

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Immersion in Ecuador: Quito to the Galpagos
2025

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world on one of Overseas Adventure Travel's (O.A.T.'s) NEW **Immersions** itineraries.

As you may already be aware, **Immersions** itineraries are shorter versions of some of our most popular O.A.T. adventures. For our more active travelers who wish to make the most of their limited time abroad, these itineraries have been carefully crafted to include all the iconic must-sees of a destination along with O.A.T.'s signature people-to-people interactions that connect you to local culture and create the most treasured travel memories.

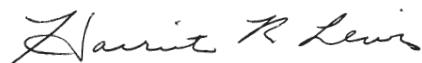
Like all our adventures, **Immersions** itineraries provide you with an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You may find yourself spending **A Day in the Life** of a local community, sharing a meal during a **Home-Hosted Visit**, or discussing **Controversial Topics** that impact everyday life. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of one of our local Trip Experience Leaders. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to arrive a few days early* to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

*Early arrival option unavailable on **Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik**

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New! Immersion in Ecuador: Quito to the Galápagos Small Group Adventure

Ecuador: Quito, Machachi, 4-night Galápagos Cruise

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

8 days starting from \$4,995

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/gql2025pricing

Experience the full spectrum of Ecuador's diverse natural and cultural tapestry up close, beginning in colonial Quito. Then, leave the urban hustle behind when you spend three nights at a jungle lodge on the Amazon, witnessing the biological diversity of the tropical rain forest before cruising the Galápagos archipelago for 4 nights aboard a privately chartered **16-passenger small ship**, witnessing species found nowhere else on our planet.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation, including 4 nights aboard a privately chartered, 16-passenger Galápagos small ship
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 2 internal flights
- 18 meals: 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 5 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 8 small group activities, including Galápagos shore excursions
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, ship crew, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Immersion in Ecuador: Quito to the Galápagos



Pacing: 3 locations in 8 days, with 4 nights aboard a Galápagos small ship. Some international flights arrive or depart from Ecuador around midnight, and internal flights are scheduled very early

Flight Time: Travel time will be 4-11 hours and will most likely have two connections

GALÁPAGOS: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

People-to-People Experiences: Spend *A Day in the Life* of a local school in Machachi, where you'll interact with the students and their teachers. This experience also includes a taste of Ecuador's indigenous culture and cuisine during a **Home-Hosted Lunch**.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Our privately chartered 16-passenger Galápagos ship will anchor just off each island we visit and a Zodiac will bring you ashore, saving time otherwise spent sailing to and from the mainland.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Quito, Ecuador
2-3	Quito
4	Fly to Galápagos • Embark ship
5-7	Cruise Galápagos
8	Disembark ship • Fly to Quito • Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Quito** before your main adventure from **\$150** per room, per night

Immersion in Ecuador: Quito to the Galápagos

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive Quito, Ecuador

- Destination: Quito
- Accommodations: NH Collection Quito Royal Hotel or similar

Today's Activities: You depart from the U.S. and fly to Quito, Ecuador's capital city, nestled at the foot of the Pichincha volcano. Upon arrival, your O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader or O.A.T. representative will meet your flight at the Quito airport and help you transfer to your hotel.

Day 2 Discover Quito's Old Town • Intiñan equator museum

- Destination: Quito
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: NH Collection Quito Royal Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's activities take place at elevations above 9,000 feet. We recommend staying hydrated while at high altitude. You may rest at the hotel if necessary.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel. Then, we'll continue on to the old town to begin exploring the city paths and historic sites of Quito on foot with our Trip Experience Leader. A charming colonial city that has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Quito is South America's oldest capital, founded by Sebastián de Benalcázar on December 6, 1534. Today we experience its delicate blend

of Spanish and indigenous cultural influences. Here, we'll enjoy a walking tour of Quito's colonial nucleus: Independence Plaza (Plaza de La Independencia), featuring a winged statue representing freedom. We'll also see the Presidential Palace from the outside, with its stalwart guards in traditional uniforms keeping watch. As we explore the city, we'll get an introduction to La Compañía de Jesus Church (if it's open to the public), an eye-popping, multi-domed Catholic complex whose gilded interior is nestled behind an equally impressive façade carved from volcanic stone. During our visit to this local landmark, we'll learn about its complicated construction, which began in 1605 and took a whopping 160 years to complete. We'll also have ample time to admire its dazzling gold-leaf motifs up close. A masterpiece of Spanish Baroque architecture, La Compañía de Jesus Church has a well-earned reputation as one of the most beautiful churches in the continent.

After our visit concludes, we'll make our way to San Francisco Plaza, one of the largest plazas in Quito.

Next, we'll immerse ourselves in the local culture during a stroll down La Ronda Street, a pedestrian-only cobblestoned street brimming with colonial charm.

Lunch: We'll toast the start of our adventure with a Welcome Lunch at a local restaurant, where you'll savor an authentic taste of Ecuadorian fare.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll visit the Intiñan Museum, a must-see attraction where you can learn more about equatorial culture and experience several exhibits that demonstrate the unique effects of being located on the equator. Then, we'll return to our hotel to spend the rest of the day on your own.

Dinner: On your own. Your centrally located hotel is surrounded by options. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend options within walking distance or accessible via taxi.

Evening: At leisure. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions, or simply relax at the hotel.

Day 3 A Day in the Life of Machachi school village • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Quito
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: NH Collection Quito Royal Hotel or similar

Activity Note: If the visit to the school falls on a weekend or holiday, alternative activities will be planned as the school won't be open.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we set out to begin our *Day in the Life* experience at a local school in Machachi, where we'll learn about the educational system, the culture, and the daily lives of the students and teachers during a tour of the school's facilities. Education is a key part of life in Machachi, and the school is central to the community. Our hosts will give us insights into the subjects taught at the school, the structure of the education system, and the local traditions that influence the curriculum. We'll even have the opportunity to join in on some classroom activities and interact with students and teachers.

Lunch: Then, we continue to a local hacienda for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**, where we'll participate in a hands-on cooking class to help prepare the meal together. This experience will give us the opportunity to learn traditional cooking techniques, discover local ingredients, and engage in the creation of a meal that we'll enjoy with the family.

Afternoon: We'll return to the hotel, where you'll then have the rest of the day to relax or explore independently as you please. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide suggestions.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for a local recommendation.

Evening: At your leisure.

Day 4 Fly to the Galápagos • Embark ship

- Destination: Galápagos islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Galápagos Small Ship

Activity Note: We'll rise very early this morning for our flight to the Galápagos.

The following description is meant only as a general guide to the cruise itinerary that you are likely to follow. The selection and order of islands visited cannot be guaranteed due to the Galápagos's frequently variable weather, marine and environmental conditions, and changes in airline schedules between the mainland and the Galápagos.

This is a carefully managed park with fragile ecosystems. To safeguard them (and to ensure your own comfort), boat and park authorities have the prerogative to revise our course at a moment's notice. You may rest on board instead of participating in any hikes if you prefer.

Breakfast: Arise very early and have a light breakfast at the hotel's coffee station.

Morning: We depart very early this morning for our flight to the Galápagos. Upon arrival, we'll drive to the dock, where we board our small ship. You can stow your gear in your cabin, orient yourself on deck, and enjoy the anticipation of the cruise ahead.

For four nights, we explore the archipelago—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—by ship, enjoying comfortable cabins and the services of an expert crew. Our Trip Experience Leader will give us an orientation briefing, including conservation techniques suggested by the Galápagos National Park. He or she is a graduate of the elite certification program conducted at the Charles Darwin Research Station on Isla Santa Cruz by the Galápagos National Park Service.

We file our Galápagos cruising itinerary with the conservation authorities of the Galápagos National Park. Park biologists periodically review it, and they have the authority to make changes to our plan to minimize our impact on the ecosystems of the islands. Our Trip Experience Leader also provides the park with information on species behavior, and we are proud to work in cooperation with the park officials in preserving the priceless natural wonders of the Galápagos.

Each morning during our cruise, the sight of an island seemingly floating off the bow may send a shiver of anticipation through you. A small dinghy brings us close to the islands for wet or dry landings, which require wading through knee-deep clear water.

On shore, a gaudily colored Sally Lightfoot crab may scuttle by your foot as you watch iguanas sunning on the sands. It is an adventure of Darwinian proportions.

All meals are included during our cruise, and no matter which island you call on, each of the next days will follow a similar pattern.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Settle into your cabin and get acquainted with your floating home before we gather for a safety drill. Our ship will be sailing toward our next island stop, where we might hike across volcanic landscapes.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Retire to your cabin. As you sleep, you'll be cruising toward another adventure in the Galápagos.

Day 5 Galápagos cruise • Controversial Topic: Illegal Fishing

- Destination: Galápagos islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Galápagos Small Ship

Activity Note: We'll make numerous landings by small dinghies that involve stepping into knee-deep water to wade ashore. Balance and agility are required to participate, and please pack accordingly. You may rest on board instead if you prefer.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Today's Activities: For the next four days, we continue our Galápagos travel, and each day we have the opportunity to snorkel the surrounding waters. Although wildlife sightings are unpredictable, we may see blue-footed and Nazca boobies, frigatebirds, pelicans, Galápagos doves, swallowtail and lava gulls, Darwin finches, or herons. We'll also marvel at sea lions and iguanas throughout our travels.

Our morning may start with a series of onboard activities designed to deepen our connection with the environment and the ship. We may begin with a tour of our ship, including the bridge, where we'll learn about the instruments and navigation process used to guide the ship through the islands. This will give us an understanding of how the crew navigates these waters safely and efficiently. We'll take a

tour of the kitchen and divide into two groups to explore the heart of the ship's culinary operations. Afterward, we'll head to the engine room where we'll get an inside look at how the ship is powered and maintained.

Following our tour, we'll have a brief introduction reviewing the islands we may visit throughout our journey. Here is a preview of the islands you may call on. Islands visited depend on the ship's itinerary.

Santiago (James)—Tidal pools reveal a profusion of octopi, starfishes, and other undersea life. Rare fur sea lions that were once on the verge of extinction cavort nearby, and we often spot oystercatchers, blue herons, and yellow-crowned night herons.

Bartolome—One of the youngest islands, Bartolome displays a fantastic landscape of lava formations—including the famous Pinnacle Rock. The mangroves often hide mating sea turtles.

South Plaza—Sea lions often greet us raucously as we step ashore. We also find land iguanas busy eating the opuntia cactus flowers and pads. There are colonies of swallow-tailed gulls, shearwaters, and red-billed tropicbirds.

Rabida (Jervis)—A reddish beach and steep volcanic slopes give this island its distinctive look.

Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock)—Cruise around this sheer 500-foot tuff cone formation, where blue-footed boobies and sea lions abound.

Santa Cruz—At the Charles Darwin Research Station, learn about pioneering ecological studies and the giant Galápagos tortoise-breeding program.

Floreana (Charles)—Like the other islands, Floreana has its coterie of remarkable creatures. But it's the human stories that will engage you

here as your guide tells of the first inhabitant, a shipwrecked Irishman, and the quirky "post office" in a barrel, where sailors have been leaving letters for delivery since 1793. This "post office" still operates today.

Santa Fe (Barrington)—Hike through a forest of opuntia cactus, where land iguanas doze, and then snorkel in clear water with coral reefs, manta rays, sea turtles, and colorful schools of fish.

North Seymour—Here you'll find the largest colony of frigatebirds in the Galapagos and a major nesting site for the blue-footed booby. On the beach, sea lions ride the waves.

San Cristobal (Chatham)—The town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on this island is the sleepy capital of the Galápagos province. Ochoa Beach boasts pelicans and other sea birds, as well as a delightful swimming beach. Nearby is Lobos Island, where you'll see pelicans, frigatebirds, and a sea lion colony.

Española (Hood Island)—Sea lions, marine iguanas, and many kinds of birds are found here, including Darwin's finches, Hood mockingbirds, and blue-footed and masked boobies. Along the southern shore, spectacular cliffs rise up from the sea. From November to April, the remarkable waved albatross, which can spend years at sea without touching land, can be seen performing their unique, perfectly-choreographed mating ritual.

Lunch: Participate in a cooking class, where you'll learn how to prepare fresh ceviche with a the onboard chef.

Afternoon: We'll sit down with a local fisherman for a conversation about the **Controversial Topic** of illegal fishing in the Galápagos Islands.

Our guide, a lifelong resident of one of the nearby coastal villages, grew up surrounded by the pristine waters of the archipelago. Today, he shares his unique point of view, shaped by years of experience as both a fisherman and a local advocate for the preservation of the islands. With growing concerns about the Galápagos' fragile marine ecosystems, the discussion centers on the impact of illegal fishing and its potential consequences for both the local communities and the biodiversity of the islands.

Illegal fishing has become a pressing issue in the Galápagos, with both local and foreign vessels exploiting the waters. The archipelago, known for its rich marine life, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and has long been a focal point for conservation efforts. However, illegal fishing threatens the delicate balance of the ecosystem. This activity often targets high-value species, putting pressure on marine populations and undermining the sustainability of local fishing practices.

As demand for seafood increases worldwide, pressure mounts to harvest more, sometimes beyond sustainable limits. The discussion reflects the tough balance of maintaining economic livelihood while also ensuring the long-term health of the ocean and its inhabitants. As a community heavily dependent on marine resources, the fishermen must navigate the fine line between tradition, necessity, and conservation.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Perhaps you'll relax in the lounge, or gaze at an amazing panoply of stars from the sun deck.

Day 6 Galápagos cruise

- Destination: Galápagos
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Galápagos Small Ship or similar

Activity Note: We'll make numerous landings by small dinghies that involve stepping into knee-deep water to wade ashore. Balance and agility are required to participate, and please pack accordingly. You may rest on board instead if you prefer.

Today's Activities: Today we continue our Galápagos travel, with opportunities to snorkel. An O.A.T. traveler commented that, "The Galápagos are sun, sea, and a workshop in evolutionary biology." Once on land, we'll walk with our naturalist Trip Experience Leader along trails that bring us close to the many indigenous species.

Today's Meals: Onboard the ship.

Day 7 Galápagos cruise

- Destination: Galápagos islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Galápagos Small Ship

Activity Note: We'll make numerous landings by small dinghies that involve stepping into knee-deep water to wade ashore. Balance and agility are required to participate, and please pack accordingly. You may rest on board instead if you prefer.

Today's Activities: This is the last day we spend in the Galápagos, and we'll continue to enjoy snorkeling, exploring, observing wildlife, and hiking around the islands.

Today's Meals: Onboard the ship.

Day 8 Disembark ship • Fly to Quito • Return to U.S.

- Destination: Galápagos islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Wyndham Hotel Quito

Activity Note: Today, we will fly to Quito from the Galápagos. Depending on your ship and flight itinerary, you'll depart from either Baltra Island or San Cristobal Island. We do not recommend that travelers departing from San Cristobal make their own flight arrangements before 10pm, as flights from San Cristobal Island arrive in Quito around 6pm.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We bid farewell to our captain and crew and disembark our Galápagos vessel. We then make our way to the airport for our return flight to Quito.

Lunch: On your own—perhaps you'll pick up a snack at the airport.

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Quito, we'll make our way to a hotel near the airport, where you'll have a day room in which to relax before your flight later this evening.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Make your way to the airport late this evening for your return flight home.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank passport pages.

No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this adventure, including the optional trip extensions.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Travel Protection Required:

For new bookings starting 1/1/25, Overseas Adventure Travel requires all travelers purchase travel protection with Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000, due to the remote nature of your adventure.

O.A.T. Travel Protection:

If you **purchase your Travel Protection Plan** through O.A.T., no further action will be needed, as the Medical Evacuation coverage and Medical Expense coverage meets these requirements.

Your Own Travel Protection:

If you purchase your own travel protection, we recommend you review the plan to ensure Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000 is included. Once you confirm your plan meets the requirements, you will need to email the following information to **TravelCoverage@oattravel.com**:

- Traveler Name(s)
- Reservation Number
- Trip Protection Provider
- Policy Number
- Date of Purchase
- Copy of your Policy Documents

You can also contact our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814** to review this policy. You will be required to provide proof of coverage by 60 days prior to departure at the latest.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 16 travelers with two local Trip Experience Leaders exclusive to O.A.T.

PACING

- 3 locations in 8 days, with 4 nights aboard a Galápagos small ship.
- Some international flights arrive or depart from Ecuador around midnight, and internal flights are scheduled very early

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted in hot, humid weather and participate in 6–8 hours of physical activities each day
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

ALTITUDE

- 2 full days at altitudes of 9,000–10,000 feet

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 60–90°F
- Quito has a mountain climate with a large drop in day to night temperature

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Hike on uneven, rocky trails that can be slippery; make wet landings; go on several snorkeling excursions; and you may encounter rough seas while cruising (especially July–October)

- Agility and balance are required for embarking small motor dinghies
- Travel by 20-passenger minibus, 16-passenger small ship, and motorized dinghies
- Drives lasting 2-4 hours and 2 internal flights of 2-4 hours each on the main trip

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 4-11 hours and will most likely have two connections

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than in the U.S. and offer simple amenities
- Small ship cabins are comfortable but small compared to large cruise ships
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- Altitude sickness medication: Quito is roughly 9,000 feet above sea level, Cuzco (on the pre-trip extension) is at approximately 11,000 feet, and Cuenca (on the Ecuador post-trip extension) is at approximately 8,000 feet. At these altitudes, almost everyone feels some of the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), including headache, nausea, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, and lack of energy.

- Anti-malaria medication is recommended for the Amazon, but you should check with the CDC and your doctor first because these medications can have strong side effects.
- Motion sickness medication: Waters in the Galapagos tend to be choppy so if you are prone to seasickness, you may want to pack a motion sickness medication.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

***TIP:** At time of writing, the State Department did not have any special warnings about American over-the-counter medications for altitude sickness, but did warn that although coca-leaf tea is a popular beverage and folk remedy for altitude sickness in the Andes Mountains, possession of these tea bags is illegal in the United States.*

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink.
- Bottled water or treated drinking water is readily available. Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly. Carry a bottle in your daypack at all times.
- Bottled drinks and juices, and hot drinks that have been boiled, are safe to drink.
- Avoid drinks with ice in them.
- Carry a handkerchief to dry the tops of bottled drinks before and after opening.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods. Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce.

Altitude Illness

Quito is at an altitude of over 9,000 feet. You will probably feel some effects of altitude when you first arrive. Even if you've been to high elevations previously, you could have a different reaction this time. For most people, the symptoms are mild and will pass in a day or so.

The most common symptoms of altitude sickness are lightheadedness, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite. You should take it easy, avoid smoking and alcohol, and drink plenty of fluids. Some people take an altitude medication, starting when they arrive or one day before. Don't take sleeping medications, as they suppress respiration. Even though you may experience a decreased appetite, force yourself to eat soups and some foods.

If these normal altitude symptoms become unmanageable, it is critical that you inform your Trip Experience Leader. Please let the leader know if you experience any of the following: serious difficulty breathing, mental confusion, a severe and unremitting headache, continued difficulty breathing after a period of rest, or poor physical coordination (ataxia).

Water Conditions in the Galápagos

Two different ocean currents impact the waters off the coast of the Galápagos—the Humboldt Current and the Panama Current. Generally speaking, when the colder Humboldt Current is dominant (July to November) the water is cooler and choppier; when the Panama Current is dominant (December to June) the water is warmer and calmer. The roughest seas usually occur from July through October, but choppy conditions can happen at any time of year. We recommend packing an anti-seasickness medicine whether or not you are prone to seasickness.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as cash, an ATM card, and a credit card
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended** as they can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.
- **U.S. dollars are accepted in Ecuador**; bring a variety of denominations in good condition.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Ecuador: U.S. Dollar (\$)

How to Exchange Money

The official currency of Ecuador is the U.S. dollar, so there is no need to exchange money.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Ecuador: ATMs are available in larger cities, such as Quito, but become harder to find in remote locations. We recommend that you bring enough cash to cover your expenses for your travel in more remote areas.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not

every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Ecuador: Credit and debit cards are more likely to be accepted in cities like Quito. But even inside a large city like Quito, cards of any kind are more commonly accepted in the modern shops of the New Town district than in the “hole in the wall” places in the Old Town.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don’t assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don’t work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Hotel housekeepers:** \$1–\$2 per room, per day.
- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip hotel porters and waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own, it is customary to leave a tip as you would in the U.S.
- **Taxi drivers:** If you take a taxi on your own, it is not customary to give a tip, but if you wish to give something, rounding the bill up should suffice. (For example, if the fare was \$4.30, you could give \$5).

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, ship crew, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler’s checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

When booking your own international flights, please also note that the tour will end on Day 8 of the main trip for your overnight flight back to the United States. Most airlines will depart from Quito very late in the evening (near midnight) and arrive in the U.S. early the following morning.

Hotels & Land Only Travelers

If you have made your own international air arrangements, please note that on this adventure the first included hotel is on the night of Day 1 of your main trip. Check in times will vary, but tend to be after 2pm.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at **www.oattravel.com/myplanner**).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). Our Trip Experience Leaders advise that for Ecuador an even less expensive and easier-to-use option is available. Instead of using a calling card, they suggest using the international phone service at a type of business known as a “Café Net or Internet”; these businesses can be found in cities all over Ecuador.

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Internet access on this adventure will be mostly limited to computers in the hotel lobby or business center; most hotels in Ecuador do not offer WiFi in the rooms, and the ones that do charge for the service. It is unlikely that you will have internet access during the Galapagos cruise portion of your tour. Internet access is not available on board the small ship during the Galapagos cruise.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Ecuador: +593

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Up to 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: Checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+width+depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase.
- *TIP: When traveling with a companion we recommend “cross-packing,” i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion’s luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*
- **Carry-on bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during driving excursions and walking trips. Consider a backpack or waistpack that keeps both hands free and distributes the pack’s weight onto your back or hips.
- **A small additional bag:** This small bag is a necessity for certain portions of your adventure.
- **On the main trip,** you will want the additional small bag for our three nights at the Amazon lodge because there is limited space for your suitcase on the motorized canoe. (You will have the opportunity to leave suitcases or duffel bags in Quito, while you travel to Galapagos.)
- **On the Machu Picchu extension,** you will need the small bag for the train trip to and from Machu Picchu because there is no space for your suitcase on the train.
- *TIP: Some previous travelers have suggested re-purposing your carry-on for this use; others have packed an empty bag into their suitcase.*
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest packing several layers of clothing. We recommend you take your own weather experience into consideration. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection. Below is a list of essential items we recommend.

- **Rain gear:** You’ll want fairly good-quality rain jacket for Quito. An umbrella is also recommended.
- **Neutral or earth-toned colors:** We recommend bringing earth-colored clothing (shades of greens, browns, and grays) for the Galapagos. These colors will camouflage your presence in the jungle. Bright colors may alert wildlife or attract insects, so wearing a neutral or earth-colored palette is strongly recommended for this part of your adventure. We also suggest that you choose a neutral color if you bring an umbrella.
- **Footwear:** You’ll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. For the wet landings during your Galapagos cruise, a pair of water shoes or sandals may be useful to give you good footing. In the Galapagos, the shoes you wear for

the wet landings or to walk on the paths will be rinsed by crew members before boarding the ship to avoid cross-contamination of the islands' ecosystems. We recommend bringing sandals or flip flops to use on board.

- **Breathable fabric:** Due to the change in climate, it is best to bring light layers of clothing.
- **Snorkel gear:** Should you buy snorkel gear for this adventure? Probably not. The Galapagos ship has basic gear like masks and fins for rent. In addition, you may be able to rent a wet suit onboard, depending on availability. If you are an enthusiast who already owns your own gear, or need special gear (prescription mask), we suggest you save space in your luggage. Of course, if you already own gear and really prefer it, you are welcome to bring it.
- **One-time laundry service:** About halfway through the trip, you will have the option to have laundry done by a next-day service for a fee. (Your Trip Experience Leader will arrange this. Or if you prefer to use a local laundromat, your Trip Experience Leader can advise you of the closest one.)

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Packing Lists

- ☐ **Clothing recommendations:** Shirts, trousers and/or jeans, shoes and socks, visor, swimsuit
- ☐ **Daily essentials:** toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels/ship will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but most do not provide a washcloth so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ **Other essentials:** Insect repellent with DEET (in spray bottles only, not aerosol cans), sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher), reusable water bottle, camera and extra batteries, and binoculars.
- ☐ **Medical essentials:** Your own prescriptions, travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication. Motion sickness medication and an antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness.

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in Ecuador is 110 volts (same as the U.S.). Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.) Aboard the Galapagos ship, you'll find the electric supply to be the same as in the U.S., so you will not need an electric-current converter for the ship.

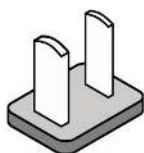
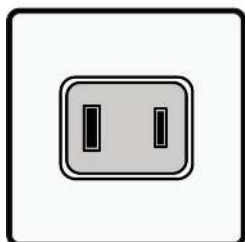
Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. It may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

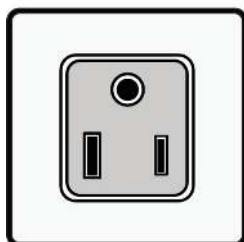
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Ecuador: A and B

Type A



Type B



Availability

A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays in the jungle.

Lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Quito and the Highlands, Ecuador: Quito, located in the Ecuadorian Andes, has a climate that is often described as one of “perpetual spring,” with warm days and chilly nights and little variation of temperature around the year. Much of the rainfall in this mountainous region comes in the afternoon and evening as clouds build up over the mountains and thunderstorms develop.

The Galapagos, Ecuador: In the Galapagos Islands, temperatures are comfortably mild throughout the year. From December through June, high temperatures are in the mid-to-upper 80s. This is considered the rainy season, even though there are more hours of sunshine than rain during these months. (In the desert climate of the Galapagos the amount of rainfall is miniscule compared to the Amazon rainforest.) From July through November, high temperatures are in the upper 70s to low 80s. This cool dry season along the equator has its positive side. The temperature during the day is usually in the 70s with low humidity and quite comfortable, making the nature hikes you take even more pleasant.

Water conditions in the Galapagos: Two different ocean currents impact the waters off the coast of the Galapagos—the Humboldt Current and the Panama Current. Generally speaking, when the colder Humboldt Current is dominant (July to November) the water is cooler and choppier; when the Panama Current is dominant (December to June) the water is warmer and calmer. The roughest seas are usually from July through October, but choppy conditions can occur at any time of year. If you are prone to seasickness, you may want to pack an anti-seasickness medicine.

TIP: For those travelers who are looking forward to swimming or snorkeling in the Galapagos, please be prepared for water temperatures in the high 60s/low 70s and choppy conditions. For details on the availability of snorkel gear, please see “Functional Tips” under “Clothing Suggestions”, or review the packing checklists.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	QUITO, ECUADOR			THE GALAPAGOS, ECUADOR		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	66 to 50	88 to 59	4.5	87 to 70	71	3.2
FEB	66 to 50	87 to 61	5.1	87 to 71	76	4.1
MAR	66 to 50	88 to 63	6.0	87 to 70	84	3.9
APR	66 to 51	89 to 67	6.9	87 to 70	77	2.4
MAY	66 to 51	88 to 64	4.9	87 to 69	66	4.7
JUN	67 to 49	80 to 55	1.9	85 to 67	60	2.1
JUL	67 to 49	75 to 50	0.8	80 to 66	42	0.8
AUG	67 to 49	73 to 49	1.0	84 to 65	38	0.5
SEP	68 to 49	79 to 56	3.1	81 to 66	44	0.8
OCT	67 to 49	85 to 64	5.0	84 to 66	57	1.1
NOV	67 to 49	86 to 63	4.3	85 to 67	61	1.4
DEC	66 to 50	87 to 62	4.1	86 to 69	65	0.9

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

Galápagos small ship

Our 16-passenger Galápagos small ship is chartered exclusively for our O.A.T. group. The 100-foot-long ship can maneuver easily among the islands, allowing for excellent views of the island shores. It features lounge areas, bars, a sun deck, and a dining room serving local and international cuisine. The simply appointed cabins have twin beds, small desk, and a private bath with shower.

- Average cabin size is 170 sq. ft.
- All cabins are outside-facing
- In-cabin furnishings: Two twin beds, small desk, and a private bath with shower

O.A.T. uses different ships depending on the trip departure date. The information in this chapter is typical but ships may vary slightly in size and facilities.

Cabin Amenities

Small ship cabins are basic and comfortable but small compared to large cruise ships. Your cabin amenities include private bathroom with shower and in room air-conditioning.

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for many small ships.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

All meals are taken in a spacious window-lined dining room. The food onboard includes international food and typical local dishes. If you require a special diet please request this in advance by contacting one of our Travel Counselors. There is no room service on board. Dining times will vary according to the scheduled daily activities.

A selection of wine, beer, and other beverages will be available for purchase onboard your small ship. Because the Galápagos Islands are part of a national park with a very fragile ecosystem, alcohol is not produced locally and must be imported. This means that you will likely experience significantly higher prices than what you would typically find at home (ex. a \$10-15 bottle of wine in the U.S. may cost \$35-50 in the Galápagos). Some Galápagos ships may allow travelers to bring

a bottle of their own favorite wine or alcohol to enjoy at their table (please check with your Trip Experience Leader for your specific ship). Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10–20 per bottle.

Many crew members do not speak English, so be ready to practice a few words in Spanish at dinner (with the help of your Trip Experience Leader).

Electricity

You'll find the electric supply onboard to be the same as in the U.S., so you will not need an electric-current converter for the ship. (But you may need one for hotels; see the section on electricity in the chapter on packing.)

Internet

Internet access is not available on the ship.

Laundry Services

There is no laundry service available on board.

Public Spaces

- **Dining room:** Enjoy international cuisine on board in a window-lined dining room.
- **Indoor common areas:** Spend time getting to know your fellow travelers in the small lounge or dining area.
- **Outdoor common areas:** Take in the scenery and wildlife on the shore from the upper sun deck.
- **Zodiac crafts:** We will embark on Zodiacs from the ship for daily exploration of the islands.

Shipboard Payments

Cash, in the form of U.S. dollars, and credit cards are accepted for purchases made on board. Personal checks are not accepted.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited on board, with the exception of one outdoor deck area reserved for smokers.

Wheelchairs

The ship is not built to accommodate wheelchairs.

Dress Code

There are no formal dinners on board; casual dress is encouraged.

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Culture & Points to Know

Ecuadorian Culture

From the legacy of the Inca Empire to Spanish colonialism, Ecuador offers an astonishingly diverse blend of cultures, weaving together indigenous traditions with those of the Spanish and Afro-Ecuadorian people.

One of many traditions that the Quechua people have kept alive throughout Spanish rule is immediately apparent—each village has specific style of clothing that is unique to their community. In the Andean mountains, these indigenous women are often seen sporting a kaleidoscope of colors on their skirts and capes, usually topped with a vibrant hat ornamented with beads. These hats can even be used to designate social status in the village based on the number of beads adorning the woman's hat. But these colorful outfits are as practical as they are beautiful; not only does the clothing keep them warm in the chilly mountain air, but the Quechua have designed their apparel to aid them with their work, such as fastening a *chumpi* (belt) to their skirt, which supports their lower back to carry heavy loads, or to secure a swaddled infant to their back.

Since the arrival of the conquistadors in 1531, Spanish influence has made a permanent mark on Ecuadorian culture. With their arrival also came the spread of Roman Catholicism, which began to transform the religious landscape until it was eventually declared the official religion of Ecuador in 1869. Roman Catholicism continues to permeate modern-day culture, particularly in rural communities where we see this reflected by a deeply patriarchal society with traditional values, such as a strong sense of duty to one's family and neighbors.

During this period of colonialism, the Spanish also engaged in the African slave trade, with the first enslaved African people arriving to Ecuador in the mid-16th century. The African people and their descendants, many of whom settled along Ecuador's coast, have contributed to the unique cultural tapestry of modern Ecuador, particularly their musical influence. Afro-Ecuadorians are famous for their marimba music and traditional chants, a form of artistic expression used to share stories and poems, worship, honor the deceased, or celebrate life. This percussion-style of music is integral to passing along legends and cultural through oral traditions.

Language

While Spanish is the official language of Ecuador—a legacy of the conquistadors that conquered the Incan Empire, it is not the primary language for many of the nation's indigenous peoples. Throughout the highlands and rural areas, many people still speak Quechua, a language passed down from the Incas.

English is increasingly spoken here, especially among people who work in the tourism industry. But you can also converse with gestures and body language. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. But please do learn a few phrases in the local language. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated, even if your pronunciation is off.

Your attire is a key part of your non-verbal presentation. Your clothing should show a respect for local tradition. In South America, this means you should dress in a relatively modest style.

Accommodations

Our hotels are comfortable, but not luxurious. At our rainforest lodge, creature comforts are basic. (Remember to bring a flashlight.) The boats we charter in the Galapagos also provide basic accommodations. Cabins are small and bathrooms can be cramped. During your trip, there can be occasional problems with electricity, hot water, and air conditioning in any of our accommodations.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Ecuadorian Cuisine

Here, you can find a wide variety of fruit due to Ecuador's diverse climate and fertile soil. This fruit includes several types of bananas, passionfruit, and tree tomatoes. You will also find plenty of seafood options. Some dishes to look for are:

- **Mani:** A sauce based on peanuts and often served with fried seafood.
- **Hornado:** Ecuador's national dish. A whole, spit-roasted pig, usually served with salad, fried plantain or cheesy fried potato pancakes called *llapingachos*.
- **Cuy:** Or guinea pig. This dish can be found in the highlands of Ecuador (and Peru). It is a staple source of protein. Many families raise them (not as pets, but for food) and then grill or roast them with herbs till the skin is crispy. Many have compared the taste to that of suckling pig.
- **Fritada de chancho:** A piece of pork shoulder that's been boiled and then fried and served with a spicy red sauce. It is accompanied by *llapingachos* (potato pancakes), corn, and fava beans.
- **Ceviche:** Here, the seafood of choice is shrimp. It is usually served in its marinade, which includes tomato, and with a corn-nut *tostado* for crunch. If you are a vegetarian, try the veggie-based *ceviche* called *cevichocho* that is made with lupini beans. You can also find mango *ceviche*, mushroom *ceviche*, heart of palm *ceviche* and many others.
- **Humitas:** A great dish if you are looking for something on the go from a pushcart vendor. These are like *tamales*—steamed *masa* (corn meal) and corn kernels in a banana leaf. They are either salty or sweet and can also contain onions, cheese, or eggs. When you crave something crunchy, grab a bag of
- **Habitas:** If you are craving something crispy, *habitas* are it. They are crispy fried and salted fava beans
- **Dulce de leche:** A dessert that is a caramelized dairy confection.
- **Alfajores:** Flaky layers of dough filled with sweet cheese or gooey caramel or molasses.

Travel in South America

Part of the adventure of this trip is the possibility that things may change. Local influences may make it impossible for us to follow the planned itinerary exactly and the sequence of sites visited may change. Rest assured that we have considerable experience at responding to changing circumstances on the spot. Our goal is always to offer you the best travel experience and the most memorable explorations of this intriguing land.

Complex, multi-layered cultural traditions and stunning natural geography make South America a fascinating destination. To get the most enjoyment out of your trip, remember that many South American countries are still considered developing nations, and be aware that you may be approached to buy crafts or solicited by children to take photographs.

In restaurants, hotels, and at cultural sites, everything works according to a slower sense of time than what you are used to. It's best to wind down and adjust to the local pace and philosophy.

Regional Flights in South America

In South America, it is simply a fact of life that schedules for internal flights often change on short notice. When this happens, our air travel experts strive to get you on new flights as close to the original schedule as possible, but limited availability of seats may require us to use early-morning flights or change the day of the flight. If schedule changes make it necessary, we may have to rise before dawn on some days where early-morning wake-ups are not mentioned in your printed itinerary.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Ecuador

Traditional souvenirs include jewelry and sculptures created from Tagua vegetable ivory (using the nut of the Tagua palm tree), ceramics, Tigua paintings, Panama hats, and items with images of Galapagos animals.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Ecuador

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 109,484 square miles
- **Capital:** Quito
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language; Quechua is also spoken.
- **Location:** Ecuador is bordered by Colombia and Peru.
- **Geography:** Ecuador is roughly the size of the state of Washington and straddles the equatorial line. Because of this geographical feature and combined with its different altitudes, Ecuador has a striking diversity of landscapes for a country of its size. Tropical rainforests in the Amazon Basin dominate its eastern section, the Oriente. The Eastern and Western Cordilleras of the Andes make up the Sierra region that bisects the country, topped by the towering peaks of Cotopaxi (19,347 feet) and Chimborazo (20,702 feet). The costa is the Pacific tropical coastal plain, which constitutes about one-quarter of the country. Ecuador and the Galapagos are known as the country of four worlds due to its diversity.
- **Population:** 17,684,536 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic (95%), Other (5%)
- **Time zone:** Ecuador is on Ecuador Time, which is the same time as U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6am in Quito. The Galapagos is 1 hour behind continental time (Ecuador time).

National Holidays: Ecuador

In addition to the holidays listed below, Ecuador celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Carnival and Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/24 The Battle of Pichincha

08/10 Independence Day

10/09 Independence of Guayaquil

11/02 All Soul's Day

11/03 Independence of Cuenca

12/6 Foundation of Quito

12/25 Christmas Day

Ecuador: A Brief History

There is archaeological evidence of settlements established by hunter-gatherer groups as early as 10,000 BCE along Ecuador's southern coast and in the central highlands. Agricultural societies that followed produced the famous Valdivia ceramics, the oldest pottery in the Western Hemisphere. These ancient peoples traded with others in Peru, Brazil, and the Amazon Basin, building a civilization sophisticated enough to construct large coastal cities by 500 BCE. These city dwellers worked metal and had navigational skills sufficient for them to trade with cultures as far away as the Maya in ancient Mexico.

The Inca ruler Tupac-Yupanqui invaded from the south in 1460 CE, but could not conquer the territories of three strong groups in Ecuador—the Canari, Caras, and Quitu. It fell to his son Huayna Capac to accomplish this in the next generation. The Incas brought their language, Quechua, to Ecuador, where it is still widely spoken. Huayna Capac celebrated by building the monumental city of Tomebamba, whose ruins near Cuenca remain impressive. This city in Ecuador became as important as Cuzco in Peru.

On his deathbed in 1526, Huayna Capac split the empire between his sons Atahualpa and Huascar. Atahualpa defeated Huascar in a civil war that weakened the empire just before the Spanish arrived—and just enough for them to overtake it. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Incas in 1532, and made his brother Gonzalo governor of Quito, Ecuador. A few years later, Francisco Pizarro was killed in a dispute with his former comrades. Gonzalo rebelled against Spain, but was left to rule Ecuador until Spanish forces finally showed up seven years later and killed him.

Spanish governors ruled Ecuador from Lima, Peru; and then from Bogotá in New Granada (now Colombia). Life for the colonists was prosperous, but for the indigenous and *mestizo* population, it was miserable. Impressed into servitude, they staged several failed rebellions. By the early 18th century, the Spanish were importing enslaved Africans from the Caribbean to work their sugar and cocoa plantations. In 1822, Simon Bolivar's chief lieutenant, Antonio Jose de Sucre, brought an end to Spanish rule in the area, though it was not until 1830 that Ecuador gained autonomy. Following independence, civil war broke out between the conservatives of Quito and more liberal elements in Guayaquil, initiating a pattern of conflict that persists today.

Ecuador's 20th-century history has been a series of democratic and military regimes. Between 1930 and 1940, there were 17 duly elected presidents, but not one completed his term due to military coups. President José María Velasco Ibarra was elected five times between 1934 and 1972, and was ousted by the military before he could complete any of his terms. Throughout the 20th century, bananas were the country's most important export—until oil was discovered in 1967. This boosted the economy, but the wealth remained in the hands of a privileged few.

After years of staggering inflation, in 2000 then-president Mahaud dumped the national currency (the sucre) in favor of the US dollar. Dollarization did not hurt the wealthy, as they'd already invested in US dollars. But ordinary people struggled to convert their near-worthless sucres to dollars, amidst rigid austerity measures. In 2006, the social democrat economist Rafael Correa was elected president; he was re-elected twice, and had some success in delivering on his promises to reduce poverty, increase the GDP, and develop social programs. Accused of overreaching power, Correa chose not to seek a fourth term when the economy declined in 2015. He was succeeded in 2017 by his former vice president, Lenín Moreno. Moreno was expected to continue Correa's "21st century socialism," but has since moved more to the center.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Ecuador

Voyage of the Beagle by Charles Darwin (1839, Natural History/Exploration). The adventurous account of a young scientist on a five-year sea voyage that changed his life—and our understanding of life on earth. First published in 1839, this book is still essential reading.

The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time by Jonathan Weiner (1994, Natural History) An accessible take on the ongoing debate over evolution that garnered the 1995 Pulitzer Prize.

Satan Came to Eden: A Survivor's Account of "The Galapagos Affair" by Dore Strauch (1936, Memoir) Perhaps Satan did not come to the Galapagos, but in 1929 the eccentric German doctor Frederick Ritter did, along with his mistress, the author. These naturists were soon joined by other, more prudish settlers who disapproved of their peculiar ways—and a mysterious, whip-wielding baroness and her two lovers. It was a bad mix, and the ensuing scandals and murder caused an international sensation in 1934. The mystery still reverberates today.

Traveller's Wildlife Guide: Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands by David L. Pearson and Les Beletsky (1987, Field Guide) A comprehensive, all-purpose field guide for your Galapagos cruise.

The Boy on the Back of the Turtle by Paul Quarrington (1997, Travel Narrative). Humorist, novelist, and family man on a quest, Quarrington offers an entertaining account of a Galapagos voyage in the company of his seven-year-old daughter and seventy-year-old father.

The Panama Hat Trail by Tom Miller (1986, Travel Narrative/History) Miller's entertaining and insightful social history of Ecuador revolves around its iconic hat and the story of its creation. It's a classic example of travel writing, and one of the best things written on Ecuador.

Suggested Films & Videos

Ecuador

Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life (2009, Documentary) This one-hour film explains Darwin's theory of evolution with panache. An extension of the "BBC Earth" series narrated by David Attenborough.

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (2003, Adventure). A seafaring adventure starring Russell Crowe. It's set during the Napoleonic Wars, when maritime battles determined the balance of power between England and France—even if those battles were off the coast of South America (as depicted in this movie). A few key scenes are set in the Galapagos.

Galapagos: The Islands that Changed the World (2007, TV Documentary). A beautifully shot documentary about the diversity of life in the islands, narrated by actress Tilda Swinton.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more

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30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



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