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JOURNEY to the GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

January 31-February 7, 2016

With Ecuador extensions before and after



Venture to a treasured World Heritage site – the Galapagos Islands – and witness for yourself Ecuador’s stunning volcanic archipelago. For this extraordinary voyage we have selected the northern route through the islands aboard the MV Letty, a 20-passenger boat with a top-rate reputation and excellent crew. We can assure you an intimate and flexible voyage designed with natural history, birding, snorkeling, and photographic interests in mind. Expert Galapagos naturalists introduce you to the geology, geography, history, botany, ichthyology, entomology, evolution, and natural history of the island, sharing experience and knowledge. With at least eight clients we add a host from Naturalist Journeys to help insure that your trip goes smoothly from start to finish.

Galapagos wildlife is truly extraordinary and remarkably tame. Many species are found nowhere else in the world. Don’t be surprised if you have to step carefully over a nesting Blue-footed Booby, or wait for a young Galapagos Sea Lion to uncurl from resting on the daypack you left on the beach.

Seabirds are abundant on the outer islands, and you’ll have a chance to observe and photograph birds courting, nesting, feeding, caring for young, and in flight. We should see three species of Boobies (Red, Blue-footed, and Masked), the Flightless Cormorant, the Galapagos Penguin, the beautiful and nocturnal Swallow-tailed Gull, both Magnificent and Great Frigatebirds, and Red-billed Tropicbirds. In deep water channels between islands we look for Galapagos Shearwater and Galapagos Petrel.

Land birds are also plentiful, including the richly patterned



Galapagos Doves. Sorting out many of the thirteen species of Darwin's finches provides a challenge. We also search for Galapagos Flamingo, Galapagos Hawk, and the Galapagos form of the Short-eared Owl.

Other creatures will also captivate your interest. The intense color of Sally Lightfoot crabs contrasts dramatically with the dark lava rock. Marine Iguana are plentiful, their color patterns varying between islands; Land Iguana, on the other hand, are rare and shy. The huge land tortoises that give the islands their name are found in the highlands. Almost every day we can snorkel in quiet coves among active and colorful fish, possibly dolphins and turtles.

So much is said of Galapagos wildlife that other parts of the experience often go undescribed. You can easily observe the islands' fascinating volcanic geology – from the texture of lava and patterns of spatter cones to the stunning moonscapes found on younger islands. Using small boats, we explore the mangrove lagoons. On some islands prickly pear cactus grow tall like trees. The Galapagos provide habitat for more than 500 species of plants, including some 180 endemics.

The Galapagos Islands have been protected since 1834; in 1986 the pristine marine environment gained added protection. Responsible tourism is a key factor in promising continued protection – our itinerary is carefully designed with that in mind. Enjoy a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station and learn more about conservation efforts, including the control of introduced species such as goats, rats, pigs, and cats.

Our company's first voyage to the Galapagos was in 1998, and in the years following we have organized another 17 voyages, and we have seen real change. Today over 30,000 people are residents on four of the islands, mainly living in the two main cities where there are airports on Santa Cruz and San Cristobal. There are many more boats now; some boats split itineraries (taking on new passengers mid-week) or some tours utilize day trips that are not always in compliance or regulated. We want to insure the quality of your stay, and keep the precious ability to be on remote islands with fewer visitors. We have booked a top-rate operator to insure a successful voyage.

Tourism to the islands is regulated by governing rules of Galapagos National Park, and most of the islands are off-limits to visitation. We have selected Ecoventura for the voyage, because of their leadership in conservation and long-standing reputation in the islands. We also really like



small ships so there is little precious time spent waiting to organize outings. We like to be first out in the mornings to be ashore for that sense of discovery. Two keen naturalists guide our walks and excursions.

We wish to leave a light footprint on our visit, and we support conservation through all steps of planning the voyage. Pre-trip materials will help you understand how to make the best use of your time, and we can guarantee, you will not want to leave! There simply is no place like the Galapagos.

OUR SHIP - the M/Y Letty



Our 2015 Galapagos Island cruise is aboard the M/Y Letty of Ecoventura, a top-rated Galapagos operator. Their signature fleet includes three identical expedition yachts custom-designed for Galapagos cruising: the M/Y Eric, Flamingo I and Letty. Built in 1991 and refurbished annually, these identical superior first-class sister yachts accommodate no more than 20 guests and feature three decks of spacious staterooms with polished teak interiors trimmed with shiny brass fittings. Accommodations include ten double outside-facing cabins with a window or porthole view, one double bed or two twin lower beds, fully air-conditioned with private bathroom (hot and cold water showers), bio-degradable soap/shampoo dispensers, hair dryer, closet, drawers, intercom and separate climate controls for your comfort. There's a dining room, well-stocked bar and conference area with a flat screen TV, library and panoramic picture windows. Or you can relax in a lounge chair on the sun deck, enjoying sea breezes and a sky full of stars.



Cruise features

- 7-night expeditions depart every Sunday from San Cristobal
- 20-guest superior first-class motor yacht
- 10 fully air-conditioned outside staterooms with private bathrooms
- Delicious, varied cuisine, wonderfully prepared by our culinary school-trained chefs
- Fully-stocked bar and boutique, 24 hour coffee & tea station
- Lounge for briefings with TV, DVD, games and library
- Wildlife observation areas, open and shaded sun deck with loungers



Enjoy with our compliments

- Three meals served daily, after-excursion snacks and non-alcoholic beverages
- Captain's welcome and farewell cocktail parties
- House wine and local beer served during dinner

- Guided excursions and daily briefings with English-speaking expert naturalists
- Low guide to passenger ratio (max. 10 guests per guide)
- Complimentary mask, fins and snorkels, 3mm custom full wet suits
- Multiple kayaks

Please note: This itinerary and pricing are for the Cruise portion of your journey. You will need to plan for arrival in Ecuador and be ready to meet your flight out to Galapagos the morning of January 31. The Cruise company will have a representative at both airports, Quito and Guayaquil, to assist passengers that day. They can also book your air to Galapagos and return, this is additional cost.

PRE and POST Tour Extension Options

Details follow main itinerary

GALAPAGOS ITINERARY

Sunday, Jan. 31 Flight to Galapagos / Arrival on SAN CRISTOBAL
 Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, SAN CRISTOBAL (Chatham)
 La Galapaguera Cerro Colorado, SAN CRISTOBAL

Our flight of two hours from Quito takes us to one of the larger islands, San Cristobal, situated on the eastern side of the archipelago. San Cristóbal is the fifth largest island and it is also the first island visited by Charles Darwin on his 1835 visit. We embark our ship at the harbor of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, capitol of the Galapagos Province. Our ship will have arrived in the morning and will be taking on water and supplies as we check out the National Park Visitor Center. We are soon in the company of Blue-footed Boobies and Galapagos Sea Lions, some of which will be sleeping in fisherman's pangas in the bay.



Upon arrival to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, SAN CRISTOBAL Island, our crew is waiting at the airport to escort you to your anchored yacht. After the welcome briefing, buffet lunch and safety drill, we travel by bus into the interior of San Cristobal to visit LA GALAPAGUERA CERRO COLORADO, where the National Park has established a breeding program for the tortoises and set up an information center for visitors. Along the trail, we find the San Cristobal (Chatham) mockingbird and Calandrinia plant, both endemic to this island. Here, you will see the terrestrial tortoises living in their natural habitat but also learn about their origin, evolution and threats by introduced animals.

We venture to the southeast end of the island to walk through dry forest habitat at an important Galapagos Tortoise Breeding Facility known as Red Hill. This is a great place to learn about tortoises, their history and conservation, and to photograph them in the wild. There are also hatchlings at the breeding facility of varying age. Along the trail we may find the Chatham Mockingbird, endemic to this island, Galapagos Flycatcher, and one familiar from home – Yellow Warbler. Out to sea, the boobies and frigatebirds soar!



Enjoy your first Galapagos sunset from the observation deck, a welcome dinner, and motion of the boat to rock you to sleep as we motor to Genovesa, one of the longer crossings of our journey. Our plan is to arrive by dawn – be on deck as you don't want to miss the entry to this spectacular bay!

Monday, Feb. 1 Darwin Bay of GENOVESA / Prince Philip's Steps of GENOVESA



We spend the entire day on TOWER (Genovesa), considered to be one of the most spectacular Islands in Galapagos for geology and for close-up views of nesting seabirds. Our activities include two walks, a panga ride, and for those that wish, snorkeling. This is also a good place to try out the sea kayaks for a quiet paddle if you wish.

The entry into the caldera is spectacular and typically takes place at first light. We then anchor in the calm waters of Darwin Bay, the ocean-filled center of a now dormant volcano. Tower is small (14 square miles) but one of the most intriguing islands of all due to its more remote location. One of the outer islands, it lies close to deep ocean waters to the north, where upwelling currents produce abundant squid and other fish that seabirds feed on. Tower is an ideal nesting area for Red-footed Boobies (both light and dark phases), Great Frigatebird, Swallow-tailed Gull, and several species of storm petrels. You will be very close to these animals so bring plenty of memory space and ample battery with you today if you are a photographer!



Tower remains remote and unspoiled, lying one degree north of the Equator. Vegetation is sparse here: dry Palo Santo forest occurs with mangroves at the ocean edge. Along one side of the caldera there are lush mangroves, where you may also encounter Lava Gull and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron roosting in shade as you explore. We have a wet-landing on Darwin Bay, a coral sand beach where Swallow-tailed and Lava Gulls gather near the tide pools. Enter a forest of Optuntia cactus and mangroves where colonies of Great Frigate birds nest. The males inflate their red-throated pouches to attract females as they fly overhead. The trail leads through a rich inter tidal zone where we find a wide diversity of wildlife.

Mid-day can be used for relaxing or venture out for snorkeling – there is easy snorkeling with a lot of fish from the beach, or more advanced snorkeling along the caldera wall where, on previous voyages, we have even seen Hammerhead Sharks! Sea lions join you to frolic by the beach.

In the afternoon we take a more extensive walk at the Visitor Site known as Prince Philip's Steps. Company owner Peg Abbott calls this a walk through wonderland. Ascending a cleft in the rock wall that rims the caldera (on a trail), one emerges to the greeting of Galapagos Doves, up to four species of Darwin's finches, numerous Red-footed Boobies nesting in small shrubs at close range, Nazca Boobies that one must almost step over, swarms of swirling storm petrels on the back side of the island, and their predator often hunting, the Short-eared Owl. One can only wish for more hours of daylight!



After the walk, relax on deck and take it all in, or kayaks are available to paddle along the shoreline. Look for the beautiful Red-billed Tropicbird usually found in the crevices, or flying over you in search of fish.

Tonight we motor to Santa Cruz Island (B,L,D)

Tuesday, Feb. 2 Las Bachas or Black Turtle Cove / Cerro Dragon SANTA CRUZ

Wake up to the sound of sea lions. Enjoy coffee on deck and a view of a stunning white sand beach which we explore later this morning. There is gentle snorkeling from the beach, and a chance to walk, observing bright colored Sally Lightfoot Crabs as we go.

Las Bachas is the Spanish translation for "barges". There is a long stretch of a soft white sand beach and interior lagoons where we find the Greater Flamingo. There is also a wonderful chance to snorkel here from the beach.





In the afternoon we stop at Santa Cruz to visit Cerro Dragon, a fascinating dry site. We enjoy a shore excursion on which we hope to find Galapagos Land Iguana, Common Cactus Finch, and – in shallow saline lagoons – Greater Flamingo and Black-necked Stilts.

Our gracious hosts welcome us back aboard for a nice evening and dinner, and sunset over the islands as we move to our next location. On to the remote western reaches of the archipelago!

Wednesday, Feb. 3 Punta Espinosa of FERNANDINA (Narborough) / Urbina Bay, ISABELA (Albemarle) or Punta Vicente Roca



This morning we arrive at the westernmost island of Fernandina, the youngest of the islands. As recent as 2009, spectacular volcanic eruptions occurred here; as a result the island is sparsely vegetated. Lava flows formed by an active volcano stretch their way around the coast. This is the most pristine of the islands – no exotic animal ever has been introduced here. The beautiful mangrove-lined cove at Punta Espinosa is home to Galapagos Penguins, which may swim around our boat like ducks. We may find sea turtles, a variety of large rays, and on the rocks, striking red and yellow Sally Lightfoot Crabs. Galapagos Sea Lions often appear at our landing, while Galapagos Hawks call and signal each other in flight overhead.

An unbelievable number of Marine Iguana live here; watch them spitting salt as you lay on your belly for a close-up shot. The Flightless Cormorant, an unusual species, nests on Fernandina.

In the morning we have a semi-wet landing at Punta Espinoza. This can be an adventure as we navigate around sea lion harems with resident bulls carefully guarding their territory. For many this morning's walk is a highlight of the journey with so many species to behold. We also explore here by a panga boat ride, looking for sea turtles, eagle-rays, Galapagos Penguins, and other creatures at the margin of island and sea.

In the afternoon, we cross over to neighboring Isabela Island, the largest in the archipelago. Isabela is actually a composite of six individual islands (one of which is submerged), formed by shield volcanoes united by lava



flows. One of the southern volcanoes erupted magnificently in October of 2005, so the island continues to grow. Scenery is astounding: the Wolf and Cerro Azul Volcanoes reach 5,100 feet high.

We disembark at Urbina Bay at the base of Alcedo Volcano (wet landing), where we find four miles of its coastal seabed, with marine life exposed due to a dramatic uplift in 1954 when the volcano erupted. The marine remnants of coral skeleton are impressive as

some of them are waist-high. Brown Pelicans and Flightless Cormorants nest here, and very large Marine Iguanas are abundant.

Thursday, Feb. 4 Elizabeth Bay of ISABELA / Tagus Cove of ISABELA

Our morning excursion is a zodiac ride at Elizabeth Bay that begins with a visit to a secluded cove, lined with large red mangrove trees. Here, turtles, rays, and shore birds can be seen. We motor to the rocky islets known as "Las Marielas", where a colony of nesting Penguins, Flightless Cormorants and giant Marine Iguanas are found.

Rich waters on the west side of Galapagos result from upwelling of the Cromwell Current. This richness is evidenced by an abundance of seabirds, sea turtles, and here we have the greatest opportunity of sighting whales. Dolphins may come to play on the ship wake or we may spy the large and curious sunfish.



This afternoon, we have a dry landing at Tagus Cove, located on the western Island of ISABELA. Darwin also visited Tagus Cove in 1835. Six volcanoes flowed together and formed the largest Island in Galapagos. During the walk, we discover a salt-water lagoon, a scenic overlook with a spectacular view of the ocean, lava fields and volcanic formations. Graffiti dating back to the 1800's is written on the rocky cliffs. Explore the Coves by Zodiac or kayak to find

Galapagos Penguins, Boobies, Pelicans and other seabirds. An excellent snorkeling opportunity is offered here after the walk.

After dinner, a sky full of stars beckons one to go out on deck and observe the galaxy.

Friday, Feb. 5 Puerto Egas of SANTIAGO (James) / Rabida Island (Jervis)



This morning, we have a wet landing at Puerto Egas, SANTIAGO (James). Stroll along the shoreline looking for octopus, starfish and other sea life caught in the tide pools. At low tide, catch a glimpse of marine iguanas as they feed on exposed green algae. Watch for Great Blue Heron, Lava Heron, American Oystercatcher and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Our walk ends at the grottos, deep pools of clear water where we encounter Galapagos Fur Sea Lions once on the verge of extinction. This is a beautiful walk on which one loses all sense of time, an immersion in life

of Galapagos.

Before returning to the yacht, there is a snorkeling and kayak opportunity from the beach. We move to another island during the lunch hour.

In the afternoon, we disembark on RABIDA ISLAND (Jervis), located close to, but offshore of James Island. Rabida sports the most diversified volcanic rocks of all the islands and is considered the geographic center of Galapagos. The dark red sand beach originated from the erosion of volcanic stones. Follow a trail that leads to a salt water lagoon, and observe Greater Flamingos as they feed. Brown Pelicans nest in the mangroves at the far side of the lagoon.



After the walk, there is time for snorkeling. At night we motor to Santa Cruz.

Saturday, Feb. 6 Highlands of SANTA CRUZ (Indefatigable) / Darwin Station of SANTA CRUZ

Today we have the full day on Santa Cruz, accessed from the main port city of the islands. It is a lively atmosphere and you can see homes of the early residents, including the family featured in the wonderful novel, *My Father's Island*.

We visit the highlands for a very different natural history excursion, one in lush forests. Witness vegetation changes as we drive through an elevation range of 2,700-4,500. We travel by bus and then enjoy a walk near "Los Gemelos," the Twin Craters, and Media Luna, where we may find



Woodpecker Finch and Vermilion Flycatcher. At this elevation, the Miconia Zone, a seasonal mist called the “*guara*” cloaks the forest, producing lush vegetation. We also visit a private farm where Giant Tortoises can be seen in the wild, grazing on the lush pastures. (B,L,D)

The main town in the Galapagos is Puerto Ayora. Finding a town at all is a surprise to most, and this



one has doubled in size since we began Naturalist Journeys trips to the islands in 1998. It is home to 12,000 residents and home to the famous Darwin Research Station and the Galapagos National Park Headquarters. We walk to the research station from the docks, with plenty of shops to tempt you on the way. The station, established in 1961, includes a captive breeding facility for several varieties of Giant Tortoise and exhibits on various projects and conservation. Larger trees and shrubs surround the tortoise pens, attracting several species of Darwin’s finches.

Sunday, Feb. 7 Interpretation Center, SAN CRISTOBAL

As we approach San Cristobal, we pass by Kicker Rock, one of the most stunning vistas of the voyage.

This morning, we visit the Interpretation Center opened on San Cristobal Island in 1999. Here we gain a more complete understanding of the natural and human history of the Islands. Afterwards, we spend

some time in port before heading to the airport for our flight back to the mainland departing noon time.

Our voyage comes to an end, but Galapagos will remain in your thoughts forevermore!



Photo: The Upper Deck, great for lounging between islands, and magical at night with the stars!

TRAVEL PLANNING

You may arrive just one night ahead, but this is risky with winter travel delays, you don't want to miss the boat! If you plan only an overnight before or after the cruise, you may fly into Quito or Guayaquil. An Ecoventura staff person will be present to help check-in for the flights at both airports.

Full Tour with Extensions: Arrive Jan. 29, 2016, and depart late on Feb. 10 or morning of Feb. 11th.

If you do the Pre-tour extension, designed to fill your time well for the safety of being there two nights ahead, your arrival date is Tuesday, Jan. 29 for a 2N pre-tour.

If you do the post-tour Extension to Mindo you may depart on EVENING flights (after 8PM) on Sat., Jan 9 or book an additional night at Puembo Birding Garden and depart anytime convenient for you Sun., Jan. 10.

If you depart directly from the cruise you can fly out on a flight after 8PM on Thurs., Feb. 7, or you can request an additional night at Puembo Birding Garden on Feb. 7 and depart on Feb. 8th at a time convenient for you.



ECUADOR Pre-tour Options Ahead of Your Voyage

You need to be ready to fly to the Galapagos on the morning of January 31st, so you must be in Quito (or Guayaquil) no later than January 30th. As the boat cannot wait for you if you are delayed, we strongly advise you get to Ecuador at least two nights early, and to encourage that we have some optional excursions planned for the two days prior to our flight to the islands. More details and costing will be available soon.

PRE and POST TOUR EXTENSIONS – Make the most of your time in Ecuador!



Arrive in Quito, Ecuador, where you are greeted at the airport for a transfer to the nearby Puembo Birding Garden, a delightful small inn that is quite reasonable and close to the airport. Its gardens provide good birding, and from here we can offer excursions.

PRE-TOUR ANTISANA NATIONAL PARK / PUEMBO BIRDING GARDEN

Fri., Jan. 29 Arrival in Quito / Puembo Birding Garden B & B

You will be met on arrival in Quito for a short drive to the cozy B and B we have booked ahead of your Galapagos cruise. The Puembo Birding Garden is known for its lovely gardens and birds, and it is convenient to the airport. Many will have dinner on the plane tonight but if you arrive earlier in the day, we can put in a reservation for you for dinner for a small additional fee.

Accommodations at the Puembo Birding Garden B & B

www.puembobg.com/

Sat., Jan. 30 Andean Condors at Antisana National Park and Reserve



Today we explore the high paramo, a tundra-like terrain with stunning snow-capped Antisana Volcano in view. Vistas are on a grand scale here, and several large lakes and ponds attract a variety of species. Our eyes are peeled for Andean Condors, very much at home here in the mountain realm. We also look for Black-faced Ibis, Andean Lapwing, and a high-elevation



hummingbird, the Andean Hillstar. Black-chested buzzard Eagle and Carunculated Caracara are two birds of prey we can study, and we also note plant life which exhibits adaptations to the rugged life required to survive in these high elevation grasslands. With luck we have splendid views of one of the most beautiful peaks of the Andes.

From here we return to Puembo Birding Garden where hospitality and a nice dinner await.

Accommodations at Puembo Birding Garden (B,L,D)

Sun., Jan. 31 Flight to Galapagos / Galapagos Cruise Begins!

Plan on an early morning as we transfer to the airport for flights to Galapagos. Your flight may stop in Guayaquil to pick up additional passengers. The distance is about 600 miles offshore, and the scenic flight takes approximately 2.5 hours. The airport is very small, and the crew from your ship will be awaiting you. You will pass through a station where you are inspected to make sure you are not bringing in seeds or other harmful items, and you may be asked to disinfect your shoes. You will pay your fee to the National Parks, you can get a stamp for your passport, and off you go to discover this amazing and treasured archipelago. Ecoventura, the company we work with for the cruise, will have a representative at the airport to help you with check in after our transfer drops you off. (B)

POST TOUR EXTENSION TO MINDO

Feb. 7-10, 2016

Note: Flights out after 8PM on Feb. 10th, or plan to stay and go next day Feb. 11th

Sun., Feb. 7 Return from Galapagos / Transfer to the Mindo Area

We return to Quito mid-day from the Galapagos and our guide is waiting to greet us for the transfer to Mindo where we have lodgings at the delightful Sacha Tamia Lodge for three nights. Once we are out of Quito, the drive is a couple of hours and is a very scenic one. We drive into the western branch of the Andes, west of the city.



Mindo is one of the most popular areas in all of Ecuador for nature enthusiasts. It is a small town in the mountains, and our lodge provides great bird and butterfly watching as well as wonderful meals, and a cozy fireplace to gather around in the evenings. It is nestled in the valley of the Rio Mindo, a remarkable locale where over 360 species of birds may be seen. The ridges, slopes, and steep ravines to the north, west, and east of the village are cloaked in pre-montane cloud forest with a dense understory that includes Guadua

bamboo. Much of the land around the village has been cleared for pasture, but small patches of secondary growth remain.



We arrive in time to settle in, and at feeders surrounding the dining area, we look for Violet-tailed Sylph, Empress Brilliant, Tawny-bellied Hermit, Green-fronted Lancebill, Purple-throated Woodstar, White-bellied Woodstar, Green-crowned Woodnymph, Brown and White collared Inca, Western Emerald and more.

A hint to be most comfortable here: Bring easy to slip off shoes, as you will go in and out of the lodge in search of birds. (Ecuadorian custom is to remove shoes to protect their beautiful wooden floors!)

Accommodations at Sachatamia Lodge (B,L,D) <http://www.sachatamia.com/>

Mon., Feb. 8 Birding at the Farm of Angel Paz / Bella Vista Cloudforest Reserve



Early this morning we plan to visit the farm of Angel Paz, who has become famous for providing great views of two often difficult to see species, Giant Antpitta and Andean Cock of the Rock. Meeting the family and walking the trails, learning the story of how they came to conserve and make close acquaintance with these species is a highlight of the tour.

After an amazing morning and breakfast, we leave the farm and drive up to Bella



Vista Cloud Forest Reserve, a private 1,000-acre nature reserve that encompasses a mix of primary and secondary forest. The botanical wonder here is something to behold! One of the top birding locations in Ecuador, the reserve is known for its diverse hummingbird species – which visit



hummingbird feeders allowing close-up views – as well as a colorful array of toucans and tanagers. At 5,000-7,000 feet we encounter spectacular cloud forest on the steep slopes above us. Here we may find a number of bird species with limited range, including the Tanager Finch.

The forest and gardens are draped with orchids and bromeliads, and butterflies abound. Some of the most beautiful birds of the forest include the Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Toucan Barbet, Golden Tanager, and Flame-faced Tanager.

Lunch and a choice of hiking or birding will fill our afternoon at Bella

Vista.

Accommodations at Sachatamia Lodge (B,L,D)

Tues., Feb. 9 Option for Birding or Culture / Silanche and Milpe Reserves or enjoy some time in Mindo

Today we have two options, another grand birding adventure, or a more relaxing day in town to learn about rural life and just enjoy being in a new country.

Our birders depart early to visit the while visiting lower elevation reserves at Milpe and Silanche Reserves, where we hope to find a number of Chocó Region endemic birds. Some of these display fascinating social behavior. We hope to see White bearded and Club-winged Manakins on their leks and other species we may encounter include: Maroon-tailed Parakeet, Tri-colored Brush Finch, Purple-throated Fruitcrow and other species.

On past trips we've had great luck finding mixed flocks of tanagers that include Glistening-green, Rufous-throated, Golden-hooded, Moss-backed and Ochre-breasted members of this colorful clan. The organization and behavior of members of the mixed flock has attracted a great deal of research in the Neotropics which we can discuss today.

Those that want to sample rural Ecuadorian life can go into Mindo, to visit the local butterfly garden and coffee house, do some shopping, enjoy local foods for lunch, and perhaps visit the local artisanal chocolate producer, the local brewpub putting together some of Ecuador's first microbrews.

We'll reunite at dinner at Sacha Tamia and trade notes for our days. (B,L,D)

Wed., Feb . 10 Yanacocha Reserve: Cloudforest and Hummingbirds / Option for evening departure

Today as an option, we can use our early morning time to bird close to the lodge, where a light brings in a great variety of species, eager to feed on large insects that have collected there during the night.

After breakfast, we pack up from Mindo and plan to be back in Quito by day's end. We visit Yanacocha Reserve this morning, located on the Pichincha Volcano west of Quito. Here we walk a trail through lush *Polylepis* forest to experience this Andean habitat and its unique plant life. We will search for species such as the colorful Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager, Glossy Flowerpiercer, and Rufous-naped Brush Finch. Hummingbirds are the star attraction here, with opportunity to see some high-elevation birds which may include the amazing Sword-billed Hummingbird, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Great Sapphirewing, Sapphire-vented Puffleg, Tyrian Metaltail, and others.



Feeding stations set up along the trail allow for easy viewing. This is an important conservation reserve, managed for several rare species that find breeding range here. It is located on the



old Nono-Mindo Road, a famous route for birding over the past few decades.

En route back in to the city, we plan a stop at Mitad del Mundo, a tourist facility on the Equator that has a good small museum on native culture, interpretation of measurements of the Equator, and yes, a photo opportunity. There is a good handicrafts market here and we know some will want time there ahead of leaving the country.

Our three night Mindo package ends back at the airport in time with a number of flights that go out right around Midnight. For everyone we plan on dinner at Puembo Birding Garden. If you are not on one of the overnight flights, we have reserved rooms for you which you can confirm as needed, costs are outlined below. (B,L,D)

Thurs. Feb. 11 Next Day Departures

For those staying over at Puembo Birding Garden, morning transfers to meet your flight can be arranged.

If you have other plans in Ecuador, we will do what we can to facilitate getting you where you need to go, please talk with our office staff.

Cost of the Extensions

Pre-tour extension: Jan. 29-31, 2016

\$495per person; to add a second dinner your arrival night add \$20.

Cost of the three night Mindo post-tour package Feb. 7-10 : \$995 per person, double occupancy \$85 if you add a night Feb. 10, and additional transfer to airport Feb. 11 from Puembo Birding Garden Airport hotel only with transfer: \$85.00 if not doing extension but plan to arrive Quito.

If you prefer to have time in the city of Quito, we can make recommendations and you just need to be at the flight at the time specified on Jan. 31st, 2016.

FROM THE WEBSITE OF THE LETTY

As we know our clients love to not only eat but dine, here is the dining description and philosophy of the ships we offer this amazing voyage on – see what you are in for!

While cruising in the Galapagos, you will look forward to each thoughtfully prepared meal. From breakfast through dinner the kitchens or galleys focus on using only the freshest ingredients, with fully 60% of the food used are sourced from these islands. Many fruits, meats and dairy products come from farms on islands blessed by rain. Organic fruits and vegetables thrive on San Cristobal and meat and dairy come from Santa Cruz. And of course the region is famous for fish and seafood. Minimizing the need for food that has to be shipped from the mainland helps protect the islands from invasive plant species, insects and even animals that can be unwelcome.

Ecoventura's clientele are often drawn to this fleet because of the company's commitment to environmental issues. Therefore it makes sense to align the kitchens with the sustainable philosophy. As you discover how fragile life is in the Galapagos, and as you experience the enormous effort that helps keep tourism possible in this region, you will appreciate even more the creative culinary presentations that appear as if by magic from small galleys on these expedition yachts.



Because you are on an adventure cruise and several times a day will be snorkeling and hiking, you don't have to worry about calories. Also the chefs are watching out for you with reduced-calorie, health-conscious preparations (avoiding fried and heavily sauced foods) that are also low in fat and sodium content. Special-needs diets can be accommodated: vegetarian or vegan, gluten free and low sodium/low fat. Plus your chef thoughtfully presents desserts in small servings that you can enjoy without feeling guilty. House wine (red or white Chilean) and local beer (Pilsner) are served at

dinner with no limit and at no additional charge.

Lunch buffets and dinner entrees offer creatively prepared chicken, fish, seafood, beef, pork or vegetarian. Lunches featuring local fish and ceviches can be served with music on the sun deck. Favorite starters include hand-rolled sushi, salmon carpaccio and seafood bouillabaisse with crostini and Pernod. Salads range from Caesar to avocado with hearts of palm. Seafood lovers enjoy grilled langostinos (giant prawns) in garlic and a pistachio-encrusted mahi mahi or tender grilled octopus. Other signature dishes are chicken Cordon Bleu and beef tenderloin in red wine. Ecuadorian and Mexican specialties are also on the menu. Desserts run the gamut from crème brulee to passion fruit mousse.

At breakfast, a few early birds may already be savoring the first cup of coffee or hot chocolate (a specialty of Ecuador). Soon everyone is lined up for the self-serve buffet: fresh fruits of the season, fruit juices, including delicious berry and tropical fruit blends, granola and nearly every day a Swiss oatmeal (muesli) along with assorted breads and cheeses. Hot dishes vary daily and range from quiche Lorraine to eggs Benedict to ham and cheddar cheese omelets, or even stuffed crepes with Nutella. A surprise one morning is the possibility of choosing a local dish, yucca dumplings stuffed with cheese and served with honey, and on another day green plantain dumplings with cheese. Young and old enjoy pancakes, bacon and ham. After returning from the morning shore excursion, our server will greet you when you return the yacht with a warm hand towel, delicious snack and fresh juice or water.

Lunch is always anticipated and indeed is often heartier than dinner because of the active afternoons to come. Served buffet-style either in the dining room or on the sun deck, guests often come back for second helpings. Fresh salads abound along with savory cold and hot presentations. Among the robust presentations look for a tuna tartar and tapenade along with chicken lasagna, a shrimp ceviche paired with a local fish en papillote, and international flavors in a bouillabaisse served with chicken Cordon Bleu, a Cuban-style shredded beef stew "ropa vieja" or Jamaican jerk chicken. One lunch goes local with a green plantain ball soup, sauteed shrimp with garlic, more plantains with potato cakes, refried white corn, a pork dish and a flan called queso de leche. At some time during lunch, a staff person will share with each guest the menu for that night's dinner and ask whether meat or fish is preferred. A lingering memory of an on-board dinner is a Basque-style preparation of octopus, grilled langostinos (giant prawns) or Pistachio crusted Mahi. Another night goes Oriental with a pork and vegetable stir-fry. A creamy Ecuadorian potato soup may send some scurrying for the recipe. It is hard to choose on some nights between a roasted pork tenderloin or turkey roulade or preparations of a seafood fettucini or eggplant Parmesan.

Because the chefs play a deft hand with international and classical variations, and because so much of the regional cuisine focuses on fresh fruits and vegetables, the vegetarian fare here is equally creative. And youngsters can feel comfortable with hamburgers and other child-friendly menu items. You can savor the menus while anticipating your cruise; but only when you've sampled the soups (hallmarks of really good chefs) do you really begin to understand the how creative and delicious these meals are. There is also no pre-arranged seating, thus encouraging guests to mix and mingle and get to know each other by the end of the cruise.