asilo de la Paz (Peace Haven). You walk to this historic site where there are great views over the whole island, explore pirate caves and visit the freshwater spring that provides water for the entire island. Along the way you should see some giant tortoises lumbering through the undergrowth or on the trail. From Asilo de Paz you walk down through a cultivated area where local people grow their crops as they have done since the settlement was founded. You will visit Claudios farm at La Primavera, where you can see frigate birds 'dance' as they swoop down over a fresh water pond to wash their salty wings. You will also see where the delicious fruit and vegetables come from that you've been eating while on the island.



From La Primavera you will again travel by chiva towards Las Palmas, where the island's first permanent inhabitant, the eccentric Dr Ritter, settled in 1926 and where he is buried. Along the way you will hear tales of some of Floreana's colourful first inhabitants, including the 'Wittmers' and the 'Baronessa', who disappeared in suspicious circumstances. Claudio has many fascinating stories about these first settlers that make up the intriguing history of the island.

Later you will have more time for some marine exploration with opportunities for swimming, snorkelling, kayaking, or even to try your hand at stand up paddling. Dinner tonight will be a special BBQ.

Overnight: Lava Lodge, Floreana Island (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Transfer to Isabela Island. Explore wetlands trail and the tortoise breeding centre - 2-3 hours walk. Tintoreras Island visit with opportunity for snorkelling.

Today you will transfer by speed boat to Isabela Island, the largest and most volcanically active of the Galapagos Islands. You will check in at your hotel, a cosy boutique hotel located not far from the town of Puerto Villamil and situated on a lovely sandy beach. Here you will spend two nights on Isabela, with time to explore the central highlands on foot, see several active volcanoes and also have many opportunity to view Isabela's plentiful wildlife.

You will start your exploration with a walk on the Wetlands Trail, through various types of mangrove trees, to look principally for marine iguana colonies and aquatic birds. There is a good network of trails to bring you to beaches and historic sites and the chance to see pink flamingos and possibly also some giant tortoises. This archipelago is said to be the only place in the world where you can see both penguins and flamingos! You will also visit the local giant tortoise breeding centre. This is an important conservation centre where the island's giant tortoise are bred and then released into the wild thereby helping a gradual recovery of their population.

In the afternoon you will take a boat trip to visit the Tintoreras, a small group of islands near the village of Puerto Villamil - these islands are named after the white tipped 'Tintoreras' reef sharks that swim here. After a short walk on the island amongst sharp black lava you can take to the water, where you may see these sharks, as well as sea lions, turtles, rays, penguins, pelicans and blue-footed boobies both from the boat and whilst snorkelling in the bay, where sea lions or penguins may join you!

Overnight: Wooden House Lodge or Albemarle Hotel, Isabela Island (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Day walk exploring the highlands of Isabela Island, 16km - 4-6 hours.

After breakfast in your hotel you have the whole day to explore the highlands of Isabela Island with a good walk and amazing views. Isabela is the most volcanic of the islands of the Galapagos. After a short bus transfer you start your hike up to the crater of the Sierra Negra volcano, one of five volcanoes on Isabela. Sierra Negra last erupted in 2005 and its huge and spectacular caldera is one of the largest in the world, second only to Ngorongoro in Tanzania. You will hike along the rim to various view points and enjoy the amazing view across the vast crater. You then continue over a Mars-like landscape to reach the rim of Volcan Chico, from where there are some of the best views on Isabela. You will be offered a snack whilst out on your walk and stop for lunch at one of the farmsteads in the highlands on the way back to your hotel.

You will then have the rest of the afternoon free to go snorkelling in Concha de Perla, just to relax on the beach or wander around the town for shopping or to enjoy a drink overlooking the ocean.

Overnight: Wooden House Lodge or Albemarle Hotel, Isabela Island (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Transfer to Santa Cruz. Visit the Darwin centre. Free time.

This morning you will transfer to Santa Cruz Island. This may mean an early start in which case you will have breakfast on arrival on Santa Cruz in Puerto Ayora, the largest town on the island. This attractive town has the largest population of the Galapagos, with a busy harbour and many friendly bars, shops and restaurants. Pelicans, marine iguanas and sea lions frequent the harbour and come right into town, especially attracted to the fishermen selling their catch at roadside stalls!

In the afternoon you will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, formerly home to the most famous giant tortoise of all, 'Lonesome George'. He is now back, embalmed and on view in his own atmospherically controlled room! Here you will see the conservation efforts being made to protect the Galapagos and its ecosystem.

For the remainder of the day you may wander through town and do some last minute souvenir shopping or have a drink at a bar before continuing to your hotel, which is located just one block away from Puerto Ayora's main pier.

Overnight: Ikala Hotel or Similar, Puerto Ayora (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Transfer to Baltra airport and fly back to Quito. Transfer to hotel.

After breakfast you will take a private bus transfer and short public ferry across the Itabaca Channel to Baltra airport for your flight back to Quito. You will be met at Quito airport and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 15: Transfer to Quito airport and depart Ecuador.

You will have breakfast at your hotel this morning, and perhaps a little time for some last minute sightseeing or shopping, before departing for the airport and your overnight flight home.

Day 16: Arrive London.

You will arrive back in the UK today.

Our grading system

Gentle Walking Ecuador & Galapagos Safari is graded as a Gentle/Moderate walking holiday, as described below.

Gentle

Trips within this grade typically mix sightseeing with easy-paced half and/or full day walks. On these trips, walks will be on relatively low altitude trails, for a duration of around 4-6 hours. On all of our Gentle graded trips, some ascent and descent should be anticipated, and there may occasionally be a longer walking day. Holidays within this grade generally use hotels and comfortable lodges although a few do have some nights camping.

These holidays are suitable for people who enjoy easy-paced walks in the British countryside or exploring on foot rather than in a vehicle.

Moderate

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ Gentle Walking trip in Ecuador with local English speaking leader for the walks
- ✓ All domestic flights and transfers
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation (4 star) in Quito on twin share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Best available hotels elsewhere in the highlands on full board basis
- ✓ Good standard lodge accommodation on the Galapagos Islands on a twin share, with all meals.
- ✓ Galapagos Tourist Transit Card (TTC)
- ✓ Galapagos National Park entry fee.
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles and boat transfers between islands
- ✓ All meals except dinner in Quito
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Visa fees if applicable
- × Evening meals in Quito
- × Airport departure taxes, if applicable
- × Optional trips
- × Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit [For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>](https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign).

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



La Casona de La Ronda Hotel, Quito or Similar

Situated in the historic centre of Quito, La Casona is a boutique heritage hotel set within an old Spanish House dating back to 1738. Beautifully renovated, the rooms lead off of the central atrium that captures the look and feel of the original colonial architecture and décor. Each guest room is finished with hand-carved furniture and polished parquet floors whilst also having a good range of modern amenities including free Wi-Fi. The hotel has its own bar and restaurant and is conveniently located close to many of Quito's attractions.



Las Palmeras Inn, Otavalo

This charming hacienda is over 150 years old and still retains many of its attractive, original features including wooden beams, tiled roof and roaring log fires. Cottage style rooms are cosy with rustic, Andean decor and overlook the inn's lush gardens and picturesque surrounding hills. The inn has its own restaurant which serves Ecuadorian inspired dishes using produce from its own organic garden.



Hacienda Zuleta, Otavalo or Similar

The hacienda has 14 beautifully decorated bedrooms each with their own fire place. The landscaped gardens, along with cosy living and reading rooms, offer a peaceful atmosphere whilst delicious Ecuadorian cuisine is prepared daily using organic vegetables, fish and dairy products produced on the hacienda.



Galapagos Magic Tented Camp, Santa Cruz Island

The luxury tented camp is situated in its own grounds where giant tortoises wander freely. The tents are 'safari style' all with en-suite bathrooms and comfortable twin beds. There are private verandas where you can sit and enjoy the peace of the area and perhaps watch the tortoises lumbering around. The lounge and dining area serves excellent home cooked food and the lava tubes in the grounds are used as bar areas where you can relax in front of the fire on cool evenings.



Lava Lodge, Floreana Island

The Floreana Lava Lodge has the perfect location on the quietest of the inhabited Galapagos Islands. Experience great wildlife viewing, isolation, island beauty and a chance to enjoy the old Galapagos way of life away from the tourist crowds. The lodge and cabins are located on one of the most secluded bays on Floreana. Each ocean front cabin has its own bathroom and front porch where you can enjoy the outdoors. The lodge also has an open air common area where guests can relax together and savour a welcome drink while enjoying the striking Galapagos sunsets.



Wooden House Lodge or Albemarle Hotel, Isabela Island

Situated in the small town of Puerto Vilamil on the south coast of the largest island in the Galapagos, the Wooden House is a welcoming, eco-friendly lodge that prides itself on being a home from home. Only steps from the beach, the lodge has a small pool, terraces, a bar and a restaurant serving delicious, fresh, local food with the emphasis on seafood. Rooms are simply furnished in a rustic style but all have air-conditioning.



Albemarle Hotel, Isabela Island

Our other choice of accommodation on Isabela Island is the Albemarle Hotel. This delightful, boutique hotel is situated right by the white sands of Cuna del Sol Beach and just a short walk from the bars and restaurants of Puerto Villamil. The hotel has a central courtyard with a pool, breakfast area and sun terraces. Rooms are large and well-equipped with either pool or sea views.



Ikala Hotel or Similar, Puerto Ayora

This hotel is located just a block from the main pier in Puerto Ayora. It has a pool and a terrace with good views of the harbour. Rooms are well-equipped and come complete with mini fridge, radio, safe box and Wi-Fi.

Meal arrangements

11 Breakfasts, 11 Lunches, 10 Dinners

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

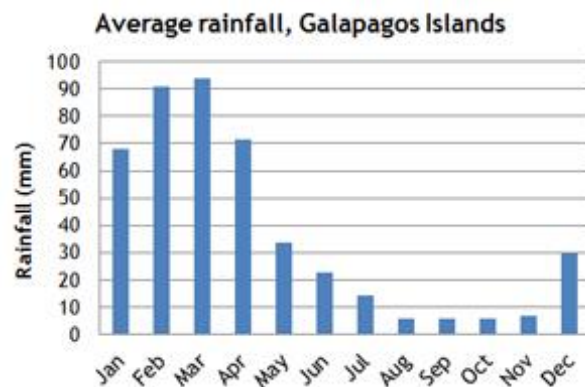
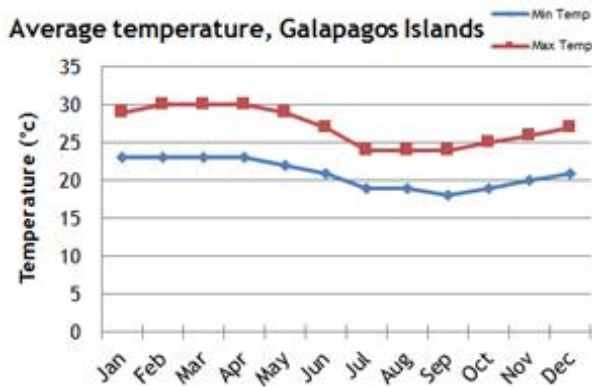
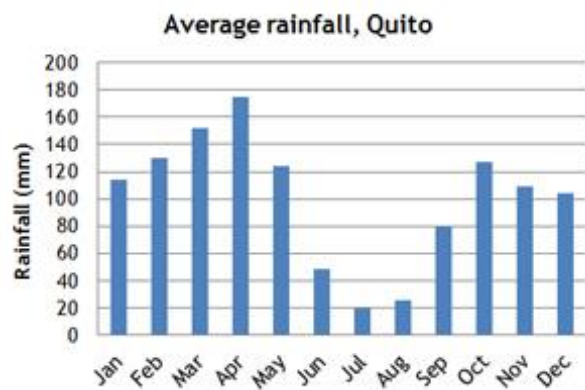
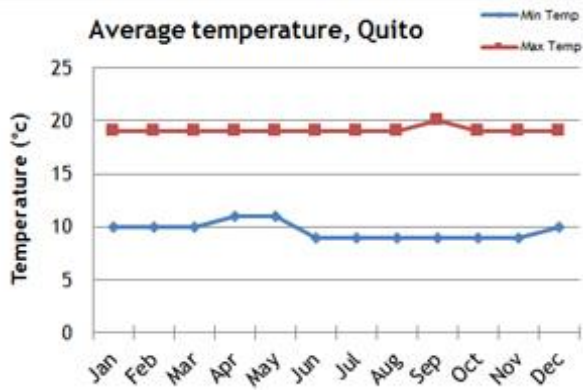
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip, arrange a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activities. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- We include the \$120 Galapagos National Park fee and tax in the price of our trip, and don't have any other hidden costs.
- This itinerary is unique to Mountain Kingdoms, and offers the perfect combination of five days on mainland Ecuador and six days in the Galapagos.
- On the Galapagos Islands, you will stay in small hotels some with beautiful waterside settings on three of the islands and travel between them by boat.
- By staying on the islands, rather than in a boat, you get the chance to meet the locals, learn about their history and culture, and directly contribute to the local economy. You can also continue to explore at leisure after the day's activities have concluded.
- You will get close up to the unique Galapagos wildlife on a variety of walks and marine activities: boat trips, swimming, snorkelling and kayaking.
- Our partner in Galapagos is an award winning eco-tourism specialist who works with the Galapagos Parks Authority and local communities on various sustainable tourism initiatives across the islands.
- Enjoy charming accommodation in Ecuador including a lovely old hotel in Quito, and a 300-year old hacienda in Otovalo.
- Our expert English speaking Ecuadorian guides have a wealth of enthusiasm and knowledge about their country and its wonderful landscapes. In the Galapagos your holiday will be led by an expert naturalist guide and supported by local specialists.
- We have a wealth of travel experience at Mountain Kingdoms with a team of friendly and knowledgeable travel experts. If you have any questions about any aspect of this holiday please don't hesitate to give us a call on 01453 844400 or email info@mountainkingdoms.com.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



The organisation was brilliant from start to finish. As a solo traveler I felt very safe and well looked after while in Ecuador, the guide spoke perfect English and was very professional and made my trip most enjoyable.

-Mr S, Gloucestershire

This trip combines exploring on foot in the north of Ecuador, staying in magnificent haciendas steeped in history and of course experiencing all the Galapagos Islands have to offer. Actually staying on the Galapagos Islands and being able to stroll around in the early mornings and evenings really added to the experience of being here. It was a time to chat to local people, relax and reflect on the days activities. As an alternative to a cruise I would really recommend it.

- Liz Noakes, former Operations Manager, Mountain Kingdoms



Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

