

## PERU & THE GALAPAGOS

### with MV Coral Motor Yacht Cruise

**14 days**

Created on: 25 Apr, 2024

**Day 1 Arrive in Lima**

Today we arrive in Lima, Peru.

This city has had wonderful restorations in recent years to the plazas, ornate facades, and wooden balconies for which the city is famous. Lima, named the 'City of Kings' by the Spanish Conquistadors, is the capital of Peru. Founded in 1535 by Francisco Pizarro, where the River Rimac meets the Pacific Ocean, this was the most important Spanish city during the colonial era with a population of about 100,000 inhabitants. Today the city is home to more than 7 million people.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

**Day 2 Lima: City Tour**

This morning we start our tour with a visit to San Francisco's Church to visit the extensive catacombs that lie underneath. We then continue to the Plaza de Armas, the most important plaza in Lima. The oldest surviving part of the plaza is the impressive bronze fountain, erected in 1650. Surrounding the plaza is the exquisite Archbishop's Palace, the cathedral, and the Government Palace where handsomely uniformed presidential guards are on duty all day. We visit the cathedral where the great conquistador Francisco Pizarro's tomb lies.

We then proceed to the Larco Museum, which showcases remarkable chronological galleries and an excellent overview on 3,000 years of development of Peruvian pre-Columbian history. Located in a unique vice-royal mansion of the 18th century built over a 7th century pre-Columbian pyramid, is surrounded by beautiful gardens. Features the finest gold and silver collection from ancient Peru and the famous erotic archaeological collection, one of the most visited Peruvian tourist attractions. For an unforgettable experience, Larco is one of the few museums in the world where visitors can also choose to enter the storage area with its 45,000 classified archaeological objects.

Later we head to the trendy area of Miraflores where people stroll along the cliff tops and watch the sun setting on the Pacific Ocean. The best location is the new "Love Park," with its magnificent monument to lovers at its centre. We continue to the Hacienda Mamacona for an exhibition of beautiful Peruvian Paso horses, accompanied by a delicious dinner of Criollo food and a folkloric show.

Overnight in Lima (Miraflores).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

**Day 3 Lima - Fly to Cuzco - Urubamba Valley - Ollantaytambo - Yucay**

Early this morning we fly to Cuzco, located in a fertile valley at 3354 m (11,004 feet). This is the archaeological capital of the Americas and the ancient capital of the Inca Empire that, at its height, stretched from Colombia in the north, through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and down to central Chile in the south. Although the empire already existed in the 12th century, it remained small until the mid-15th century. Over the next 100 years, it expanded massively but declined due to the civil war and the conquest by the Spanish conquistadors under Francisco Pizarro in 1533.

On arrival we will travel by road into the Urubamba Valley, or "Sacred Valley of the Incas," along one of the most scenic drives on our trip, to the Inca ruins of Ollantaytambo located on a spectacular ridge with deep valleys on either side. We can admire the carefully constructed and maintained farming terraces on the surrounding hillsides.

We continue to the town of Yucay on the bank of the Urubamba River (2300m / 7,590 ft). This is an attractive little town of particularly fertile lands whose name translated into Spanish means "deceit" or "bewitchment". According to legend, in the middle of the 15th century, the Inca Huayna Capac was captivated by the incomparable magnificence of Yucay's setting and decided to settle here.

Overnight in Yucay.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

#### Day 4 Yucay - Machu Picchu Area

Today we take the early morning train\* from Urubamba to Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu. The train journey to Machu Picchu is a highlight of any trip to the Andes; the scenery is simply spectacular, and the train allows you to enjoy it in comfort. The +/- 3 hour trip takes us through a changing landscape with wonderful vistas of the mountains and, deep in its dramatic canyon, the beautiful Urubamba River. Our early arrival from Urubamba ensures that we are at the site before the tourist throngs arrive on the train from Cuzco later in the morning.

Upon arrival at the Aguas Calientes train station, a bus will take us on the 6 km (4 mile) twisting journey up the mountainside to the site of Machu Picchu. Having already dropped our baggage at our hotel, we proceed immediately for a guided 3-hour walking tour of the ruins (please be prepared with all that you need for our tour). We will enter the site through the House of the Terrace Caretakers, which flank the agricultural sector. Once on the site, we will see, among other features: the Temple of the Sun, the Fountain Caretaker's House, the Royal Sector, and the puzzling Temple of the Three Windows. We will also see the Common District, the Sacred Rock, and the prison-like Temple of the Condor.

Machu Picchu, popularly known as the 'Lost City of the Incas,' is an ancient city of stone palaces, towers, temples and staircases. It is a very mysterious place, and to this day our knowledge of it remains sketchy. There are no records or artifacts on the site to indicate what any of the buildings were used for. Archaeologists have ascertained that the site was most likely a ceremonial centre and possibly used for administrative purposes for the populous region.

After our tour, you may choose to proceed to the hotel or remain on the site for some independent exploration (your ticket is included and good for the day), and return to the hotel on your own using the return portion of your bus ticket.

\* PLEASE bring an overnight bag for this one night at Aguas Calientes as the train enforces strict luggage limits. Our larger bags will be transported back to Cuzco for us. Please also note that, due to group size limits, groups exceeding 15 participants will be split between two guides for today's site tour.

Overnight at Agua Calientes (near Machu Picchu).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

#### Day 5 Machu Picchu Area - Cuzco

A large part of the beauty of Machu Picchu is created by its setting on a mountain top surrounded by deep valleys. By staying for a second day to visit Machu Picchu, rather than visiting as a day trip from Cuzco, we are able to savour the atmosphere of this very special place.

In the early morning of our second day at Machu Picchu,\* most group members choose to take the bus back up to the site with the weather-dependent hope of seeing the mist-clad mountains greet the morning sun. Weather notwithstanding, the best thing about going up the second day is being there early when there are fewer people, allowing time to "soak it in," as well as the opportunity to climb Huayna Picchu and/or to the Sun Gate.

During our time at Machu Picchu, we will also include a visit to the Manuel Chavez Ballon Site Museum, which focuses on the "discovery", excavation, and history of Macchu Picchu. On display are historical photos, including photos of Hiram Bingham at Machu Picchu shortly after he came across the ruins, informative write-ups on the construction of Machu Picchu and the life of the Incas, and artifacts found at the site. Outside the museum is a very lush botanical garden running along the river; some plants are labelled and there are a few short trails. This is a nice shady area to rest on a hot day and is an easy 25 minute walk from Aguas Calientes down the road leading to Machu Picchu.

Later in the afternoon we board the VISTADOME train from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo Station (1.5 hours) from where we bus back to Cuzco.

\* DUE TO strict limits on the number of visitors daily, if you elect to visit again today (optional - at your expense), you will need to book well advance online via [www.ticketmachupicchu.com](http://www.ticketmachupicchu.com). You will need to choose the EARLIEST options for Machu Picchu only OR Machu Picchu & Huayna Picchu if you want to hike Huayna Picchu.

Overnight in Cuzco.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 6 Cuzco Area

This morning we visit some of the most important Inca sites in the Cuzco area.

Sacsayhuaman is an impressive complex which, like so many others of that time, had both a religious and military purpose. The fortress known as the 'storehouse of the sun' incorporates some of the largest stones ever used in a building. The zig-zag walls represent the teeth of the sacred puma and provide an excellent defensive structure. The stones fit so perfectly together without mortar that not even moss can grow in the cracks!

In the afternoon we return to Cuzco and enjoy a tour of the town. We visit Coricancha, the temple of the sun which was the most important location in the Inca empire. Entombed in the closed cloister of the Sto Domingo Church, these sacred walls were hidden from modern civilization until the colonial walls were brought down in 1950 by a powerful earthquake. We also visit the church of San Blas with its fabulously carved pulpit. Wandering the narrow streets of the San Blas artisan region we make our way to the cathedral which towers impressively over the Plaza Mayor. Inside we find precious paintings from the Cuzco School of Art, one of the most prolific of its era.

This Inca city was laid out around a great central square in the shape of a puma, the god of lightning. Today, stone walls built by the Incas line most of Cuzco's central streets and form the foundations of colonial and modern buildings. The Inca buildings were so well built that the Spaniards simply knocked down the upper parts of the Inca temples and palaces and built their churches and mansions on top of the Inca walls. Shortly after the Spanish conquest, the capital was moved to Lima on the coast. Thus Cuzco has retained a wonderful, untouched colonial atmosphere. The culture is also very much alive here, and is evident in the music, clothing and handicrafts of the people.

We have dinner at a local restaurant where we can try some typical Peruvian dishes. One may wish to try the "Pisco sour", a powerful drink made with a Peruvian liquor distilled from white grapes.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 7 Cuzco & Pisac

This morning we visit the ruins at Tambo Machay, Puca Pucara and Qenko. The latter is an Inca sacrificial site carved with inscriptions.

We continue to Pisac with its lively market where you will encounter traditionally dressed locals with whom you can barter for colourful craft items. You will see many unique Andean musical instruments as well as dazzling textiles. Peruvian woolen items are justifiably famous for their imaginative designs, based on Inca art and the local flora and fauna. You can buy sweaters and caps made from the extremely warm wool of alpacas and llamas.

We return to Cuzco with balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Cuzco.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 8 Cuzco, Peru - Quito, Ecuador

Today we transfer to the airport for our flight to Quito (via Lima).

Quito (2788 m/9,200 feet) is Ecuador's lovely capital city, nestled against Pichincha Volcano high in the Andes.

Overnight in Quito.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

### Day 9 Quito: City Tour

Today we tour old Spanish Colonial Quito, preserved by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. As we enter the streets of Old Quito we step into the past, surrounded by centuries-old architecture. We stop at the commanding Legislative Palace, whose murals record Ecuador's history. We will see Quito's most beautiful religious buildings, including the cathedral, the Independence Plaza, San Francisco Church, and visit one of Quito's most impressive religious buildings, La Compania church, whose ornate facade and solid gold altars make it one of the most famous of South American churches. We visit the famous Panecillo Hill with its towering winged statue of the Virgin of the Apocalypse with views of north and south of Quito and the surrounding mountains.

This afternoon we travel 22 km (14 miles) north of Quito to the Equator line monument, known as the "middle of the world," where you can stand with one foot in the Northern and the other in the Southern Hemisphere. We also visit the excellent on-site ethnographic museum with exhibits pertaining to the many indigenous peoples of Ecuador.

PLEASE NOTE: Due to logistical reasons, this is a "floating day" that may occur at a different point of our program.

Overnight in Quito.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

### Day 10 Quito - Fly to Galapagos / Interpretation Center & Tijeretas Hill (San Cristobal Island)

Departure from Quito or Guayaquil to San Cristobal (2 1/2 hours flight). Arriving in Galapagos, passengers are picked up at the airport by our naturalist guides and taken to the pier to board the M/Y Coral I or M/Y Coral II.

An archipelago of 12 large and several hundred smaller volcanic islands occupying a 4800 sq km (3,000 sq mile) area about 1000 km (620 miles) west of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands have become one of the world's premier adventure travel destinations. Over the course of your visit, you'll (hopefully!) enjoy up-close views of unusual, specially-adapted animals, plants and terrains including sea lions, tortoises, iguanas, land and sea birds, volcanic landscapes, unusual cacti and vegetation. Little has changed about the islands since Charles Darwin's visit in 1835 to "this little world within itself" inspired his first theories of evolution. Nearly the entire archipelago is a natural sanctuary where you'll have thrilling encounters with some of the world's last completely untamed wildlife that has never learned to fear the presence of humans.

The Coral Yachts offer a cozy cruising experience, with only 36-20 guests, the ambiance is that of a private yacht. The onboard and inland activities are great opportunities to bond with fellow travellers, the crew, and to share experiences throughout the trip.

The first day on board, our crew members will organize a welcome cocktail to celebrate the start of the journey in the Galapagos Islands. Once guests have settled, the adventure begins with two daily visits to the islands. Visiting the islands is a great opportunity to get to know more about this unique destination, animals that have adapted to live on volcanic grounds and crystal clear beaches and are friendly to humans. Picture-perfect sceneries which are home to the overflowing nature of every island.

The Ocean View, air-conditioned "standard plus" cabins can accommodate twin beds or a full size bed with private facilities. There are interconnecting doors suitable for families or friends traveling together. Each cabin includes: safe, entertainment system with LCD TVs, hair dryer, special bedding in each category, and remodeled furniture in each cabin.

Excursion - Interpretation Center & Tijeretas Hill (San Cristobal Island)

Dry landing. The interpretation center is full of interesting information and offers the perfect overview to the formation of Galapagos, its significance in the world, threats and conservation efforts. Followed by a hike to Frigatebird Hill (Cerro Tijeretas) we will have great looks at both species of frigatebird, with the bonus of a beautiful view of the bay below.

Difficulty level: easy/moderate

Type of terrain: flat/stairs/rocky

Duration: 1-hour visit/1-hour walk

\* The description of our activities over the next five days is provided by the cruise operator (itinerary 'D', South Galapagos).

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Overnight MV Coral.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### Day 11 Galapagos Cruise / Cerro Brujo, Punta Pitt & Islet (San Cristobal Island)

AM: Cerro Brujo (San Cristobal Island)

Wet landing (you may need to step into knee-deep water and walk to shore). From our pangas, as we head to shore, we are first humbled by the immensity of the stunning cliffs of "Sorcerer's Hill". We can enjoy simply sharing the beach with sea lions, snorkeling from shore or take a walk to a hidden lagoon where we might spot black-necked stilts, ruddy turnstones, whimbrels and white-cheeked pintails.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy

Duration: 1-hour walk/1-hour snorkeling

PM – Punta Pitt & Islet (San Cristobal Island)

Wet landing. Sea lions will greet us as we land on the beach and prepare for our climb to a high point on the steep eroded tuff cone. This is the only place in the islands where we will enjoy the chance to see all three of the booby species in the same place. The red-foots will be perched on the Cordia lutea and small trees, the Nazca's on the ground near the cliff edge while the blue-foots will be a little further inland. Frigatebirds will be all around and the views are breathtaking.

Difficulty level: demanding

Type of terrain: rocky

Duration: 2½-hour walk/ 40-minute snorkeling or kayaking

Overnight MV Coral.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### Day 12 Punta Suarez, Gardner Bay, Osborn or Gardner Islets (Espanola Island)

AM – Punta Suarez (Espanola Island)

Dry landing. One of the highlight visits of the trip. Punta Suarez seems to have everything – a naturalist's paradise. A slew of marine iguanas and sea lions greet us at the landing site from where our walk continues with close encounters of boobies, endemic lizards, gulls and even a dramatic blowhole. The oldest extant island in the archipelago it is our only opportunity to commune with the endemic waved albatross during their breeding season between April and December. With luck, we can watch their complex courtship display.

Difficulty level: demanding

Type of terrain: rocky

Duration: 2½-hour walk

PM – Gardner Bay, Osborn or Gardner Islets (Espanola Island)

Wet landing. One of the most stunning beaches in all of Galapagos. The long, white, sandy beach, lapped by turquoise waters is home to a colony of Galapagos sea lions, indifferent to the humans that walk amongst them. The Hood mockingbirds, endemic to this particular island, will be eager to inspect the visitors and satisfy their innate curiosity. Darwin's finches may also join the throng including the reclusive warbler finch. We can also snorkel here from the beach, in the shallows of the bay.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy

Duration: 1-hour walk/1-hour snorkeling

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Overnight MV Coral.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### Day 13 Punta Cormoran, Devil's Crown, Champion & Post Office (Floreana Island)

AM – Punta Cormoran/ Devil's Crown/Champion (Floreana Island)

Wet landing. On arriving, the observant visitor will notice that olivine, a volcanic crystal, has proffered a subtle green hue on the dark beach. Our walk takes us past island-endemic Scaevola plants to a large, shallow, lagoon often inhabited by a variable number of shockingly pink greater flamingoes. We continue through a forest of palo santo trees to arrive at a powdery white beach, a nesting area of green turtles. As we paddle barefoot in the shallow water we will spot diamond stingrays and white-tipped reef sharks. This coral-sand beach marks the end of our trail, and we head back to the olivine beach we landed on, to swim or snorkel amongst sea turtles, reef fish, sea lions and, on a good day, white-tipped reef sharks. A small colony of penguins resides on Floreana and can sometimes be observed as well.

One of the favorite snorkeling sites in the islands. Devil's Crown, an eroded volcanic cone, is home to an abundance of fish and marine animals. We will swim with big schools of yellow-tailed surgeonfish, salemas and creole fish and with luck may spot turtles, spotted eagle rays, parrotfish, and even hammerhead sharks! The jagged crown is a roosting area for boobies, noddies, tropicbirds, and frigates.

A truly magical place to snorkel. We would expect to see here green turtles, harmless white-tipped reef sharks, an impressive diversity and abundance of fish as well as some playful sea lions often approaching very close, itching to show off their prowess in the water. Champion Islet also happens to be the last remaining home of the island-endemic Floreana mockingbird which we may be lucky enough to see from our pangs.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy & flat

Duration: 1-hour walk / 1-hour snorkeling

PM – Post Office (Floreana Island)

Wet landing. A very short walk from the beach leads us to the famous Post Office Barrel. Claimed to have been the first set up in 1793 by Captain James Colnett it remains the oldest functioning post office in the Pacific. The system was that whalers and fur-sealers would leave addressed letters in the barrel to be picked up by homeward bound colleagues. In the spirit of maintaining tradition visitors, today will often take letters and hand-deliver them in their home countries.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy

Duration: 30-minute walk / 1-hour snorkeling

Overnight MV Coral.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### Day 14 Highlands Tortoise Reserve (Santa Cruz Island) - Baltra - Quito - Depart

AM – Highlands Tortoise Reserve (Santa Cruz Island)

Dry landing. In the central highlands of Santa Cruz Island, we have our best opportunity to interact at close quarters with totally wild, Galapagos giant tortoises. A short walk among these huge, 600lb, reptiles will also offer the chance for more highland species, especially several species of the famed finches.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: flat & muddy (depending on season)

Duration: 45-minute drive / 1 ½-hour walk

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After the visit, passengers will be transferred to the airport for their return flight to Guayaquil or Quito.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are booking your own flights, please ensure that your departure time from Quito is no earlier than 9:00pm (most northward flights depart around midnight). This is to allow plenty of connecting time for our incoming flight from the Galapagos.

PLEASE NOTE: As an exception to our general policy regarding the inclusion of tips in our tour pricing, gratuities for the ship's crew are NOT included in tour price (we have found that trying to pre-pay tips on your behalf is not practical, for a number of reasons). Accordingly, we suggest that you allow approximately USD 100-150 total per passenger for satisfactory service.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast