

ECUADOR'S NATURAL WONDERS

An exploration of the Ecuadorian cloud forest
combined with an island hopping adventure
in the Galapagos aboard the **Isabela II**

21st October to 2nd November 2019



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Toucan



Otavalo market



Church, Quito

For a relatively small country, Ecuador has an astounding wealth of natural treasures and cultural splendours. From the charming colonial architecture of Quito and the colourful markets of Otavalo to the exotic flora and fauna of the cloud forest and unique wildlife of the Galapagos Islands, our escorted tour will introduce you to the country's many marvels. After exploring the country's capital of Quito, we spend three nights at Mashpi Lodge which is located in the heart of the Equatorial Chocó Bio-Region, regarded as one of the planet's most important 'hot spots' of biodiversity. A hideaway in the forest, only accessible to its privileged guests and located on a scenic plateau, Mashpi features amazing views of the surrounding forested mountains right up close through its floor-to-ceiling panoramic glass windows. Hummingbirds are among the highlights of any visit to Mashpi, with 32 species observed in the wild to date. Following our stay at Mashpi we will enjoy four nights aboard the Isabela II discovering the curiosity and fearlessness of the wildlife on the Galapagos Islands. Our time on the islands will be spent following the nature trails, snorkelling with the sea lions, discovering the underwater world by glass bottom boat and strolling along the islands pristine beaches.

THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Quito, Ecuador.

Fly by scheduled indirect flight arriving in Quito this afternoon. On arrival transfer to the Hilton Colon Hotel for our three night stay.

Day 2 Quito. After breakfast in the hotel we will have a guided city tour of Quito. During the 13th century Quito was the prosperous centre of the Kingdom of Quitus. It later became the northern capital of the Inca Empire and in the 16th and 17th centuries colonial architects built formidable temples, monasteries and mansions, creating an urban jewel designated as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. We will continue to the Equatorial Monument, located a short drive north of Quito, which marks latitude 0°, where we can stand with a foot

on each hemisphere. We will visit the Ethnographic Museum inside the monument, which shows the different Native American groups living in Ecuador. Enjoy lunch at El Crater restaurant followed by an afternoon at leisure in Quito.

Day 3 Otavalo. This morning we drive to the north of Quito and the textile market of Otavalo, where we visit the many stalls full of ponchos, scarves, blankets, wall hangings, woven belts (fajas), hats, handbags and much more. We then proceed to Peguche, an Indian village near Otavalo which is home to the artisans who do the weaving in their homes; here we can learn about their culture and everyday life. We will enjoy lunch at a charming country inn or hacienda before returning to Quito this afternoon for some time at leisure.



Day 4 Quito to Mashpi Lodge.

This morning we drive to Mashpi Lodge for our three night stay. The Lodge is perched at 930 metres above sea level amid pristine lower montane rainforest and cloud forest. Here we will be surrounded by a profusion of plant species, from ferns and bromeliads to hundreds of orchid species, many rare and endangered. Monkeys, peccaries and even

puma make their homes inside the reserve which is crisscrossed with waterfalls between dramatic, verdant hills. A staggering 400 species of bird – including some 35 endemics – have been spotted to date, not to mention 112 species of amphibians and reptiles. On arrival the naturalist guides will briefly speak about the cloud forest and its conservation before we enjoy lunch. This afternoon we

Sea Lion, Galapagos



Mashpi Lodge



Mashpi Lodge



Treefrogs, Choco rainforest



Mashpi Lodge sky bike

will take our first walk along the Cucharillo Trail, named after an Ecuadorian endemic tree common at Mashpi but otherwise threatened throughout the country. At the end of the trail we will find a large waterfall and rocky riverbed with beautiful ponds. At sunset there will be an opportunity to enjoy a nature walk as the sounds and smells intensify and if we turn off our torches, we will be able to observe sparkling fireflies and feel bats zipping by.

Days 5 Mashpi Lodge. At dawn we will embark on a walk to the Life Centre via the Howler Monkey's Trail. This path crosses primary forest dominated by many ancient trees, the 'copal' the most emblematic of them. Early in the morning, the trail is buzzing with activity and we should get to hear and hopefully view, rare birds such as the Rufous-fronted Wood-quail or the Rufous-crowned Antpitta. Visit the Life Centre which offers a marvellous view of the forest from the comfort of an expansive wooden deck. Here we will explore the life of butterflies, the many species found in the Mashpi area and their metamorphosis from egg, larva, caterpillar, and chrysalis to winged wonder. We will also discover various species of host plants that butterflies use to lay their eggs on, such as passion flowers, birds of paradise and milk weeds. Not far from the centre, we visit the 'tropical orchard' where many varieties of fruit trees and plants, including banana, manioc, cacao, hot chili peppers,

coffee and wild raspberries, are grown. Enjoy lunch at the lodge and this afternoon you may want to enjoy the facilities of the lodge's superb spa or to join the excursion along the Napa Trail. This trail crosses a variety of habitats including secondary and regenerative forests, as well as large patches of primary forest. The walk is a great opportunity to learn about the ecological realities at Mashpi and the importance of forest conservation within the Chocó bioregion. This is also a trail of great scenic beauty and an excellent opportunity for bird watching. Towards the end, we will encounter one of Mashpi's most unique attractions: the 'iron palm'. This evening there will be a lecture on the different scientific research projects that take place at Mashpi and includes footage from hidden camera traps in the forest.

Day 6 Mashpi Lodge. After breakfast we walk the short distance to the Observation Tower. Looming above the treetops, Mashpi's observation tower allows us to enjoy the protected forest in all its glory. At 30 metres above the ground, this is an ideal site for nature lovers, allowing us not only to appreciate the forest's complex structure, but also the incredible species richness that thrives throughout the canopy, where 70% of the forest's biodiversity is found. Choose to walk back down or take the sky bike which traverses a 200 metre section above the canopy. Return to the lodge via a strenuous walk via the San Vicente Waterfall

or take the easier Oxibelis Trail that takes us to a small waterfall. At the lodge we will enjoy a varied and delicious lunch. This afternoon we head towards the Hummingbird Station. Mashpi boasts a total 32 hummingbird species identified to date, many of which inhabit different altitudinal ranges, with around 19 species considered common at our specially designed feeder station. Not only will we observe hummingbirds of all kinds, but also toucans, tanagers, squirrels, and more. The site is located at a natural viewpoint, which, on clear days, provides breathtaking views of the reserve's forested hills.

Day 7 Mashpi Lodge to Quito. This morning there will be another chance to take a dawn walk to observe the birds of the forest or take a walk to the 50 metre Copal Waterfall amongst a landscape of moss-covered trees, bromelias and orchids at every corner. We return to the lodge for lunch and check out for our drive back to Quito and an overnight stay at the Hilton Colon Hotel with the remainder of the day at leisure.

Day 8 Quito to Santa Cruz, Galapagos. Transfer this morning to Quito airport for our scheduled flight to Baltra in the Galapagos Islands. On arrival we will take a short ferry to Santa Cruz Island before lunch in a highlands restaurant. After lunch we will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station and the giant tortoise pens within an impressive giant prickly-

pear cactus forest, home to many land birds. Enjoy a stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora before we embark the Isabela II.

Day 9 Santa Fe & South Plaza. A stunning anchorage provides our jumping-off point for our visit to this sandy white beach with many sea lion harems. Galapagos hawks are often easily observed, perched atop salt bushes and we may see the endemic land iguana on an island walk. There will also be the chance to snorkel from the skiffs, kayak or take a ride in the glass-bottom boat. After lunch the turquoise waters at South Plaza island contrast brilliantly with the white sand and black lava of the shoreline, while a carpet of scarlet sesuvium succulents serves as groundcover for a grove of luminescent green prickly-pear cactus beyond, populated by Galapagos land iguanas. Along the coastline we find sea lion colonies, while sea birds play with the thermals that form along the cliffs of this small but amazing island.

Day 10 North Seymour & Las Bachas. The morning starts with an enjoyable walk along the coast and the interior of North Seymour island, observing numerous bird colonies as well as sea lions and marine iguanas. There will be opportunities for snorkelling and coastal exploration with chances of spotting fur seals along the rocky coastline. This uplifted island is also home to a nesting colony of frigatebirds and provides great views of the surrounding



islands due to its central location in the archipelago. Over lunch we relocate to Las Bachas where US military barges were beached and abandoned after World War Two. Locals referred to the beach as the 'barges beach', a name that morphed to 'bachas'. Today it is an important nesting area for the east Pacific green sea turtle. Located on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island, it is a glorious white beach, with several brackish lagoons only a few steps away from the sea. These lagoons are the feeding grounds of various wading birds, from stilts to flamingos and we can swim or snorkel from the beach.

Day 11 Bartolome Island & Sullivan Bay. Today a Galapagos icon awaits for us at Bartolome Island. A great way to start the day, with a steep climb up a wooden staircase with wonderful views over the island. Following the walk, we will take the

dinghies for a ride around colossal Pinnacle Rock, followed by time to enjoy the beach and do some snorkelling or explore the shores and look for Galapagos penguins. After lunch, we board the pangas to land at Sullivan Bay on the east coast of Santiago, a white coral sand beach great for swimming with a trail over a lava field that flowed here a little over 120 years ago. This is the perfect place to see and feel the volcanic origin of Galapagos while observing its wildlife. Many label this location as an open textbook of geologic wonders.

Day 12 Baltra to London. Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to Guayaquil and connect to our onward indirect flight to London.

Day 13 London. Arrive this afternoon.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Cabin Category	
Wayra Room at Mashpi Lodge & Classic Cabin on Isabela II	£7295
Suite at Mashpi Lodge & Classic Cabin on Isabela II	£8125
Suite at Mashpi Lodge & Owners Cabin on Isabela II	SOLD OUT
Wayra Room at Mashpi Lodge & Standard Cabin on Isabela II for sole use	SOLD OUT

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Four nights hotel accommodation in Quito on a bed and breakfast basis • Three nights accommodation at Mashpi Lodge on a full board basis • Four nights aboard Isabela II on a full board basis • Shore excursions • Lunch on days 2 and 3 • Galapagos transit fee and tourist card • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Airport taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance.

POST-CRUISE PERU EXTENSION

1st to 8th November 2019

Before returning to London, we are offering the opportunity to join an exploration of Peru.



THE ITINERARY

Day 1 Galapagos to Lima. Fly by scheduled flight via Guayaquil. On arrival transfer to an airport hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 2 Lima to Cusco. After breakfast in the hotel we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Cusco. On arrival transfer to the hotel and enjoy an afternoon to acclimatise and relax before we meet tonight for dinner.

Day 3 Cusco. After a morning at leisure and lunch in a local restaurant, we will explore the city seeing the beautiful buildings such as the Temple of the Sun and old colonial buildings such as the Cathedral and the Museum of Colonial Art. We will then head to the fortress of Sacsayhuaman, a magnificent example of Incan military power, where we find the Qenqo, subterranean galleries and the Incan Baths.

Day 4 Sacred Valley to Machu Picchu. We leave Cusco this morning and drive to the town of Pisac, famous for its handcraft market but also where the Incas built an observatory to study astronomy as well as an impressive network of cultivated terrace. After lunch continue to the Incan fortress and citadel of Ollantaytambo. After the tour, transfer to the train station for an amazing train journey to the famous Inca Citadel of Machu Picchu, the great mountain-top city abandoned by the Inca Empire, reclaimed by the jungle and lost to humanity until its rediscovery in 1911. Arrive in Aguas Calientes this evening and transfer to our hotel before enjoying dinner.

Day 5 Machu Picchu to Cusco. Our morning tour will explore the Citadel including the Main Plaza, the Circular Tower, the Sacred Sun Dial, the Royal Quarters, the Temple of the Three Windows and various burial grounds. After lunch we transfer to the train station for our return journey to Cusco. On arrival transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 6 Cusco to Lima. Transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to Lima. This afternoon join a guided sightseeing tour including Lima's Historical Centre, Religious Art Museum as well as San Francisco Monastery and its famous underground crypts known as the Catacombs. Continue your visit through the residential Districts of San Isidro and Miraflores. Also visit El Olivar Park with olive trees brought from Spain in the 15th century, the Central Park of Miraflores and El Parque del Amor with views down to the Pacific Ocean. Return to the hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 7 Lima to London. Enjoy a free morning before we transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

Day 8 London. Arrive this afternoon.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin: **£1995** Single: **£2795**

Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel from Baltra to Lima and between Lima and Cusco, three nights accommodation in Cusco, two nights in Lima and overnight accommodation in Aguas Calientes on a bed and breakfast basis, dinner on days 2 and 4, lunch on days 3, 4 and 5, excursions, train travel between Cusco and Machu Picchu, transfers, airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

NB. Please note that the high altitude of this tour may affect some travellers.



ISABELA II

Refurbished in 2014, the Isabela II is a stylish yacht ideal for exploring the Galapagos Islands. She accommodates just 40 guests in comfort, and is equipped with Zodiacs for landing on these remote islands. The ship is also equipped with sea kayaks, a glass bottom boat and snorkelling equipment for making the most of your journey around this breathtaking archipelago. On board you will be accompanied by a team of passionate and dedicated naturalist guides who will add greatly to your overall experience.

Your Cabin

All cabins are en-suite and have outside views with ample storage space, a safety box and a hairdryer. Divided between two decks, there are 20 cabins on the Cabin Deck whilst the master suite is located on the Main Deck next to the dining room. Classic cabins measure 12.8m² and the standard cabins measure 12m². The Master suite on the Main deck is larger and measures 18.9m² with an additional sitting area.

Your Space

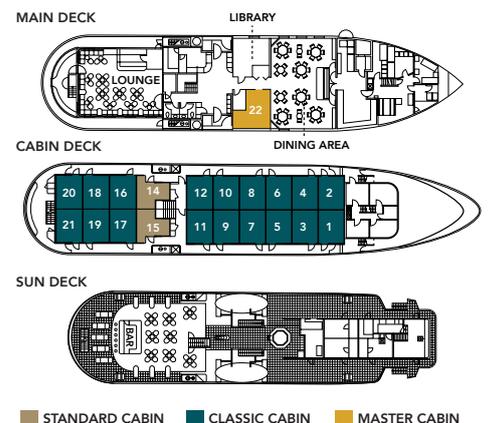
The Lounge is where daily briefings and films on the natural world will be shown throughout your voyage. Here you will find a well-stocked bar where you can enjoy a drink in the evenings, or perhaps relax with a good book and a cup of tea from the coffee and tea station which is available 24 hours a day. In the reception area you will find

the small gift shop and internet point although quality of reception will depend on location. The Sun Deck with comfortable furniture offers breathtaking views of your surroundings and opportunities to look out for nature. There is also a hot tub and gym available on this deck, and here you will pick up your wetsuits and snorkelling equipment.

Your Dining

The spacious single seating dining room is tastefully decorated and affords outside views and on occasion meals can be enjoyed on the Sun Deck. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet style, with a wonderful selection of local fresh produce and both hot and cold dishes. For lunch there is a selection of soup and salad, main courses and dessert. Dinner is a set menu served at your table.

DECK PLAN



This cruise visits out of the way destinations. You will be accompanied by an expedition team and many landings ashore will be made by Zodiac landing craft. Cruises such as these will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.



Albatross



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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Sea lions basking on the beach.