



Himanshuu Sheth Photosafaaris

Ecuador

Quito, Amazon & Galapagos

Date: 2018 Oct 16 – 30 (14N/15D)

Highlights: The Mighty Amazon & the Islands of Galapagos



Galapagos – Land where Darwin's theory of Evolution was inspired from...



Our Itinerary –

Oct 16: Arrive Quito, Ecuador

Arrive at Quito airport & check into hotel to relax & recover. Dinner, overnight JW Marriott or similar.



Oct 17 : Quito – Amazon

After breakfast we take our flight to Coca, in the Amazon basin. A quick lunch at Sacha Private house & then we go to the docks to take our private canoes for the 2 hour journey down the river to the Lodge's property. From there a 30min hike through the rainforest leads you to Lake Pilchicocha. Here some natives will paddle us across the lake to our final destination. Check in at Sacha Lodge & we can swim in the lake after being in the equatorial heat all day. Spend the rest of the evening observing & photographing various species of birds & visit the butterfly house. After dinner we accompany our naturalist to see the many species that can be found only at night.

Overnight: Sacha Lodge (LD)

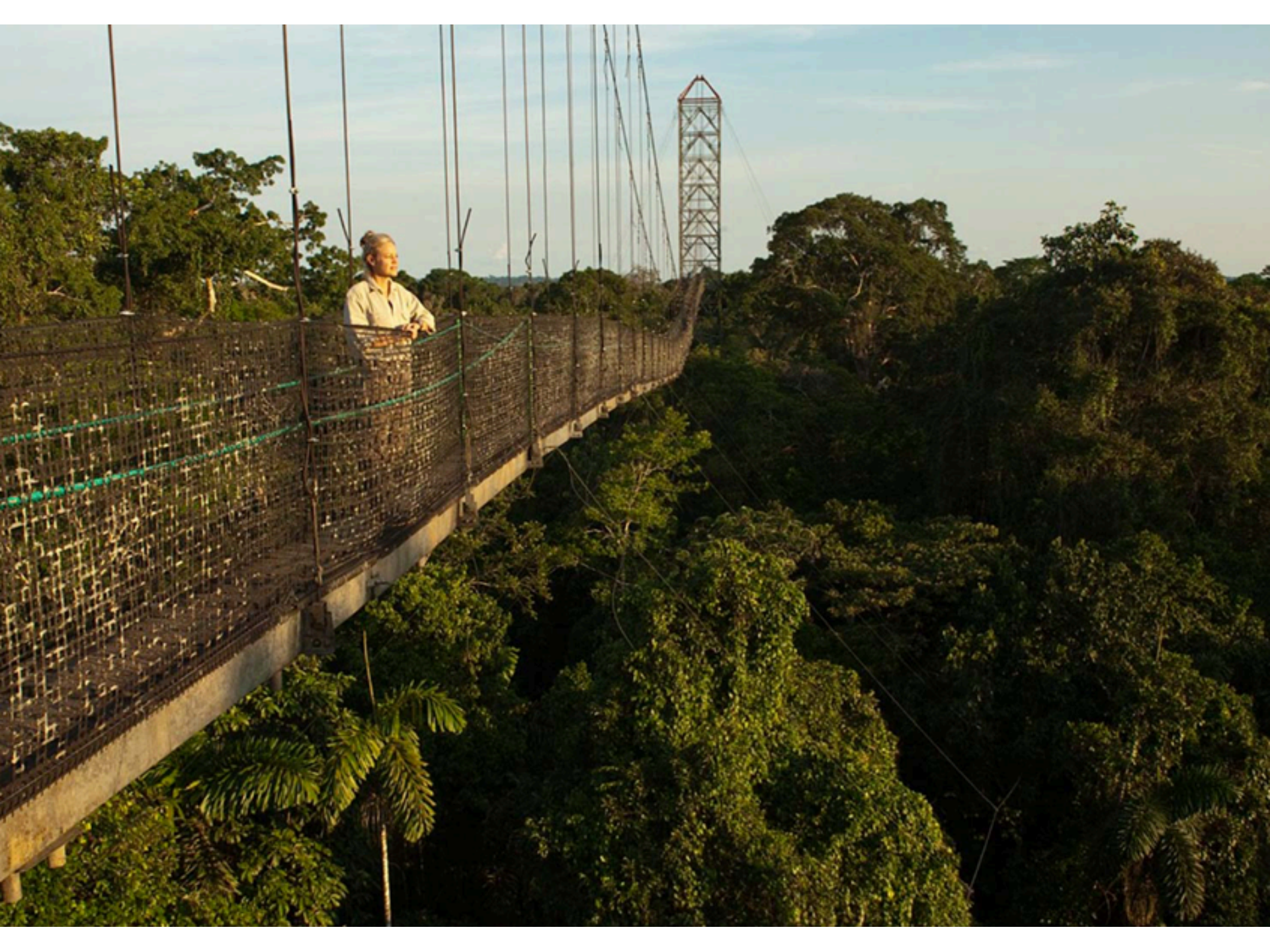






Oct 18: Amazon

We start our day around 6:30am. We do a walk along the Lian Chica trail & come to the Canopy walk, for the spectacular views of the rainforest & many vibrant coloured birds. After the canopy walk we go to Igapo forest habitats where natives will explain many medicinal plants which have been used in their culture for centuries. After lunch we could take a leisurely hike along Rio Napo or a more challenging hike to try & spot the elusive dusky titi monkey. Later we walk back along the boardwalk & to our canoe ride back to the lodge.
Overnight Sacha Lodge (BLD)





Oct 19: Amazon

After breakfast, we begin our hike on trail Lagartococha. This trail offers us the chance to learn more about the native people and their relationship with the forest. At lake Lagartococha, take a tranquil canoe ride through a natural swamp, which is the home of anacondas, caimans, and capybaras. After the canoe ride, a walk on the other side of Lagartococha may give us the opportunity to spot capuchins or squirrel monkeys playfully jumping through the trees. Around 15:30 we will begin what many think is the best excursion at Sacha, a silent canoe ride through the flooded Amazonian forest, where we have a good chance of being surrounded by troops of squirrels, capuchins and howler monkeys. We arrive at Sacha's 135-foot wooden tower built around an ancient Kapok tree. Get close up views of vibrantly colored birds, and watch the sunset with an amazing view of Mount Sumaco, a volcano, and possibly a view of the snow-covered caps of the Andes! A canoe ride back through the flooded forest at night will be an awe-inspiring experience. Listen to the symphony of frogs and insects as you navigate through the narrow flooded forest trail & arrive back at lake Pilchicocha and the welcoming lights of Sacha Lodge.

Overnight in Sacha Lodge (BLD)





Oct 20 : Amazon - Quito

Breakfast and depart from the lodge at 7:30am for an easy walk on the boardwalk to watch monkeys one last time before your final departure. 2-hour canoe ride back to Coca for your 35-minute flight back to Quito. Our guide will be waiting to take us on our city tour upon arrival. We will visit downtown, oldest city street, La Ronda. We will visit the gastronomy capsule & learn about the spices of this region. Visit the house of handicrafts, Independence square, XVI century cathedral, The Presidential Palace, El Sagrario Church & La Compania de Jesus, one of the most beautiful baroque churches in South America. Finally we drive to the viewpoint at the Penecillo hill & see the Unique winged virgin of Quito. We will get stunning views of the city & the surrounding mountains & Volcanoes.

Overnight at JW Marriott or similar.



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Oct 21 : Quito

Drive along the Pan-American Highway known as "The Volcanoes Avenue" towards one of the world's highest active volcanoes-Cotopaxi (5,897 m). Explore this magnificent area & after we have don't that we will visit a typical indigenous market in the region. Return to Quito by evening. Overnight at JW Marriott or similar.





Oct 22 : Quito – Galapagos – Santa Cruz Island

Morning flight from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra, Galapagos Islands.

We will arrive at Baltra Island in the morning. After passing through immigration and baggage claim, we will be met by a Alia staff member and transferred to the yacht. We will be shown to our cabin where we will have some time to settle in before lunch and a welcome briefing.

Afternoon, we will visit Fausto Llerena Breeding Center in Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island, where giant tortoises are bred in captivity. Subspecies of the giant tortoises interact with one another, and many of the older tortoises are accustomed to humans stretching out their heads for a photo opportunity. The babies are kept until they are about four years-old and strong enough to survive on their own.





Oct 23 : Galapagos – Isabela Island

In the morning we will visit **Moreno Point** at Isabela Island. Here a dry landing onto what was once flowing lava. The lava has left craters in its wake which formed crystal tide pools. By looking into the pools, you can peer into another world as the marine life drifts by your window. In the brackish pools of this area, you may see pink amingos, white-cheeked pintails, and common gallinules. If you look carefully into the pools, you may see white-tip reef sharks and some sea turtles. We may also spot flamingoes, ducks & turtles.

Second Half we visit Elizabeth Bay on the east coast of Isabela Island. The bay contains many islets, which can be visited by dinghy. Penguins and blue-footed boobies can be spotted on the rocky islets. With an abundance of marine life and clear water, the area is perfect for snorkeling and viewing schools of colorful fish, sea lions, and perhaps even sharks.





Oct 24 : Galapagos – Isabela & Fernandina Islands

In the morning, we will go to **Urbina Bay** which is located at the base of Alcedo Volcano between Tagus Cove and Elizabeth Bay. This area experienced a major uplift in 1954 causing the land to rise over 16 feet. The coast expanded half a mile out leaving marine life stranded on the new shore. This area is also a great place for snorkeling. We will see Land iguanas (the biggest in the Galapagos), hawks, coral reef, giant tortoises. We can go snorkeling & see turtles, rays, tropical fish.

In the afternoon, crossing the Bolivar Channel that divides Isabela and Fernandina Islands, we will land at **Espinosa Point**, and after walking past a colony of marine iguanas and a group of sea lions, reach the island's highlight: the flightless cormorant nesting site. This area provides a great opportunity to see the Galapagos hawk. We can also do a small hike about 2kms & see the active volcano La Cumbre.







Oct 25 : Galapagos – Isabela Island

Morning we will visit Tagus Cove on Isabela Island which is located across from Fernandina Island. This spot has been frequented by ships since the 1800s, using the area as an anchorage site. Trails winding by Lake Darwin up to a ridge display wonderful views. Punta Tortuga, just north of Tagus Cove, is another lovely beach surrounded by mangroves. We will get to see Penguins, flightless cormorants, Darwin Volcano & Lake.

Afternoon we visit Vicente Roca Point. Comprised of two separate coves, this site is a large bay with spectacular sea life. Keep an eye out for seahorses, sea turtles, and the strange yet fascinating Mola mola (or sun fish). We can snorkel & take a dinghy ride. We can see Penguins, blue-footed boobies, terns, Nazca boobies, two types of sea lions. sea turtles, rays and puffer fish.





Oct 26 : Galapagos – Santiago Island

Morning visit Espumilla Beach where marine iguanas lounge and the Sally Lightfoot crabs attract the hunting herons performing the dance of predator and prey right before our eyes. Snorkeling is highly recommended as you could come face to face with an octopus, moray eel, shark and a variety of other species of tropical fish.

Afternoon, we will go to Egas Port, also known as James Bay, on Santiago Island which is home to the curious Galapagos hawks and quick-footed Galapagos lava lizards. The trail leads to the coastline with gorgeous tide pools and grottos full of fauna. Here the Galapagos fur sea lions bathe in the sun. This is also a great snorkeling site.





Oct 27 : Galapagos – Rabida & Santiago Islands

In the morning, we will visit Rabida Island (or Jervis) which is one of the most colorful and volcanically varied islands in the archipelago as well as a great snorkeling site. We will start on Rabida's famous maroon sandy beach, and after an easy hike, we will arrive at a stunning lookout to enjoy the amazing landscapes. The island is a birdwatcher's delight. Some of the rarest species are in abundance such as nine varieties of finches, large-billed flycatchers, Galapagos hawks, and brown pelicans.

In the afternoon, we will visit Chinese Hat Islet. This small islet is located near the southeast coast of Santiago Island. Its name comes from the distinct shape of the islet's summit. This small islet is a great location to view many geological formations such as lava tubes and lava flows. Some of the lava ows were formed underwater and subsequently raised above sea level. The presence of coral heads on the lava ow indicates this phenomenon.





Oct 28 : Galapagos – Santa Cruz & South Plaza Island

Morning visit Bachas Beach, located on the north shore of Santa Cruz which is a swimming beach. One of the few remnants of the U.S. World War II presence in the Galapagos, a floating pier, can be seen here. You may see flamingos, Sally Lightfoot crabs, hermit crabs, black-necked stilts, and whimbrels. Sea turtles also nest on the beach.

In the afternoon, we will head to South Plaza Island. This small island with steep cliffs was formed by rising lava and is now covered by Opuntia cacti. It is also home to one of the largest sea lion colonies as well as colorful yellow and red land iguanas. The most characteristic plant is the Sesuvium. During the rainy season its color is a greenish to yellowish tone and in the dry season (end of June through January) a bright red.





Oct 29 : Galapagos – San Cristobal Island & return to Quito

In the morning, we will visit the Interpretation Center. This site is part of an environment project. The Museum of Natural History explains the volcanic origin of the archipelago, ocean currents, climate, and the arrival of endemic species. The Human History exhibit chronologically describes significant events such as discovery and colonization of the islands.

After this we will be transferred to the airport for our flight back to Quito. Check into hotel & the rest of the evening at leisure.

Overnight at JW Marriott or similar.



Oct 30 : Quito onwards...

After a relaxed morning we prepare to leave this incredible corner of our planet with some incredible memories & images to cherish for a long long time.

Includes:

Accommodation, Meals as indicated in the Itinerary

All Land / water transportation as indicated

Domestic flights (costs shown are indicative & may change at the time of booking).

Photography guidance

Excludes:

International airfare inclusive of related taxes

Visa entry fees

All Optional Activities extras not stated

Expenses of personal nature such as telecommunications, tips / gratuities, cigarettes, drinks etc.

Laundry services not unless otherwise mentioned

Travel, baggage and medical insurance. (Highly recommended)

Any other item/s not specified above.

Changes or deviation from the itinerary

Look forward to a very exciting Photosafari...

