



Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop

Wildlife Wonders, Expert Guides & Comfortable Cruising

Thank you for choosing MT Sobek for your adventure. Please note that this itinerary may be subject to change depending on local conditions, so we recommend being flexible and bringing your spirit of adventure.

Contact us at info@mtsobek.com
or call **800-974-0300**



Trip Planner

This trip planner contains essential information to prepare for your upcoming adventure. Please read it carefully and contact your Adventure Coordinator if you have any questions.

About three weeks prior to departure, we will email you **Final Details** which will include information on your guides and emergency contacts in case you are delayed en route.

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Arriving and Departing

Where does the trip start and end?

The trip starts and ends in Quito, Ecuador.

What airport should I fly into and out of?

You should fly into and out of Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito, Ecuador (UIO).

When should I book my flights?

Once your reservation with MT Sobek is finalized, we'll notify you of your trip's status. After your departure is confirmed to operate, flights and travel arrangements may be purchased. While we can often confirm departures in advance, some decisions may be finalized closer to final payment at 95 days from departure. Please check with your Adventure Coordinator before purchasing your international tickets.

When should I arrive and depart?

Once your booking is confirmed, please consult your Adventure Coordinator regarding specific flight times to ensure they align with our scheduled transfers.

Arrival: Please arrive in Quito, Ecuador (UIO) anytime on Day 1.

Departure: You can schedule your departing flight from Quito, Ecuador (UIO) after 10:00 pm on Day 10 or anytime on Day 11. Your hotel on the night of Day 10 is included and serves as either a comfortable rest stop before a late-night flight or a full night's rest before departing the following day. The hotel is located just five minutes from the terminal and provides a complimentary 24/7 airport shuttle, which you can easily coordinate at the front desk.

Who will I meet on Day 1, and where?

You will meet an MT Sobek representative outside the customs area at the Quito airport. They will assist with your transfer to the hotel in the city. Your first group activity is the morning of Day 2, and you will have a full briefing later that day with your fellow travelers to discuss the flight to the Galapagos. Please refer to your Final Details for specific meet-up instructions.

How are internal flights to the Galapagos Islands handled?

We take care of the logistics by reserving your flights to and from the Galapagos Islands on your behalf, and this cost will be reflected on your trip invoice. You will receive additional details regarding these flights during your orientation. If you are traveling with a child aged 11 or younger, please provide your Adventure Coordinator with a clear copy or photo of the child's passport at least 95 days before departure. Once received, we will adjust your invoice to reflect the child airfare rate for the internal Galapagos flights.

Trip Planner *continued*

What hotels do you recommend if I arrive early or stay late?

If you arrive early or stay late to explore more of Quito, we recommend staying in the city center at our group hotel, [Swissotel Quito](#), located in the Floresta neighborhood. For those staying late near the airport or requiring a day room on Day 11, the [Wyndham Quito Airport](#) is an excellent choice as it is located just five minutes from the terminal. Your Adventure Coordinator is happy to book these extra nights for you.

Note that the drive from Quito airport to the city center takes approximately one hour. For those who are staying in the city center post-tour, we can arrange a private transfer from Quito airport to your hotel at additional cost.

Do I need a passport or visa for this trip?

A valid passport is required to enter Ecuador. Ecuador requires that passports be valid for at least six months beyond your arrival date and contain at least one blank page for entry stamps. US citizens do not need a visa for stays under 90 days. Non-US citizens should consult their local embassy or consulate to confirm current entry requirements.

If a minor is not accompanied by all parents or legal guardians, we strongly urge the traveling guardian to carry a notarized document from all non-traveling guardians granting approval for the minor to travel. Air carriers and local authorities do request this documentation from time to time. Similarly, if a minor is traveling with a sole parent or guardian, we recommend carrying notarized documentation confirming that status to ensure a smooth journey.

Why do we spend two nights in Quito?

Quito is a UNESCO World Heritage city and the excursions you'll enjoy there are a memorable part of the experience. Additionally, this time serves as a buffer day. The journey to the Galapagos begins with an early morning transfer to catch your flight to the islands. With these flights frequently fully booked, any international delay or missed connection could cause you to miss the ship's departure. This way, you get to enjoy a day in Quito, and be sure that if you are delayed, you could still reach the islands for the cruise.

Transportation and Transfers

Are airport transfers included?

Airport transfers are included from the Quito Airport to city-center hotels regardless of your arrival date. On departure, a complimentary airport shuttle is provided from the Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel to the airport terminal.

Can MT Sobek help arrange a private transfer?

Arrival transfers are included regardless of the date you arrive. If you are staying in the city center post-tour after Day 10, we can arrange a private transfer from the Quito airport to your hotel at an additional cost.

How much time will we spend in vehicles during the trip?

Most days are focused on active exploration rather than long periods of travel. Once you reach the Galapagos Islands, transportation between the *Galaxy Stella* and the shore will be in small motorboats known as *pangas* (Zodiacs). These short, scenic transfers typically occur in the morning and afternoon to reach hiking and snorkeling sites, lasting only a few minutes each way.

There is one vehicle transfer during the cruise, a 45-minute scenic drive to the Santa Cruz highlands to see giant tortoises. In Quito, you will have one-hour private van transfers between the airport and your city hotel.

Trip Planner *continued*

Are there any especially long travel days?

The most significant travel involves the flights between Quito and the Galapagos Islands at the beginning and end of your cruise, generally starting with an early wake-up for the transfer to the airport and allowing plenty of time to check in for the flight and arrive at the gate. The 2-hour flight to the islands is part of the adventure—offering your first sense of just how remote and extraordinary this wildlife haven really is.

Are there both wet and dry landings during the cruise?

Yes, you will experience both throughout the cruise. During a wet landing, you will step out of the *panga* (a motorized inflatable dinghy) into shallow water near the shore, so your feet will get wet. A dry landing occurs when the *panga* pulls directly alongside a landing site or onto the beach, allowing you to disembark without stepping into the water.

Fitness, Terrain and Trail Expectations

How difficult is the activity on Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

This is a Level 2 trip involving eight days of active exploration including walking, snorkeling, and kayaking. You should be prepared for one to two hours of daily activity on varied terrain. While elevation changes are minimal, the uneven surfaces and the high altitude of Quito (9,350') are the primary physical factors.

Varied Trail Conditions: Daily easy-to-moderate walks of one to two hours take you over sandy, rocky surfaces that require good balance. Occasionally, more challenging terrain includes fields of dramatic broken lava rock.

Water Entry: You must be comfortable with "wet landings," which require stepping out of a small *panga* into ankle- to knee-deep water.

High Altitude: Quito's altitude, at 9,252 feet (2,820m), is almost twice as high as Denver, Colorado. As you may be flying to Quito from sea level, you may feel the physical effects of being at high altitude. The best advice is to take it easy, drink plenty of water to keep hydrated, and to avoid alcohol and heavy foods. Consult with your doctor about medication that may help relieve symptoms of altitude sickness.

Water Activities: The snorkeling (from the *panga* or the shore) and kayaking on this trip are suitable for beginners.

Do I need prior experience?

Prior experience is not required, as the walking is moderate, and snorkeling and kayaking can both be enjoyed by beginners.

How should I train or prepare for Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

Focus on preparing for short walks over varied terrain and being comfortable in the water for short periods of time.

Solid fitness base: Go for one- to two-mile walks or participate in aerobic exercise for 30 to 60 minutes per week to prepare for island excursions.

Balance: Activities that improve your balance will be helpful for transitioning between the yacht, the *panga* boats and kayaks, and the shore. Practice using trekking poles for balance on rugged terrain.

Break in Footwear: Ensure your hiking shoes or sturdy sneakers and your water shoes are well broken-in before you arrive.

Trip Planner *continued*

Is there exposure or technical terrain on Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

While there is no technical terrain or exposure on this trip, you will encounter loose and uneven surfaces such as sand and lava rock, which can be sharp and jagged. Some trails, like Prince Philip's Steps on Genovesa, involve climbing rough stone steps to reach a plateau. Your guide and the crew will assist you when moving from the yacht to the panga or kayaks, and your guide will manage the group's safety on all excursions off the yacht.

Can I walk at my own pace?

Park regulations require the group to travel together while walking on shore, and to stay at least 6 feet away from wildlife. Guides help manage pacing so everyone can hike comfortably while maintaining safety and group cohesion.

What if I want to skip a day?

You have the flexibility to skip daily activities if you prefer to relax on the yacht. Your guide will inform you of the day's plan so you can decide which excursions to join. Since the group will return to the yacht for lunch, you can also choose to join just for the morning or afternoon activities.

How much free time will I have?

Days are active with optional morning and afternoon excursions, and there is time to quickly change clothes and freshen up on the yacht between outings. Evenings are relaxed, allowing you to catch the sunset, look out for seabirds, dolphins or whales, soak in the jacuzzi, or play games and converse with fellow travelers in the lounge before or after a congenial dinner together. After your morning city tour, lunch and orientation on Day 2 in Quito, you will have leisure time for the remainder of the afternoon and evening, if you'd like to make evening reservations or plans in advance.

Accommodations and Meals

What should I expect from accommodations on this trip?

This trip features a blend of upscale city hotels and a comfortable private motor yacht.

Hotels in Quito are chosen for their convenient locations. The Swissotel at the start of the trip is located in Quito's Floresta neighborhood, close to great shopping and restaurants and safe and easy to explore on foot. The Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel at the end of the trip is a convenient and comfortable stopover after your journey back from the Galapagos, chosen for its location right next to the airport (which is a 40-minute to one-hour drive from the city center).

Your home in the islands is the [Galaxy Stella](#), a 126-foot motor yacht. It features six beautiful, air-conditioned cabins—with five standard cabins between 134 and 160 square feet and one master cabin (surcharge applies) at 520 square feet, all with ensuite bathrooms. Between excursions, you can relax in the attractive dining room, the spacious lounge with a library and TV, in the Jacuzzi, or on the open sundeck.

Will I have access to Wi-Fi and electricity?

Yes, Wi-Fi and electricity are available. The hotels in Quito provide complimentary Wi-Fi, and the *Galaxy Stella* is equipped with satellite internet, though it may be slow or inconsistent due to the remote location. All yacht cabins have outlets so you can charge electronics every night.

Trip Planner *continued*

What meals are included?

Almost all meals are included as part of your journey. No meals are included on Day 1, as most flights arrive Quito late at night. Dinner is not included on Day 2 so that you have more flexibility to pack and go to sleep early before the early morning departure to Galapagos on Day 3. Some guests prefer just a quick, light dinner at the hotel this evening, and others enjoy the experience of dining out at one of many excellent restaurants in the surrounding neighborhood or in the Old Town (accessible by taxi from the hotel). Additionally, lunch and dinner are not included on Day 11 as this is a travel day from the Galapagos back to Quito. Specific meal inclusions for each day are included in the detailed daily itinerary.

What is the food like on Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

The food is prepared by a skilled chef and features a mix of international and Ecuadorian cuisine. You might enjoy signature dishes like *ceviche* (marinated seafood), *llapingachos* (potato pancakes), *locro de papa* (potato and cheese soup), coconut fish stew or an Ecuadorian favorite, *tres leches* cake.

Enjoy a variety of buffet breakfasts featuring wonderful fresh tropical fruit, eggs, pancakes, yogurt, and cereals, with coffee, tea, and fresh juices available 24 hours a day. Lunches are served as a buffet or plated and always include soup, various salads, a dessert, and a choice of fish or meat. In the evenings, savor plated dinners that include a fresh appetizer, dessert, and an entree with vegetarian options always available. A welcome and farewell drink are provided onboard, and you may also purchase additional beverages—there is a full bar with bartender onboard. Any extra bar charges are added to your onboard account to be settled on your final day via cash or credit card.

Can you accommodate dietary restrictions?

Yes, we can accommodate many common restrictions like vegetarian and vegan diets on this trip with advance notice. Dairy- and gluten-free diets can be accommodated, but we cannot eliminate all potential for cross-contamination.

Let us know about your dietary restrictions and food allergies as soon as possible, so we can coordinate with guides, hotels, and restaurants. Please also list these on your Participant Information Form.

Are single rooms available?

Yes, a limited number of single rooms are available on this trip. About a third of our travelers go solo, and single room inventory often books up quickly! You can find more information on solo traveler options [here](#).

Are triple rooms available?

Triple occupancy can only be offered in the Master Cabin on the *Galaxy Stella* using a sofa bed; please contact your Adventure Coordinator for details and pricing.

Packing and Gear

What should I pack for Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

Quito and the Galapagos Islands are blessed with a pleasant climate year-round. During the day, you can generally expect temperatures in the 70s°F and 80s°F in the Galapagos year-round. In Quito, nighttime temperatures drop to the low 50s°F with daytime temperatures in the 60s°F.

Pack for a range of temperatures with casual, comfortable clothing. Essentials include at least two swimsuits, a sun hat with a wide brim, reef-friendly sunscreen, and a lightweight windbreaker for cooler evenings. The dress code onboard the *Galaxy Stella* is comfortably casual. A full packing list will be provided.

Trip Planner *continued*

Do I need trekking poles?

You may wish to bring trekking poles for balance on uneven terrain. A limited number of trekking poles are available to borrow onboard free of charge.

What size daypack should I bring?

A small daypack (maximum 15- to 20-liter capacity) is ideal for carrying your water bottle, camera, sunscreen, and extra layers during island excursions. Bring a resealable plastic bag to store items inside your daypack that need to be kept dry. Some guests prefer to use a small hip pack rather than a day pack for short hikes.

Can I bring more than one bag?

Guests should plan to bring one main piece of luggage and a daypack. For internal flights there is a 50 lb. weight limit for checked luggage and 17 lb. for carry-ons. Because space on the yacht is limited, packing efficiently is important.

What kind of footwear should I bring for this trip?

You will need sturdy sneakers or lightweight hiking boots with good traction for walking on rocky lava trails. For wet landings, we recommend sturdy sandals with a heel strap (or some prefer to go barefoot for wet landings on sand, then put their sneakers on once out of the water). Onboard the yacht, guests typically remove shoes and go barefoot or wear socks to keep the deck clean.

Will I have access to laundry during the trip?

Laundry service is very limited on the yacht. You are welcome to hand-wash small items in your cabin; you can use the soap provided or bring a small packet of biodegradable detergent for this purpose.

Should I bring a personal medical kit?

Yes, we recommend bringing a personal kit with basics like blister care, bandages, lip protection, and any personal medications. It is also helpful to include powdered electrolytes to stay hydrated in the tropical sun.

What do I need to pack for water activities?

Snorkeling gear (masks, snorkels, fins) is provided for your use onboard the cruise at no charge, but you are also welcome to bring your own mask and snorkel if you have ones you know fit you well. A wetsuit is generally recommended year-round to maximize your time and comfort while snorkeling. Full wetsuits of three mm in thickness are available to rent onboard (current rate is \$55 for the seven-night cruise), but you are also welcome to bring your own to assure the best fit—especially if you require a special size or prefer a shortie wetsuit. Alternatively, a long-sleeved synthetic water shirt (also known as a rash guard) can be used in the water for sun protection during the warmest months (January-March).

The water temperature ranges from the mid-60s°F to 70s°F year-round. Around June, the Humboldt Current starts bringing cool, nutrient-rich waters to the Galapagos, and temperatures will be in their lower range of 65-72°F until September. After September, the waters generally start warming up to the mid-70s°F.

Trip Planner *continued*

Why do I need to pack reef-friendly sunscreen?

To protect the fragile marine ecosystem of the Galapagos, it is essential to use reef-friendly sunscreen that is free from harmful chemicals. These mineral-based sunscreens help prevent coral bleaching and protect the diverse underwater life you will encounter while snorkeling. When packing, please look for brands that are members of the [Safe Sunscreen Council](#).

Ingredients Banned in Eco-Marine Parks: Avobenzone, Methylbenzylidene, Benzophenone-3, Nano-Particles, Butyl/Methoxydibenzoylmethane, Octinoxate, Butylcarbamate, Octocrylene, Butylparaben, Octyl Salicylate, Cetyl Dimethicone, Oxybenzone, Cinoxate/Cinnamate, Padimate O / Paba, Dimethyl Apramide, Phenylbenzimidazole, Dioxybenzone, Polyethylene, Hexyldecanol Propylparaben Homosalate, Sulisobenzene, Menthyl Anthranilate, Titanium coated in Aluminum or Dimethicone. Methylparaben, and Trolamine Salicylate.

On-the-Ground Travel Tips

What is the weather like on Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

The islands enjoy a pleasant climate year-round, with temperatures generally in the 70s°F and 80s°F year-round. In Quito, expect cooler mountain temperatures with daytime highs in the upper 60s°F and evening lows down to 50°F.

December to May: Daytime highs in the Galapagos reach 84-88°F, with overnight lows around 72-75°F.

June to November: Daytime highs in the Galapagos reach 72-79°F, with overnight lows in the mid- to upper-60°Fs.

What is the water temperature in the Galapagos?

Water temperatures in the Galapagos vary by season and are influenced by shifting ocean currents. From December to May, the water is typically at its warmest, ranging between 70°F and 75°F. Starting in June, the Humboldt Current brings cooler, nutrient-rich waters to the archipelago, with temperatures generally staying between 65°F and 72°F through November.

What currency should I bring?

Ecuador uses the US Dollar. We recommend bringing cash for small purchases, souvenirs, and tips, as credit card machines in the islands can occasionally fail due to intermittent connections. Large bills are fine for paying park fees and gratuities, but we recommend bringing smaller bills as well for incidental purchases.

Will I have cell service?

You will have cell phone reception in Quito and near the ports on arrival and departure days in the Galapagos. There is no reception while cruising between islands. We recommend checking with your provider for international rates before you depart.

Will I need electrical adapters or a voltage converter?

Ecuador uses 110-120 volts with the same outlet style as the US, so no adapters or converters are required for American devices.

How much extra money should I budget?

We recommend budgeting \$500 to \$700 per person for gratuities, personal expenses like alcoholic beverages or souvenirs.

Separately, each traveler is responsible for paying the Galapagos National Park entry fee in cash upon arrival in the islands. The current fee is \$200 per person for those aged 13 and older, and \$100 for children aged 12 and under.

Trip Planner *continued*

How is tipping handled on this trip?

Tipping is a common way to show appreciation for your guides and crew. We recommend a total budget of \$300-\$415 per guest. This typically includes \$20-\$30 per day (eight days) for your Adventure Guide and \$20-\$25 per day (seven days) for the Galaxy Stella crew tip pool. Gratuities for drivers, porters, and hotel staff in Quito are already included in your trip price. Please provide tips in US dollars cash, as our local teams cannot accept payment apps or credit cards.

Health and Safety

Do you recommend travel insurance?

Yes, we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance for all trips. Travel insurance can help cover trip cancellations or interruptions, medical expenses, emergency evacuation, travel delays, and other unexpected situations. We offer travel insurance with Arch RoamRight and will be happy to provide you with a quote. Please see our [Travel Resources](#) page for more information.

Do I need to be cleared by a doctor to participate?

There is no standard required clearance from a doctor to participate in this trip. You will have an opportunity to discuss your fitness and preparedness for the trip with MT Sobek. If you have medical concerns or questions about fitness, consult your healthcare provider before traveling.

What medical support is available during the trip?

There is no doctor or clinic onboard the *Galaxy Stella*. Your guide and the yacht crew are trained in First Aid. The *Galaxy Stella* carries basic emergency supplies, including a blood pressure cuff, tourniquet, stretcher, and materials to immobilize a broken bone and administer stitches, along with basic medications. In a serious emergency, the procedure is to reach the nearest island with hospital facilities or a larger ship with medical staff.

What kind of challenges should I expect on Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

Expect uneven volcanic terrain and an initial altitude of 9,350 feet in Quito. You will use *pangas* for island transfers, requiring balance for "dry" landings onto rocks or "wet" landings into ankle- to knee-deep water; staff are always available to assist. Those prone to motion sickness should bring preventatives for longer crossings.

How can I stay healthy during the trip?

Stay hydrated, particularly during your first few days in Quito to mitigate the effects of altitude. While all food and tap water on the yacht are safe, in Quito you should stick to sealed bottled water—even for brushing your teeth—and avoid street vendors, raw vegetables, shellfish, and mayonnaise-based dressings.

Maintain frequent hand hygiene, especially before meals, and consult your doctor regarding motion sickness preventatives if you are prone to seasickness.

Bring a small personal supply of insect repellent. Guests with bee or wasp allergies must carry their own medication, such as an EpiPen.

Note that airplane cabins will be sprayed with a mild insecticide before landing to protect the fragile ecosystem in the Galapagos Islands.

On Trip Support and Emergencies

Trip Planner *continued*

What if I have an emergency and need to be evacuated?

If a serious medical emergency occurs, the protocol is to transfer you to the nearest island with hospital facilities or to the closest large vessel with a doctor onboard. Because evacuation can be prolonged and expensive in this remote region, we strongly recommend travel protection that includes medical evacuation coverage.

Are bathrooms available on shore?

Bathrooms are not available on the remote islands you will be visiting. Because shore excursions are short, you'll use the bathroom on the boat before or after visiting shore in those locations.

What is the guide-to-guest ratio?

This trip is led by one expert MT Sobek naturalist guide for the group of up to 12 guests. The yacht is also supported by a full professional crew to cater to your needs.

Extensions and Local Exploration

Are trip extensions available before or after Ecuador Galapagos Adventure Cruising on Galaxy Stella Eastern Loop?

Yes, we offer several exciting extensions! You can explore the [Highlands of Ecuador at Hacienda Zuleta](#), a colonial-era working farm with many activities to choose from. Immerse yourself in the lush Amazon rainforest, full of wildlife, based at beautiful [Sacha Lodge](#), or head to the Mindo Cloud Forest for birdlife and butterflies in the mist. We also have an extension for Peru's Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu. More details are provided in your guest portal when you book, and your Adventure Coordinator can help you arrange your extension.

What are the best things to do if I arrive early or stay late?

In Quito, visit the Equator Monument and stand in two hemispheres or explore pre-Columbian artifacts at the Casa del Alabado. You might also enjoy shopping for local handicrafts or relaxing at the Swissotel's pool and spa. For those wanting to venture further, short excursions to the surrounding Andean highlands or local markets are wonderful ways to deepen your Ecuadorian experience. Half-day or full-day excursion options in and around Quito are also provided in your portal when you book.

Happy travels from all of us!

We wish you all the very best on your adventure! Check out our photo contest for a chance to showcase your pics and win trip credits for future MT Sobek adventures.