



An introduction to Ecuador

We have put together this guide to introduce Ecuador to you knowing that is very easy to get bamboozled by too much information. We hope this short guide will be enough to set you on the right course, without being too detailed. As such it is not meant to be definitive - for further details we strongly recommend that you look at our website or get in touch as we would be delighted to talk to you all about Ecuador.

Country summary

Ecuador is the 4th smallest country in South America, yet it encapsulates so many of the continents finest attributes. The central region is dominated by towering Andean peaks and fiery volcanoes and exploring this region is all about traditional life that often centres around weekly markets and town plazas. In the east is the biodiverse Amazon jungle where you can stay at a remote lodge and Learn about traditional indigenous life and spot a huge variety of wildlife. Last but not least, a flight to the enchanting, tamed and revered Galapagos Islands should be on everyone’s bucket list – it is the main reason people visit Ecuador.

Highlights of the county

The Galapagos Islands

The Galapagos Islands is in all honesty, the must see place in Ecuador. Travel via boat through the Islands gazing at this exotic and jam packed wildlife spectacle. The marine life is like nothing you will see, and you can get incredibly close to the animals who have no reason to fear you – it is unparalleled for wildlife viewing and really feels like the ‘enchanted islands’ which they are so aptly named. And if this isn’t enough, explore the island from different perspectives snorkelling, diving and in some parts, walking. Most Galapagos Island cruises are about 7 days and the price depends on the size and type of boat – the smaller and more luxurious, the more expensive.

Our favourite small boat for cruising around these islands is the MV Origin – an extremely stylish, luxury boat which is a very comfortable base for you to explore the islands from. Alternatively, the M/Y Eric and Letty duo of yachts are an attractive alternative – they are two exclusive, superior first-class motor yachts with the capacity for 20 guests and will explore the islands.





Quito

Quito is the capital city of Ecuador and sits in high altitude in the midst of the Andean peaks and volcanoes. It is split in two parts – one side has a colonial feel to it with its cobbled streets and architecture, whereas the other side is the opposite – a cosmopolitan hub of busy urban dwellers. Take your time to explore museums, food markets, and historical sites such as the 16th century cathedral in Plaza de Independencia.

Discover the shiny new side of Quito from the centrally located [Hotel Plaza Grande](#) with its rooftop bar, giving you a great view of the city from above. Or for a more historical stay go for [Patio Andaluz](#) in the heart of colonial Quito.

The Amazon

The Ecuadorian Amazon is hugely expansive. Although it makes up almost half the country it is hardly inhabited with only 5% of the population living here. Visit here for fresh water dolphin spotting, monkeys, anacondas, armadillo, 1200 bird species and more. You can also have cultural village visits from here which is a great way to get a better feel for the country. Stay on the edge of a lagoon in amongst the wildlife at [Sani Lodge](#) – a remote eco lodge and a birders dream.

Cuenca

Here, you will find Ecuador's colonial city and a UNESCO world heritage site. It is an ideal place to relax and wander around. The centre is the most attractive part but everywhere is draped with history and quirky features. It is a nice stop, but the draw of visiting this region is also the journey to get there through the Ecuadorian Highlands and the Valley of the Volcanoes which is a fantastic way to experience the mighty Andes. Stay at [Mansion Alcazar](#) with its fantastic location and colonial, elegant interiors fitting of the town as a whole.

Mindo

The Valley of Mindo is a very dense cloud forest. It is a very different area than others in Ecuador with its mossy foliage and hugely diverse populations of birds and frogs. The moisture in the clouds makes the forest a luscious green and packed with life – well worth a visit if you are spending time in Ecuador. [Mashpi Lodge](#), although not located in Mindo, is an excellent option for those seeking luxury in this unique location – unwind in the Jacuzzi after taking a trip along the canopy cables which wind through the forest from the lodge. Mindo is also possible to visit on a day trip from Quito

The Highlands

The Highlands of Ecuador stretch through the middle of the country and comprise of the Andes mountain range making this region a focal point for the country. The volcanoes are active and contain the highest in the world with Mount Cotapaxi, and there is an abundance of flora and fauna to be enjoyed. Enjoy this remarkable sight on your journey to the historical town Cuenca.

Neighbouring countries to combine with Ecuador itinerary

After exploring the Galapagos Islands and once you have exhausted Ecuador, Lima in Peru is only a short flight away from Quito or Guayaquil. Here, there is plenty to do with fantastic museums and internationally renowned restaurants - you will not get bored if you spend a few days here. For those of you with no time restraints, why not visit the legendary Machu Picchu and explore a bit more of Peru as well.



General information on Ecuador

When is the best time to visit?

There are several microclimates in Ecuador that influence the best time to visit. Take into consideration that the best time to visit the Galapagos Islands are from December to May, although outside of these months then we still recommend visiting the islands, apart from in September when the seas can be choppy. Down the central highlands of the country then the best time to visit are from June to September.

How much does a trip to Ecuador cost?

There is no easy answer to this one as all of our itineraries are designed from scratch to suit your interest and budget. As a general guide then a two week trip to Ecuador, including a week in the Galapagos Islands starts from around \$8000 per person. For a full itinerary please see <http://digital.africaodyssey.com/Itinerary/Landing/16DA8822-B5A7-40F6-8972-EB0F11F93C6E>

Is the altitude a problem?

Some regions of Ecuador such as Quito at 2,850m can get up to very high altitudes. It is not a problem, but just something to be wary of. We always design our trips taking into account the altitudes that you will be experiencing.

What is the currency?

Ecuador uses the US dollar, and it can be withdrawn from ATMs in larger towns using UK credit/debit.

What is the language?

Spanish.

What is the time difference?

GMT -5 hours.

How do I get there?

There are no direct flights from the UK and popular change airports are Amsterdam, Paris and Madrid.



Why South America Odyssey?

First and foremost, the team here at Odyssey Travel love South America and have spent many years exploring and working in the continent in a variety of capacities. We have stayed at the hotels we work with, we have built loyal relationships with the best guides in their respective fields, and we now use our love and first-hand knowledge to craft individual tailor made itineraries. It is our intimate knowledge of the continent, combined with our relationships that help us continually deliver exceptional and authentic holidays to the continent. Our promise to you is first class service, unrivalled country knowledge and value for money.

✓ First class service ✓ Super knowledgeable itinerary designers ✓ Fantastic value for money

Our price promise

Booking through us will cost no more - and often considerably less - than booking the same trip with all the individual suppliers directly. We are able to negotiate excellent rates with suppliers, which results in savings for you. In the very unlikely event that you get a cheaper quote for the same trip from a reputable UK bonded tour operator, we will match that quote.

We are ATOL bonded (ATOL 5397) so whatever might happen to us, your money is protected.

No surcharge for currency fluctuations. Once your itinerary is confirmed and your deposit has been paid, we guarantee that we will make no surcharge for currency fluctuations, whatever happens to exchange rates before you actually travel.

In summary, we are able to package a holiday for less than you will be able to arrange directly, without any exchange risk, and you will benefit from our decades of experience in arranging similar trips, our impartial opinions, and the financial security that our ATOL bond offers!