

# Galapagos Essentials

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**Country(ies):** Ecuador & Galapagos

**Tour type:** Small Group

**Transport:** domestic flight, ferry, speed-boat, mini-van

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 12

**Days:** 7 Days

**Start location:** Quito, Ecuador

**End location:** Quito, Ecuador

**Departs On:**

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 0

**Highlights:**

Explore the wildlife snorkeling with sea turtles, rays, penguins and sea lions, Visit highlands with the wild giant tortoises, Visit Academy bay, visit the lava tunnels and Isla Lobos, Relax on white sand beaches

**Places Visited:** Santa Cruz Island, Academy Bay, Playa de los Perros, Darwin Research Station, San Cristobel, Isla Lobos



718 x 657

# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive in Quito. Evening welcome briefing

Welcome to Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and often referred to as the Cultural Capital of South America! This vibrant city, nestled in a valley on the equator at the base of the Pichincha volcano, boasts the largest and most well-preserved colonial center in the Americas. Upon arrival, you have the option to discover the captivating old town and its surroundings. Our team can assist with arranging a Quito City Tour if you'd like (please request in advance). This evening, join us in the hotel lobby at 6pm for a welcome briefing led by one of our trip leaders, where we'll discuss the exciting adventure ahead and answer any questions that may arise. Today is a day for acclimation and gathering information, so relax and enjoy your first taste of Quito!

**OVERNIGHT:** Quito hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Quito Arrival Airport Transfer || Single room supplement (ECSGES)

## Day 2: Fly to Baltra Island. Visit the highlands in search of Giant Tortoises

Today, you'll be transferred to the airport for your flight to Baltra Island in the Galapagos. Upon arrival, you'll be met and taken by ferry across the Itabaca channel to the neighboring island of Santa Cruz. From there, we'll drive to the highlands, home to the famous Galapagos giant tortoises. You'll enjoy lunch at a private ranch before setting out on a walk to spot these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat. We'll also explore fascinating lava tubes formed by solidified lava flows. Afterward, we'll continue to your hotel, where you'll meet your local guide who will brief you on the exciting itinerary ahead. The rest of the evening is yours to unwind and further discover the beauty of this unique island.

**OVERNIGHT:** Baltra Island hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 3: Boat trip to Academy Bay for snorkelling. Afternoon hike and visit Playa de los Perros

After breakfast, get ready for an unforgettable half-day tour to Academy Bay. Don't forget to pack everything you need, and if you'd like to snorkel, we'll provide the gear free of charge. We'll take a boat to the bay, where you can swim and snorkel alongside vibrant fish, fascinating marine life, and playful sea lions known for their curiosity. Keep an eye out for the iconic blue-footed boobies as well! Next, we'll hike to a nearby viewpoint for a chance to spot white-tipped reef sharks gliding through the waters below. Then, stroll along Playa de los Perros, home to sunbathing marine iguanas. Don't forget your camera – the striking contrast of giant cacti, red rocks, and the turquoise ocean creates picture-perfect moments.

**OVERNIGHT:** Baltra Island hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 4: Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. Speedboat to San Cristobel Island

This morning, we'll delve into the world of the Galapagos Islands at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Here, you'll gain deeper insights into the many endemic species you've encountered in their natural habitats, and learn

about the ongoing conservation and management initiatives that safeguard this unique ecosystem. In the afternoon, we'll embark on an exciting speedboat journey to San Cristobal Island. During this crossing, keep your eyes peeled for playful dolphins and majestic whales, especially if you're traveling between July and October. Upon arrival, we'll settle into our comfortable hotel accommodations, ready for the next leg of our adventure.

**OVERNIGHT:** San Cristobal Island hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 5: Exploring Isla Lobos

Following breakfast, we'll head to a nearby dock and hop on a boat for a short, scenic ride to Isla Lobos. Keep your eyes peeled during the journey, as you're likely to spot a variety of marine animals before even reaching the island. Upon arrival, we'll embark on a guided tour of this fascinating isle, home to a diverse array of wildlife. You'll have the opportunity to observe frigate birds with their impressive wingspans, the charming blue-footed boobies, graceful manta rays, playful sea lions, and even the occasional shark patrolling the surrounding waters. Afterwards, we'll take full advantage of San Cristóbal's pristine white coral beaches. You can choose to take a leisurely stroll, simply unwind in the warm sun, or take a refreshing dip in the crystal-clear water. As the day winds down, we'll return to the bustling Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, full of memories and remarkable encounters.

**OVERNIGHT:** San Cristobal Island hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 6: Free time before flying back to Quito

Take advantage of a leisurely morning before we head to the airport in San Cristóbal for your flight back to mainland Ecuador. Upon landing in Quito, you'll be greeted and transferred to your hotel, where you can relax and enjoy your final evening before bidding farewell to this incredible adventure.

**OVERNIGHT:** Quito hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 7: Tour ends in Quito

Cherish your memories, treasure your photos, and know that a piece of your heart will forever remain in Ecuador. We hope you'll be drawn back to explore more of this enchanting land soon. Until then, we wish you a fond farewell and a "buen viaje"!

Whilst an airport transfer is not included today, this can be arranged on a request basis.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Quito Departure airport transfer

## Included

- 5-star hotels in Quito, 3-star on the Galapagos Islands
- All transport and transfers per the itinerary
- Roundtrip Domestic flight from Quito to Baltra
- Airport transfers in Quito (for the Baltra flights on days 2 & 6)
- Services of a local tour leader throughout

- Services of Naturalist Local Guide whilst in Galapagos
- Snorkelling Gear (masks, fins & life vest)
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

## **Excluded**

- International flights (available on request)
- Quito airport transfers on days 1 & 7
- Visa fees
- INGALA transit card: USD 20 p/p
- Galapagos National Park fee USD 200 p/p
- Wetsuit Hire USD 20 p/p
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tipping
- Any other items not mentioned above

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

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## 1. Accommodation

We use good quality 5-star hotels on this tour whilst in Quito. On the Galapagos Islands, we use comfortable 3-star properties. Please see the accommodation tab for details of the hotels most commonly used on this tour (specific hotels are subject to change).

Hotel accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms. All couples will stay in a private double room.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

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## 2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. On our trips to the Galapagos Islands, we include the cost of a roundtrip flight between Quito and the Galapagos Islands. Whilst travelling between the Islands of the Galapagos, we'll make use of local ferries and speedboats.

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## 3. Airport Transfers

As many of our travellers choose to combine our Galapagos adventures with further travel through Ecuador, we have not included the cost of arrival and departure airport transfers on this tour, though they can be added if required.

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## 4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Our Galapagos tours start and finish in Quito and if you are flying in immediately prior to joining this tour, you should fly into Mariscal Sucre Quito International Airport (UIO)

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

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## 5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach

with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our Galapagos group departures to have a minimum of 2 and maximum of 12 travellers.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local guides and reps wherever possible. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. On our Galapagos tours you'll be accompanied by a local tour leader. Whilst in the Galapagos, you'll also be joined at times by a local naturalist guide.

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## 6. Galapagos fees & permits

When visiting the Galapagos Islands, you should be aware of additional fees and permits which are required, please find details below:

### **INGALA Transit Card - USD 20 per person (cash only):**

In essence, this is simply a fee to obtain authorization to visit the Galápagos Islands.

You pay a small fee of 20 USD in cash at the INGALA booth at the airport in Quito or Guayaquil to receive a "Transit Control Card" (TCC or TCT in Spanish). This card tracks your entry and exit from the islands, helping to protect the delicate ecosystem from unauthorized immigration.

Introduced in 2012, this system is a requirement for all non-resident visitors. If you're taking a cruise, you can often pre-book this card through the cruise line, and a representative will meet you at the airport with it.

Remember to keep your Transit Control Card safe throughout your trip, as you'll need to present it upon departure.

### **Galapagos National Park Fee - USD 200 per person (cash only):**

To visit the Galápagos Islands, all tourists must pay an entrance fee, which varies depending on age and nationality. Most foreign adults pay \$200, while children pay \$100. Visitors from certain South American countries enjoy reduced rates (these are updated rates which came into force on 1st August 2024).

While the fee may seem high, it's crucial to remember that these funds directly support the conservation of the islands' unique biodiversity. The Galápagos National Park, along with other agencies, uses these resources to protect the delicate ecosystems, improve local services, and ensure the sustainability of this natural wonder.

The entrance fee contributes to a wide range of initiatives, from safeguarding marine life to supporting education and healthcare in local communities. By paying this fee, you're not only gaining access to an unforgettable experience but also actively participating in preserving the Galápagos Islands for future generations.

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## 7. Tipping

Whilst the amount you tip should ultimately be determined upon your satisfaction of the service you've received whilst on tour, we are often asked for advice on this. For the team involved in operating your tour on the ground (from drivers to guides), we would recommend budgetting approximately 20 USD per person per day for tips, though it is at your discretion if you wish to tip more or less than this.

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## 8. Language and Customs

The Galapagos Islands, being a part of Ecuador, have Spanish as their official language. However, due to the significant influx of tourists, English has become widely spoken and understood in the tourism industry. Other languages like German and French might also be spoken by some locals.

The customs of the Galapagos Islands largely mirror those of mainland Ecuador, with a strong emphasis on family and community. The locals are known for their warmth and hospitality towards visitors. One unique custom observed by some crews sailing through the Galapagos is a special tradition when crossing the equator. Additionally, a local folk dance called the "Galapagos Dance" showcases the unique biodiversity of the islands through rhythmic movements inspired by the behavior of local birds.

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## 9. Passports & Visas - Ecuador

### Passports:

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months AFTER the date your trip finishes. This is a general requirement for all of the countries we travel to on our trips. If you have dual nationality you can only use one passport for the entire trip. It is your responsibility to ensure you have a valid passport.

### Visas:

Many nationalities (including UK, European, Australian, New Zealand, South Africa, USA) can travel to Ecuador visa free for stays of up to 90 days in each 12 month period. Other nationalities should check with their local consulate or embassy.

### Galapagos Islands:

Please refer to the section with our tour notes titled 'Galapagos fees & permits' to ensure you are fully prepared for your time in the Galapagos.

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## 10. Time

The time in Ecuador is GMT minus 5 hours (minus 6 hours in the Galapagos islands).

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## 11. Voltage

Ecuador uses two types of electrical outlets, known as type A and type B. Type A plugs have two flat parallel prongs, while type B plugs have two flat parallel prongs and a round grounding pin. The standard voltage in Ecuador is 120 volts.

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## 12. Money

Ecuador uses the United States dollar (USD) as its official currency. This adoption occurred in 2000 following a period of high inflation and economic instability with their previous currency, the sucre. For many travelers, this is convenient as it eliminates the need for currency exchange and allows for easy budgeting. U.S. dollar bills are used throughout the country, and Ecuador also mints its own centavos coins, which are equivalent to U.S. cents.

ATMs are readily available in most cities, which dispense USD.

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## 13. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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## 14. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000



partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

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## 15. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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## 16. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](http://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

[www.twitter.com/encounterstravl](http://www.twitter.com/encounterstravl) (yes, without the 'e')

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## 17. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with

details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

*IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

## **Covid-19**

**Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).**

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## **18. Before you travel**

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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## 19. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

### How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

### The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

### Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.

- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

**Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!**

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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