THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS AND MAINLAND ECUADOR
In-depth Exploration of Evolution’s Playground and a Hotspot of Biodiversity

December 28th of 2014 to January 13th of 2015

The evolutionary story of the Galápagos Islands has been told many times but only through immersing yourself in their splendor can you truly appreciate the impressive forces that shape nature here and around the globe. Embark on the Samba to explore this tropical, volcanic archipelago plentiful in charismatic wildlife unafraid of you or your camera. The Captain and crew of the Samba are devoted to making your journey the trip of a lifetime. Very few trips will conjugate the wonders of the “Enchanted Islands” with the richness of Biodiversity, Culture, Cuisine and Folklore of Ecuador. Travel from Mangroves on the basin of the Guayas River and climb to the Páramo of Cajas above 10,000 feet! We stopover at Cuenca, a city that is a vivid reminder of the colonial times and that will enhance our journey with flavors of highlands of our country. From the markets and hot springs of the Andes we endeavor to the heart of the Amazon Basin. The Amazon Rainforest is home to about 2.5 million insect species, tens of thousands of plants, and some 2,000 birds and mammals. Explore the most diverse jungle on the face of this earth, home of the Achuar people. The rainforest is the Achuars’ nourishing mother, and within this living web of forest trails, streams and rivers, they know virtually every plant, tree and animal. Here, they fish, hunt, and grow their crops as they have always done. The Achuar maintain a remarkable and intimate relation with nature and its processes.

AT A GLANCE

COST: $6,900.00 per person on double occupancy. All costs included!! Meals from dinner on December 28th of 2015 through breakfast on January 13th of 2016.

GROUP SIZE: 14 participants.

NUMBER of DAYS: 17 days and 16 nights total, including estimated travel time.

LEADERS: Juan Manuel Salcedo and assistant guides.

OUR LEADER

Juan Manuel Salcedo was born in the Galápagos Islands and grew up in Puerto Ayora, on Santa Cruz Island, living and learning in the outdoor evolutionary lab of the Galápagos. Outside of school, Juan spent time sailing on his father’s boat where he developed his love and passion for observing and interpreting the wildlife of the archipelago. He spent a year in Los Angeles studying sailing and navigation to gain a skipper certificate. He finished his undergraduate studies at the University of San Francisco, Quito where he studied Applied Ecology with minor degrees in Biology and Geology. Juan has been involved in Environmental Education projects in the Galápagos Islands and on mainland Ecuador. Through all of his experiences, he has maintained and nourished his love and passion for the world around him. Juan is pleased to be able to offer the most in-depth voyages possible in the Galápagos on board his own boat, the Samba.
OUR ITINERARY

December 28th

Arrival to Quito and accommodation at Mansión del Rio Hotel Boutique.

Our hotel offers the perfect combination of comfort and exquisite atmosphere that brings guests to early last century (1900). We are located next to the majestic River Guayas, Barrio Las Peñas, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Guayaquil, on the eastern slopes of Cerro Santa Ana, where they defended the city from the pirate attacks in the past centuries, being our hotel an ideal destination for tourism.

December 29th to January 05th

Flight to Galápagos to board the Samba. The Samba is the perfect choice to experience the Galápagos Islands to their fullest. This sturdy, stately, and very comfortable motor yacht is a European Dutch classic and best in her class. A great ocean-going vessel with her specially designed high bow, she provides safe crossings and boasts a special stabilizing sail. The top-side settees and a flush and ample forward deck provide getaways or extra space for group activities such as stargazing, whale watching, or simply sunbathing. The experienced and friendly crew is committed to redefining your ideas of quality and excellence. The Samba is a graceful, top-quality craft, is locally owned and crewmembers are from the Galápagos or mainland Ecuador. The crew takes great care to make everything environmentally friendly as well as socially responsible. The chef on the Samba serves excellent international cuisine and is happy to prepare special dishes to fulfill dietary requests (with advance notice). The majority of the food on board is organic and locally grown. The Samba accommodates 14 guests in six double cabins and one exterior double bed cabin, all with private bathrooms, hot water, and air-conditioning. Full-length wet suits and snorkeling gear are available free of charge. See deck plan and cabin descriptions on last page of itinerary and additional information and photos on our website or by mail upon request.

January 05th

Arrival to Guayaquil and accommodation at Mansión del Río.
January 06th

Visit to Manglares Churute and bus ride to Cuenca through the Páramo of Cajas.

Located only 50 kilometers from Guayaquil, with 38,000 acres of mangroves and 12,000 acres of forest. It is one of the most important mangrove reserves of the country. Navigating along the canals you can observe five different types of mangroves. This ecosystem is the habitat for more than 50 species of birds, crustaceans and reptiles. In the forest of Churute you can observe Hauling and Cappuccino monkeys, squirrels, raccoons, land iguanas, insects, and birds. The Canclon or Horned screamer is an endemic bird from Churute Eco Reserve. We will also learn about the traditional human use of mangroves and how the artisanal fishermen make their living.

Our drive to Cuenca will last about 3 hours and will be stopping at Cajas National Park. This very beautiful and recently declared UNESCO World Heritage Site preserves high Andean landscapes and habitats, featuring nearly 300 stunning glacial lakes and pools that form the headwaters of the Tomebamba River, open páramo grassland and stands of Polylepis forest. Giant Hummingbirds, Turquoise Jays, Andean Teal, Giant Conebill and the superbly blue Tit-like Dacnis are a few of the bird highlights.

January 06th

Accommodation at Hostería Durán in the colonial Cuenca.

Cuenca is redolent with history – the old city is the second cultural World Heritage Site in Ecuador, but human settlement in the area can be traced back 10,000 years to nomadic hunters who gradually settled and grew crops. At Cuenca a collision of well valued gastronomy, thermal spring pools with an average temperature of 30°C degrees, natural steam Turkish baths and private hot baths will immerse yourself in the benefit of the relaxing and healing properties of thermal energy of the Andes.

January 07th

Colonial Cuenca city tour and the Inca empire of Ingapirca.

We spend the morning exploring the historic Cuenca with a local guide, featuring a famous 'panama' hat factory and we end with a very special lunch.

Driving north a couple of hours we arrive at the Ingapirca Ruins, a site of pure cultural wonders which will take you back in time to taste a moment of what our Incas lifestyle and costumes were all about. This is the largest and best-preserved archeological complex of Ecuador.
January 08th to 12th

Kapawi Ecolodge: Biodiversity and the Achuar people. Kapawi reserve is one of the most remote, ecologically responsible and cultural sensible Amazon Jungle Ecolodges in the world. Your visit to this Amazon Jungle Lodge really contributes to sustainable socio - cultural communities and the protection of a unique natural environment. It is a remote and pristine region, the Amazon rainforest, untouched by logging, mining or petroleum extraction. This Amazon Jungle Lodge is located in one of the most remote and well protected parts of the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest. Deep in the nearly two million acres of the Achuar people’s territory, the Ecolodge is accessible only by air-flying in small planes over an unbroken green expanse of the Amazon rainforest. Located in the territorial lands of an indigenous nation (7,000 people in 64 communities) still living as they have for generations and in intimate harmony with nature, the Ecolodge provides guests a range and depth of cultural experiences unmatched by any other rainforest lodges.

January 12th
Return by bus to Guayaquil. Arrival to Guayaquil and accommodation at Mansión del Río.

January 13th
Departure for international flights.