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***Ecology in Ecuador: Wildlife Observation in the Amazon Rainforest, Andean Cloud Forest & Galápagos Islands***  
***Adventure Activities: Hiking, Ocean Kayaking, Camping and Snorkeling***  
***Itinerary for George Mason University · January 5 - 20, 2011***

DATE	DAY OF WEEK	ITINERARY	OVERNIGHTS	ACTIVITIES	MEALS
Jan 5	Wednesday	Depart U.S. / Arrive Quito	Hotel Vieja Cuba	Surrounded by forested mountains and volcanoes at 9,350 feet above sea level, Quito is the second highest capital city in Latin America. Despite the fact that it's only 15 miles south of the equator, Quito's elevation gives it a wonderful spring-like climate year-round. Upon evening arrival into Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport, you will be met by your Andean Discovery guide and transferred to your inn to relax after the flights.	
6	Thursday	Quito	Hotel Vieja Cuba	After breakfast, you will be met by your guide and vehicle and proceed on a tour of Colonial Quito's cobbled streets, whitewashed adobe walls, and ornate balconies. Visit sites such as the Compania Church, with its striking facade in American Baroque and Plateresque styles, and the Church of San Francisco, which was built by the Spaniards in the 16th century. This afternoon visit the Botanical Garden of Quito where nearly all the ecosystems of Ecuador are represented. The garden is located in the middle of Carolina Park and includes rare flora such as the Frailejón plant from the high páramo region. Amazon briefing and dinner.	B, L, D

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Jan 7	Friday	Quito / Amazon Rainforest	Tiputini Research Station	This morning Andean Discovery staff will transfer you to the national airport in time for your morning flight to the Oriente, the Amazon Basin of Ecuador. Upon arrival into the city of Coca, you will transfer to the port and board a motorized canoe for your journey downstream to the Tiputini Biodiversity Station (the journey requires a canoe transfer, an open aired bus transfer, then a second canoe transfer). Wildlife viewing en route to the station and arrival in the late afternoon. The Station welcomes scientists interested in developing short and long term research programs as well as school groups with a short-term educational focus on the Amazon Rainforest. The Station is located among the most pristine Amazon Rainforest within the Yasuní National Park, an important UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the largest tract of tropical rain forest in Ecuador. Upon arrival you will receive an orientation and then dinner is served. Nocturnal walk or canoe excursion.	B, L, D
8	Saturday	Amazon Rainforest	Tiputini Research Station	This morning you will be divided up into small groups, and lead by a native guide, an expert on the forest's secrets about medicinal plants and other useful items of the rain forest. After a short hike, climb the 150-foot observation tower to search for White-throated toucans, Mealy Amazon parrots, Squirrel monkeys, Scarlet Macaws, and other animals that reside in the forest's canopy layer. The tower has been built upon high ground, therefore increasing your view of the continuous primary forest extending out towards the Yasuni National Park. The tower allows you incredible access to the rare plant and animal species of the delicate treetop ecosystem. Return to the lodge for lunch. Afternoon hike and wildlife viewing on the Matapalo trail. Evening lecture about the motion sensitive cameras, a project conducted by scientists at the Station and National Geographic to photograph jaguars and other nocturnal animals that live in the surrounding forest. While resting from activities you may get to see a group of pink-nose dolphins investigating near the lodge, a large 10-foot black caiman crossing the river, a capybara looking for rest near the river edge, or experience the graceful flights of blue and yellow macaws over the lodge area.	B, L, D

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Jan 9	Sunday	Amazon Rainforest	Tiputini Research Station	Early rise and breakfast. Morning hike and wildlife viewing on the Pahuaco trail. Visit to the canopy walkway for another look at the forest's ceiling. Return to the lodge for lunch. The hall has a library with books on local birds and tropical ecology. The calls of red howler monkeys will accompany the resting times before gearing up for the next excursion. Afternoon canoe visit to the "aguas negras". Return to the lodge for dinner and evening lecture on the affects of oil extraction on the rainforest's natural habitat and native communities, and controversy surrounding the issue.	B, L, D
10	Monday	Amazon Rainforest / Quito	Hotel Vieja Cuba	After an early morning breakfast, you will pack in the canoes and journey upstream to Coca, arriving in time for your flight to Quito. Upon arrival into Quito, you will be met by Andean Discovery staff and transferred to the Charles Darwin Hotel. Optional salsa classes this evening lead by a local tropical dance teacher (\$10 per participant not included).	B, L, D
11	Tuesday	Quito / Mindo /Bellavista Cloud Forest	Bellavista	After an early breakfast, depart northwest with your guide and private vehicle for a pleasant, 90-minute drive to the Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve. Cloud forests, correctly termed pre-montane/subtropical rain forests, cloak the steep slopes of the Andes from about 2,950 to 8,202 feet above sea level. They are forests of high biodiversity, with a profusion of little-studied wildlife and plants. Bellavista is at the southern edge of the Choco/Andean hotspots of biodiversity, which stretches from southwestern Colombia to northwestern Ecuador, and is home to over 300 different species of tropical birds and numerous other animals. Equally important, Bellavista is part of the Mindo Area of International Importance for Birds, the first area so designated in South America, by Birdlife International in 1997. Descend the flanks of the Andes from Quito to 4,015 feet above sea level and watch the landscape change dramatically as lush green forest and waterfalls dominate. Your first stop is the quaint town of Mindo where you will slide on a harness and clip in for an exhilarating zip-line canopy tour of the surrounding cloud forest. Keep your eyes out for toucans, owls, quetzals, hummingbirds, and the beautiful Cock-of-the-Rock as you explore the forest's canopy. A series of 13 zip lines connected by built-in tree platforms allows you to journey over 2 miles across the upper level of the cloud forest. After lunch, proceed on a guided hike through Bellavista's network of trails in the beautiful Tandayapa Valley, observing wildlife along the way. The rainforest here is different than the rainforest in the Amazon and George Mason students will compare and contrast the two ecosystems during their visit. Enjoy dinner in the 360° dome restaurant and relax to the sounds of nature at night.	B, L, D

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Jan 12	Wednesday	Bellavista Cloud Forest / Quito	Hotel Vieja Cuba	Early morning wakeup and bird walk. Hike to one of the reserve's picturesque waterfalls. Keep your eyes out for Bellavista's resident mammals such as the endangered Spectacled Bear, (rarely seen but protected by the reserve), the puma, Andean coati and tayra, to name a few. Optional horseback riding excursion (not included in trip price.) After lunch, you will be transferred to your hotel in Quito for a briefing about the upcoming Galápagos excursion and dinner.	B, L, D
13	Thursday	Quito / San Cristóbal Island  <i>Galápagos</i>	Hotel Cactus	This morning you will be transferred to the airport in time for your flight to San Cristóbal Island, the easternmost island in the Galápagos, and ranked among the older group of islands. This island is also where Charles Darwin first went ashore in September 1835. Upon arrival, you will be met by your Galápagos Naturalist Guide and transferred to a local beach-front restaurant for lunch. After a kayak briefing, transfer to the beach, load up in our sit-on-top kayaks, and set out to explore the coast. The slow pace of the kayaks gliding over the water and the freedom to navigate on your own makes this afternoon in Galápagos a special experience, and a great way to begin your visit to the Islands. While kayakers can't disembark anywhere they please, the boats are maneuverable enough to cruise rocky shorelines that motorized vessels cannot. Paddlers often attract curious animals, especially near-sighted sea lions, which tend to approach you for a closer look! Continue along the west point of the island until you reach the turquoise-blue waters of Las Tijeretas Bay. From your kayak, observe marine wildlife such as Blue-footed Boobies, sea lions, frigate birds, or brown pelicans whose eight-foot wingspan helps them to dive-bomb for sardines. Make your way back to the beach at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. This small attractive port is nestled along a crescent-shaped bay and is the provincial capital of the Galápagos Islands. Enjoy a little time to stroll the port on your own before dinner and a briefing about tomorrow's activities from your Naturalist Guide.	B, L, D

DATE	DAY OF WEEK	ITINERARY	OVERNIGHTS	ACTIVITIES	MEALS
Jan 14	Friday	San Cristóbal Island  <i>Galápagos</i>	Andean Discovery Private Camp – San Cristóbal Island  Sleeping tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, dining tent, toilet tent and camping showers are provided by Andean Discovery  Andean Discovery professional chef prepares delicious meals at the camp	After a hearty breakfast, assist Andean Discovery in its conservation efforts by planting endemic and native plants and trees in the Native Plant Garden. Species to be planted include: Alternanthera, Walteria, Palo Negro, Lecocarpus, Muyuyo, Algodoncillo, Cafetillo, Romerillo, Senna, Opuntia, Calandrin, Galapagosa, Scalesia, Palo Santo, Guayabillo, Chala, Matazarno, and Uña de Gato. Literature about these endemic species and the importance of our reforestation efforts will be provided to GMU participants. Later this morning, transfer to the port where you will board a small motorboat for a day of snorkeling, swimming, and exploration along the northwest coast of San Cristóbal Island. The first stop is Lobos Island for a chance to swim with sea lions, sea turtles, and observe various tropical fish. After a box lunch, continue on to Kicker Rock (known in Spanish as Leon Dormido), a giant rock outcropping, which is the jagged remains of a vertical tuff cone. The flanks of Kicker Rock are a notorious nesting place for seabirds such as Masked Boobies and Frigate birds. This is a great place to snorkel with friendly Galápagos sharks, sea turtles, and spotted eagle rays. Late afternoon arrival at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. This small attractive port is nestled along a crescent-shaped bay and is the provincial capital of the Galápagos Islands. Enjoy a little time to stroll the port on your own and then transfer to the camp in the highlands. Your Galápagos Naturalist Guide will brief the group about tomorrow's activities.	B, L, D
15	Saturday	San Cristóbal Island / Floreana Island/ Isabela Island  <i>Galápagos</i>	The Wooden House	After an early rise and breakfast, board a small boat with outboard motor and depart for Floreana Island (approximately 2.5 hours), the first island that saw a permanent settlement of Ecuadorians in 1832. Floreana has the most intriguing human history with visitors including pirates, prisoners, and whalers. Today a resident human population of 100 habitants accompanies the local wildlife. Before your arrival at Floreana, you'll snorkel at Champion's Bay, one of the best snorkel spots in Galapagos, located just off the coast. Keep your eyes out for white-tipped sharks, rays, sea turtles, sea lions, and countless tropical fish. Disembark at Puerto Velasco Ibarra and transfer a few kilometers inland to the humid zone, which is home to the Medium Tree Finch, found only on Floreana Island, and the dwellings of the original settlers of the island. After lunch and a swim at Playa Negra, board the boat and continue northwest to Isabela Island (approximately 1.5 hours), the largest island in the Galápagos Archipelago and perhaps the most biologically and geologically diverse. Check in at your hotel in Puerto Villamil and your Naturalist Guide will lead a discussion about today's sightings and brief the group about tomorrow's activities.	B, L, D

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Jan 16	Sunday	Isabela Island <i>Galápagos</i>	The Wooden House	Early rise and breakfast. Morning transfer to the highlands of Isabela where you will hike up the flanks of Sierra Negra Volcano, one of Ecuador's most active volcanoes, which last erupted on October 22, 2006. As you approach the crater rim, located at an elevation of nearly 4,890 feet above sea level, take in spectacular views of the 30-square mile caldera. The crater's steaming fumaroles, charcoal-black landscape, and petrified lava formations are testaments to its recent eruption and ongoing volcanic activity. Enjoy a picnic lunch before descending the volcano and returning to Puerto Villamil. Late this afternoon relax on the beach or optional snorkeling with sea lions at Concha del Perla, located near your hotel.	B, L, D
17	Monday	Isabela Island <i>Galápagos</i>	The Wooden House	This morning you'll take a one-hour boat trip southwest along the coast of Isabela to visit the marine sanctuary, Los Túneles, a unique network of channels, arches, and tunnels formed by a series of lava flows. Enjoy a walk over the arches and snorkeling in this spectacular site, which is home to numerous aquatic animals such as marine turtles, sharks, and Blue-footed Boobies. With calm and clear blue waters, and abundance of marine wildlife, many visitors describe this site as a "natural aquarium". Return to Puerto Villamil for lunch or have a box lunch on board. This afternoon travel across the bay with your guide to Tintoreras Island. The island is called Tintoreras because it's a resting place for white-tip reef sharks, "Tintoreras" in Spanish. On the way, keep your eyes out for Galapagos penguins, the smallest species of penguins in the world and endemic to the Galapagos. A short hike allows you to observe one of the largest colonies of marine iguanas in Galapagos, white-tip sharks, sea lions, Sally Lightfoot crabs, and Blue-footed Boobies. Return to the bay for some spectacular snorkeling with sea lions, rays, and many different species of tropical fish.	B, L, D
18	Tuesday	Isabela Island / Santa Cruz Island <i>Galápagos</i>	Hotel Peregrina or equivalent-	After breakfast, board your privately chartered boat and transfer 2 hours to Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island, the largest port town in Galapagos with shops, restaurants, and the Charles Darwin Research Station. After lunch proceed on a guided visit of the Darwin Station, where you will learn about current scientific research on the islands and the Station's mission to ensure the conservation of the environment and biodiversity in the Galapagos Archipelago. The Station is also a tortoise breeding and rearing center. Observe how tortoises of different subspecies are prepared for reintroduction to their natural habitats. Evening dinner and briefing.	B, L, D

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Jan 19	Wednesday	Baltra Island / Quito / Depart		This morning transfer by land to the Baltra Island canal, and then on to the Baltra Aiport in time for your flight to Quito. Upon arrival in Quito, you will be met by Andean Discovery staff and transferred to your hotel. Farewell dinner in Quito. Lunch on your own.	B, D
20	Thursday	Arrive U.S.		This morning you will be transferred to the airport in time for your international flight to the U.S.	

**Meals included:** B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

## Included

- Transfers and all activities as per the above itinerary
- Accommodations based on double occupancy
- Meals as per the above itinerary inclusive of restaurant staff tips
- Services of English-speaking professional Andean Discovery guides in the Amazon Rainforest, Galápagos, and Andean Highlands
- Park fees (except for Galápagos National Park)
- Bottled water
- Sleeping tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, dining tent, toilet tent and Andean Discovery campsite facilities on San Cristobal
- Internal round-trip flights as per above itinerary, priced out separately above (Quito to Amazon Basin and Quito to Galapagos)
- Private land transportation in a comfortable government inspected vehicle as per the above itinerary
- Andean Discovery office staff, 24-hour emergency contact person with cell phone communication available throughout the trip
- Guest Cell Phone for the group leader to communicate with Andean Discovery staff during the trip

## Not Included

- International round-trip airfare from U.S. to Quito
- \$100 per person Galápagos National Park fee, and \$10 Galápagos Immigration Card fee (fees subject to change)
- Equipment for wildlife viewing such as binoculars, snorkeling gear, and wetsuit
- Gratuities for staff such as guides and drivers (see pre-departure packet for recommendations)
- Sodas, alcohol
- Meals and expenses en route
- Airport departure taxes of approximately \$40.80 (from Quito, subject to change)
- Laundry, phone and other items of a personal nature
- Cost of hospitalization and evacuation if necessary
- Fees for passport, visas, immunizations, and travel insurance, if applicable

**Please note:** Andean Discovery (AD) will attempt to adhere to this itinerary as much as possible. However, certain conditions (political, climatic, environmental, cultural, or wildlife patterns) may necessitate changes in the itinerary. AD reserves the right to alter any itinerary at any time, if necessary. We will attempt to notify participants of changes as far in advance as possible. Costs incurred by such changes will be the responsibility of the participant. The cruise itinerary in the Galapagos is subject to change at the discretion of the Galapagos National Parks Department.