



## viExplorer Ecuador & Galapagos

The viExplorer Ecuador & Galapagos tour includes must see places as well as hidden treasures in Ecuador's diverse mainland and majestic Galapagos islands.

Discover one of the best-preserved colonial cities in Latin America with a tour through the historical centre of Quito. Escape to the Andean highlands and stay in a mountain ranch while hiking a spectacular volcano and roaming the landscape on horseback. Immerse yourself in indigenous culture while spending the night with a traditional Indian family and absorbing their music and dance. Descend from the cool highlands into lush rainforest where waterfalls and an authentic jungle village await you. Ride the infamous Nariz del Diablo train ride through the rugged Andes before relaxing in the charming city of Cuenca. Get close to Giant Tortoises, White-Tipped Reef Sharks and Iguanas, not to mention incredible beaches and bizarre volcanic landscapes on the Galapagos islands. Head back to relative normality in Guayaquil with colourful wooden houses juxtaposed against modern skyscrapers.



### Dates and Prices

#### viExplorer OpenAge Explorer tours for any age

23/10/ - 07/11/2010 - 3199€ - Early bird discount\*

#### Early bird discount

100 Euros off the published viventura price

This PDF was generated on 30/07/2010. Please note, that prices are updated constantly, so please take a look at <http://www.viventura.co.uk/ecuador/aecu/dates-and-prices> for the most up to date tour price. Also make sure to take a look at <http://www.viventura.co.uk/ecuador/aecu/travel-route> for further information about the itinerary including information about the accommodation.

### Day 1 - Saturday | Europa

Your flight will leave Dublin and travel to Quito via Madrid.

You will arrive in Quito in the late afternoon where your tourguide will be waiting for you to accompany you and the other travellers to the hostel.

In the evening, we will enjoy an evening meal together while our tour guide explains some of the most important things about the journey ahead. Afterwards, we will have some time to rest on our own.

*Dinner*

### Day 2 - Sunday | Quito

We'll enjoy a nice breakfast together in our hostel, before we leave for a city tour in Quito. Sundays are free from noise and traffic so it will be the perfect day to explore one of the largest and best-preserved historical cities in Latin America.

After a busy morning taking in colonial architecture and beautiful museums and monuments, we'll take the bus to Cumbayá in the valley of Tumbaco where we'll enjoy lunch with the viventura team.

Thereafter, we'll be free to relax and enjoy the many bars and restaurants available in the modern part of Quito.

*Breakfast | Lunch | :t:Private Bus (approx 2 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 2 h)*

### Day 3 - Monday | Quito

Depending on the weather in the morning, we may take the cable car which provides fantastic views over the city from 4100m. This is a great way to take one last glimpse of Quito and the journey that lies ahead in the distance. Alternatively, we'll visit the Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) monument which is the official site of the equator.

In the afternoon, we'll visit the colourful Artesanal market. This is a good place to enjoy the different sights and sounds of the traders. Artesanal market is easy to get to unlike the touristy Otavalo market which doesn't always warrant its long journey time.

For our last night in Quito, we'll take a Chiva bus ride through the historical centre with our own live music band. The city lights accompanied by some local Canelazo (a warm alcoholic fruit drink) will be the perfect way to see the city from a different angle. Luckily, tomorrow we'll be able to sleep in a little.

*Breakfast | :t:Private Bus (approx 2 h)*



#### Day 4 - Tuesday | Quito - Cotopaxi

After breakfast we'll leave Quito on a private bus and head south towards Cotopaxi National Park where we'll stay in a mountain ranch, set in a typical green Andean landscape.

After a little rest, we'll visit the most spectacular and famous volcano in Ecuador. Our bus will take us to an altitude of 4500m from where we'll hike a further 300m. Whilst it can be a little strenuous, we won't have to be fitness fanatics to enjoy the experience.

In the afternoon, we'll roam the landscape on horseback. We'll use Criollo horses who are well kept and very steady, so even a complete amateur will be able to relax and enjoy the excursion. During the trip we'll hopefully see glimpses of wild horses, llamas and bulls, while enjoying incredible clear skies as the sun goes down.

In the evening, we'll enjoy a well-deserved candle-lit dinner and relax next to the fireplace with a few drinks.

*Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | :t:Private Bus (approx 2 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 2 h) | :t:Horse-riding (approx 3 h)*

#### Day 5 - Wednesday | Cotopaxi - Quilotoa

Leaving Cotopaxi in the morning, we'll head towards the Andean village of Quilotoa where our hosts will be a traditional Indian family. Our journey will take us through green, yellow and brown fields overlooked by a strange mountainous landscape.

Upon arrival, we'll have the chance to walk 350m down to a beautiful crater lake where the mountains are reflected in the dark emerald coloured water. We'll hire horses on the way back up to save some energy.

In the evening, we'll have the opportunity to see how real Indian families live while enjoying some of their traditional music and dance. Adventurous eaters might welcome the opportunity to try some Guinea Pig, which is the local festive dish of the region.

We won't be able to guarantee single or double rooms because the hostel has a limited number of rooms.

*Breakfast | Dinner | :t:Private Bus (approx 4 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 2 h)*

#### Day 6 - Thursday | Quilotoa - Puyo

In the morning, we'll visit a rural school sponsored by viventura's vSocial programme.

Like many schools in the area, resources are limited and we'll have the opportunity to see where some of the money from our tour is being used to help buy basic materials and a daily hot lunch for the children.

Soon after, we'll leave for Baños and then onto Puyo in the Amazon rainforest. Our journey will see a very rapid change in landscape and climate, as we leave the Andean highlands for warmer valleys and finally into the hot lush jungle.

We won't be able to visit the local school if our trip coincides with school holidays

*Breakfast | :t:Private Bus (approx 5 h)*

#### Day 7 - Friday | Puyo

Today, we'll visit the jungle village of Kotokocha where we will acquaint ourselves with traditional Kichwa culture. Our local guide will give us an insight into some of the local Indian ceramics, medicinal plants and animals.

Later on, we'll hike for 2 hours through the jungle with the opportunity to rest at a big waterfall. Indeed, today will be the perfect day to experience pure unspoiled nature.

#### Included

flight from/to Dublin  
flight to the Galapagos islands  
Irish airport fees  
all carriers and transfers (trains, buses, etc.)  
all overnight stays in selected hostels in double rooms  
viventura tour coordinator  
additional local guides  
meals as indicated in the tour itinerary  
entrance fees and other costs indicated in the tour itinerary  
adventure and fun

#### Not Included

take-off tax in Guayaquil 28 USD  
take-off tax in Quito 41 USD  
entrance to national park in Galapagos islands (approx. 110 USD)



*Breakfast | Lunch | :t:Private Bus (approx 2 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 3 h)*

### **Day 8 - Saturday | Puyo - Banos - Riobamba**

Today, we'll leave early in the morning for Riobamba. We may stop at a local workshop where our guide will talk about the production of Balsa wood. Items made from Balsa wood will also provide perfect souvenirs because they are so light.

We'll then visit the impressive Pailon del Diablo (Devil's Cauldron) waterfall. Lunch can be enjoyed by the waterfall or on our return journey in Baños.

*Breakfast | :t:Private Bus (approx 3 h)*

### **Day 9 - Sunday | Riobamba - Cuenca**

We'll get up early in order to get a good place on the roof of the famous Nariz del Diablo train ride. We'll take the train for about 2 hours and our journey will take us through the cool highlands of the Andes until Guamote or Alausi where we'll take a private bus to get to Cuenca.

At night we'll enjoy a 2 hour city tour of Cuenca with its charming cobblestone streets, old-world cathedrals, colonial parks and urban rivers. Of course, there'll be plenty of free time left over to enjoy the best bars and restaurants of Cuenca.

*Breakfast | :t:Train (approx 2 h) | :t:Private Bus (approx 5 h)*

### **Day 10 - Monday | Cuenca - Galapagos**

In the morning, we'll fly from Cuenca via Guayaquil to Baltra airport in the Galapagos islands.

Once we arrive, we'll explore Isla Santa Cruz with a local guide. Right away, we will travel through an ever-changing landscape and discover the famous twin craters and walk through a huge lava tunnel.

We'll also have the opportunity to see lots of wild and rare species, including the iconic Giant Tortoises in their natural habitat and the island's Land Iguanas that have thankfully be brought back from distinction.

Afterwards, we'll visit the Charles Darwin Station where research is carried out to protect the Galapagos species. Here, we'll see some more Giant Tortoises, some Land Iguanas and the famous 'Lonesome George'.

After such a packed day, we'll head back to our hotel for a nice evening meal before exploring the island's nightlife.

*Breakfast | :t:Flight (approx 2 h) | :t:Flight (approx 2 h) | :t:Private Bus (approx 1 h)*

### **Day 11 - Tuesday | Galapagos - Isla Santa Cruz**

Today, we'll be free to relax and make the most of the beautiful island. We might visit the beautiful white beach of Tortuga Bay where it's possible to observe Sea Iguanas, Blue-footed Boobies, Rays and Pelicans. Alternatively, we can do some snorkelling in Las Grietas and relax on Playa de los Alemanes beach away from the lively part of the island.

It will also be possible to reserve a tour to other islands (this is best booked at the last minute or through the viventura office when in Quito).

In the evening, there'll be several bars and restaurants waiting to be discovered.

*Breakfast*

### **Day 12 - Wednesday | Galapagos - Isla Santa Cruz - Isla Isabela**

#### **Stephan P.**

The tour was fantastic! I don't want to underline one or several highlights because it was the variety that made this trip so special. The mix was just perfect. That way there was something for everybody. The nature, the guide, the group and especially the animals made this trip an unforgettable experience. Thanks to the whole viventura team.

#### **Antje P.**

I'm going to enjoy the experiences of this journey for a long time. It was an intense and interesting time. I wouldn't have expected such diversity hidden in such a small country.

#### **Peter J.**

I did enjoy the Ecuador Galapagos tours very much. It did involve a big variety of activities, but the horse riding and snorkelling on the Galapagos islands were the highlights for me. The good attention from our guide Javier has to be mentioned as well, as he was always happy and open to our questions.



In the morning, we'll have plenty of free time to buy souvenirs or just sleep in.

Shortly after lunch, we'll depart by boat for Isla Isabela. If you suffer from sea sickness you'll need to bring some medicine in case the sea gets rough on this 2 to 3 hour journey.

Once we arrive at Isla Isabela, we'll observe a more relaxed atmosphere, where the streets aren't paved and people take life in their stride. We'll be just a short walk from our hotel and a one kilometer long white sandy beach in the little village of Puerto Villamil. With a little luck, we'll see some Flamingos in the nearby lagoons before observing the impressive sunset.

*Breakfast | :t:Boat (approx 3 h)*

### **Day 13 - Thursday | Galapagos - Isla Isabela**

Leaving early on our private transport to make the most of the day, we'll head towards the national park where we can explore an impressive and unique volcanic world.

We will see some drastic changes in plant life and weather before we reach the highest point of our Galapagos journey at 1500m. Walking along the rim of the Sierra Nega Crater we'll experience a mix of vapours and gases clearly indicating the active nature of the volcano. Indeed, the last eruption here took place in October 2005.

Then we'll visit the Lava fields of volcano Chico; a moon-like landscape made out of different types of lava in all imaginable forms and colours.

Our private transport will take us back to Puerto Villamil where we can enjoy the rest of the day at our own leisure.

*Breakfast | :t:Private Bus (approx 2 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 6 h)*

### **Day 14 - Friday | Galapagos - Isla Isabela**

In the morning, we'll take a short walk to the dock, leaving in a little boat to some small islets within Isabela bay known as Tintoreras.

With a bit of luck, we'll observe White-Tipped Reef Sharks resting in small channels next to the lagoon and Sea Lions sleeping under the mangroves. Sea Iguanas of all sizes can be found during the mating season showing off their beautiful red and green skin. While we might also see Blue-Footed Boobies or Galapagos Penguins on our way through the bay.

In the afternoon, we'll be able to discover the marine world of the islands. While snorkelling near the shore we'll enjoy the company of schools of differently coloured fish alongside Parrot Fishes, Rays and majestic Sea Turtles.

In the evening, we'll enjoy our last meal together with a few drinks as a busy day of travelling awaits us the following day.

*Breakfast | Dinner | :t:Boat (approx 1 h) | :t:Trekking (approx 1 h)*

### **Day 15 - Saturday | Galapagos - Guayaquil - Europa**

Today, we'll leave Isla Isabela really early by boat to get to Isla Santa Cruz. There'll be some time to buy souvenirs before flying to Guayaquil; Ecuador's biggest city located on the Pacific coast.

Our city tour of Guayaquil will include colourful wooden houses juxtaposed with modern skyscrapers. After stopping at both the old and modern districts, we'll walk up to a lighthouse and chapel where we can enjoy panoramic views over the city.

There'll be some time for a snack before checking-in for the Atlantic flight back to Ireland.

*Breakfast | :t:Private Taxi (approx 1 h) | :t:Flight (approx 2 h) | :t:Private Bus (approx 1 h)*

#### **Jan F.**

We discovered the country in such a short time - it was not possible to see more. The Galapagos Islands, the snow storm at Cotopaxi and many jungle experiences are going to stay in my memory

#### **Anita F.**

It was a fantastic trip through a diverse country. We saw and experienced a lot, and there was always a reason to laugh. Thank you to everybody, who made this trip an unforgettable experience.

#### **Maureen S.**

The tour through Ecuador and Galapagos had many highlights because we saw such different areas. It's not possible to compare them. The mountain range near Cotopaxi was one of them, with its amazing views and our walk up the mountain until 5000m. I was really surprised how relaxed the Giant Tortoises and Sea Iguanas were. The highlight was snorkelling with turtles and sharks. The organisation was great all the time, before the trip or during the trip through our all knowing guide Javier. If I was to plan another trip to South America, it would be with viventura.



**Day 16 - Sunday | Europa**

We'll arrive in Dublin via Madrid in the late afternoon.

*Breakfast | Lunch*