

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The Pacific Ocean coastline at Isla de la Plata; the pool at the Finch Bay Eco Hotel in the Galápagos; Pikaia Lodge in the Galápagos; a suite at Mashpi Lodge, a two-and-a-half hour drive from Quito.



Ecuador is hotter than ever—and we’re not talking about the year-round direct sunlight. With Quito’s new airport making travel more accessible, tourism is expected to swell to about 1.4 million visitors this year. A renovated railway, extraordinary activities and an influx of upscale hotels all contribute to the action.

For a restorative trip rooted in age-old customs and striking scenery, Ecuador is a dream destination. As one of Latin America’s smallest countries (about the size of Colorado), it offers a most vibrant and versatile canvas for any traveler. Visit an organic shrimp, cocoa bean or tea farm in the Amazon. Climb the tallest volcano in the Andes. Take a dip in the mountainous hot springs. Study the patterns of hummingbirds and butterflies. Score high-quality alpaca blankets at city markets. Dare to try traditional food like *cuy* (guinea pig). Learn to make native candy like *colaciones*. Increase your well-being with a visit to an Andean herbalist. Activities are limitless and often unforgettable.

Experience remote communities, ruins, plantations and rare animal-spotting while aboard the cushy new Tren Crucero. The railway re-opened this summer after a massive, four-year renovation (it was closed after flooding in the ‘90s), the journey by train offers a four-day, 280-mile ride from the Andes to the coast, including Nariz del Diablo, a highlight for many travelers.

Exit the train in Guayaquil and fly to the Galápagos. Treat yourself to a stay at the new five-star Pikaia Lodge, the first carbon-neutral hotel in Ecuador. Located on a quiet tortoise reserve atop an extinct volcano crater, it offers a truly sustainable setting where guests can attend lectures on evolution and take private tours around the reserve. For the ultimate holiday, splurge on the pool suite, which includes a terrace, plunge pool and private garden. Fun fact: to mark the 178th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s visit, Google teamed up with Galápagos National Park and the Charles Darwin Foundation to show off the surroundings through virtual street views.

Be sure to also venture away from the Galápagos and explore colorful Quito and nearby areas. Aside from the art galleries, ancient churches, specialty shops and crafts markets, the food scene is bursting—with dishes often cooked by Peruvian chefs. Of note is the restaurant Zazu, which attracts a hip crowd and offers flavorful dishes made from local ingredients. If staying in Quito, look no further than Casa Gangotena, a boutique hotel that embodies both comfort and class. Set in a converted mansion overlooking Plaza de San Francisco, the property is pure pleasure: afternoon tea on the patio, magnificent rooftop views of the historic center and even its own line of chocolate bars (in partnership with Pacari chocolate).

For an opportunity to explore lesser-known areas, some travelers prefer to stay outside of Quito. Mashpi Lodge, about two-and-a-half hours away, considers itself a “luxury cocoon in the clouds.” Rooms are sleek, sophisticated and serene. Appreciate the ecosystem without leaving your room through floor-to-ceiling windows. If you can muster the energy to leave the robe behind, explore the forest and its inhabitants via a treetop gondola.

To book your adventure in Ecuador, contact your travel agent today.

## EMBEDDED IN ECUADOR

Dan MacCombie, co-founder of Runa—an organic Amazonian tea company with offices in Brooklyn, Quito and Archidona—shares his favorite spots in Ecuador.

### PUERTO LÓPEZ

“Machalilla National Park has a beautiful dry forest and access to Isla de la Plata, which is like a mini Galápagos. There are outstanding seafood restaurants along the waterfront.” Be sure to stop in Montecristi, a quaint little town where the original Panama hat was created.

### MINDO

Two hours from Quito, Mindo is the center of the cloud forest, rife with butterflies, orchids and a misty atmosphere. “Zip-line through the rainforest for a view that’s once-in-a-lifetime. Have coffee and a famous double-Ecuadorian chocolate brownie at El Quetzal, my favorite local café.”

### QUITO

“An absolute must-see is the Fundación Guayasamín, devoted to Oswaldo Guayasamín, a remarkable painter in the Cubist style who focused on representing the history and challenges for independence and economic equality throughout South America.” Don’t miss the TelefériQo, a funicular that takes you up a volcano and offers expansive views of the city and valley.

### BAÑOS

For wellness seekers, “head to the amazing public baths or upscale spas on your way down south. You can also rent a bike and ride down the road towards Puyo, which passes over the most beautiful waterfalls.” For travelers who want to experience working directly with farmers, Runa can arrange private tours to visit sustainable agroforestry operations that produce *guayusa*, the leaf from which Runa products are made. “*Guayusa* has been consumed every morning by local communities for millennia, and it’s a central part of sharing their dreams and stories.”



LIMITED EDITIONS @ GREGLOTUS.COM

[balharbourshops.com](http://balharbourshops.com)

BAL HARBOUR SHOPS

9700 COLLINS AVENUE

BAL HARBOUR, FLORIDA

305.866.1816