

15 DAYS: GALAPAGOS ISLANDS & RIO PASTAZA VALLEY ECOTOUR #2

Join us on January 24th for EcoMinga's Anniversary Celebration

A natural history exploration across one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth, this program benefits Fundación ECOMINGA, a conservation NGO that protects areas of high biodiversity and endemism in Ecuador. On the mainland, led by Javier Robayo, biologist and Director of Fundación ECOMINGA, with participation by Lou Jost, co-founder of ECOMINGA. Natalia Espinoza will join expert guides for the Galapagos cruise and Santa Cruz exploration.

Details subject to change.

ITINERARY

JAN 18 Arrival to Quito, Ecuador

Arrival in Quito, capital of Ecuador, orientation to program.

Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh

JAN 19 Travel to Rio Pastaza Valley

This journey along the Avenue of Volcanoes will take you close to Cotopaxi, one of the highest volcanoes in the world, and end in Río Verde, located in the Pastaza Valley. The nearby town of Baños is a place of pilgrimage for people around the world. The breathtaking scenery, the waterfalls, and the thermal baths are the main points of attraction. The Pastaza River and the many waterfalls are the headwaters of the Amazon River.

Lodging: Hotel Miramelindo



JAN 20-21 Explore the Pastaza Valley

Several EcoMinga reserves are located in the surrounding area of Baños. Explore orchid rich trails with expert guides.

Lodging: Hotel Miramelindo

JAN 22 Travel to Quito

Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh

JAN 23 Antisana Volcano

Lodging: Termas de Papallacta



JAN 24 Return to Quito & EcoMinga's 20th Anniversary

Enjoy the hot springs in the morning and return to Quito for lunch. Optional visit to Botanical Gardens. Evening celebration.

Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh

Jan 18-Feb 1, 2026

Duration: 15 Days

Start/End: Quito, Ecuador

Capacity: 9 participants

RATES

Early Bird Rate: \$7,450*

(register by August 1st, 2025)

*Need-based aid available

Standard Rate: \$7,680

Includes: in-country travel, lodging (all rooms are double occupancy), meals, and academic, cultural, and nature activities.

Does Not Include: international airfare, \$220 Galapagos Park fee, \$200-\$350 in cash for gratuities, checked bag to Galapagos, and four open meals. Upgrades available.

\$1,000 deposit refundable in the unlikely event of tour cancellation. Balance due September 15, 2025. Balance due: August 1st, 2025

Contact: Lori Espinoza at:
lori@andeanstudy.org

REGISTER

Upon registering you will receive an invoice for your payment.

\$500 from your total fees benefit Fundación EcoMinga, an Ecuadorian conservation NGO that protects areas of high biodiversity and endemism in Ecuador.





JAN 25 **City Tour**

Quito was declared by Unesco as the best preserved colonial city of the Americas. Discover Ecuador's history by visiting downtown Quito and studying its architecture.
Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh



JAN 26 **Alambi & Sachatamia**

Located on the western slopes of the Andes, Alambi and Sachatamia allow you to see hundreds of hummingbirds, and other unique species of birds, that gather in a single spot to feed. Lunch will be at Sachatamia Lodge where EcoMinga staff will give you an introduction to their conservation work, and an overview of projects at major reserves, including the nearby vanilla project at Manduriacu Reserve.
Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh



Quito > Guayaquil > Galapagos



JAN 27–29 **Galapagos Islands by Luxury Yacht**

Fly to the Galápagos and board the Infinity Yacht, with a serene panga ride through the mangrove estuary of Black Turtle Cove on Santa Cruz Island. Explore Genovesa Island's El Barranco—Prince Philip's Steps—home to red-footed boobies, owls, and nesting petrels along a lava plateau trail. Continue to Santiago and Rabida Islands for red volcanic landscapes, sea lion colonies, flamingos, endemic cacti, and *nine* species of Darwin's finches.
Lodging: Infinity Yacht ([learn more about the vessel here](#))



JAN 30–31 **Exploring Santa Cruz Island**

Land-based exploration of the island's volcanic highlands, home to a massive lava tunnel and the famous Galapagos giant tortoises—still critically endangered, but recovering. Santa Cruz, the most populous island in the Galápagos, hosts three genetically distinct tortoise populations.
Lodging: Hotel Ninfa



Galapagos > Guayaquil > Quito



FEB 1 **Return, and End of Program**

Free evening in Quito and open dinner.
Lodging: Hotel Casa Fosh

MEET THE TOUR LEADERS



Javier Robayo

Javier is an award-winning conservationist and executive director of Fundación EcoMinga. He has led more than 200 research biology and teaching expeditions in Ecuador. His extensive, collaborative field work has led to the discovery of more than 10 species of orchids, a new genus containing two species of rodents, a new genus of frog, and five other species of amphibians. In 2022, he was named one of "50 People Changing the World" by The Explorers Club. www.ecominga.org

Expert focus: Botany, birds, and tropical biodiversity



Lou Jost

Lou, cofounder of EcoMinga, is a scientist, naturalist, and conservationist whose life's work fuses mathematics, ecology, exploration and art. Trained in physics and math in the U.S., he ultimately turned his gaze to the biodiversity of the Andes and Amazon. For three decades, he's lived in Baños, Ecuador, devoted to studying and protecting these ecosystems. His pioneering research—especially on quantifying biodiversity—has shaped global conservation science. Beyond academia, Lou has discovered over 70 plant species, mostly orchids. Through Fundación EcoMinga, he helped establish protected areas and worked hand-in-hand with local communities to shield imperiled habitats. His dedication runs deep—both personal and professional—and his legacy thrives in the forests he has preserved and the lives he has enriched through science and inspiration.



Natalia Espinoza

Natalia is an Ecuadorian-American aspiring filmmaker and polyglot with degrees in Film and Psychology from Barnard College and an M.A. in Film Studies from Columbia University. Her multicultural upbringing in Ecuador inspires her work, using film to bridge cultures and explore environmental themes. Her thesis focused on climate storytelling and ethical issues in documentary and docufiction in the Amazon. Currently based in NYC, she has become increasingly involved in conservation in Ecuador since 2020. Natalia serves on the board of the EcoMinga Foundation, is a Youth Council member of Reserva: The Youth Land Trust, and co-founded EcoStudio. She hopes to use storytelling to advocate for climate action and the protection of Ecuador's biodiversity.

