



Photo by Eric Linberg



ECUADOR & GALÁPAGOS

AMAZON RAINFORESTS, CLOUD FORESTS AND GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

San Diego Botanic Garden Led by Julian & Leslie Duval

September 25 - October 7, 2018

Get a glimpse of the land and sea of Ecuador during this 13-day program, highlighting three very different ecosystems: the rainforests, cloud forests, and Galápagos Islands. Begin your exploration in the bustling capital of Quito, where you'll have a chance to visit the botanical garden and sample local culture. Then take an exciting four-night cruise amid the Galápagos Islands, known for their high levels of endemism, before returning to the mainland, where you'll explore the high elevation cloud forests of Mindo. Conclude your journey in the Amazon rainforest, where you'll get treetop views from canopy walkways and see iconic flora and fauna. This trip offers incredible sights and experiences you won't forget.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Tour the collections of Quito Botanical Garden, whose highlights include carnivorous plants, roses, and orchids.
- Discover endemic vegetation in the Galapagos Islands, such as *Scalesia villosa*, *Lecocarpus pinnatifidus*, Galápagos Milkwort, white and black mangrove, and palo santo ("holy stick").
- Take guided hikes in the Mindo cloud forest, characterized by lush green vegetation, ferns, bromeliads, and more than 270 orchid species.
- Learn how native cultures have used medicinal plants in the rainforest for hundreds of years as you traverse terra firma and igapo forest habitats.
- Canoe through the flooded Amazonian forest to catch a glimpse of native fauna, including birds, caimans, and several types of monkeys.

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

SEPTEMBER 25 - PUEMBO

Upon arrival at the Quito International Airport, after clearing customs and collecting your luggage, you will be met and transferred to Hostería Rincón de Puembo, located only 20-30 minutes from the airport in the small town of Puembo, which is about 20 minutes east of Quito. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo.*

SEPTEMBER 26 - PUEMBO

This morning meet your guide and transfer to Jardín Botánico de Quito, where you will be given a special tour of the garden, which is located within the 67-hectare Parque La Carolina. The gardens feature different environments, such as Amazonian, desert, and wetland ecosystems. Highlights include carnivorous plants, roses, and orchids. You will then travel back to Old Town, and have lunch at a local café. After lunch, enjoy a walking tour of the historical district of Quito. During your tour, visit the church of the Compañía de Jesús, with its impressive interior inlaid in gold. Also see Plaza Grande, which is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building, and the Archbishop's Palace. End your tour in the Plaza de San Francisco, with a walk around the plaza, making sure to visit San Francisco Church, one of the principal religious monuments in the world. After your tour, return to Hostería Rincón de Puembo and relax before dinner. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 27 - GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

This morning transfer to the Quito airport for your flight to San Cristóbal in the Galápagos Islands. Upon arrival, get picked up at the airport by the naturalist guides and after a 10-minute bus drive to the pier, board the M/V Galápagos Legend. Dry landing in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Galápagos Islands. There, visit the Interpretation Center, an excellent place to learn about the islands' history in The Museum of Natural History which displays information about the volcanic origins of the islands, their remoteness from the continent, ocean currents, climate, the arrival of the different species and their colonization, among other points of interest. The human history is also showcased, chronologically narrating the most significant events related to the discovery and the island's colonization. After lunch visit Tijeretas Hills, which involves a high-intensity walk amidst beautiful landscapes and a magnificent view at the foot of a frigatebird nesting colony. *Overnight aboard M/V Legend. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 28 - GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

After breakfast have a wet landing on a beautiful white coral sandy beach guarded by a colony of sea lions. There are no trails, so stay along the shore where you can spot Galápagos Hawks, American Oystercatchers, Galápagos Ground Doves, Hood Mockingbirds, Yellow Warblers, lava lizards, marine iguanas, and three species of Darwin's finches: a subspecies of the Large Cactus-Finch (which is similar to the Large Ground-Finch), the Small Ground Finch (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) and the Warbler Finch (*Certhidea olivacea*), another endemic subspecies. Swimming and snorkeling offer a great variety of

the Galápagos' marine wildlife: king angelfish, Creole fish, damsel fish, parrotfish, manta rays, and white-tipped reef sharks. In the afternoon, make a dry landing to visit Punta Suárez (Española Island), an island of geological interest, where you'll explore volcanic formations and riveting wildlife: large sea lion colonies and seabirds including the Española Mockingbird, Nazca Boobies, and the spectacular Red-billed Tropicbird. You will also encounter marine iguanas, lava lizards, and the colorful Sally Lightfoot crabs. A somewhat lengthy hike will bring you among Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies, right up to nesting grounds that sometimes overlap the trail. Other birding favorites include Galápagos Dove, Galápagos Hawk, Swallow-tailed Gulls and the world's largest colony of Waved Albatross, an unequivocal highlight during mating season (May-December). Admire the island's dramatic backdrop, featuring the famous "Soplador," a seaward blowhole that shoots up water up to 23 m (75 ft) in the air. *Overnight aboard M/V Legend. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 29 - GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

Visit Post Office Beach, located on the north side of Floreana (wet landing). The bay was named because in 1793 Captain James Colnett installed a wooden barrel which served as an informal post office for sailors passing through, who would take letters with them back to their destinations. Today, visitors continue the tradition by placing unstamped postcards inside the barrel, hoping that some other traveler, going to the letter destination, will take it back for free. The chances are that the letter posted can take a long time to arrive at its destination. However, there have been cases where it has arrived before the sender. You may also encounter Darwin's finches, Yellow Warblers, and lava lizards. There are also great snorkeling opportunities with green Pacific sea turtles. As well, the island is best known for its endemic vegetation: *Scalesia villosa*, *Lecocarpus pinnatifidus*, and the Galápagos Milkwort. Snorkelers can practice on the main beach among playful sea lions. In the afternoon visit the Cormorant Point (wet landing), on an olivine green, sanded beach. Hike from the black mangrove beds to a brackish lagoon, which usually holds one of the largest flamingo populations in the Galápagos. Endemic plants here include *Scalesia villosa*, white and black mangrove, and holy stick. The trail continues to a beautiful white sandy beach, one of the most important nesting sites of green Pacific sea turtles. It is important to avoid walking in the water due to the stingrays that may be hiding in the sand, which can be dangerous if accidentally stepped on. From the beach, one can spot sea turtles, Blue-footed Boobies plunging into the water, and small reef sharks floating along the shoreline in the search for food. This coral-sand beach marks the end of your trail, and you head back to the olivine beach we landed on, to swim or snorkel amongst sea turtles, reef fish, sea lions and, on a good day, white-tipped reef sharks. A small penguin colony can be observed. *Overnight aboard M/V Legend. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 30 - GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

You will visit the Charles Darwin Station where the Galápagos giant tortoise breeding program takes place as part of our efforts to preserve the fragile Galápagos environment and where the famous Lonesome George (the last surviving

specimen of his species) lived for decades. Admire a prickly-pear cactus forest and a variety Darwin's finches and other land birds. The Darwin Station also works providing environmental education to the communities, schools, and tourists visiting the Galápagos Islands. You will also have some free time to visit the town and shop for souvenirs. To visit the Fausto Llerena Breeding Center is a great opportunity to observe giant tortoises in their natural habitat. Lava tunnel formations are the result of the many eruptions that have occurred throughout history. In the Scalesia forest, Vermilion Flycatcher, Short-eared Owls, and several finch species can be spotted. In the afternoon visit the Ballena (Whale) Bay (wet landing), this is a beautiful green sand cove at the base of Dragon Hill on the west coast of Santa Cruz Island. The beach contains plenty of olivine crystals of volcanic origin. The crystals were formed when the magma was still underground. The content is magnesium, iron, and silica. Opportunity to see marine iguanas and sea birds, followed by snorkeling. Also, admire The Eden Islet, which is off the western coast of Santa Cruz. It offers opportunities to see Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies and reef sharks. *Overnight aboard M/V Legend. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 1 - PUEMBO

After breakfast be prepared to visit the Carrion Point to dinghy ride at the entry of the Itabaca channel in a lagoon with turquoise water, where you can observe sharks, Blue-footed Boobies, and different kinds of fish. After the visit, you will be transferred to the Baltra airport to take your flight back to Quito. Upon arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure. Dinner will be at the hotel. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BD)*

OCTOBER 2 - PUEMBO

After breakfast you will depart from the lodge for a full day trip to Mindo cloud forest, where you will have guided hikes on the trails in the pristine forests that are noted for having over 450 species of birds, a great number of butterfly species, 270-plus orchid species, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Lunch will be at a local hotel or restaurant. After your time in Mindo, you will return to Rincón de Puembo. Dinner is on own. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BL)*

OCTOBER 3 - AMAZON

After breakfast transfer to the Quito airport to take a domestic flight to the Amazon rainforest. A 30-minute flight over the Andes Mountains leads you to a bustling oil town called Coca located in the Amazon Basin. Have a quick lunch in Sacha's private house. Then it's off to the town docks to board Sacha's private canoes for the two-hour journey downriver to Sacha Lodge's property. A 30-minute hike through the rainforest leads you to Lake Pilchicocha. Here, you are met by native workers to paddle you across the lake to your final destination. Arrive at Sacha Lodge around 3:30 or 4 pm (subject to change). Swim in Lake Pilchicocha, which is a black water lake home to many species of fish and animals. A refreshing swim after arriving may be just what you need after being in the equatorial heat all day. Bird observing from the mini tower offers guests an excellent opportunity to view several species of birds common around the lodge. This is also a great place to watch the sun set. Visit the butterfly house

with your naturalist guide to view the beautiful colors of many different species of butterflies. After dinner, accompany your naturalist guide on a night walk through the rainforest to view the hundreds of different species of animals that can only be found at night. Or maybe a canoe ride on the lake to view the spectacled and black caimans with their glowing orange eyes as you silently paddle across the lake to get a closer view. *Overnight at Sacha Lodge. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 4 - AMAZON

Begin morning activity between 6 and 7 am. Begin walking on the Liana Chica Trail and arrive at the canopy walk for spectacular views of the rainforest canopy and the many different species of vibrantly colored birds. Designed to be a self-standing rigid suspension canopy walk, it is one of only a few in the world. Located within Sacha's private reserve, two miles from the shores of the Rio Napo and one mile from the lodge, the bird walk gives guests the opportunity to get an up close and personal view of the rainforest canopy. Two of the three towers have observation decks every 12 meters, making towers accessible for everyone. The canopy walkway is 36 meters high and 275 meters long, giving guests a bird's-eye view of all the wonders and beauty the tropical rainforest has to offer. The canopy walk is designed as a sturdy walkway enabling guests to casually move along while enjoying the spectacular views. After the canopy walk, continue on Liana Grande through terra firma and igapo forest habitats where native guides will explain many different species of medicinal plants that have been used in their culture for hundreds of years. Liana Grande will turn into the trail Higueron, which will take you through pristine primary forest with huge kapok and fig trees towering hundreds of feet above your head. After lunch, you may choose to take a leisurely hike along the Rio Napo, or choose a little more challenging hike on the trail Leoncillo to try and spot the elusive dusky titi monkey. Either way the trails will lead you back to the main boardwalk for your final hike and canoe ride back to the lodge. *Overnight at Sacha Lodge. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 5 - AMAZON

Leaving the lodge after breakfast, begin the hike on trail Lagartococha. This trail offers the chance to learn more about the native people and their relationship with the forest. Learn about the trees where natives believe the spirits of their ancestors live, and the mysterious "dwende" or devil-man of the forest. After arriving at lake Lagartococha, take a tranquil canoe ride through a natural swamp, which is the home of anacondas, caimans, and capybaras. Afterwards, a walk on the other side of Lagartococha may give you the opportunity to spot capuchin or squirrel monkeys playfully jumping through the trees. Return from the walk or canoe ride and head back to the lodge for a refreshing dip in the lake, or a nice relaxing nap in your personal hammock on your private balcony. After lunch, your native guide will teach you how to fish for the infamous razor-toothed piranha. Keep in mind that piranhas will not attack people and swimming at the same time is perfectly safe and fun! Around 3:30 pm you will begin what many think is the best trail at Sacha, a silent canoe ride through the flooded Amazonian forest, where you have a good chance of being surrounded by troops of squirrel, capuchin, and howler monkeys. Keep your eyes peeled for the shy and

elusive river otter as well as the incredibly well camouflaged three-toed sloth. After your eye-popping ride through the flooded forest, you will arrive at Sacha's 135-foot wooden tower built around an ancient kapok tree. Get close-up views of vibrantly colored birds through Sacha's powerful scopes, and watch the sun set with an amazing view of Mount Sumaco, a volcano, and possibly a view of the snow-covered caps of the Andes. Leaving the tower just before or after sunset will give you an experience not soon forgotten. A canoe ride back through the flooded forest at night will be an awe-inspiring experience. Listen to the symphony of frogs and insects as you navigate through the narrow flooded forest trail, keeping your eyes open for caimans. Watch the several species of bats flying over your heads and listen to the many species of nocturnal birds making their eerie nighttime calls. *Overnight at Sacha Lodge. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 6 - PUEMBO

After an early breakfast depart from the lodge at 7:30 am. Take one last walk on the boardwalk to the river, and from there a two-hour canoe ride back to Coca for your 35-minute flight back to Quito. You will arrive in Quito at 12:30 pm (subject to change). You will then be transferred to the hotel, where you can enjoy all the amenities the hotel offers for leisure time. Have a farewell dinner at the hotel and then transfer to the airport to take your evening flight back home. (Should you choose a flight home the next morning, your hotel room is included with breakfast and transfer to the airport.) *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BD)*

OCTOBER 7 - PUEMBO

If your flight is this morning, you will be transferred to the airport. Arrive home today, the timing of which depends on the departure from Quito, either early morning or night. (B)

LAND PRICING

\$7,465 (based on 14 participants)

Cost includes meals, accommodations, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, Galápagos National Park fee, internal flights, in-country transportation, local guides in each region for the duration of the program, all tips/gratuities, bottled water on the bus, donation to SDBG, and carbon offset.

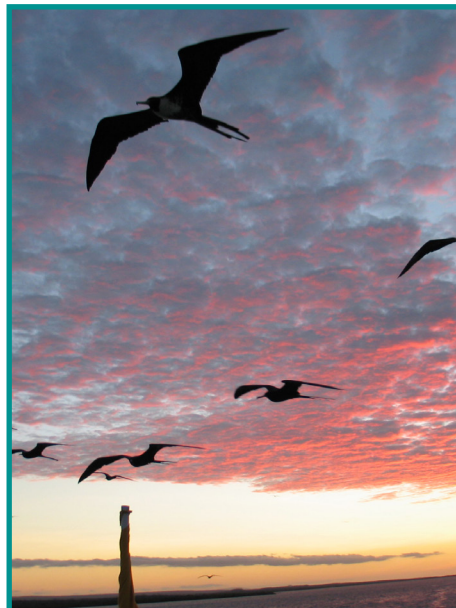
Does not include international airfare, estimated at \$1,075 from San Diego, alcoholic beverages, or items of a personal nature. Other departure cities available.

THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip add \$1,740 per person. A \$350 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to reserve your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable excluding a \$100 cancellation fee until April 28, 2018, at which time non-refundable final payment is due. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit www.travelinsured.com. Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe



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