



OPUNTIA CACTUS ON SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

ECUADORIAN CLOUD FORESTS AND GALÁPAGOS BY LAND & SEA

Pacific Horticulture Society

October 29 – November 7, 2021



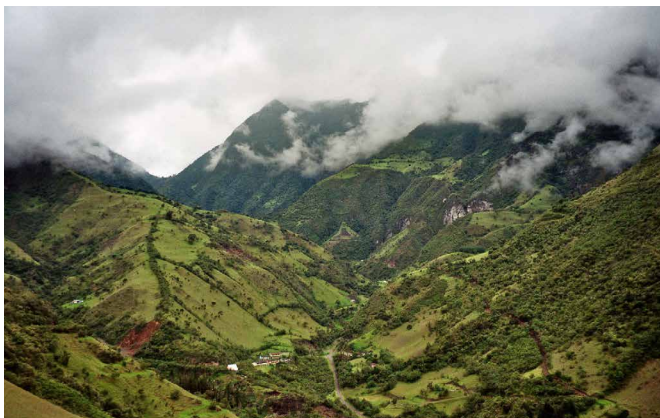
From the Andes to the Galápagos, Ecuador boasts dazzling biodiversity in an array of ecosystems. Join Pacific Horticulture Society on this 10-day journey, first setting out into the heart of the Andean cloud forest, where endemic flora provides habitat for mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies. Then, venture to the Galápagos archipelago, exploring a variety of landscapes across different islands from the comfort of your home base, a luxury tented safari camp. Experience the best of many worlds with fellow horticulture enthusiasts!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Observe giant ferns, bromeliads, mosses, and lichens in the pristine Andean cloud forests of northern Ecuador.
- Visit a private orchid garden, home to approximately 200 species of native orchids, and learn from the owners and family about their work.
- Look for some of the hundreds of bird species found in the Mindo region, including hummingbirds, tanagers, and toucans.
- Compare different vegetation zones in the Galápagos and examine the many endemic plants that have adapted to survive here.
- See the iconic Galápagos giant tortoise in its natural habitat, the densely forested highlands of Santa Cruz.
- Swim and snorkel the archipelago's turquoise waters for the chance to view sea lions, marine iguanas, sea turtles, white-tipped reef sharks, and more.

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER



OCTOBER 29 - PUEMBO

Upon arrival in Quito, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo.*

OCTOBER 30 - MINDO

This morning, depart for the forest reserves northwest of Quito. The drive takes you through Yanacocha and the Quinde Eco-route, one of the most important natural routes in the area. Arrive at Yanacocha, a moss-clad temperate forest and *Polylepis* woodland on the side of Volcán Pichincha, at an altitude of approximately 9,850 feet. Yanacocha is the last refuge of the emblematic bird of Quito, the critically endangered Black-breasted Puffleg. Andean flora, such as *Bomarea*, *Centropogon*, *Fuchsia*, *Macleania*, and *Palicourea*, is easily seen along the trails. Have lunch at the reserve before continuing through the eco-route. Visit Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve for hummingbird observation. The reserve sits over two major valleys and covers a large range of altitudes (4,750 to 7,210 feet) with several different flora and fauna habitats. Continue to your lodge for check-in, dinner, and overnight. Guided night hikes are available for those who are interested. *Overnight at Hotel Séptimo Paraíso. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 31 - MINDO

Continue exploring the beauty of the Ecuadorian cloud forest, considered one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet. The region's pristine forests are noted for flora like orchids, tree ferns, bromeliads, mosses, and lichens, as well as a great diversity of butterflies, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and more than 450 bird species. Visit a private orchid garden, home to approximately 200 species of native orchids in an area of 2,300 square feet. Learn from the owners and family about their work and life in the cloud forests of Ecuador. *Overnight at Hotel Séptimo Paraíso. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 1 - PUEMBO

Today visit El Pahuma Orchid Reserve, a private, 1,600-acre reserve home to a multitude of epiphytes (air plants), including bromeliads, orchids, mosses, and ferns. El Pahuma is also a BirdLife International Important Bird Area (IBA), as the reserve's lush montane forests are home to many rare and endemic avian species. After lunch, return to Puembo, arriving in the late afternoon with time to relax this evening before your flight tomorrow to the Galápagos Islands. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 2 - SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

This morning, head to the Quito International Airport for your flight to Santa Cruz Island in the Galápagos. Upon arrival, your bilingual naturalist guide will meet you at the airport or dock. As you make your way across the island, pass from the arid zone and through the transitional zone into the lush highlands. Your first stop is at Los Gemelos ("The Twins"), two lava tunnels that formed massive sinkholes when they collapsed. The larger of the two is 2,300 feet deep and almost 1,300 feet wide. On a short hike around the rim, your guide will point out the birds of the endemic *Scalesia* forest, such as Galápagos Doves and up to eight species of Darwin's finches. Next, visit a Galápagos giant tortoise reserve. On the many trails of the highlands, including those around your accommodations, it's possible to see wild tortoises resting in ponds and slowly traversing the land. Also watch for the endemic subspecies of the Short-eared Owl; with luck, they can be spotted in the trees dotting the landscape. Elsewhere in the highlands are elaborate, underground lava tubes, created centuries ago by the Santa Cruz volcano. The tubes formed when the lava at the surface cooled, insulating the molten lava underneath. As the lava flowed, it left these tubes in its wake. Some of the tunnels on Santa Cruz go for miles and have chambers up to 60 feet high. Local folklore says that they were used by pirates as hideouts and to store supplies. Descend into the caves for a look into the island's formation, and follow a lit path with your guide through cavernous tunnels dating back at least 1 million years. The experience can be daunting in spots where the tubes get narrow, but it's a worthwhile trek into the geological past of the island. After stopping for lunch midway during the adventure, make your way back to the camp. Enjoy a sunset cocktail on the deck and a four-course, tapas-inspired meal in the main lodge before retiring for the evening. *Overnight at Galapagos Safari Camp. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 3 - SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

After breakfast, head to the Itabaca Channel on the northern end of the island and board a boat for the 45-minute journey to North Seymour Island. Here, it may be possible to see birds like Blue-footed Boobies, Yellow Warblers, Galápagos Mockingbirds, and Magnificent Frigatebirds displaying their brilliant red throat pouches. Land iguanas also frequent the two-mile trail that circumvents the island. In the channel between North Seymour and Baltra Island is Mosquera Islet, another fun site to explore. This flat, rocky section of land plays host to a large, active sea lion colony where you can see bulls, females, and pups in different stages of growth. Back onboard the boat, have lunch while navigating toward Las Bachas Beach on the northern coast of Santa Cruz. The white sand hideaway was used by the U.S. Army during World War II (the name "Bachas" refers to two U.S. barges that were left here) and today is perfect for those who wish to stroll along the coast, snorkel, or swim. The coralline beach is a nesting ground for sea turtles at night, and you'll need to exercise caution to avoid the protected areas. After drying off and taking a final walk around the beach and nearby lagoons, board the boat and set sail back to camp, where sunset refreshments and a gourmet dinner await. *Overnight at Galapagos Safari Camp. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 4 - SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

After breakfast, head to the dock at Itabaca Channel and board a boat for a full-day excursion. Your first stop is at Punta

Carrión at the eastern mouth of the channel. The shallow waters of the sheltered cove are a fun place to snorkel with schools of fish, rays, and if you're lucky, reef sharks. Then continue about an hour and a half over open waters to South Plaza, arriving at this tiny island before lunch. Disembark and traverse an ascending trail that leads to the cliffs above. Along the way, pass golden land iguanas resting in the shade of *Opuntia* cactus. The landscape of South Plaza is vibrant, with red, yellow, and green *Sesuvium* accentuating the rocky terrain. The viewpoint overlooks a busy sea lion colony on the western corner of the island, and the view past the cliff's edge reveals different species of seabirds, surfing the wind side by side. South Plaza's other residents include land and marine iguanas, Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies, Red-billed Tropicbirds, and Swallow-tailed Gulls. After a full day, return to camp in time for refreshments at sunset before dinner. *Overnight at Galapagos Safari Camp. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 5 - SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Located in the eastern highlands of Santa Cruz, Cerro Mesa is a private reserve rich in endemic flora and bird life, with mockingbirds, Short-eared Owls, and six subspecies of finches. The area is also home to a species of Galápagos tortoise that's endemic to this island. The trip is a short drive from the camp. In the morning, you can explore the various trails at the reserve. End the circuit at a viewpoint where you can look out over the lush landscape of Santa Cruz and the nearby islands on a clear day. After lunch, make your way to Garrapatero Beach, choosing to travel either by vehicle or a gentle, eight-mile bike ride. The striking contrasts of the black lava, white sand, and turquoise water of Garrapatero Beach catch many by surprise. Nearby, dense mangroves play host to all of the Galápagos ground finches, including the Common Cactus-Finch, which feeds off the *Opuntia* cacti that dot the trail on the 15-minute hike to the area. As the beach comes into sight, watch out for the Manzanillo trees along the path. The small apples on their branches are inviting but poisonous, and even the sap touching your skin can cause burns and rashes. Other creatures above and below the waterline include marine iguanas, sea lions, Blue-footed Boobies, rays, and sea turtles. Through the mangroves skirting the sand is a freshwater lagoon where you can often spot flamingos, White-cheeked Pintails, and Black-necked Stilts in the morning or late afternoon. Just past the tide pools on the beach, clear waters offer a secluded spot for swimming. Kayaking off the beach's shores in search of sea turtles can be arranged; this is a great way to actively explore the bay. On your way back to the camp, visit El Trapiche Ecológico, a working farm in the highlands that produces coffee and sugar cane liqueur. Learn about the different methods used to refine sugar cane, including the use of a mule-driven press. There is also a demonstration showing how artisan coffee is produced, from picking the berries to roasting the beans. As the day winds down, head back to the camp for a relaxing drink or dip in the pool before an inviting dinner and some independent stargazing if the night is clear. *Overnight at Galapagos Safari Camp. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 6 - PUEMBO

This morning is at leisure to relax, take a walk, or enjoy the sunrise from the camp's observatory before you depart to the airport for your flight back to Quito. Upon arrival, after collecting your luggage, you will be met and transferred to

Rincón de Puembo for an early farewell dinner. For those departing this evening, you will be taken to the Quito International Airport for your flight(s) home. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BD)*

NOVEMBER 7 - DEPART

This morning, you will be transferred to the Quito International Airport for your flight(s) home. *(B)*



LAND COST

\$6,580 per person

Pricing is based on 8 participants and includes all accommodations, activities, and meals as mentioned in itinerary, internal flights, in-country vehicle transportation, Galápagos National Park fee, local guides in each region for duration of the program, all gratuities, bottled water on the bus, and departure tax.

Does not include international airfare or items of personal nature. Holbrook can assist with flight arrangements if desired.

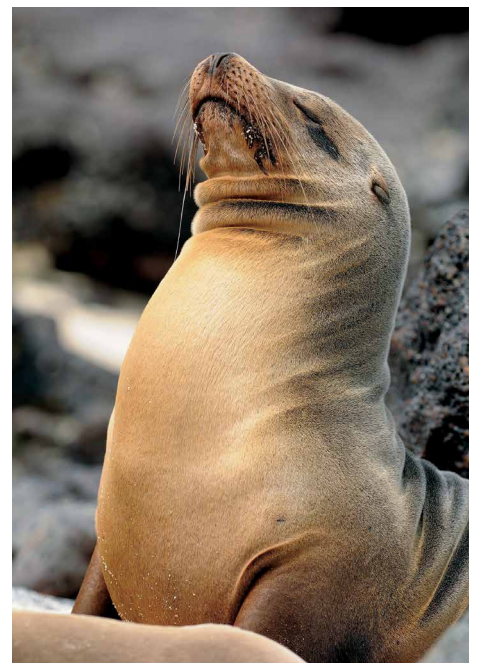
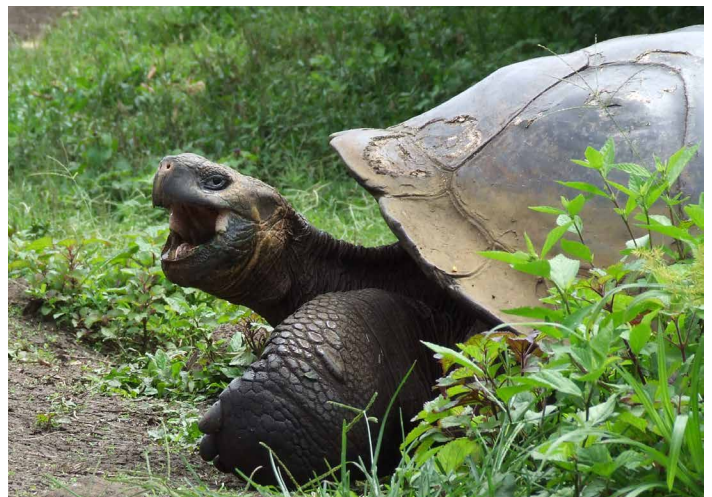
TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip, add \$995 per person. A \$500 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to reserve your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable minus a \$300 cancellation fee until July 26, 2021, at which time non-refundable final payment is due.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL

Visit holbrook.travel/phs-gps21 or contact Sandy Schmidt at schmidt@holbrooktravel.com or 877-907-5360.

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