

Risk Management & Risk Prevention Measures Galapagos Islands Eco Tour 2018

INTRODUCTION

All travel brings with it risks of one kind or another. However, a prepared traveler is far less vulnerable than an ignorant one. Please read through this document carefully, as it has been compiled with your comfort and safety in mind. The purpose of this document is not to cause alarm or concern. On the contrary, this document has been written to reassure you that reasonable precautions have and will be taken.

QUITO

Quito is the capital of Ecuador, 22 km south of the equator. The city has a year-round spring-like climate due to its geographical location. It lies in a valley of magnificent mountains at the foot of the Pichincha volcano. The city has been declared an UNESCO site in order to preserve the old colonial town and its rich history. Quito is divided into two sections – the old town and the new town. The old town is the cultural center of Quito, made up of interesting historical buildings and colonial churches, which you will have a chance to explore on the city tour.

RISKS IN QUITO

Given that our stay in Quito is limited, the risks associated with Quito will be minimal. However, it is always good to be aware of the potential risks.

As of June 16, 2017, there is no nationwide advisory in effect for Ecuador. However, you should exercise a high degree of caution due to high levels of crime and public demonstrations. Please visit the Government of Canada Travel Advisory <http://travel.gc.ca/destinations/ecuador> for more information. It is recommended to go through a free registration process offered by the Canadian Foreign Affairs to keep you connected to Canada in case of an emergency by visiting Registration of Canadians Abroad <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration> .

CRIME IN QUITO

Petty crime (such as pick-pocketing) can occur at airports, at bus stations, and in other transit points. Do not leave your bag or luggage unattended. It is recommended to place a copy of the itinerary with your name, address and phone number in an accessible part of your luggage so that your luggage can be reunited with you in case it is lost. Keep your passports and important papers in a money belt under your clothing. Carry only enough money for anticipated expenses and keep any valuable items or electronic equipment out of sight. It is advisable to make two copies of all personal documents and travel itinerary; leave one copy with a family member or friend and keep the other copy separate from your originals in case of theft or loss. You may want to hand in your passport, documents and valuables to the hotel reception for safekeeping in Quito, and carry only copies of your identification documents. It is a legal requirement in Ecuador to carry identification at all times.

HEALTH RISKS IN QUITO

Quito is the second highest capital in the world (2850 meters above sea level). Therefore, altitude sickness may be a problem. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, dehydration, a pounding heart, breathlessness, upset stomach, and insomnia. The locals drink coca tea, which relieves the symptoms. Drinking a lot helps. Do not overexert yourself, and do not consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes in order to minimize symptoms. Discuss any health concerns with your family doctor prior to the trip.

During your free time in Quito, drink only bottled water and alcoholic beverages that do not contain ice cubes. Eat only well cooked foods; avoid eating salads, and raw fruits and vegetables that have not been properly cleaned. Avoid milk or milk-related products since the milk may not be pasteurized. Some of the diseases that can be transmitted by contaminated foods are typhoid fever and hepatitis A.

Please ensure you have contacted Vancouver Coastal Health Travel Clinic <http://travelclinic.vch.ca> at least six to eight weeks prior to the trip for the most up to date health requirements for travel in Ecuador. The travel clinic appointment phone number is 604-736-9244.

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galapagos Islands are 960 km west of Ecuador, and thus isolated from all the uncertainties associated with the mainland.

HEALTH RISKS IN GALAPAGOS

Traveling on boats can result in motion sickness. However, the waters around the Galapagos Islands should be relatively calm in April/May. Therefore, this is not a major concern. It is recommended that you bring Gravol, scopolamine patches, and/or any other medication that you might need (based on the advice of your doctor). Check the compatibility of all motion-sickness medications before the trip; some medications may have bad side effects.

In case of emergencies, there is a pharmacy and a Hospital Republica Del Ecuador on Santa Cruz on Avda Baltra (phone number: 05-252-7439), a Hospital Oskar Jand on San Cristobal in Puerto Baquerizo (phone number: 05-252-0118), and a Centro De Salud #3 on Isabela (phone numbers: 05-252-9181 and/or 05-252-9006).

CLIMATE IN GALAPAGOS

The temperature in the Galapagos Islands is approximately 26 degrees centigrade in April/May. The Humboldt Current tempers the Galapagos climate, so you will not experience extreme heat. However, sunstroke, sunburn, or heat exhaustion may still occur. Wear protective clothing (for example: a hat and sunglasses) at all times on the boat. Wear a white T-shirt in the water in addition to sun blocks. Make sure the sun block is 100% waterproof so that it remains effective.

BOAT CRUISE IN GALAPAGOS

We will be cruising on the Archipell catamaran, which has the Safety Management Certificate number DIRNEA-SMC-11-1, issued in accordance with the provisions of SOLAS and is valid until 2015.

Archipell is a first-class boat that has comfortable cabins, private bathrooms, hot water, dining room, two bars, library, air conditioning, safe deposit box, first aid equipment, water purifier, 24 miles Furuno Radar GPS, Satellite Navigator, depth finder, HF-VHF, Valise satellite radio, depth sounder, cell phone, smoke and fire detectors, ABC fire control system, zodiacs and life jackets. There will be nine crewmembers and a naturalist on board to make our stay as pleasant as possible.

The tour involves guided walks around islands, which may involve traversing through rough and forested terrain. Remain close to the experienced naturalist; follow his instructions at all time, and wear robust yet comfortable footwear that are not prone to slippage.

Entering and leaving the water, as well as boarding and leaving the boat entail risks of possible sprains and strains. Be extremely cautious on wet and dry landings; the launch boat (the pangas) can move quite a lot while attempting to disembark. Please wear the life vests provided while riding the pangas to/from the islands at all times. Do not consume alcohol prior to snorkeling or visiting the islands, as this can impair coordination.

SNORKELING RISKS IN GALAPAGOS

The water temperature is approximately 24 degrees centigrade. Wearing a shorty or wet suit is advisable to maximize your comfort in colder waters and lengthen the amount of time spent in the water snorkeling. You can rent a wet suit on the catamaran but bringing your own ensures the best possible fit.

Even though the tour operators will provide snorkeling equipment, it is recommended that you bring your own snorkel and mask since this will ensure the best fit. Your snorkel mask should fit tightly so that it does not leak yet feel comfortable. Do not remove your snorkel and mask before leaving the water. Use contact lenses, which are not prone to damage from contact with salt water. Bring cleansing eye drops in your personal medical kit.

Put on all your equipment before entering the water. Do not take your equipment off - except for fins - before re-boarding the dinghy. While snorkeling, constantly check for the position of the boat and other snorkelers. Remain within 30 meters of the boat at all times. When getting on and off the dinghy, stay away from the outboard motor, which is located on the stern - never approach the dinghy from the stern. Leave the water immediately when you feel cold or uncomfortable in any way. Signal for help if you feel alarmed, have difficulty staying afloat or swallow excess seawater.

The waters off the Galapagos are remarkably safe. Nevertheless, there is always the possibility of injury caused by marine creatures (such as sharks, jellyfish and sea lions) or contact with rocks and corals. Do not approach coral or rocks too closely. If a cut or scratch occurs, leave the water immediately and seek medical assistance. There are reef white-tip sharks and often schools of hammerhead sharks. However, there has never been a shark attack on humans in the Galapagos waters. Avoid the poisonous stings of the hydroids (that look like small, white, feather-like plants) and the jellyfish. When entering the sea from the shore, shuffle your feet when walking to ensure that you do not step on stingrays, which are sometimes buried in the sand.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Please advise us before the trip if you suffer from any physical disability, as facilities in the Galapagos Islands are not well suited to tourists with even minor physical disabilities.

A FINAL WORD

Undoubtedly you will recognize the comments and risk prevention measures of this document as common sense. If you follow these guidelines, your trip will be safe, enjoyable and enlightening.

If you have any questions about this document, please do not hesitate to contact either Janinah Jansen (Program Coordinator) at jjansen@langara.ca or 604-323-5979 or Anoush Dadgar (Tour Leader) at adadgar@langara.ca.