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EXPLORING THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS BY YACHT

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Immerse yourself in the amazing biodiversity of the world renowned Galapagos
- Explore the Central and Western Islands of the Galapagos including Western Isabela and Fernandina
- Swim and snorkel among sea lions and brightly colored fish
- Visit flamingo-filled lagoons, ancient pirate coves, and a red coral beach
- Search for penguins, sea turtles, and rays in a bay accessible only by dinghy
- travel by boat to the best viewing locations for iguanas, seals, and an abundance of birds

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TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Ecuador
Activities:	Multisport
Arrive:	Plan to arrive at the Mariscal Sucre Airport (UIO) in Quito, Ecuador any time before 3PM on Day 1
Depart:	You can plan flights out from UIO any time after 7PM on the last day

Trip Overview

It's hard to imagine a travel destination more unique and dreamy than the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos is a land defined by its rugged volcanic landscapes and wealth of wildlife, much of which only exists on this unforgettable archipelago. On this trip we'll experience the natural wonders of the Galapagos in the most intimate and up-close way possible - via boat. We'll travel aboard a first-class motor yacht to red coral beaches, secluded coves, sunken caves, and green mangroves. We've chosen a route based on some of the most incredible wild-life viewing opportunities on the planet including land and marine iguanas, Galapagos giant tortoises, sea lions, flamingos, fur seals, penguins, Darwin finches, blue-footed boobies, and the Galapagos hawk. Step aboard for a luxurious and epic adventure.

Rating

This trip is appropriate for women in good physical condition who want to spend 4 to 6 hours every day actively exploring the Galapagos, including hiking, swimming, snorkeling, and kayaking. There are several hikes that are relatively short (maximum 3 hours) but are sometimes steep and rocky. None of the days are strenuous; however, they are full, and some will involve early mornings. Each day we will climb in and out of Zodiacs, sometimes onto sandy beaches, but sometimes onto rocky and wet shoreline, requiring balance. There are numerous opportunities to snorkel on this trip and being comfortable in the water is important if you want to snorkel. The majority of the trip is on a yacht and may not be a good choice if you are very prone to seasickness. **Rating:** 1 [\[2\]](#) 3 4 5.

What's Included

- An English-speaking local naturalist guide and an AGC guide
- Internal flights to/from the Galapagos Islands and transport to our yacht
- Double occupancy lodging in the trip hotel and yacht
- Meals as noted on the itinerary
- All activities on the itinerary

Not included: Travel between Quito and your home, Galapagos National Park Entry Fee (\$100), Galapagos Transit Card (\$20), Isabela Port Fee (\$10), alcoholic beverages, guide and crew gratuities, travel insurance, meals as noted on itinerary, and optional activities not on the itinerary.

NOTE: Travel insurance is NOT included, but it is required for this trip.

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Our trip starts in Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ecuador's Capital City. At over 9,000 feet, Quito is the highest capital city in the world, and this enchanting city may just take your breath away. Our hotel is located in the colonial center of Quito, while the airport is located outside of the city. Upon arrival in Quito, you will be met by an English-speaking guide and taken to your hotel transfer to your hotel. The shuttle from the airport to the hotel is approximately 45 minutes. We'll gather at 5PM in the lobby for introductions before sharing our first dinner together. Overnight: Casona la Ronda, boutique hotel (D)

DAY 2

It's time to rise and shine and lace up our walking shoes! This morning we'll visit Quito's colonial center and South America's oldest capital (close to 500 years old), with narrow streets and hanging balconies. Our tour will include the Independence Plaza flanked by the presidential and archbishop palaces; and La Compañía Church with its impressive gold-leaf altar, considered the most beautiful church in the Americas. We'll drive to 'El Panecillo Hill' for a panoramic view of the city and admire the 45 m. high (148 ft) statue of the 'Virgen de Quito', the only Madonna with wings. Following our city tour, we'll drive approximately 15 miles North of Quito to the Equator Memorial at latitude 0°00', which marks the place where an 18th century expedition established the exact geodesic position of the Equator. We'll visit the monument, the ethnographic museum, and time permitting, a private smaller museum. We'll take part in an assortment of experiments demonstrating the effects of being on the equator while on our Quito Equator Monument Tour. After some down time at our hotel, we'll dine out at a delicious local restaurant. Overnight: Casona la Ronda, boutique hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 3

This morning it's time for the moment we've all been waiting for - our arrival in the Galapagos! In the morning we will transfer to the airport for our domestic flight. We'll fly to Baltra, formerly the location of an air base built by the US Navy during WWII, located just off Santa Cruz Island and one of the two main airports in the Galapagos. After paying our Galapagos National Park Entry fee (\$100 USD each) we will exit the terminal, collect our bags, and be met by our local guide in the arrivals area. They will escort our group via bus, barge, and bus again to our first stop in the Highlands of Santa Cruz, where Galapagos giant tortoises can be seen in the wild. We'll take our time to marvel at these gentle giants, and then have lunch in the highlands. After lunch we'll pay a visit to the Charles Darwin Station, which is both a research facility and National Park Information center, and has a giant-tortoise and land iguana breeding program and interpretation center. Following this day that is chock-full of travel, information, and new experiences, we will be more than ready for our final activity, boarding our comfortable and private first-class motor yacht, Beluga. Once on board we will be given a yacht briefing, a welcome beverage and delectable dinner, and a guide briefing for the next day. Overnight: On board the Beluga. (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Ready for our first full day of exploring the Galapagos by yacht?! We'll wake to a delicious chef-prepared breakfast with panoramic views of Sombrero Chino from our breakfast table. On this trip much of our boat's movement will happen overnight, bringing us the unique joy of waking up to new surprises out the window each day! Each day of our yacht voyage will be a combination of nature walks or hikes, wildlife viewing, snorkeling, and exploration by dinghy. We'll typically depart the yacht around 8AM and will start each day with a talk on shore about our location and plan for the day. There will be times when the length of our walks and amount of time spent snorkeling will be guided by our group's desires, weather, and timing. Having an exclusive yacht allows us some flexibility to explore to our heart's content. Sombrero Chino is a small volcanic island just off the southeast tip of Santiago. The name of the island means "Chinese hat", which describes the shape of the island. Fauna we may see today includes sea lions, marine iguanas, and the Galapagos penguin. After ample exploration of Sombrero Chino, we'll depart for our second stop of the day, Rábida Island. Rábida is one of the smallest Galapagos islands, and one of the most striking, known for its dark red coral sand beach. Highlights of Rábida include its lagoon filled with vibrant flamingoes, a pelican nesting site, sea lion bachelor colony, and a snorkeling site at the end of the beach. We'll snorkel at one or both islands depending on timing. (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Our journey today takes us to the largest island in the Galapagos, Isabela, formed by five active volcanoes fused together. Wolf Volcano is the highest point in the entire Galapagos at 1707m. We'll hike for approximately 3 km on Sierra Nevada volcano, which boasts a 10-kilometer diameter and learn about its recent lava flows, moist highland vegetation, and parasitic cones. We'll also visit Puerto Villamil, a charming port village on a white sand beach. Animal highlights today include visiting the Tortoise Breeding Station and a flamingo lagoon. Other possible stops today (depending on conditions) are the Tintoreras or Los Humedales. Tintoreras is a unique volcanic formation and a popular iguana nesting site that's home to hundreds of marine iguanas. In its quiet lagoon there are also boobies, penguins, and other birds. Los Humedales, a network of secluded wetlands, are a true hidden gem of Isabela with paths to rocky beaches, lava tubes, and natural pools. (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Today we'll begin our exploration of the far West side of Isabela, beginning with Punta Moreno. Punta Moreno is located in the central southwestern coast of Isabela Island and has spectacular views of the volcanoes Alcedo, Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul. On today's nature walk, we'll marvel at the impressive lava flows, desolate and pristine landscape, and varied and unusual arid zone vegetation. Our next stop is Elizabeth Bay, accessible only by dinghy. We'll hop into ours and look closely for penguins in the small islets in the bay. The long and narrow end of the bay is surrounded by three species of mangroves. Galapagos Sea Turtles and rays can usually be seen in the water. After a peaceful afternoon of cruising the bay and enjoying its varied wildlife, we'll head back to our home on the sea for some relaxation and dinner. Enjoy swaying under the stars on our spacious sundeck before retiring to your cabin. (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Today we'll motor farther north along Isabela's shores and visit Urbina Bay and Tagus Cove. Urbina Bay is located at the central-west coast of Isabela Island at the foothills of Alcedo and Darwin volcanoes. We'll walk on a flat and sandy path to see colorful land iguanas, Galapagos Giant tortoises and a coral reef rising above sea-level from a shallow sea-bed uplift in 1954. Tagus Cove is a natural harbor protected from the waves that made a perfect hideout long-ago for whalers and pirates. Centuries ago, they left their ship's names painted or carved on the rocks. A hike uphill to Darwin's Crater salt-water lake will provide an excellent view. We'll have the opportunity to snorkel in at least one, or possibly both sites depending on timing and will also have the option to kayak in Tagus Cove. (B, L, D)

DAY 8

We'll begin our day with a hop over to Fernandina Island, a stone's throw from the coast of Isabela. Fernandina is the youngest volcanic island and is still active. At Punta Espinoza, a place famous for its large colonies of marine iguanas, we'll also seek out unique species such as the flightless cormorant, Galapagos penguin, Galapagos hawk, and Galapagos snake. Returning to Isabela, we'll explore Punta Vicente Roca. We'll visit this site via dinghy rides along the cliffs and the partially sunken cave at the water's edge. Nasca boobies, blue-footed boobies and flightless cormorants inhabit the shoreline. Once again snorkeling will be an option at one, and possibly both sites depending on timing and interest. (B, L, D)

DAY 9

On our final full day in the Galapagos (unless you're extending your time here), we'll venture back to Santiago Island. This time we'll head ashore on the northwest side of the island. Santiago Island offers a wide variety of seabirds, marine iguanas, and fur seals. In Puerto Egas we'll walk along the rocky coastline that will show us a glimpse of some of Galapagos' best tide pools. Some highlights will include Sugarloaf volcano, fur seals, oystercatchers, a marine iguana colony, and old salt mine. Back on board the Beluga, we'll round the north side of Santiago, and disembark on Bartolome Island. A short but steep hike on a boardwalk will take us to the highest point on Bartolome for a spectacular view. It will take us about 1 hour to get to the summit, with several stops along the way to appreciate the scenery and learn from our guides. Sea lions and penguins can be seen around Pinnacle Rock, and there is a sandy beach with great swimming and snorkeling. We'll snorkel at one or both sites depending on timing. (B, L, D)

DAY 10

Our time in the Galapagos is winding to a close, but we will fit in one last stop, at North Seymour Island, just off the coast of Baltra. This flat piece of land originated after an uplifting event thousands of years ago. The island is home to endemic Palo Santo trees, colonies of blue-footed boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, and magnificent frigate birds. After our time on North Seymour, we'll wave goodbye to the Galapagos and motor to Baltra for our return flight to Quito. Our local guide will accompany us to the airport to check in for our return flights to Quito. If you are continuing to our land-based optional extension at the Enchanted Galapagos Lodge, a local guide will meet you in Baltra and transport you to the lodge to get settled and oriented to the remainder of your adventure. If you are departing from Quito today, there will be restaurants with lunch available at the airport, and you can plan flights out after 7PM. There are overnight flights departing from Quito, or we also recommend booking a night at the Wyndham Quito Airport and flying out the next day. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

Plan to arrive at the Mariscal Sucre Airport (UIO) in Quito, Ecuador any time before 3PM on Day 1

- If you arrive on Day 1, you will be met at the airport based on your flight arrival time and transported to the Casona la Ronda boutique hotel in Quito.
- If you arrive prior to Day 1, transportation from the Mariscal Sucre airport is not included and you should plan to meet us at the Casona la Ronda hotel lobby at 5PM on Day 1. If you have the time, it is a good idea to arrive in Ecuador one day before the trip begins, particularly if your international flight connections are tight or you are departing from a region where it is likely that bad weather may cause flight delays.
- The group will gather at the Casona la Ronda lobby at 5PM on day 1 and have a group welcome dinner and introductions.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exitto Travel](#). Start by submitting this [form](#). Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Exitto charges a one-time, non-refundable processing fees of \$50 per passenger.

Accommodations

We'll spend our first two nights at La Casona de la Ronda Hotel in Quito, a charming boutique hotel with a central courtyard just off the main plaza in Quito. The remainder of the trip we will live aboard our private luxury motor yacht, Beluga. Beluga is fully air-conditioned, spacious, and comfortable. It has 6 shared double cabins and 1 single supplement cabin, each with its own private bath with hot showers. There is a dining cabin with panoramic windows, and a sundeck to enjoy the view

Travel Insurance

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit www.travelexinsurance.com or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

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