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# Travel to South America Grows in Popularity

South America, particularly Peru and Ecuador, are attracting visitors in droves

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Machu Picchu, Peru. Janeen Christoff

Updated June 29, 2015.

When [Virtuoso](#) released its [Top 10 Trips of a Lifetime](#) as part of its recently released Dream Travel Survey, a Galapagos Islands expedition came in at number nine on the list. Ecuador is one of the fastest-growing destinations – as well as the most popular – in South America, according to Virtuoso's sales figures for

summer 2015. Travel to the country is up 84 percent from last year. And the number of ways you can take in the Galapagos Islands continues to grow, with new ships entering the market.

Tour operators are taking notice of the increased demand.

"We've experienced a significant spike in interest in our Peru and Ecuador itineraries over the last few months, most likely due to the reasonable cost of travel, with flight and hotel accommodations starting at \$1,409 per person for our eight day escorted tours," said Marty Seslow, vice president of sales and marketing for Gate 1 Travel.

"We anticipate having more than 20,000 passengers travel to these two destinations by the end of 2015."

Here are some of the highlights of a visit to these two countries:

- Journey to the Galapagos Archipelago of volcanic islands, five million years in the making.
- A hike to the Napo River in the Amazon rainforest
- A train ride through misty peaks to the astonishing ancient citadel of Machu Picchu
- A stop at the Middle of the World monument where visitors can stand with one foot in the Northern and one in the Southern Hemisphere
- A full-day tour of the city of Lima with its 2,000 years of history
- A visit to the impressive Inca fortress of Ollantaytambo

Gate 1 Travel has several opportunities for travelers who are inspired to head south.

### Peru

The [10-day Affordable Peru journey](#) starts at \$1,549 per person, land only. It includes a city tour of Lima to discover its more than 2,000 years of history, a visit to the fortress of Ollantaytambo, a full day tour via train to the ancient Inca citadel of Machu Picchu and a boat excursion on Lake Titicaca to visit the Uros floating islands.

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Hotel stays include the Jose Antonio Hotel in Lima, San Augustin Urubamba Hotel, Jose Antonio Cuzco Hotel, Hotel Royal Inn Puno.

Visitors can add several optional excursions, including dinner with a local Peruvian family, a dinner and show in Lima, a half-day excursion to the Larco Herrera

Museum and more.

### **Ecuador**

The [11-day Classic Ecuador & Amazon Adventure](#), which starts at \$1,499 air inclusive, encompasses some of the best sights in the country, including the cloudforest in Cotopaxi and the Amazon Rainforest.

The itinerary includes three nights in Quito, a night in Otavalo, a night in Papallacta, two nights in Punta Ahuano in the Amazon jungle, one night in Banos and a night in Cotopaxi.

Highlights of the journey include a tour of Colonial Quito to see its art and architecture; the Mindo Cloud Forest, a magnificent 47,000-acre reserve; the chance to stand at latitude "0" at the Middle of the World Monument on the Equator; browsing for local goods at the historic Otavalo Market, one of the largest in South America; a chance to see the flora and fauna in the heart of the Amazon Rainforest; the Devil's Cauldron falls; and meeting with a local Quechua Indian family.

Hotel stays include the Mercure Hotel Alameda, Quito; Cabanas del Lago, Otavalo; Puertolago Country Inn, Otavalo; Termas de Papallacta; Casa del Suizo in the Amazon; Hacienda Leito, Patate; Hacienda La Cienega, Cotopaxi.

Travelers have the option to add on a little relaxation and pampering at the Termas de Papallacta Spa.

Gate 1 combines a cruise to the Galapagos and a mainland Ecuador tour on the 15-day Ecuador With Five-Day Galapagos Cruise, which starts at \$4,649.