

# Galapagos Islands with Amazon Extension - August 19 to September 1, 2012

This is trip #3 of the three trips planned with Globus in 2012. There are still spaces available but limited. Hence, please let us know if you are interested.

This is considered to be a particularly exotic trip as we will be spending 4-day in Ecuador part of the Amazon jungle before spending 2 days in Quito, Capital of Ecuador, and the rest in the Galapagos Islands, where Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution starting in 1831. We will be on Santa Cruz, capacity of 88, for 4 days and nights and the rest of the Islands trip will be on land. As a result, we may need to prepare ourselves for seasickness, but not be taken as a deterrent for taking the trip. From U.S., we will be flying to Quito and returning from Guayaquil, also in Ecuador. As a result, the international portion of travel can be complicated as there is no same U.S. airline serving both cities.

A trip itinerary is included below but please go online to find other information. <http://avalonwaterways.com/Product.aspx?trip=2WBGQ>. For this trip, you will need a yellow fever shot certificate.

In Santa Cruz, we are given **17 standard main deck cabins (no additional cost), 3 standard boat deck cabins (\$196 additional per person), and 2 superior boat deck cabins (\$480 additional per person)**. Please go to the website for deck info: <http://avalonwaterways.com/product.aspx?trip=2WBGQ&content=ship&ship=santacruz>.

**Trip Date:** We will be leaving U.S. on August 19, 2012 and returning and arriving on September 1, 2012.

**Trip Cost:** The net trip cost per person (including land and all international and intra tour airs) is about \$5,300, after all the discounts (my commissions). The optional travel protection plus plan is \$329 per person (highly recommended). Since we will be flying to and out from two cities, I am inclined to have Globus handled our international air for the entire group as some will not begin and end trip from the NYC area.

**Please let me know as soon as you can of your trip plan. If the answer is yes, please let me know of the following: (1) your preference on cabins, and (2) purchase of the Globus Plus plan, which is highly recommended going to this region.**

## Cruise Overview

This exciting vacation lets you sample the natural wonders of Ecuador, including the Galápagos Islands and the Amazon Jungle. From Quito, fly to Coca and travel by canoe to your Amazon lodge for a 3-night stay that includes a rainforest canopy walk, a guided night tour, a cruise through the flooded forest, and a visit of Kapok Tree Tower. Return to Quito for guided sightseeing and to have your photo taken at the "Center of the World." Next, fly over the Pacific to Baltra and transfer to Santa Cruz Island for two nights at the Finch Bay Hotel, where an expert Naturalist introduces you to indigenous plant and animal species found only in the Galápagos. Choose from a menu of à la carte activities to make this experience special to you. Then, embark on an exciting 4-day cruise among various Galápagos Islands. Have your camera ready as your Naturalist points out colonies of sea lions, pelicans, boobies, several species of Darwin's finches,

marine iguanas, flamingos, masked boobies, blue-footed boobies, frigatebirds, and other birds. Also visit the Charles Darwin Research Station—a remarkable adventure!



## Day-by-Day Itinerary

### Day 1 **Arrive in Quito, Ecuador**

Welcome to Quito, the capital of Ecuador and a [UNESCO](#) World Cultural Heritage Site.

### Day 2 **Quito–Coca**

Fly from Quito to Coca and travel by CANOE to your Amazon lodge. The Ecuadorian Amazon is the world's largest remaining tropical rainforest, where more life hums, buzzes, chatters, and bubbles than anywhere else on the planet. One Amazonian tree can host more ant species than all of the British Isles put together, one hectare of forest boasts almost as many frog species as all of North America, and the great expanse of jungle contains more than 20% of the earth's vascular plant species. Here you can find a monkey small enough to sit on your fingertip, an 8-pound toad, a spider that eats birds, and the world's largest snake—the 30-foot-long anaconda. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

### Day 3 Amazon

Today, begin on the suspended CANOPY WALK, boasting views of the rainforest canopy, where your Naturalist will point out many different species of vibrantly colored birds. Continue through the jungle below and learn of the medicinal plants and immense biodiversity that have been used by the native cultures for hundreds of years. After a picnic lunch in the primary forest, return to the lodge by canoe. Tonight, accompany your Local Guide on a night WALK or CANOE ride to discover creatures rarely seen during the day—you may even spot a caiman or two! (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

### Day 4 Amazon

This morning you may opt to visit a parrot clay lick, a site where parrots and parakeets by the thousands can usually be seen. Later, depart on a Napo River CRUISE through the flooded forest in search of the varied wildlife. Here you will have a good chance of seeing troops of squirrel, capuchin, and howler monkeys—and maybe even the incredibly well-camouflaged 3-toed sloth. After time spent fishing for piranhas, arrive at the KAPOK TREE TOWER, perched 135 feet high. Get close-up views of birds as the sun sets on volcano Mount Sumaco and the Andes. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

### Day 5 Coca–Quito

Return to Coca, where you will board your flight to Quito and join Day 1 of your Ecuador and Galápagos trip. (Breakfast)

### Day 6 Quito

An included sightseeing tour showcases Quito's treasures: the historic stone murals of the LEGISLATIVE PALACE, Independence Plaza and the 16th-century SAN FRANCISCO MONASTERY, the Jesuit's LA COMPANIA CHURCH with its stunning golden altars, and the impressive paintings at the WORKSHOP & MUSEUM of Oswaldo Guayasamin. Have your photo taken in front of the EQUATORIAL MONUMENT, the "Center of the World." This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner. (Breakfast, Dinner)

### Day 7 Quito–Baltra–Galápagos Islands–Finch Bay Hotel

Take a morning flight to Baltra, one of the remote Galápagos Islands. Upon arrival, transfer to the highlands of Santa Cruz, where your Naturalist introduces the island's lush and vibrant landscapes. Visit the Giant Tortoises RESERVE for a chance to see the famous Galápagos tortoises in their wild habitat. Next, see the Twin Pit Craters, great depressions of volcanic material formed by a long process of slow sinking of the ground, where exceptional Scalesia trees, ferns, mosses, and orchids can be seen in the surroundings. Later this afternoon, visit the CHARLES DARWIN RESEARCH STATION, established to help conserve the Islands' natural habitat and protect the famous giant tortoises. While here, see famous "Lonesome George" and learn about the tortoise rearing program. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner) **SPECIAL FEATURE:** *Named*

*after the famous Darwin's finches abundant in the surroundings, the Finch Bay Hotel offers a private seaside location surrounded by mangroves. Amenities include a bar, lounge, restaurant, outdoor pool and Jacuzzi, and beachfront access. Guests can enjoy daily boat excursions to various Galápagos Islands, kayaking, snorkeling, bicycle rides in town, and viewing the local flora and fauna.*

#### Day 8 Galápagos. Finch Bay Hotel

Outings today include a list of activities that allow you to have a "Galápagos à la carte" adventure. Perhaps take a hike over the lava rock formations past gigantic cacti to Las Grietas, a unique swimming hole created by lava flows. Or choose a walk to Tortuga Bay, a 6-mile-long coralline beach; mountain bike up in the highlands; or swim, snorkel or kayak right off the beach at the hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

#### Day 9 Galápagos Islands (Embarkation) Cruising: Santa Cruz Island

Today, board the sleek Santa Cruz for five days of CRUISING among various Galápagos Islands. Each day, travel ashore to the remote islands with your expert Naturalist, who introduces you to the unique fauna living free and fearless of man. Visit LAS BACHAS on Santa Cruz Island, where abandoned WWII military barges can be found. Today, it is an important nesting area for the East Pacific Green Sea Turtle. You will also see brackish lagoons just steps away from the sea and white sand beach, which is a feeding ground for various wading birds, from stilts to flamingos. Return to the ship for a briefing on the next day's adventure, followed by a Captain's welcome cocktail and dinner. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

#### Day 10 Cruising Galápagos Islands: James Island

After breakfast, join your Naturalist for a short panga ride to ESPUMILLA BEACH, a coffee-colored sand beach on James Island. In the nearby mangrove forest, watch where you step, as this is common nesting area for sea turtles. Also keep an eye out for Galápagos finches, marine iguanas, and sea lions, as well as flamingos and pintail ducks in the nearby lagoons. This afternoon, land at PUERTO EGAS on James Island, known for its black sand beach and a landscape of tuff-stone layers and lava flows. This is a great opportunity to see land and marine birds as well as a colony of fur sea lions, marine iguanas, and Sally Lightfoot crabs. You have the chance to snorkel or swim from the beach, or ride on the glass-bottom boat. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

#### Day 11 Cruising Galápagos Islands: Rábida & Bartolomé Islands

Disembark at RÁBIDA ISLAND on a red-colored beach, formed from the unusually high content of iron in the volcanic material. Stroll along the beach of this small island as your Naturalist points out large colonies of sea lions, pelicans, boobies, yellow warblers, and several species of Darwin's finches. Very close to the beach, hidden behind a strip of green saltbush, is a salt pond where, at times, greater flamingos migrate. This is a wonderful place to snorkel from the beach, due to the unique combination of underwater species like the Galápagos dolphin and submarine landscapes. After lunch, en route to our next island, dolphins are often spotted. At BARTOLOMÉ ISLAND, hike to the summit for a stunning view of two beautiful bays and fascinating formations of lava flows and spatter cones, including the iconic Pinnacle Rock. You will also have the chance to snorkel and possibly see Galápagos penguins in tropical waters and even some sharks and rays! (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

#### Day 12 Cruising Galápagos Islands: Tower Island

Upon arrival at TOWER ISLAND, your visit to Prince Philip's Steps begins with a scenic panga ride along the cliffs to see the large number of nesting colonies of Nazca Boobies, red-footed boobies,

and shore and seabirds in the cliffs' ledges. Disembark at the base of Prince Philip's Steps and climb up the stairs to a trail where birdlife abounds. A walk with your Naturalist reveals large colonies of masked boobies, blue-footed boobies, frigatebirds, storm petrels, and even short-eared owls. In the afternoon, disembark at DARWIN BAY to observe thousands of birds—mainly frigatebirds, red-footed and masked boobies, gulls, herons, finches, and mockingbirds. Return to the beach for swimming and snorkelling at this beautiful natural harbor. The more adventurous can snorkel below the cliffs. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

### Day 13 Galápagos Islands (Disembarkation) San Cristobal–Guayaquil

After breakfast, depart for Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on SAN CRISTOBAL, where Charles Darwin first set foot in the Galápagos back in 1835. This island is home to seabirds like blue-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, herons, frigatebirds, and various shore birds. Also watch for the Chatham (San Cristobal) Mockingbird and Chatham Lava Lizard—both species are endemic to this island and seen nowhere else in the Galápagos. Head to the airport for your flight to Guayaquil, where you will have free time this evening to prepare for your return flight home tomorrow. (Breakfast)

### Day 14 Guayaquil

Your vacation ends with breakfast this morning. (Breakfast)