

Tapir – Tortuga



Bike down Cotopaxi volcano • Explore the Amazon jungle • Go reverse canyoning and caving • Hike Antisana Highlands • Visit a local Amazon community • Baños • Visit a traditional hacienda • Soak in hot springs • Explore Quito • Meet giant tortoises and iguanas • Swim with turtles and rays at Kicker Rock • Snorkel with reef sharks at Floreana Island • Cycle down San Cristobal Island • Explore Sierra Negra volcano and Santa Cruz Island on foot • Kayak Isabela Island • Explore lava tunnels • Visit the Pirate caves on Floreana Island

15 days: Quito–Quito

Fare: US\$4499

Season: Year Round

The Tapir-Tortuga combination trip is an extraordinary way to see Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. There is no other part of the world where you'll find the diversity in flora and fauna that you'll find here, and in typical ACTIVE style, you'll see all the most incredible parts. It's packed with exciting and varied activities, wonderful scenery, and the chance to meet the local people and wildlife. In mainland Ecuador, you'll hike through virgin Amazon jungle, high plateaus and the fertile highlands surrounded by 'The Valley of Volcanoes'. You'll cycle down Cotopaxi, one of the world's highest active volcanoes, visit a local rainforest community, and soak in hot springs in an incredible Ecuadorian highland setting. You'll go reverse canyoning and caving in the Amazon jungle then explore Quito – Ecuador's cosmopolitan and colonial highland capital city. In the Galapagos, you'll snorkel, dive, hike and cycle while cruising between the multitude of stunning islands in our boat. We start with a short flight to San Cristobal Island to snorkel with sea lions and tame reef sharks in crystal clear water, kayak in a beautiful calm bay and hike up an island volcano with one of the largest calderas in the world. We get up close to some of the most intriguing and fearless wildlife on the planet, with visits to tortoise breeding centres and iguana colonies, and share our beach time with inquisitive sea lions. We'll explore amazing lava tunnels, cycle through local townships and learn the mysterious histories of Floreana Island. If you're only ever going to be in this part of the world once in your life, then it's well worth experiencing both Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, ACTIVE style!

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

SUNDAY

Arrive in Quito, explore Ecuadorian ranch

Your trip begins in Ecuador's capital city, Quito. If you're flying in on day one of the trip, your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip leader will meet you at the airport or your accommodation in the morning. In the afternoon we'll head to Cotopaxi, one of Ecuador's most spectacular mountains in the heart of the Valley of the Volcanoes. Here we'll make ourselves at home at Hacienda La Alegria, a typical, family-run Ecuadorian ranch, and meet our hosts, locals Gabriel and Patty. Try your hand at milking the cows, wander around and check out the amazing scenery, or just relax inside this beautiful home and enjoy Patty's incredible cooking!

ACCOMMODATION: Hacienda La Alegria, Cotopaxi (L,D)

MONDAY

Cycle Cotopaxi volcano, Baños

Today is definitely a highlight of the Tapir trip as we head into Cotopaxi National Park. The centrepiece of the park is the perfect cone-like, snow-capped peak of Cotopaxi (19,347 feet). Here we begin our cycling adventure down one of the world's highest active volcanoes! Ride downhill at your own pace through the lunar landscape and beautiful lakes that encircle Cotopaxi, ending your ride at 10,000 feet. The scenery is magical. If you're game, we'll hike up to the snowline of this majestic volcano for some of the best views in Ecuador. Later, we'll drive through the "Valley of the Volcanoes" to Baños – a beautiful mountain village in the Rio Pastaza Valley.

ACCOMMODATION: El Marques Posada, Baños (B,L,D)

TUESDAY

Free time in Baños

Baños, nestled between the Rio Pastaza canyon and Tungurahua volcano, is a playground for adventure activities. There are lots of optional activities here, including canyoning, biking, rafting, horse riding and even salsa dancing lessons! The magnificent, subtropical cloud forest environment of Baños offers incredible hikes, and the town itself is charming too. There are hot springs, great cafés, a beautiful town square and rows of little stores on the sidewalk where the locals weave melocha (toffee).

ACCOMMODATION: El Marques Posada, Baños (B,D)

WEDNESDAY

Amazon Jungle, hike to a local community, caving

Today we'll head east out of Baños, down the Rio Pastaza Valley. The high cloud forest gives way to lush rainforest, sweeping all the way down the canyon walls into the river below as we descend into Ecuador's Amazon jungle lowlands. We'll get straight into the action when we arrive at our rain forest lodge, with a hike to a community of indigenous people living in the rainforest. We'll take a dugout canoe across the Napo River, then hike two hours into the jungle

"Until I found ACTIVE, I didn't know any vacation could appeal to me. When my friends talk about their vacations, it is always the same boring place doing the same boring thing – nothing. ACTIVE gets me to far-flung places to spend action-packed days doing AWESOME things."

Sean Halligan (Concord, California, USA)

to the village. This is a real highlight of the trip – you'll learn how these small indigenous communities maintain their traditional ways of life and get some sense of the important role the rainforest plays in their lives. This afternoon we'll get back into the action with a hike into pristine virgin jungle, where we'll venture deep into an elaborate canyon system. These canyons become a series of caves and limestone cliffs. With bats as spectators, we'll hike through the canyons back to Shangri La Lodge.

ACCOMMODATION: *Shangri La Lodge, Upper Napo River* (B,L,D)

Andrew says: "Ecuador isn't exactly crowded with travellers, which is great for us! But I can't understand why it isn't a renowned adventure destination yet – places like Shangri La Lodge offer truly unique activities, an amazing setting and is a must for any adventure lover!".

THURSDAY

Jungle hike and reverse canyoning, soak in hot springs

Using 4x4 trucks, we'll travel deeper into the rainforest and take a short hike along a jungle trail to our first waterfall climb. The climb up these waterfalls is a lot of fun, even for absolute beginners at the art of reverse canyoning – which is typically everyone! Once we climb above the waterfalls, we traverse a rainforest ridge to rustic Amarongachi Lodge, where we'll have lunch. If there's time later, we'll hike to a beautiful lagoon for a swim before we head back into the highlands to Papallacta. Here we'll soak in glorious hot springs that sit right outside our rooms, and take in the cloud forest and mountain views before dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: *Termas Papallacta, Ecuadorian Cloud Forest*(B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Hike Santa Lucia Highlands, explore Quito

This morning we'll hike up into the Santa Lucia Highlands Plateau, on the northwestern side of Antizana volcano, standing at 13,800 feet. It's a heart pumping hike to reach the plateau, passing llamas and alpacas on the trail, but the views of the Antisana, several other snow capped peaks and the surrounding rugged Paramo area are magnificent. We'll also get amazing views of the massive Antisana Glacier that drops down the side of the volcano. Keep an eye out for condors too as they're often seen in the area. Later we'll take a short drive back to Quito, where we'll have the afternoon free to explore the city. We'll meet again this evening for dinner at a local Ecuadorian restaurant.

ACCOMMODATION: *Sierra Madre Hotel, Quito* (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Fly to the Galapagos, cycle San Cristobal highlands

This morning we'll take a short flight to San Cristobal, the easternmost island of the Galapagos Islands chain and home of the provincial capital, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. After lunch we'll head to the town of La Soledad. From here, we'll bike down through the lush highland cloud forest that blankets the top of the island. With stunning views of the coast, we'll ride all the way to La Loberia – a beach that is home to a large sea lion colony and nursery. You're not

likely to see this many sea lions in one place anywhere else in the world! This evening, we'll dine on local produce and fresh fish for our first evening meal in the Galapagos Islands.

ACCOMMODATION: *San Cristobal lodging, San Cristobal* (B,L,D)

SUNDAY

Snorkel with sea lions, turtles and sharks at Isla Lobos and Kicker Rock

Today we'll take our boat out to Isla Lobos off the coast of San Cristobal, where we'll don wetsuits, snorkels and masks (and tanks for the divers – diving option add US\$160) and explore the underwater world for a close up view of sea lions as they fish for their dinner!

Isla Lobos is one of the main sea lion, frigate bird and blue-footed booby colonies in the area. After a swim with the sea lions, we'll get back on our boat and head for Kicker Rock where we'll either snorkel or dive around the remains of an underwater volcano with a rock face rising 500 feet above the surface of the water (dives one and two).

Your trip leader will give you a full briefing and then we'll take to the water to explore the walls of the volcano. There will be chances to see beautiful tropical fish, turtles and sharks as they skirt the edges of Kicker Rock! Afterwards we stop into a picturesque bay to have lunch and a rest before returning to port. Then it's off to the Interpretation centre to learn a little about the history and biology of the islands. Later there will be an optional hike to Frigate Hill Lookout to see the acrobatics of the local frigate birds as they dart around the cliff tops stealing the catch from other birds.

"The best trip I have ever been on. It was almost like the whales, penguins, dolphins, sharks, marine iguanas and sea lions had been booked along with the accommodation, planes and boats! I do not think I have smiled and laughed so much in ages."

Jennie Silkstone (Nottingham, UK)

ACCOMMODATION: *San Cristobal lodging, San Cristobal* (B,L)

MONDAY

Snorkel and hike Floreana Island

After an early breakfast, our little boat will take us away from San Cristobal Island towards the magnificent Floreana Island. Floreana is the sixth largest island in the Galapagos chain and one of the least inhabited (by humans at least!). With a population of around 120, this place has a pretty relaxed atmosphere. On the way, we're often visited by friendly dolphins so keep an eye out! Later, we'll hike into the highlands of Floreana, where we'll learn a little about the mysterious history of the islands as we visit the pirate caves and the area where the first inhabitants once lived. Then it's back down to our accommodation in the tiny port of Puerto Velasco Ibarra – a fantastic hideaway lodge with incredible sea views and a great sunset!

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Wittmer, Floreana Island* (B,L,D)

TUESDAY

Journey to Isabela, snorkel Tintoreras

This morning we'll make the journey east to Isabela Island, the largest of all the islands in the Galapagos archipelago. After lunch, we'll head out on small local boats to check out the crystal-clear waters of the Tintoreras rock outcrop. Keep an eye out for rays, marine iguanas, reef sharks, herons and the Galapagos Penguin - the only penguin found close to the equator. Later, we'll don our snorkels and masks again to explore the clear waters of this great snorkelling area. This calm and shallow body of water is home to sea turtles, and a multitude of colourful fish species.

ACCOMMODATION: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island* (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY

Hike Sierra Negra volcano, Volcan Chico Lavafields

Our hike today will take us to the summit of Sierra Negra volcano, rising nearly a mile above the ocean. See the lowland vegetation change before your eyes as we ascend into a lunar landscape on our way to the top. It's quite a hike to the top of the volcano, but the views across the seven mile wide crater and surrounding coastline are worth the climb! This is one of the largest volcanic calderas in the world, and one of the most active. As we hike, we might be lucky enough to see Galapagos hawks, short-eared owls, finches and flycatchers that inhabit this region. When we get back from our hike, we'll head to Beto's beachside bar to toast the setting sun over the Pacific.

ACCOMMODATION: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island* (B,L)

Andrew: "Beto's bar on the beach at Puerto Villamil is one of the best places in the world to chill out! Relax in a hammock and watch water lapping on the beach as the sun goes down."

THURSDAY

Kayak Isabela Bay, visit giant tortoise breeding centre, wall of tears

This morning we'll start with an early morning kayak in the calm waters of Isabela bay. Here we'll have the chance to see some of the Island's most amazing wildlife up close. Marine iguanas bask in the sun, blue-footed boobies sit in pairs on the rock tops, and sally lightfoot crabs scurry out of our way along the waters edge. Below us rays gracefully swim by and turtles pop up for a breath of air. Later, but still in the morning we'll head to a Galapagos giant tortoise breeding centre where we can meet these majestic prehistoric creatures. Then we'll travel along Isabela's pristine coastline to the 'Wall of Tears' - a fascinating remnant of the Galapagos Island's convict past. There will be a bit of free time this afternoon to find a hammock on the beach, or explore on your own.

ACCOMMODATION: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island* (B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Hike Santa Cruz highlands and Tortuga Bay, visit giant tortoises

We'll depart Isabela Island early this morning bound for Santa Cruz Island, where we'll hike into the amazing cloud forest highlands. Once there, we'll have our only chance to see giant tortoises in their natural environment, along with intriguing birdlife like the vermilion flycatcher. We'll take a look inside the lava tunnels scattered throughout the highlands. These tunnels were formed by petrified lava flowing underneath the Earth's surface, carving out large cylindrical caves. Some are almost a mile long!

This afternoon we'll hike to Tortuga Bay, one of the most stunning beaches in the Galapagos, where we'll have the option of trying our hand at bodyboarding or surfing, or just lounging around on incredibly fine sand. Tortuga Bay is accessible only by foot and is home to hundreds of prehistoric-looking marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies and pelicans.

ACCOMMODATION: *Puerto Ayora lodgings, Santa Cruz Island* (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Charles Darwin Research Station, return to Quito

This morning we have our last excursion and a chance to see the most famous tortoise of all, Lonesome George. At the Charles Darwin Research Station you will learn about the breeding program they have in place to save some of the most vulnerable species of tortoises and land iguanas. Also there will be a chance to see different types of carapace that help differentiate the tortoise species. Afterwards, it's a transfer to the airport on Baltra Island for the short flight back to Quito on the mainland. This evening we'll share our final dinner together in Ecuador.

ACCOMMODATION: *Sierra Madre Hotel, Quito* (B,L,D)

SUNDAY

Quito, depart for home

Today is the last day of your trip around Ecuador and Galapagos Islands with ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA. If you have a flight today, we'll be sure to get you back to the airport on time. You'll return home relaxed and refreshed from all the great activities, fine food and friendly people you will have met while travelling with us in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

(B)

SPECIFIC INFORMATION – TAPIR-TORTUGA

ACCOMMODATION: The Tapir-Tortuga is an active adventure-oriented trip that takes you to some wild and remote areas of Ecuador and the Galapagos. We've chosen accommodations for their comfort, cleanliness and charm – not the number of channels available on the television. Having said that, even the remote jungle lodges have private rooms with mosquito nets, a hammock outside and great views!

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: You can fly into Quito first thing in the morning on the first day of the trip, but we recommend you arrive any time the day before. On the last day of the trip, you can fly out any time. If you want to arrive earlier or leave later, we're happy to help you out with extra hotel accommodation bookings.

TRIP START: If you arrive on the first day of the trip, an ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA representative will meet you at the airport at 10 am. If you're already in Quito, you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group in the lobby of our joining hotel at 11am.

TRIP END: You can fly out at any time on the last day.

FLEXIBILITY: Ecuador is in a developing part of the world, and we can't tell you that everything runs like clockwork in South America. What we can tell you is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders, and we know how to keep things operating as smoothly as possible, even when conditions are challenging. That's why we are here! If you bring flexibility, an open mind and a sense of humour you'll find your trip goes even smoother!

DIVING IN THE GALAPAGOS: Kicker Rock is one of the most interesting dive spots in the world. Our dive guides are all highly

qualified with years of dive experience. If you're a diver and would like to dive on the trip, there is an additional fee of US\$160 for two dives and a safety dive, including all the necessary gear. **PLEASE NOTE:** Due to strong currents, the Galapagos is not a destination for novice divers. We recommend you have logged at least 10-20 dives before diving here and you must bring your PADI or SSI certification to dive.

Kayaking in the Galapagos: The sea conditions in the Galapagos can be pretty varied, so we haven't named a specific time for kayaking. We usually go on Sunday, unless the conditions say otherwise. If you're a keen to kayak, rest assured you will at some stage when the conditions are right.

Included: Details of what's included in your trip fare are available on the General Information page at the back of this booklet. In addition, on our Tapir-Tortuga trip your fare includes all ground transportation (including boat transfers and domestic flights Quito–Galapagos return). All your meals, except for two dinners (on Sunday on San Cristobal and Thursday on Isabela Island), where we've found most people like to check out the local restaurants on their own.

NOT INCLUDED: The Ecuadorian Government charges every person who enters the Galapagos Islands a US\$100 park entrance fee. You'll be asked to pay this when you arrive to the airport in Galapagos. INGALA, the coordinating body of Galapagos, also charges a \$10 Transit Control Fee, which is paid through the airline as you check in at Quito airport.

For more information on accommodation, fitness and experience requirements and what's included in the trip fare,

General Information

We've included trip-specific details in the Specific Information section at the end of each itinerary. This is also where you can find details on recommended flights for the start and the end of your trip.

ACCOMMODATION: Our trips focus on getting you outside for the best adventure activities in the most stunning parts of South America. The accommodation we choose is clean and comfortable, but it's not a tour of the fanciest hotels in South America! Some of the places we stay are quite luxurious and other places – like the mountain lodges in Patagonia – are very basic, but truly spectacular.

From time to time, we might stay in places other than those specified in the itinerary - but we'll let you know before you go.

FITNESS: We've designed our trips to be challenging, fun and outdoor oriented – none of our trips are passive scenic tours – so you'll need a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself. Age and experience are not important; you don't have to be young or extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some regular exercise. Getting in a few short hikes with a day pack or a gym class before your trip is always a good idea.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need lots of outdoor experience to take our trips. Our trips allow you to make the most of South America's outdoor environment, culture and history regardless of your experience. Our trip leaders are highly trained and experienced outdoor guides and they'll look after you. Experience is not as important as having a 'can do' attitude and being willing to give things a go. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and have an impeccable safety record.

FLEXIBILITY: South America is a developing part of the world and we won't tell you that everything runs like clockwork. What we can say is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders and we know how to keep things operating smoothly, even when conditions are challenging. That's why we're here! You'll find your trip even more enjoyable if you remember to bring flexibility, an open mind and a sense of humour with you.

INCLUDED: Our trip fares are all shown in US dollars so our

guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can join us for shorter periods of time for most trips. The fares quoted on each itinerary include taxes. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have an experienced trip leader with every trip and have a specialist local guide on many of our excursions for extra local knowledge.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire trip. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- Breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D), except on our *Tortuga* trip where some dinners are not included, and during your free days on our *Jaguar* and *Tapir* trips when most people like to check out the local restaurants on their own.
- All drinking water. (Alcohol and other drinks are not included.)
- All hiking, snorkelling, rafting, canoeing, sea kayaking, hiking, biking and jungle activities as described in the itinerary, excluding optional activities as noted. No activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip be less awesome if you choose to sit out any of the activities.
- Tips for local activity guides, drivers and boat captains are taken care of by ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA, except for Inca Trail guides and porters on our *Jaguar* trip.
- Transport including buses, boats, trains and some flights.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday and we are serious about not nickel-and-dime you. On a couple of the trips you'll have one or two meals to cover, drinks and the cost of extra activities if you choose them. In some destinations you may have to cover your departure tax when you leave the airport. You'll probably feel like tipping your guide at the end of a fabulous time too. Other than that, everything's taken care of – you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip!

ITINERARY UPDATES: We update our printed itineraries each year. Please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing (this one is valid to April 2013).

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