



## **A Taste of Ecuador - Andes, Amazon, and Galapagos 3-Week Program**

**Starting mid-February 2025**

We are excited to offer a fun YFU experience to staff, volunteers and/or alumni that would like to discover Ecuador in two weeks.

Our idea is for you to taste a bit of what your students do on the different trips they have during their exchange in Ecuador. We will start in Quito, with a short visit to the YFU-Ecuador office, followed by a city tour of Quito and of course a visit to the Equator.

We have planned a three day visit to the northern section of Ecuador where you will learn about the various traditions of our natives, as well as meet with the YFU students placed in the region.

Moving on to the southern regions of Ecuador to discover two of our highest mountain peaks: Cotopaxi and Chimborazo and last, but not least, a taste of the Amazon. Starting with the famous town of Baños and moving on to discover the communities, handicrafts and wildlife of the Amazon region.

Of course, if you want to extend your stay, you are always welcome to stay and visit the amazing Galapagos Islands.

So, don't miss out on this opportunity to taste a bit of Ecuador, our culture, our landscapes, wildlife, traditions, handicrafts and of course our wonderful food. What better way to help you recruit students to this little part of the world, than to live the experience yourself.

An adventure of a lifetime, all in two weeks!

### **Itinerary:**

#### **Day 1: Arrival to Quito**

Please, book a flight to Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito. Our staff will be waiting for you at the airport. Transfer to hotel or to host family depending on what you choose. The Hotel Casa Aliso is located in the traditional artistic neighborhood of "La Floresta" where you will find several small cafeterias, as well as a variety of restaurants. Of course, we will give you insider tips of the best places to go!

DRIVING: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: none

HOTEL: Casa Aliso or host family



### **Day 2: Quito City Tour and Middle of the World**

Welcome breakfast at the YFU Ecuador National Office. Afterwards, city tour through the old part of Quito, also known as "the Monastery of America" and UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Visit to the towers of the largest church in Quito called "La Basílica" and then walk through the streets of the old downtown to the golden church "La Compañía", the square of "San Francisco", the main square and much more. Lunch at a traditional restaurant with typical food of the city. In the afternoon, Intiñan Museum located at the equator where you will have the chance to step with one foot on the northern hemisphere and the other on the southern hemisphere.

DRIVING: 2hour

WALKING: 4 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch

HOTEL: Casa Aliso or host family

### **Day 3: Andean Cosmo vision and Traditions**

Depart from Quito to take the Pan-American Highway to the northern Andes. First stop will be at the Cultural Center "Luna Sol", where you will learn about the Andean Cosmo-vision and Spirituality of the natives from the Middle of the World. This Workshop will allow you to understand the indigenous beliefs and how they see the Universe. You will learn how to connect with the energies of "Pachamama" (Mother Nature) through simple breathing and concentration techniques. You will then enjoy a traditional lunch from this part of the Andes.

In the afternoon, visit to two native families in a small artisan village called Peguche to see how some of Ecuador's handicrafts and musical instruments are made. Afterwards, drive to the Imbabura Volcano where you will stay the night in a center run by indigenous families in the village of San Clemente. Each room is an independent small house with a private bathroom. In the evening, we will enjoy live music from the Andes played by local musicians.

WALKING: 2 hours

DRIVING: 3 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch, dinner

HOTEL: Indigenous Village San Clemente



#### **Day 4: Cuicocha lake and meeting with YFU inbound students**

Another exciting day in which you will spend the morning doing some of the daily activities of the indigenous people, such as feeding domestic animals (lamas). You will also learn about important festivities, farming tasks and community activities of the indigenous people and how these are deeply connected with the seasons and cycles of nature.

After a delicious lunch we will leave the peaceful village of San Clemente and visit one of the most impressive, active volcanoes in Ecuador: the Cuicocha crater-lake. After a short hike around the crater, you will meet the YFU students placed in this region while enjoying our delicious “humitas and quimbolitos”. These are a traditional tamale type dish from the Ecuadorian Andes. Overnight at the village of San Clemente.

WALKING: 4 hours

DRIVING: 2 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch, dinner

HOTEL: Indigenous Village of San Clemente

#### **Day 5: Otavalo handicraft market and Condor Park**

As we start moving to the south, first visit will be to the famous handicraft market of Otavalo, considered the largest handicraft market in South America. Then we will stop at Parque Condor, which is an important project that helps rescue birds from illegal hunting. If there is no rain, this private reserve offers a flying show of various species of native birds. You will also learn about the efforts that are being done to protect them.

In the afternoon, drive to the next hotel near the amazing Cotopaxi Volcano. This is the only place to stay overnight inside the National Park Cotopaxi, which means we will enjoy an amazing view of this active volcano. The German scientist Alexander von Humboldt wrote in his diary on 1802: *“Cotopaxi is the most beautiful mountain in the world with a perfect pyramid shape”*. The hotel is a private mountain refuge with large rooms, each with multiple beds and shared bathroom. If you wish, you may also book with an upgrade to include private room and private bathroom.

WALKING: 3 hours

DRIVING: 4 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, dinner

HOTEL: Tambopaxi Lodge



### **Day 6: Cotopaxi National Park**

Start the day with a unique opportunity of seeing a volcano in eruption! Although the Cotopaxi is active again, it remains calm enough to have the national park open for visitors.

Visit to the Limpiopungo Lake located at 3900 meters high where you will see some wildlife animals such as birds, wild horses and more. If the weather conditions are optimal, participants that feel well acclimatized to the altitude can drive up to 4500 m where you can then leisurely climb the last 300 meters to the refuge on foot. A magnificent view of the surrounding peaks awaits you! After a break at the Refugio José Ribas, we descend together to the parking place and continue through the enchanting landscape of Cotopaxi National Park.

The afternoon is free to enjoy the surrounding of the hotel, relax or if you want, book a horse riding tour.

WALKING: 4 hours

DRIVING: 1 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, dinner

HOTEL: Tambopaxi Lodge

### **Day 7: Chimborazo Volcano**

Another very special day: Chimborazo volcano, the highest mountain in Ecuador! Drive up to 4800 meters and observe many Vicuñas and Alpacas along the way.

If the weather conditions are good and the group feels up to it, we can walk up to 5000 meters! The path is just one kilometer long but, of course, we will go slowly because of the altitude.

Afterwards, visit to a community that has almost 80 Alpacas. After a lunch break to recover from the hike, we will have the chance to see these lovely animals from the Andes and buy handicrafts made by local women from the alpaca wool.

Drive to Riobamba city to stay overnight.

WALKING: 2 hours

DRIVING: 4 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch

HOTEL: Mansión Santa Isabel



### **Day 8: Baños, entrance to the jungle**

We leave the Andes and drive to the city of Baños, famous because of its hot springs and located near the active Tungurahua volcano. First, visit the most iconic waterfall in Ecuador: “Pailón del Diablo”. On this short hike you will be able to appreciate the different nature compared to the high mountains: green and greener around us! In the afternoon visit to the view point: “La Casa del Árbol” where you will enjoy breathtaking views.

The rest of the afternoon is free to enjoy the city of Baños: you may just want to walk around or maybe go to the hot springs. Baños is also famous for its night life so after dinner we will have the chance to enjoy it.

WALKING: 3 hours

DRIVING: 2 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, dinner

HOTEL: La Isla

### **Day 9: Community of Indigenous Women**

Welcome to the jungle! In the morning drive to the community of “Sinchiwarmi”, which, in the local language means “brave women”?

After a delicious typical lunch, we will learn how to make bracelets and then take a walk through a cocoa tree farm to learn how to process the cocoa beans and make your own chocolate.

In the afternoon, drive to Liana Lodge, a great facility in the middle of the private reserve "Selva Viva". Monkeys are at home here and you can observe them well in the afternoon. Liana Lodge is an ecolodge near the Arajuno River. All rooms are bungalows made with local materials. Every room has a private bathroom. There is electricity in the reception and restaurant area but not in the bedrooms.

DRIVING: 4 hours

WALKING: 2 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch, dinner

HOTEL: liana Lodge



### **Day 10: Jungle excursion**

The day will start with a short canoe ride to the “AmazOOnico Animal Rescue Center”, one of the most important places in the region for wildlife conservation. A volunteer will explain the efforts that are being done to protect wildlife and we will have the chance to see some animals of the jungle.

Afterwards, visit to a community where you can taste a traditional drink called “chicha”. Learn about the use of blowguns and visit a lake full of caimans. Lunch at the lodge, followed by “siesta” time.

The afternoon will be a fun and unique experience as we build a raft out of balsa wood and travel on the Arajuno River back to the lodge!

After dinner, short night walk in search of insects and frogs.

WALKING: 3 hours  
CANOE: 1 hour  
BALSA RAFT: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
HOTEL: Liana Lodge

### **Day 11: Caves exploration**

On the drive back towards the Andes region, stop visit the Jumandy Caves which are the second largest caves in Ecuador. Equipped with rubber boots and a good dose of courage, we will wade through underground water gullies in total darkness. Admire the stalagmites and stalactites up close and take a bath in underground waterfalls.

Lunch on the way and drive back to Quito.

WALKING: 2 hours  
DRIVING: 5 hours

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch.  
HOTEL: Casa Aliso



### **Day 12: Free day in Quito**

A full day free to explore other sites, do some shopping or just relax. Some ideas for half day activities in Quito: ride the cable car and enjoy a fantastic view of Ecuador's capital at 4000 meters high, visit the botanical garden of the city or explore the famous art museum "Casa Guayasamin".

Another alternative would be just to take a walk in the residential neighborhood where the hotel is located and enjoy a coffee in one the traditional shops.

In the evening we will meet for a good bye dinner in a restaurant near the hotel.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, dinner.

HOTEL: Casa Aliso

### **Day 13: Transfer to the airport for international flight or Galapagos extension**

It is time to say good bye to Ecuador. We will organize a transfer to the airport according to the schedule of your international flight.

OR

Visit the wonderful Galapagos Islands on a 5 days extension.

DRIVING: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast



## 5 days Galapagos Extension

Visit numerous places inside the Galapagos National Park and overnight in 2 different Islands. The best snorkeling spots of the Galapagos are included on this trip, as well as impressive short hikes. On this tour you will swim with sea turtles, sea lions and reef sharks and see giant tortoises, marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies and other endemic species of the Galapagos.

### **Day 1: Flight to Galapagos and first snorkeling with sea lions**

Transfer to the airport of Quito, where you will be assisted to pass the Galapagos Biocontrol and Transit Card formalities. Flight to San Cristobal airport. Galapagos is considered “the most amazing place on Earth” according to the English magazine Wanderlust. We have carefully chosen the best excursion for you to enjoy these fantastic Islands.

After arriving to San Cristóbal Island, check into the hotel and immediately leave to explore the waterfront by foot, where you will see the first sea lions. We will enjoy the view from the “Tijeretas” hill and snorkel for the first time in the same bay where Charles Darwin arrived in 1835. Then continue to Carola beach, a white sandy beach with many sea lions and marine iguanas.

FLYING: 4 hours  
WALKING: 2 hours  
SNORKELING: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch  
HOTEL: Katarma

### **Day 2: Snorkeling excursion to Kicker Rock**

In the morning we will head out to the sea: Will start with a drive to the famous Kicker Rock, which is a small islet where many species of native birds breed every year. After this wonderful panoramic drive, time to snorkel and explore the amazing underwater world. Depending on the current of the sea we may be able to see ray, turtles, sea lions and even sharks!

Lunch will be served on the boat on the way to a nearby beach where you will have time to swim and discover some of the animals before returning to the port in the early afternoon.

Free afternoon to enjoy the island of San Cristobal and its beautiful sunsets.

BOAT DRIVING: 2 hours  
WALKING: 1 hour





SNORKELING: 1 hour  
MEALS INCLUDED: breakfast, lunch  
HOTEL: Katarma

### **Day 3: Galapagos Giant Tortoises**

Take a speedboat to the island of Santa Cruz. After our check-in at the hotel in Puerto Ayora, we will visit the Charles Darwin Station where you will learn about some of the tasks of the national park as well as to get an overall view of the rich fauna. Giant turtles from many islands of the archipelago live in several enclosures. Here you will also learn to distinguish the different shapes of the shells, as well as the importance of breeding the turtles in the research station to ensure their survival.

After a lunch break in Puerto Ayora, we will visit the highlands of the Santa Cruz Island. Here you will visit the Twin Crater formations and walk inside a vast natural Lava Tunnel. Afterwards, search for Giant turtles in the wilderness! One of the best moments you will experience on the Galapagos Islands will be to see these giant reptiles eating, walking slowly or just lying on the grass.

BOAT DRIVING: 2 hours  
WALKING: 3 hours  
Driving: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch  
HOTEL: Deja Vu

### **Day 4: Boat excursion to non-inhabited island**

Shared yacht excursion to one of the non-inhabited islands: Seymour, Plazas or Bartolome. We will be picked up at the hotel and cross the Island by bus. At the Itabaca channel, our naturalist guide and the crew of the yacht will be waiting for us.

Enjoy iconic fauna and fantastic landscapes of one of those islands. Of course, snorkeling is on the program as well! And also enjoy a delicious lunch on board.

NOTE: This tour depends on the regulation of the Galapagos National Park for non-inhabited islands. We will let you know which island we are visiting as soon as we have confirmation.

BOAT DRIVING: 3 hours  
WALKING: 2 hours  
Snorkeling: 1 hour

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch  
HOTEL: Deja vu



### **Day 5: Flight back to Guayaquil or Quito and international flight connection**

Unfortunately, it is time to say good bye to this natural paradise. We drive to the channel of Itabaca and take a short boat ride to Baltra Island where the other airport of Galapagos is located. From here we fly back to Quito or Guayaquil, depending on your international flight.

For your international flight connection take into consideration that arrival time in Guayaquil from the Galapagos is approximately at 16:00 and in Quito at 18:00. If you need an extra night in Quito or Guayaquil please let us know, and we will be happy to help you.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast