

# ENCHANTING ECUADOR

From the Galapagos to the Amazon rainforest, thrills abound in every corner of this wildly diverse country

SUZANNE MORPHET

From its snow-capped highlands to its volcanic offshore islands, and to the lush Amazon rainforest, Ecuador is an adventure playground. By 9:30 on our second morning I'm wearing a woollen poncho over zamarros (sheepskin chaps) and sitting astride a white stallion named Cantinero.

My husband and I are at Hacienda El Porvenir, a working ranch on the slope of Rumiñahui volcano, just an hour and a half by car from Quito, Ecuador's capital. By horseback we explore the páramo — the high-altitude grasslands of the Andes.

The páramo has been used to graze sheep and cattle since the Spaniards introduced them in the 1500s, but it's no longer economical. Worse, overgrazing reduces the natural biodiversity and prevents rain from being absorbed.

About 25 years ago, the owners here decided that ecotourism could be another way forward and turned their working hacienda into the first hotel in the region. They also reduced the number of cattle and planted native trees and shrubs — more than 680,000 to date — but kept their horses to retain the local cowboy culture.

From horseback we see the "wild bulls" in the distance, which the chagras round up once or twice a year to take to market or select for breeding. Sauntering slowly while others gallop ahead, I enjoy the cool mist on my face and the fragrant shrubs at my feet.

Subsequent days are equally rewarding: we make cheese empanadas with chef Lucy, we hike the páramo with Miguel, we cycle trails through the forest on e-bikes with Felipe. And we let Carmen massage our tired muscles in the APU mountain spa.



Christian Zavala, one of the guides at Sacha Lodge ecological reserve, surveys his pristine surroundings in the Ecuadorean Amazon. SUZANNE MORPHET

## GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

"We're going to walk single file," says Juan, our Ecuadorean guide after we wade ashore on the island of Sombrero Chino in Galápagos. "It's one of the 2,000 rules in the national park," he adds with a wry smile.

He's exaggerating of course, but visiting Galapagos means follow-

ing rules including staying on the trail and listening to your guide. We like the fact that no more than 20 people can go ashore in one place at a time, and that we never see more than three or four other small ships at anchor.

We're travelling for a week aboard the Cachalote Explorer, an 88-foot yacht built in Vancouver as

a fishing boat in 1988. Owned by Enchanted Expeditions, it's been converted to an air-conditioned cruiser for up to 16 guests and feels the perfect size for motoring lightly through this archipelago of 21 volcanic islands.

On our twice-daily excursions ashore, we marvel at the raw moonscapes of the islands with

the most recent eruptions, and encounter the fearless creatures the Galápagos are famous for. Sea lions seem to perform just for us, rolling, flipping and blowing bubbles. Male blue-footed boobies march for their partners. One day a pair of mockingbirds lands inside the hood of someone's camera lens.

# APPLE CIDER VINEGAR — NEVER TASTED SO GOOD

For centuries apple cider vinegar has been known as a health promoting tonic, and today studies are confirming this, when looking at digestion, blood sugar health and even weight loss.

**TOO ACIDIC TO DRINK**

For some people, the strong vinegar smell and taste is too much to handle. Others might mind the acidity of the liquid. Whatever the reason may be, there is now a more convenient way of taking this vinegar.

**THE TASTY WAY TO HEALTH**

Apple Cider™ Gummies by New Nordic are sugar free and vegan gummies that deliver a tasty apple flavour while still providing the benefits of the vinegar. Sourced with the Mother, they contain 400 mg of apple cider vinegar and a high amount of acetic acid.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Not many apple cider vinegar gummies are yet regulated by Health Canada. Look for the NPN on the bottle before buying.

- ✓ SUGAR FREE & VEGAN
- ✓ WITH THE MOTHER
- ✓ KETO FRIENDLY
- ✓ MADE WITH GREEN APPLES
- ✓ HIGH STRENGTH

### CUSTOMER REVIEWS

★★★★★  
I would recommend them!

"I've tried taking apple cider shots but they gave me acid reflux. Then I came upon Apple Cider Gummies by New Nordic and took it for a few weeks. I found they helped my digestion. I would recommend them."

- Allison

★★★★★  
These taste great and actually work!

"These are delicious! I love the taste and they actually did help me lose weight. I was eating healthy and exercising regularly, but I had hit a plateau. After I tried these, I lost the last few pounds pretty quickly. You can smell the apple cider vinegar when you open the bottle and sniff, but you won't taste it at all! Definitely recommend and I love that they're sugar free and vegan."

- Paula

★★★★★  
Delicious

"I just received these gummies and if you are hesitating because you worry about flavor, be assured they are delicious! I'm so happy, no more trying to chug down my acv vinegar."

- Wendy