

The Alumni Association Travel Program LLC

Presents

Quito and Galapagos Islands Exploration

January 16 – 25, 2023

Standard Plus \$5,845 Per Person, Double Occupancy from Chicago; Single Supplement - \$1,380

Junior Suite \$6,145 Per Person, Double Occupancy from Chicago; Single Supplement - \$1,660

Balcony Suite \$6,595 Per Person, Double Occupancy from Chicago; Single Supplement - \$1,840



This is an exclusive travel program presented by the Alumni Association Travel Program LLC

Day by Day Itinerary

Monday, January 16 – CHICAGO / QUITO (I)

We depart Chicago's O'Hare Airport this afternoon by scheduled service of American Airlines and travel to Miami, Florida, from where we begin our journey to Quito, Ecuador. On arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport this evening, we'll meet our Tour Guide who will travel with us throughout our stay in mainland Ecuador. Founded on the ruins of an Incan city, the capital of Ecuador has a setting that few other cities can match. Surrounded by snowcapped volcanoes, but only 15 miles from the equator, Quito enjoys a spring-like climate all year round.

Tuesday, January 17 – QUITO (B)

This morning we will enjoy an introduction to Quito's colonial past as we explore the bustling streets and squares of the largest historical Old Town in the Americas. We'll see the stone-carved facade of Ecuador's House of Congress, and then head to the Plaza de la Independencia, one of the most attractive colonial centers in Latin America. Next, we'll visit the Church of La Compania. Richly intricate both inside and out, it is a masterpiece of baroque and Quiteno colonial art. Nearby, we'll also take in the Plaza San Francisco named for its church and monastery honoring Quito's patron saint. Then, we'll travel outside of the city for a panoramic view from the top of Panecillo Hill, where on a clear day you can see the volcanoes that surround Quito and the historic downtown. From here, our tour will take us north to visit Mitad del Mundo, the Equatorial Monument, which marks the precise location of the equator – don't miss an opportunity to straddle the equatorial line with one foot in the northern hemisphere and the other in the southern hemisphere!

Wednesday, January 18 – QUITO (Otavalo) (B,L)

Today we journey outside Quito and travel along the snaking Panamericana Highway through the colorful valleys of Guayllabamba and Cayambe to the province of Imbabura. Our destination is the charming Andean mini-city of Otavalo, located between the capital city of Quito and the border with Colombia. As we'll soon learn, Otavalo is Ecuador's beating heart and a cradle of Andean culture. The city's crown jewel is its Old Town, full of colonial monuments and architectural treasures, and without a doubt, the Craft Market is the most famous and picturesque in South America. Centered around the Plaza de Ponchos, the market offers the possibility of approaching Ecuadorians at a more intimate level as you can negotiate the prices of a variety of woven goods, bags, hats, flutes or simply appreciate the skillful and generous people responsible for the elegance and beauty of the clothing and handicrafts – a true arts and crafts shopping adventure.

Thursday, January 19 – QUITO / CRUISING (Mosquera Islet) (B,D)

This morning we take to the skies for Baltra Island, located near the center of the Galapagos archipelago. On arrival, we'll transfer to the pier for embarkation aboard the M/V Galapagos Legend, an expedition ship designed with comfort and luxury in mind. Panoramic windows allow you to not only observe the destination but also to be a part of it. As we're about to find out, the islands are a paradise where animals have no fear of man; it is a magical realm where creatures seem to be enchanted.

This afternoon we cruise to Mosquera Islet, a tiny, low lying islet, covered in coral sand, set between North and South

Seymour Islands. Although Mosquera may be small, it makes up for it with a great diversity of interesting wildlife. It's also one of the few islands without marked trails, so visitors can explore at will. Although Mosquera Islet's highlight is the resident colony of noisy Galapagos sea lions, it is also home to a Lava Gull nesting site, the rarest gull on the planet, and one of the best places to snorkel.

Friday, January 20 – CRUISING (Santiago & Rabida Islands) (B,L,D)

Our first stop today is Santiago Island, one of the most interesting and diverse islands of the Galapagos Islands. For starters, anyone interested in geology or volcanos is going to love it. Santiago has some of the most stunning volcanic formations and surreal basaltic lava flows of the whole archipelago. We'll step ashore at Puerto Egas to explore deep pools and caves carved from the lava shoreline, home to playful Galapagos fur seals as well as a variety of resident and migrant bird species, including Darwin's Finches, Flycatchers and Galapagos Hawks. Santiago also oozes in history and has many a tall story to tell. From the British buccaneers who used the island as a resupply base, to the visit of Charles Darwin in 1835.

This afternoon we cruise to Rabida Island, unique even by Galapagos standards. Rabida is known as the red island, and it's easy to see why. The beach and cliffs of Rabida are colored a deep shade of red making the island one of the most photogenic landscape sites in the Galapagos Islands. Rabida is small and has just one visitor site where a wet landing drops visitors onto the red sand beach, where lazy Galapagos sea lions like to sunbathe. A short visitor trail leading up to the cliffs will take you through a forest of Palo Santo trees and endemic Opuntia cactus to the clifftop, the perfect place for a panoramic photo of Rabida Island in all its glory.

Saturday, January 21 – CRUISING (Isabela Island) (B,L,D)

Today will be spent on Isabela Island, the largest island of the Galapagos with an area of 1,790 square miles. One of the youngest islands, Isabela is located on the western edge of the archipelago near the Galapagos hotspot. Our day begins at Urbina Bay. Located on the western shore of Isabela Island, this location is a fascinating area where a large coral reef lies exposed following a dramatic sea bottom uplift in 1954. The site also features a short trek inland, where Galapagos giant tortoises can be spotted, and we may run into a few very impressive land iguanas. This afternoon we'll cruise north to Tagus Cove, which has an interesting history as pirates and whalers frequented these parts through history. To this day you can still see some of the names written on the cliffs, along with some interesting graffiti that was left here by the US Navy during the mid-1990s. On shore, a beautiful hike leads past an overview of Darwin Lake where you can find a range of bird species, and a stunning view when you get up to the ridge – which may be why pirates used to stop here too! Once back at sea level you have an opportunity to snorkel along the submerged seawall where you'll find a variety of fish and sea life.

Sunday, January 22 – CRUISING (Fernandina and Isabela Islands) (B,L,D)

Our day begins on Fernandina Island, the westernmost and youngest of the main islands of the Galapagos archipelago. Even by Galapagos standards, Fernandina is exceptional. Unlike other

parts of the Galapagos, no introduced species have taken root here. The visitor site at Punta Espinoza, just across from Tagus Cove on Isabela Island is a memorable one. It's home to thousands of lethargic marine iguanas, and for the volcanically minded, it's the island on which you're most likely to witness an eruption. Fernandina is a favorite destination due to its beauty and the unique species that are rarely seen anywhere else.

This afternoon we cruise to Punta Vicente Roca on the western coast of Isabela Island. Although there is no landing site, this spectacular location is surrounded by immense cliffs of an eroded volcano. Studded with resting sea birds such as brown noodles and Nazca boobies, you can enjoy an up close view from the dinghies. The upwelling of cold water currents in this part of the Galapagos gives rise to an abundance of marine life, and with that, an opportunity to enjoy one of the best snorkeling spots in the Galapagos archipelago.

Monday, January 23 – CRUISING / QUITO (Santa Cruz)

(B,L)

This morning we visit the island of Santa Cruz. Located in the center of the Galapagos archipelago, it is also the most populous of the islands, and a focal point for scientific research, where a variety of Galapagos land animals are studied. The Galapagos Islands are synonymous with giant tortoises, and this morning is our chance to see these iconic reptiles. On arrival at Puerto Ayora, we'll travel to the Highlands Tortoise Reserve where we have our best opportunity to interact with a population of tortoises, as they walk freely around the private and National Park lands. This spot is also a birdwatcher's haven, since almost every land bird present on the island lives or migrates here.

Following our visit, we cruise to Baltra Island and take to the skies on our return to Quito. On a clear day, we'll have an opportunity to view three of Ecuador's four contrasting ecosystems - the Galapagos Islands, its sandy beaches, and snowy volcanoes.



Tuesday, January 24 – QUITO (Mindó Cloud Forest) (B,L)

Today we travel to the Nambillo-Mindó Cloud Forest, a natural sub-tropical paradise in one of the most biodiverse zones in Ecuador. We'll visit Mariposas de Mindó, a butterfly breeding farm dedicated to the exhibition, reproduction, and conservation of the butterflies in the cloud forest of Mindó. We'll also allow time to climb the observation towers from where you can admire the beauty of the cloud forest from above, and the colorful hummingbirds native to this area. As we'll soon learn, Mindó is also known for its coffee and chocolate production, and we'll enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the chocolate-making process from bean to bar at a small-batch factory.

Wednesday, January 25 – QUITO / CHICAGO (B,I)

As all good things must come to an end, early this morning we return to Mariscal Sucre International Airport in preparation for our return journey home. No better time to reflect on memories of our *Quito and Galapagos Islands Exploration* vacation that will last a lifetime and new friendships made along the way!

*** * * Welcome Home * * ***

The Vacation Price Includes:

- Pre-trip assistance.
- Informational packet.
- Alumni staff assistance for a worry-free travel experience.
- Economy-class air transportation by scheduled service of American and Avianca Airlines.
- Transportation by deluxe private motor coach with accompanying Tour Guide on pre and post-cruise days.
- First class hotel accommodations and cruise accommodations aboard the M/V Galapagos Legend based on travelers' choice of stateroom.
- All meals as shown in the Day by Day Itinerary.
- Sightseeing as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary including applicable entrance fees.
- Luggage handling and portage charges for one suitcase per person.
- Airline taxes and fees, Galapagos National Park Tax, Quito Migration Control Card, taxes for included ground services, and cruise line fuel surcharge totaling \$330 per person.

The Vacation Price Does Not Include: Items of a personal nature such as passport fees and destination entry requirements; luggage handling at airports; gratuities to the motor coach driver(s), local guides, and ship personnel; personal and baggage insurance; and meals other than those stated above.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TRAVEL PROGRAM LLC

PROGRAM TOUR CONDITIONS

Tour Deposit and Payment: Reservation deposits and payments may be made by check. Tour prices increase every year. Therefore, please note that price increases could occur after the printing of this brochure and in advance of your tour's departure

Tour Pricing: This is a package tour in which land tour costs and special group airfares have been combined in the most advantageous way. Should you wish to make any deviation from the package tour by changing your departure and/or return dates, the advantages of the package tour price may be eliminated, and additional charges may be assessed.

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance is very important and can be purchased through USI Travel Insurance Services. This insurance is designed to cover you and your tour investment from tour cancellation/interruption penalties and to provide medical expense, medical evacuation, baggage and personal effects loss, and accidental death coverage, as well as emergency assistance. There is an advantage to early enrollment in this travel insurance program. Purchasing coverage within 21 days (Plus and Elite Options) of your initial tour deposit can make you eligible for (1) Pre-existing Medical Condition Exclusion Waiver, and (2) Optional Cancel for Any Reason Coverage (Plus and Elite Options). If you wish to take advantage of these special options, you must enroll within 21 days of the date your initial tour deposit is received. Contact Travel Insurance Services at 1-800-937-1387 or my.travelinsure.com/niu. Considering recent global events, including without limitation, the global pandemic, it is strongly recommended that all travelers purchase additional insurance to protect their travel purchase.

No Liability: By participating in this Program, you understand and agree that the Alumni Association Travel Program LLC ("AATP") and its affiliates, related entities, officers, directors, attorneys, trustees, beneficiaries, insurers, employees, managers, members, volunteers, students, agents, other representatives, predecessors, successors and assigns are not responsible for any liabilities, claims, causes of action, damages, fees, costs, and expenses of any kind relating to any tour cancellation, tour interruption and/or delay; baggage loss, theft, damage, or delay; accident and/or sickness medical expenses, accidental death; and worldwide emergency medical evacuation and assistance arising out of or in any way related to this Program.

RESPONSIBILITY

AATP does not conduct the tours and does not act as agent for any participants interested in tours. AATP acts solely as a facilitator with independent tour operators, with whom tour participants directly make arrangements for completing travel. As a courtesy only, AATP acts as a liaison with tour operators should you have any questions or concerns that may arise before, during or after your tour. AATP strongly encourages you to familiarize yourself thoroughly with all the tour operator's terms and conditions, including without limitation, their cancellation and refund policies. AATP strongly encourages you to investigate all available insurance options from third parties. AATP and its affiliates, related entities, officers, directors, attorneys, trustees, beneficiaries, insurers, employees, managers, members, volunteers, students, agents, other representatives, predecessors, successors and assigns are not responsible for any changes to trips or travel arrangements, or for any monetary losses or additional expenses of any kind arising out of or related in any way to your travel.

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Tour Operator. The tour operator, supplier of services, or their respective affiliates, officers, directors, trustees, employees, agents or other representatives (collectively "Tour Operator") shall not be responsible for or become liable for any delay incurred by any person in connection with any means of transportation, for any loss, damage or injury to person or property by reason of any event beyond their control or occurring without their fault or negligence.

The Tour Operator reserves the right to:

1. Substitute the airline to be used; the type of aircraft; and to alter the dates of the tour; the tour routing; or to cancel the trip if a minimum number of bookings is not reached for either the air or land portion of this itinerary.
2. Substitute hotels for other hotels in available categories.
3. Decline to accept or to retain at any time any person as a participant on any tour or to cancel any tour.

No Refunds. No refund will be made for voluntary absence from the tour unless arrangements are made at the time of booking. The schedules contained herein are subject to change without notice. All rates are based on current Tariff and Exchange rates in effect at the time of the printing of this itinerary and are subject to adjustment without prior notification in the event of changes therein or in changes in the number of participants on which the rates are based.

No Travel Carrier Liability. The travel carriers involved in this Program are not responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or other conveyance. The passage contract in use by any travel carrier, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the travel carrier and the purchaser of this Program tour.

For more information, contact the Alumni Office at 815-753-1512 or visit the Travel section at myniu.com.

\$100 of the trip cost is tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

**Alumni Association Travel Program LLC
Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center
231 N. Annie Glidden Road
DeKalb, IL 60115**