



VCU Alumni

GALAPAGOS ECO EXPERIENCE

2025 YOUNG ALUMNI JOURNEY



US DEPARTURE DATE: **APRIL 5, 2025**

LAND TOUR START DATE: **APRIL 5, 2025**

RETURN DATE: **APRIL 11, 2025**

US ARRIVAL: **APRIL 12, 2025**

LAND PACKAGE FROM: \$2,875

Visit our website www.aesu.com/vcu for more details and to book.

START YOUR ADVENTURE

Dear Young Alumni and Friends!

Can you think of a better way to travel than with fellow VCU Young Alumni?

The VCU Alumni Alumni Travel Program, designed for recent grads ages 22 – 35, offers you this opportunity by bringing you together with individuals in the same age range, with similar backgrounds and experiences, while enriching you on well-designed, hassle-free tours of the world.

These programs provide social, cultural, and recreational activities and many opportunities for learning enrichment and enjoying a connection back to VCU. Our journeys are of great quality and value, operated by a travel company with over 48 years of experience in the young travel market.

In this brochure you will find a detailed itinerary, travel dates and pricing.

If you have any questions about this tour, please contact our tour operator, AESU Alumni World Travel, by calling 800-638-7640 or email alumni@aesu.com.

To make an online booking, please visit our young alumni tour landing page www.aesu.com/vcu and select this tour to be directed to the tour web site.

We are looking forward to traveling with you this coming season.

Sincerely,

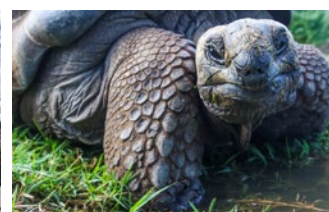


Elizabeth Bass
Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations
Virginia Commonwealth University

Travel insurance is compulsory. Some schools or alumni associations may offer travel insurance to you at a reduced rate. If not, AESU also offers group travel insurance. Ask our reservations agent for details or visit this link: <https://www.generalitravelinsurance.com/get-a-quote.html?partner=AESU3922>

“ **DEFINITELY THE BEST DAYS OF MY LIFE,
WITHOUT A DOUBT. NEW FRIENDS, AMAZING
EXPERIENCES. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR THIS TRIP.** ”

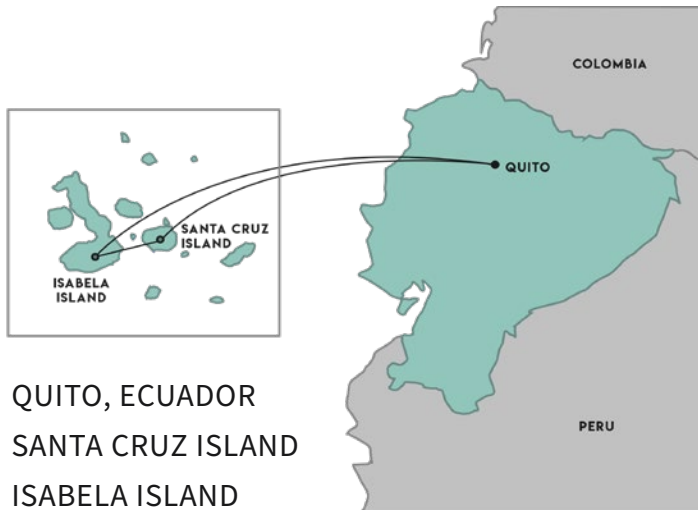
FORMER TRAVELER



GALAPAGOS ECO EXPERIENCE

8 DAY TOUR OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS, ONE OF THE MOST ECO-FRIENDLY PLACES IN THE WORLD

PLACES VISITED



PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS

This trip has been carefully designed to feature these fantastic inclusions and highlights:



For a glossary of these experiences, visit:
www.aesu.com/aspects-awt



ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE/ACTIVE

For more details, please visit:
<https://www.aesu.com/activity-levels-awt/>

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

8-Day Land Package Transportation and Lodging

- 6 nights in superior tourist class hotels with private bath/shower, 2-share rooms
- Quito: 2 nights, Santa Cruz Island: 2 nights, Isabela Island: 2 nights
- All ground transportation by private motor coach or public motorboat
- Domestic flights, Quito – Santa Cruz – Quito in economy class
- Airport transfers with purchased AESU group airfare

Meals

- 16 meals: 6 breakfasts, 5 lunches including packed lunch | 5 dinners

Tour Highlights

Welcome orientation | Quito Old Town & colonial center | Carondelet Palace, Middle of the World monument | Inti-Nān open air-museum | Santa Cruz highland giant tortoises | Lava tunnels | Tintoreras marine wildlife | Biking in Wetlands Complex | Wall of Tears | Sierra Negra Volcano hike | Tortuga Beach activities | Opuntia Kakteen (cactus forest) | Las Grietas emerald waters and much more!

Activities & Admissions

- Guided tour of Quito, led by a local English-speaking historian
- Naturalist and/or local experts throughout Galapagos
- Admissions to Quito sights (churches where applicable, Middle of the World, Inti-Nān Museum)
- Santa Cruz highland hike
- Lava tunnel
- Charles Darwin Research Station visit
- Guided exploration of Tintoreras
- Bike ride to Wetland Complex
- Sierra Negra Volcano hike
- Tortuga Beach snorkeling
- Hike through the dry forest of Opuntia Kakteen
- Las Grietas Canyon

Optional Excursions

(not included in land package price):

- Day 6 – Tortuga Beach kayaking or stand-up paddle boarding



GALAPAGOS ECO EXPERIENCE ITINERARY

About the Trip!

Step into Ecuador's natural wonderland and get ready to unlock a world of adventure.

From Quito, Ecuador's dynamic capital nestled between Andean peaks, offering a blend of history, culture, and stunning vistas to the untouched beaches of the exotic Galapagos Islands, this is your ticket to endless excitement.

Imagine exploring the volcanic wonderlands of Santa Cruz and Isabela, encountering marine iguanas, friendly sea lions, and massive tortoises. Get set to dive into the ultimate South American escape that promises unforgettable thrills and unrivaled experiences!

- DAY 1** **LAND TOUR START DATE: ARRIVE QUITO, ECUADOR**
 Bienvenidos! Welcome to Quito, the capital of Ecuador and a city famed for its high vantage point in the Andean mountains and ancient Incan significance.
Meals: In-flight
Inclusions: Airport transfer with purchased AESU group airfare
- DAY 2** **QUITO**
 Our adventure begins with an exploration of Quito. Sitting at an altitude over 9,000 feet above sea level at the foot of the Pichincha Volcano, Quito is one of the most attractive cities in South America, stretching along a central valley formed by the east and west ranges of the Andes.
 Our tour includes the Old Town, the "Balcon Quiteño," the Legislative Palace, the colonial center, Independence Plaza, Carondelet Palace, the Metropolitan Cathedral, "La Compañía" and "San Francisco" churches.
 After lunch at a cozy local restaurant in the old town, we continue to the "Mitad del Mundo," Middle of the World monument to visit the "original" equator that makes Quito the most famous example of a city located in two hemispheres.
 We continue to Inti-Nan, an open-air museum and a great place to learn more about the history of Ecuador and its indigenous people.
Meals: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner
Inclusions: Tour of Quito, guided by a local English-speaking expert | Admission to churches, where applicable, Middle of the World and Inti-Nan Museum | Ingala transit card

DAY 3 FLIGHT TO GALAPAGOS – SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

A morning flight brings us to Santa Cruz Island. Upon arrival we make our way to the highlands of Santa Cruz, stopping at the Scalesia Cloud Forest for a short trek through the scrublands in search of giant tortoises roaming in their natural habitat.

We explore one of the many lava tunnels found across the islands due to the archipelago sitting on a tectonic plate. Charles Darwin conceived his theory of evolution on the Galapagos and the research station named after him provides a whole range of information about the conservation efforts made to preserve the unique ecosystem.

The station is also an ideal place to meet more Galapagos tortoises. We end our day in Puerto Ayora, located on the southern shore of Santa Cruz Island.

Meals: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

Inclusions: Flight from Quito to Santa Cruz Island | Guided tour of Santa Cruz Island | Visit to Charles Darwin Research Station | Naturalist and/or local experts

DAY 4 ISABELA ISLAND – TINTORERAS – WALL OF TEARS

We depart Santa Cruz by motorboat this morning. After approximately two hours, arrive at Isabela Island, the largest island of the Galapagos. We begin our visit at 'Tintoreras' a group of small islands in front of Puerto Villamil, where we see penguins, sea lions and colorful fish in the shallow sea and observe sharks in a small channel.

After lunch we hop on our bikes and visit the Wetlands Complex and the Wall of Tears. This five-mile ride over a mix of compacted sand and ballast track takes us along a path of pools, beaches, and mangroves.

At the end of our journey, we reach the Wall of Tears, known as El Muro de las Lágrimas, and one of the most important historic sites in the Galapagos Islands. It gets its name from the crying and sacrifices of the prisoners who were forced to build it. Our day ends in Puerto Villamil where we share today's experiences over a dinner of local specialties.

Meals: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

Inclusions: Motorboat ride from Santa Cruz to Isabela Island | Guided tour of Tintoreras | Bicycle ride to the Wetlands Complex and the Wall of Tears | Naturalist and/or local experts

DAY 5 ISABELA ISLAND - SIERRA NEGRA VOLCANO HIKE

We are in for a special treat today. The Sierra Negra Volcano is one of five active volcanoes located on Isabela Island and the only one that visitors are allowed to hike to.

We catch a ride to the volcano's trail entrance, then gear up and enjoy a 7.5-mile climb, guided by a certified naturalist. Upon reaching the top, peer into the volcano's glowing funaroles and 6-plus mile wide caldera, then close your eyes and absorb the energy of the Galapagos Islands, feeling your surroundings and the powerful connection to the land.

Though the volcano remains active today, there hasn't been any recorded activity in nearly 20 years. We return to our hotel with time to relax and get ready for dinner.

Meals: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

Inclusions: Guided hike of Sierra Negra Volcano | Naturalist and/or local experts

DAY 6 PUERTO AYORA – SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Early this morning, we bid farewell to Isabela Island as a motorboat takes us back to Santa Cruz Island. We visit Tortuga Beach, one of the most beautiful beaches on the Galapagos, with an opportunity to spot marine iguanas, pelicans, rays and colorful fish. This is an immaculate natural paradise where you can go kayaking or paddle-boarding, observe marine iguanas and birds or swim with harmless sharks in a cove.

After a short hike through the cactus forest of Opuntia Kakteen, take a refreshing last dip in the ocean. In the afternoon we visit “Las Grietas,” a long crevasse or fissure canyon of high volcanic walls filled with emerald-green waters. The protected walls ensure that the water, which is a mix of sea and freshwater entering from opposite ends of the cavern, is crystal clear and calm – perfect for a relaxing swim. Enjoy local delicacies at our farewell Galapagos dinner tonight.

Meals: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

Inclusions: Motorboat from Isabela to Santa Cruz Island |
Tortuga Bay beach snorkeling | Swimming with (harmless) sharks |
Opuntia Kakteen cactus forest Las Grietas emerald water swim

Optional activity: Tortuga Bay kayaking or paddle boarding

DAY 7 SANTA CRUZ ISLAND – FLIGHT TO QUITO – CONNECTING FLIGHT HOME

After breakfast, we take final selfies with our new-found friends, before leaving Santa Cruz to Quito for our connecting flights home.

Meals: Breakfast

Inclusions: Private airport transfer | Flight to Quito

DAY 8 ARRIVE HOME

Arrive home with memories of one of the world’s most intriguing destinations and plans for your next exciting adventure!

YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE GALAPAGOS CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The Galápagos National Park Directorate organizes and manages the ecosystems in the archipelago. It aims to secure the conservation and integrity of the National Park and ensure the rational use of goods and environmental services that it generates for the population. Measures were put in place to control tourism by implementing a series of rules and regulations to protect the Islands and minimize the impact of tourism. All visitors must be accompanied by Galápagos National Park certified guide and pay a \$200 cash entrance fee (subject to change) upon arrival to the Galapagos Islands. For more details see: <https://www.galapagos.org/travel/park-rules/>

TOUR DIRECTORS

Your land package tour includes the services of a professional tour director, who knows this is a trip of a lifetime for you. They are young professionals; multi-lingual and carefully selected graduates from major universities. They are eager to show you the world through the eyes of an adventurer, sharing with you their vast knowledge, as well as interesting little-known facts.

Our qualified tour directors and staff of local experts mean a trouble-free journey with the added security of group travel. We are very proud of our tour directors, therefore it is customary to include gratuity.

Show the tour director and driver your appreciation with a tip. We suggest \$6-7 per person/per day for your tour director and \$4 per person/per day for your driver.

HOTELS

We stay in superior tourist-class hotels or better, all with private bathrooms in 2-share rooms. Our hotels have been specially selected for their atmosphere, friendly hospitality, and cleanliness. They are centrally located or within a short walk of public transportation, taking you to the landmarks of your choice in the city you are visiting.

All land package rates are based on two people sharing a room. You can book a single-room by paying an additional single supplement of \$725. The total single tour package for the 8 day trip is \$3,600.

If you are a solo traveler and don't want to pay the single supplement, AESU will attempt to arrange a share with a same-gender traveler. If we are unable to arrange a share, the single supplement of \$725 will be added to your invoice.

By booking your trip with AESU, you are agreeing to all the terms and conditions as outlined on our website:
<https://www.aesu.com/terms-conditions-awt/> | For details on our payment plan, please visit: <https://www.aesu.com/payment-plan-awt/>