

# English Heritage competition

## Ecuador and Galapagos (La Pinta Cruise)

**10 days**

Quito (4 nights), Galapagos Islands Cruising (3 nights) and Guayaquil (2 nights)

### FRIDAY

Departure from London Heathrow (not direct) to Quito. On arrival in the afternoon, you will be met and transferred to the Patio Andaluz hotel.

The **Hotel Patio Andaluz** is a national treasure and is situated in the heart of the Old Historic center of Quito, and surrounded by churches, museums, and national monuments. Enjoy the enchantment and comfort that the beautifully elegant Boutique Hotel offers. The hotel boasts 30 suites, Rincón de Cantuña Restaurant and Cava-bar Marquez de Jerez.

*Overnight for 4 nights.*

### SATURDAY

A visit to the Equatorial Monument, 25 Kms. (16 miles) North of Quito, which marks the exact Middle of the World, latitude 0°, where you can stand with a foot on each hemisphere. Visit the Ethnographic Museum inside the monument, which shows the different Native American groups living in Ecuador. Visit downtown Quito for lunch and enjoy an afternoon in the Colonial quarter. (B/L)

### SUNDAY

Visit Otavalo, which is considered one of the most important destinations in Ecuador, primarily for its ancestral and cultural Heritage. It is enriched by millinery traditions, myths, legends and customs together with Andean landscapes of outstanding beauty: mountains, lakes, Waterfalls and Rivers. For lunch, guests will have the opportunity to visit a Colonial Hacienda to taste the best of the Andean delicacies. After lunch return to Quito and visit a rose farm export plantation, where you will get to understand the productions process of the best roses of the world; The Ecuadorian Premium Roses. (B/L)

### MONDAY

The Valley of Mindo is within the protected Mindo-Nambillo forest, located a short two-hour drive to the northwest of Quito. The 48,000-acre Forest stretches over the slopes of Pichincha Volcano and covers diverse ecosystems ranging from the cloud-high, treeless Plateau through subtropical forest to tropical jungle. A first short stop is made at the rim of the extinct Pululahua Volcano, before descending into the Valley of Mindo. Specially trained guides introduce visitors to the mysteries of the Cloud Forest, pointing out the unique flora and fauna. Bird Life International has designated Mindo as an IBA (Important Bird Area), the first such site in South America. Then visit the Butterfly Vivarium, housing 25 varieties of butterflies. Hundreds of caterpillars feed on their host plants in their natural environment to assure the best development of pupae and butterflies. Lunch is served at a restaurant of the area. (B/L)

## TUESDAY

An Escorted transfer from hotel to airport will be provided.

### Baltra Island

Morning arrival to Baltra Island by TAME flight and immediate transfer to the dock to board Yacht LA PINTA. Welcome introductory briefing, and lunch.

### The Galapagos Islands

The Galápagos Islands have been named after the giant Galápagos tortoises. The archipelago, 1000 Km. (600 miles) off Ecuador's Pacific Coast originated from undersea volcanic activity, six million years ago. The archipelago's 13 major islands, 6 smaller ones, and scores of islets are all part of Ecuador's National Park system. In 1835, the English naturalist Charles Darwin visited the islands and discovered this "living laboratory" which inspired his writings on the Theory of Evolution. Many of the animals on the Galápagos Islands have developed into different species from their continental relatives, and because they have never experienced man as a predator, they show no fear of humans. This wondrous group of islands is yours for unhurried exploration. Follow the nature trails; enjoy the amazing sights, wade and even dive among the animals of land and sea. Guests are taken to shore in small groups by a multilingual naturalist guide, who will explain the fascinating geology and history of an eco-world that takes you back millions of years. There is ample opportunity to walk, swim, snorkel, photograph, and observe the abundant variety of wildlife on each island. You can swim with sea lions, walk among black marine iguanas basking in the sun and observe the elaborate mating rituals of boobies, albatrosses, or male frigate birds displaying their red pouches.

Yacht: M.Y. LA PINTA: The 63-meter (207-foot) yacht accommodates 32 guests. La Pinta's ample staterooms provide Galapagos explorers with unparalleled comfort and its 24 cabins are located mid-ship. Bathrooms have all the amenities, hair dryer and plenty of plush towels. Ecuador has one of the tastiest cuisines in South America, with a great variety of fruits and vegetables, where the country's biodiversity is reflected. Along with the traditional international cuisine, and some Ecuadorian delicacies, the creative chef offers healthy, light and delicious meals. A choice of wines is available for dinner. All meals are free seating with no dress code.

### **Expedition features**

- Stargazing programs and equipment
- Communication between naturalists and guests via wireless receiver and earphone
- Snorkeling equipment: masks, snorkels, flotation vests.
- Shortie wet suits (used between June and December)
- Glass-bottom boat
- Sea Kayaks
- Natural history lectures & briefings

Puerto Ayora and the Charles Darwin Research Station Afternoon visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station and the giant tortoise pens, an impressive giant prickly-pear cactus forest and many land birds. Then a stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora before embarking on Yacht LA PINTA. Next day's expedition plan and dinner.

## WEDNESDAY

### Sullivan Bay (James Island)

Sullivan Bay is on the east coast of Santiago just across Bartolome Island. We land on a white coral sand beach and begin our walk over lava that flowed less than 100 years ago. This is the perfect place to see and feel the volcanic origin of Galapagos. This site is most interesting for the geography of the lava flows, the intricate squiggles, cracks, and designs of the liquid lava as it solidified. After 110 years, life is starting to return to the flows, with occasional tufts of grass and cactus growing in the cracks. Optional panga ride, Glass-bottom boat or snorkeling is possible. Lunch on board.

### Puerto Egas (James Island)

Wet landing for a mid-length walk. Most of the landscape is tuff-stone layers and lava flows. This is a great opportunity to see land and marine birds. At low tide, marine iguanas graze upon the algae beds and there is a colony of Galápagos fur seals. Opportunity for snorkeling and swimming from the beach.

Next day's expedition plan and dinner.

## THURSDAY

### Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (San Cristóbal (Chatham) Island)

Disembark at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. This small attractive port is the provincial capital of the Galápagos Islands (population 4,000), along a crescent-shaped bay. Visit the San Cristóbal Interpretation Center, where visitors can obtain information that will help them understand more the natural history of the Galápagos, with a great emphasis on human history and conservation. Later this morning, visit the breeding center for tortoises (La Galapaguera) at Cerro Colorado, including a 45-minute bus ride. The rewarding fauna of this island may not only be the giant tortoises, since many island-specific endemics are found here. It includes mockingbirds, lava lizards, and the vermilion flycatchers. Return to Yacht LA PINTA for lunch.

### Cerro Brujo (San Cristobal Island)

Afternoon dinghy ride along the shores of tuff-stone layers bring you to Cerro Brujo for a wet landing at a white coralline beach, home to seabirds like blue-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, herons, frigate birds, and some shore birds. Also, look for Galapagos sea lions. Highlights ashore include the Chatham (San Cristobal) Mockingbird, Chatham Lava Lizard; both species are endemic to this island and are seen nowhere else in the Galapagos. You may also spot Yellow Warblers or Galapagos flycatchers. These are the same shores that Charles Darwin walked upon, back in September 1835, as San Cristobal was the first island where he set foot in the Galapagos. Farewell cocktail and departure briefing.

## Friday

### Baltra Island

After breakfast, departure to the port and airport to take the flight back to the continent.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Itineraries and program are subject to change without previous notice due mainly to readjustment of the National Park policies and regulations, weather conditions, seasonal changes or safety reasons.

**Dry landing:** passengers step from the dinghy onto rocks or a dock.

**Wet landing:** as the dinghy edges onto a sandy beach, passengers step into knee-deep water and wade ashore.

## **FRIDAY**

Disembark at Baltra and transfer to the airport in time for the return flight to Guayaquil and two nights at the **Hotel Oro Verde**. (B/L)

Located in the downtown commercial and banking heart of the city, at only eight minutes from the International Airport, the **Hotel Oro Verde** offers 230 luxury rooms, three restaurants, bar, delicatessen, room service, a luxurious Club Floor, swimming pool, fitness and business center, casino and shops.

## **SATURDAY**

Guayaquil is a tropical city, with temperatures ranging between 21°C and 30°C (70° to 90° F) all year. Here the vibe is Caribbean, in marked contrast to Ecuador's Andean region. Guayaquil, in the last years it has become a very appealing tourist destination, and is very close to many beaches.

The visit includes the main attractions of the Port of Guayaquil, starting with the Centennial Plaza that honors the heroes of Guayaquil's independence, A short stroll takes you to the famous Moorish Clock Tower and Bolívar Park, with an equestrian statue of South America's liberator, Simón Bolívar. The latter is also called "the park of the iguanas", as here they roam undisturbed and perch on the treetops, blending perfectly with the green leaves. Beside the park is the neo-gothic Metropolitan Cathedral. Then drive to the southern end of Guayaquil's ravishing Malecon 2000 to see the Crystal Palace, the Integration Square and the Plaza of the Flags and Plaza Olmedo, (B/L)

## **SUNDAY**

A transfer to the airport will be offer on time to take international flight back home. The baggage handling of two suitcases per person is included.

## **MONDAY**

Arrive back at London Heathrow.

### **PROGRAMME INCLUDES:**

- **Accommodations**
- **Island sightseeing**
- **Naturalists guide and lecture services in English/Spanish**
- **Transfers in Quito, Guayaquil and Galápagos as per description**
- **Air ticket Quito-Baltra-Guayaquil**
- **International flights LHR-UIO-LHR (economic class)**

### **NOT INCLUDED:**

- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Galápagos National Park entrance fee \$100.00
- INGALA Migration Control Card \$10.00
- Bar, gifts, gratuities an personal items
- Airport exit tax in Guayaquil \$27.75

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