

Cotopaxi volcano, Ecuador

Tailored Departures

The world is your oyster! This is a package that can be 100% customized according to your trip length, budget and itinerary inclusions.

10 nights

Please contact us for the latest pricing.
We'll match you with your best option!

✔ What's Included:

- Round-trip airfare
- Round-trip airport transfers
- 10 nights accommodation in a double room
- 10 breakfasts, eight lunches 10 dinners
- All transportation and sightseeing as per the itinerary
- English-speaking tour guide
- Free chaperones based on single supplement (may be modified to required ratio)

ECUADOR AND GALAPAGOS

Educational Group Tour

Join us on this educational tour through Ecuador and over to the Galapagos Islands!

Over 10 nights, we will learn about and meander through Ecuador's cultural and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, religious monuments and intricate architecture. We'll explore national parks, natural attractions, meet giant tortoises, bathe in hot springs, wander past waterfalls, hike volcanos and snorkel in clear waters on the Galapagos Islands!

The most adventurous and active educational tour in which you can participate!

Educational Group Experts

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Your Itinerary

DAY 1 | ARRIVE IN QUITO

Arrival to the Quito International Airport. Transfer in a private vehicle to the hotel with a tour guide.

Dinner on your own.

Overnight in Quito (1 night)

DAY 2 | QUITO - OTAVALO (B, L, D)

After breakfast at the hotel, we start our tour through the modern section of Quito, before moving towards the historical area of the city. Our tour will take us along the narrow cobble-stoned streets of the 16th century UNESCO World Heritage Site of oldtown Quito.

We'll take a walk and visit the colonial temples and monasteries of this urban jewel, starting at Independence Square, flanked by the Presidential Palace, the Cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace and City

Hall. We'll also pass by the exquisite stone façade and the interior of La Compañía de Jesús church, which is one of the most notable of Latin American churches, due to the gold leaf décor and its baroque style.

We then continue to the church of San Francisco, with its impressive façade and atrium leading into its gilt interior. The interior is styled in Moorish Baroque, with a winged Virgin of Quito at its main altar.

At the Basilica, we will take a number of walkways and ladders to reach the tower at approximately 314 ft. (approx. 95 m), which offers an exceptional view of Quito.

We stop for lunch, before travelling northward out of the city towards the Equator line, 14 miles (approx. 22km) from Quito, where a monument and museum now mark the location. We will continue on to Otavalo where we will have dinner.

Overnight in Otavalo at the community (2 nights)

DAY 3 | OTAVALO (B, L, D)

Today we will join the local community in a traditional minga, which is communal work, involving the whole community, addressing a certain problem that they are facing.

Lunch is at the community, as well as dinner.

DAY 4 | OTAVALO - LASSO (B, L, D)

Starting early in the morning we continue to participate in the minga. After lunch we leave for Lasso arriving in time for dinner.

Overnight in Lasso (1 night)

DAY 5 | LASSO - COTOPAXI NATIONAL PARK - SALCEDO (B, L, D)

After breakfast, we visit the National Park Cotopaxi which includes the highest active volcano in the world, Cotopaxi (19,375 ft., approx. 5,900 m). Whilst in the park, we will see the mountainous landscape known as Paramo.

There's time for walking through the park, bird watching and lunch before travelling to Salcedo and dinner at our hotel.

Overnight in Salcedo (1 night)

DAY 6 | SALCEDO - QUILOTOA - BAÑOS (B, L, D)

Today we drive to Quilotoa loop, a waterfilled caldera and the westernmost volcano in the Ecuadorian Andes. The 3 km wide caldera was formed by the collapse of the volcano following a catastrophic eruption about 800 years ago. The caldera has since accumulated a 250 m deep crater lake, which has a unique green colour as a result of dissolved minerals. Fumaroles are found on the lake floor and hot springs occur on the eastern flank of the volcano.

After lunch, we continue on to the village of Baños, which is named after the thermal baths located in the area. Dinner is at our hotel.

Overnight in Banos (1 night)

DAY 7 | BAÑOS - QUITO (B, L, D)

After breakfast, we have free time to get to know Baños, sitting

1,800 m above sea level, which is located at the foot of the active Tungurahua volcano, sitting at 5,100 m above sea level.

Baños is a popular tourist area for its famous hot springs, scenery and the accessibility to the jungle. Whilst in the village, there are a number of points of interest to explore, including visiting the Church of the Dominican Order, a place of pilgrimage of Nuestra Señora del Agua Santa.

You can also watch the preparation of Melcocha, a type of sweet made with molasses using traditional methods, or wander through the fruit and vegetables market.

Later in the day we will see waterfalls, thermal springs, and breathtaking scenery, of the Andean region surrounding Baños. We'll visit the spectacular Pailón Del Diablo waterfall (weather permitting) and the beautiful Manto de la Novia waterfall. Both waterfalls are known as the most impressive waterfalls in the area. Pailón Del Diablo has the 10th highest waterfall in the world. If we have enough time we'll go hiking as well.

After lunch we continue on to Quito and dinner at our hotel.

Overnight in Quito (1 night)

DAY 8 | QUITO - GALAPAGOS (B, L, D)

After breakfast at our hotel we will leave for the airport to fly to Baltra in the Galapagos. We will be met at the airport by our naturalist guides and continue on to our hotel.

After lunch, we will visit the Santa Cruz highlands, located to the northwest of Puerto Ayora, where we will see the giant tortoises of the Galapagos, in a natural reserve. Approaching these enormous and slow-moving animals in their humid and forested abode is always an inspiring adventure. The tortoises can weigh between 250 and 300 kg and can live up to 150-200 years!

We return to our hotel for dinner later in the evening.

Overnight in the Galapagos (3 nights)

DAY 9 | GALAPAGOS (B, L, D)

After breakfast, we will visit some of Isabela Island, the biggest island in the Galapagos. The majority of the island is protected by the National Park, but today we will start early and reach the highlands by bus to begin our 6-hour trek to the Sierra Negra and Chico volcanos.

Sierra Negra has the second largest active crater in the world and has a radius of 10 km. Chico volcano is a cone of Sierra Negra. We will walk through the moon-like scenery and have great views all over Fernandina and the north of the island. This gives us an idea of how the islands looked at the time of their creation.

We will stop for lunch at a local farm and tortoise reserve and afterwards we will continue to Santa Cruz Island, before relaxing over dinner at your hotel.

DAY 10 | GALAPAGOS (B, L, D)

Today we start with an early breakfast, before taking a 2.5 hr flight to Floreana. Once we arrive we will have time to snorkel at Loberia beach and then visit the highlands, at a place called "Peace Asylum" where the first colonists of the island settled.

Our guide will talk about the history of the colonists and we may even see a Galapagos giant tortoise.

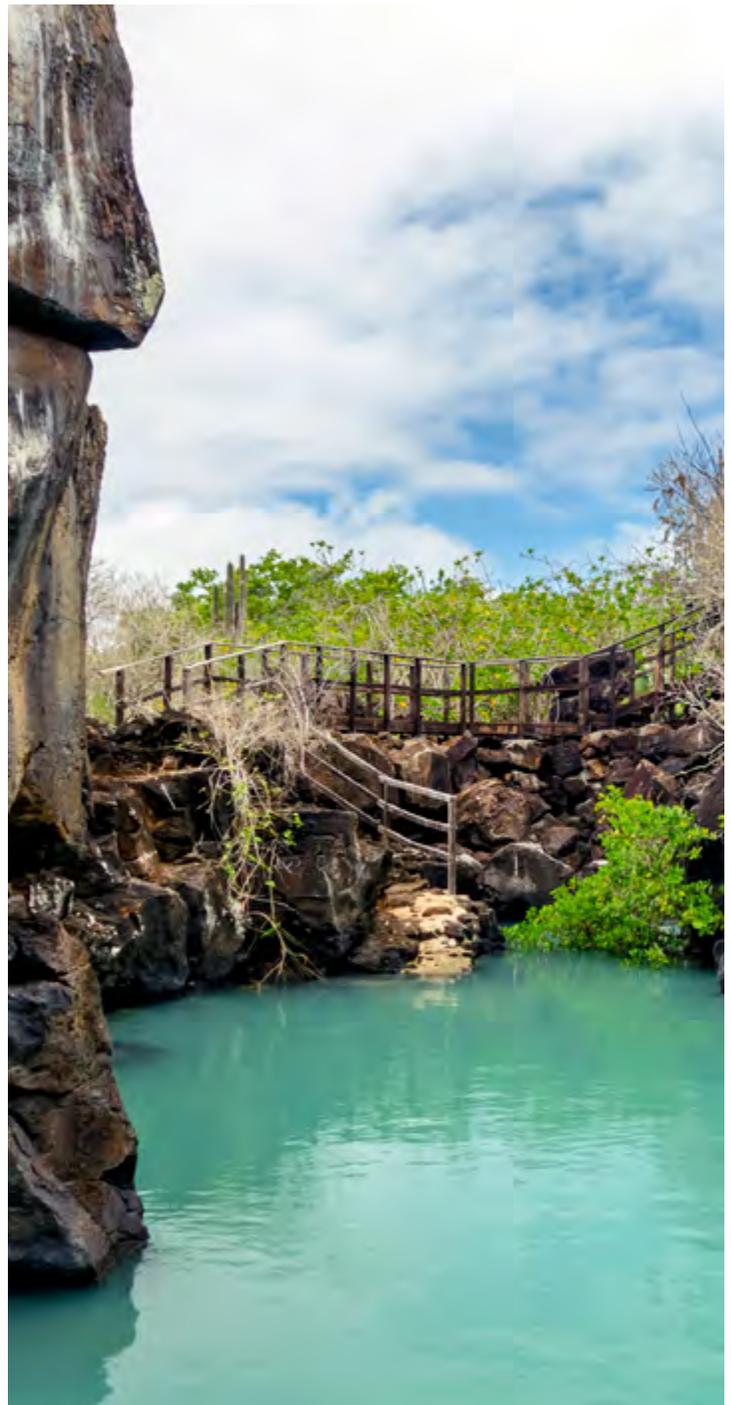
Lunch is in a small village called Velasco Ibarra. Afterwards, we will continue to Santa Cruz Island and have dinner at the hotel.

DAY 11 | GALAPAGOS (B, L, D)

For our final day, we visit the Charles Darwin Station. This is an international non-profit research station dedicated to the conservation of the Galapagos ecosystem and provides the knowledge and support to ensure the conservation of island biodiversity through scientific research and complementary actions.

We will observe frigate birds, sea lions, blue footed boobies, iguanas and turtles, including Lonesome George, the famous last surviving tortoise from Pinta Island.

Afterwards we transfer to the airport for our flight to Quito for our flight home.



RESPONSIBILITY

Merit Travel Group Inc. doing business as Merit Travel, acts solely as agents for the Travel Service Suppliers such as hoteliers, airlines, ground service operators, bus operators, etc. who are providing their facilities as described in this brochure. We do our best to select such suppliers but exercise no control over them and cannot be held responsible for the failure of these suppliers to carry out any obligations. Any and all bookings made with these suppliers by us, for you, are subject to the terms and conditions of each and every such supplier. Supplier liability may also be limited by law, tariffs, or conditions set forth in their documentation, tickets, etc.

Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, Merit and its directors, officers, employees, affiliates, successors, assigns, agents and other representatives are not responsible for any and all claims for losses, damages (whether direct, indirect, special, punitive, or other consequential damages, lost profits or opportunities) delays, illness, injuries, inconvenience, loss of enjoyment, or anxiety (whether based in contract, tort, negligence, strict liability or otherwise, and even if Merit and the Travel Service Suppliers have been advised of the possibility of damages to such party or any other party) arising from:

- a. Fault or negligence or omissions on the part of the said travel service suppliers;
- b. Illness, theft, strikes, mechanical problems, quarantine, governmental intervention, weather conditions, acts of hostility or violence, and any other grounds beyond our control;
- c. Your failure to obtain passport, visas, other travel documents or inoculations
- d. Your failure to advise us the name of the traveller exactly as it appears on the passport;
- e. Your failure to report on time at an airport or ground transfer facility;
- f. Material damages, theft or other mysterious disappearances of your goods;
- g. Personal injuries or death;
- h. Force Majeure - an event(s) beyond our, or our supplier(s), reasonable control including, but not limited to, acts of God, strikes, lockout or other labour disputes or disruptions, wars, blockades, insurrections, riots, earthquakes, weather conditions, floods or acts of restraints imposed by governmental authorities.

PRICING

All prices are per person in Canadian dollars unless otherwise noted. GST, HST and provincial taxes are applicable on tours as noted.

INCREASE IN TOUR COSTS

Merit reserves the right to increase tour prices in the event of an increase in government and airport authority imposed taxes and fees, fuel and currency surcharges, supplier price increases, or any other cost increase. If the increase is greater than 7% of the tour cost, the client may cancel the booking within seven days of notification and obtain a full refund.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

A group can only be reserved upon a non-refundable deposit (amount to be specified at the time of quotation) payable in one lump sum applicable to the total cost of the group reservation.

Full and final payment is due no later than 60 days prior to departure. Please note that some of our suppliers may require an additional deposit or full payment at time of booking pending seasonality. You will be advised of any additional requirements at time of booking.

LIABILITY

Merit cannot assume responsibility for any costs incurred for any travel arrangements purchased separately from the Merit tour. Merit's responsibility shall extend only to the provisions of advice as to industry-standard or supplier recommended connections and check-in times. Provided Merit supplies such advice, they shall not be responsible for missed connections or departures, regardless of the cause.

TRAVEL PROTECTION PLAN (INSURANCE)

Trip cancellation and interruption insurance, medical and hospital insurance, baggage insurance, and various additional insurances are available and

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. If you choose not to purchase insurance, you are required to sign an Insurance Waiver Form. Note that if you choose not to purchase insurance, you are fully liable for any and all penalties imposed as stated under Cancellation Policy on this page. Please speak to your representative at the time of making reservations about insurance.

REFUNDS

The nature of travel involves risks and unpredictable weather and thus Merit cannot assure any departure or arrival times at any point of an itinerary. Your right to receive a refund is limited. There will be no discounts or monies refunded for any missed or unused services. Merit reserves the right to cancel the tour for any reason. Should this occur, a full refund will be made to the traveller.

CANCELLATION POLICY

While Merit will do its utmost to minimize any penalties charged, there are irrecoverable costs associated with your tour. The following penalties will be considered the costs incurred with cancellation:

- a. 60 days or more prior to departure: partial or full refund permitted less deposit per passenger. Please note that group rates may change if numbers fall below group booking conditions with our suppliers in which case individual rates may apply.
- b. Less than 60 days prior to departure final payment is non-refundable.

Cancellation penalties for some tours will vary and there may be additional penalties associated with the airfare. If so, these policies will be noted separately at time of booking and will prevail.

TOUR CHANGES

We reserve the right to substitute itineraries, hotels, airlines or vessels due to conditions beyond our control. In such cases we will do everything possible to ensure the locations visited, the excursions taken and the hotels offered are similar to the ones originally planned. Any change to itineraries will not result in eligibility for a refund.

REVISION FEE

Changes to your tour reservation might not be possible. Should you request a change and we are able to accommodate it, you will be subject to any charges imposed by the airline or tour suppliers. In addition, we reserve the right to charge a \$50 revision fee for any change made after the deposit is paid. A change in name or departure date may constitute a cancellation, and the corresponding penalties may apply.

PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION

All passengers travelling internationally must travel with a passport. Many countries require the passport to be valid for 6 months beyond the traveller's return date. Visas may be required for some destinations. It is the passenger's responsibility to obtain at the passenger's expense, all documentation required by all relevant authorities. In the event that the passenger does not possess the correct documentation, the air carrier has the right to refuse passage.

DESCRIPTION

Every effort has been made to describe and produce the travel services and photographs as accurately as possible in the printed tour description. However we reserve the right to correct errors and we will make all reasonable efforts to inform you should any significant changes occur.

Please note that the living standards and local conditions during your tour may be different from what you are accustomed to at home.

CONSENT

Your retention of tickets, reservations or bookings after issuance shall constitute your consent to the above terms.

If you encounter any concerns during your tour, please inform your local travel service provider. If the matter cannot be resolved, please inform Merit Travel in writing upon your return.

Please note that the above terms and conditions are subject to the terms and conditions agreed to under signed school board agreements between Merit Travel and the School Board.