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EXPLORING THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Immerse yourself in the amazing biodiversity of the world renowned Galapagos
- Stay on three different islands and learn about the unique aspects of each
- Swim and snorkel among sea lions and brightly colored fish
- Hike to the rim of a volcano and see the effects of a 12-year-old eruption

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TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Galapagos Islands, Ecuador
Activities:	Multisport
Arrive:	Plan to arrive at the Quito airport (UIO) by 4 p.m. on Day
Depart:	You can leave any time on the last day (Day 10) unless you are staying for the “Ecuador's Amazon Jungle” trip.

Trip Overview

The Galapagos Islands are loved the world over for their rich and accessible wildlife and fantastic geology. Widely known as the place where Darwin confirmed his theory of evolution, it also offers the opportunity for intimate viewing of wildlife on sea and land. In the Galapagos we'll swim with sea lions, snorkel in clear waters teeming with brightly colored fish, hike to a volcanic crater, and walk within a few feet of blue-footed boobies, marine iguanas, and Giant Tortoises. Our journey takes you to three unique islands as well as many coves and inlets that include a wealth of wildlife. Add on the [Amazon Extension](#) to make the most of your time in Ecuador!

Rating

This trip is appropriate for women in good physical condition who want to spend 3 to 5 hours every day actively exploring the Galapagos, including hiking, swimming, and kayaking. With the exception of the hike up Sierra Negra Volcano, none of the days are strenuous; however, the days are full and some will involve early mornings. There are several opportunities to snorkel on this trip and being comfortable in the water is important if you want to snorkel. There are also several speedboat transfers and while the ocean is typically calmer this time of year, this trip may not be a good choice if you are very prone to seasickness. Please note, as in all international travel, flexibility is an absolute must and the ability to set aside our western expectations and enjoy the culture and country will make for a wonderfully enjoyable trip.

Rating: 1 [2](#) 3 4 5.

What's Included

- An English-speaking naturalist guide and an AGC guide (If the trip is not full, there may not be an AGC guide)
- Internal flights to/from the Galapagos Islands and private speed boat transport between islands
- Double occupancy lodging in hotels (10 nights)
- Meals as noted on the itinerary
- All activities on the itinerary
- Gratuities for day guides, drivers, boat crews and lodge staff

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 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 it is likely you'll experience some symptoms of breathlessness as you walk around. Our hotel is located in Quito while the airport is located outside of the city. The group shuttle from the airport to the hotel is approximately 45 minutes and will leave the airport at 3PM. If you arrive early and want to get to the hotel before this timeline, we will help you arrange a shuttle for an extra fee. We'll then gather at 5PM in the lobby for introductions and a trip orientation before sharing our first dinner together.

Overnight: Reina Isabel Hotel or similar (D)

DAY 2

Today we explore the highest constitutional capital in the world! After a walk around Quito's historic Old Town district, you'll see why Quito was the first city to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We'll admire the famed Basilica and, if time allows, climb inside to explore its towers before continuing on to the main square, the Archbishop's Palace. Before lunch we'll get to see Quito's best viewpoint at El Panecillo. Free afternoon to relax and get ready for Galapagos. (B, L, D)

Overnight: Reina Isabel Hotel or similar

DAY 3

It's back to the airport early this morning for our flight to the Galapagos! Today will be a long travel day but it will be mitigated by our excitement about being in the Galapagos. We arrive in 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 each) and transferring to Puerto Ayora via bus, we board our waiting speed boat for a 2.5-hour trip to Isabela Island. This seahorse-shaped island is the largest in the archipelago at 80 miles in length. Despite its remarkable beauty, Isabela is not a stop on most Galapagos cruises, making it a less-visited site perfect for our adventures.

Isabela was formed approximately one million years ago by the merger of six shield volcanoes: Alcedo, Cerro Azul, Darwin, Ecuador, Sierra Negra, and Wolf, all but one of which are still active. Two of the volcanoes, Wolf and Cerro Azul, stretch above the cloud cover and are therefore arid on their upper flanks. Because it is a relatively young island, Isabela's lava fields and surrounding soil do not have the varied vegetation zones of other islands. Despite this, the rich animal, bird, and marine life are beyond comparison. Upon arrival in Puerto Villamil, the main town on Isabela, we check into San Vicente Hotel. On a walking tour we'll start learning about and get oriented to the area. (B, L, D)

Overnight: La Laguna Hotel or similar

DAY 4

The morning begins with a boat ride to the small isolated islet of Tintoreras or Shark Alley. This island is a unique volcanic formation. On its west face a primitive species of lichen flourishes in the moisture brought by the prevailing wind. This is a popular iguana nesting site that's home to hundreds of marine iguanas. In the quiet lagoon there are also boobies, penguins and other birds. We'll explore by boat and then by foot, walking through the volcanic rock and observing the wildlife and then, we'll explore by water - snorkeling! We'll snorkel in a calm inlet with colorful fish and winding underground lava tubes. This area is frequented by green sea turtles that like to rest on the calm, sandy bottom. After lunch we'll get to snorkel again, this time at a spot called "Concha y Perla" or shell and pearl where sea lions are usually plentiful. (B, L)

Overnight: La Laguna Hotel or similar

DAY 5

After breakfast this morning we drive to the highlands of Isabela for an entirely new view and feel of the Galapagos (and likely our most challenging day of the trip). After a 45-minute drive we reach the starting point of our hike up Sierra Negra, one of the most active volcanoes in the Galapagos. It last erupted on October 22, 2005 and deposited a new and dramatic layer of lava. The caldera of this volcano is the second largest in the world, with a diameter of approximately six and a half miles. On our hike we can spot a variety of birds, including finches and flycatchers and if we're lucky, the Galapagos hawk. From the rim of the caldera we can see the awesome force of nature and its aftermath.

At this point in our hike, there are choices. We can stop and enjoy our surroundings or continue our hike to Chico Volcano to see fumaroles and the unusual lava formations, a striking visual record of the geological history of these islands. From our highest vantage points, we'll enjoy views of Isabela's other volcanoes and nearby islands. Returning to the starting point of our hike and then driving back to town, we'll have time for a walk to the beach for a cool swim, or perhaps a stroll in town. Mileage: 4 or 11 miles roundtrip. (B, L)

Overnight: La Laguna Hotel or similar

DAY 6

We'll begin the day with a kayak excursion in a protected bay. While here, we'll search for the protected Galapagos penguin - the only penguin found close to the equator. It's also the smallest and looks like a duck until you see it out of the water. Along the way, we'll also keep an eye out for eagle rays, sea turtles, and blue-footed boobies.

In the afternoon we head by boat to Isla Santa Cruz (about 2.5 hours), also called Indefatigable Island. The tourist capital of the Galapagos, Santa Cruz is located in the center of the Galapagos Islands archipelago. It is also the center of human activity, since the National Park Headquarters, the Darwin Research Station, and the largest settlement in the Galapagos Islands, Puerto Ayora, are all located on Academy Bay on the south side of Santa Cruz Island. We'll check in to the hotel and then go for a short walking tour of Puerto Ayora. Our hotel is close to the center of town and if you have been wanting to do some shopping, there are lots of choices here. (B, L)

Overnight: [Lobo de Mar hotel](#) or similar

DAY 7

This morning you have two options for the activity. The first is an easy 15 minute stroll to a lovely snorkeling and swimming area called "Las Grietas". The second is a 1.5 mile (each way) walk to Tortuga Bay, a gorgeous and pristine beach accessible only by foot. Do you prefer swimming, sunbathing, or bodysurfing? Or all three? It's totally up to you at Tortuga Bay. In the afternoon we'll get to see the interior of the island. (Santa Cruz is the only island of the Galapagos that has a road crossing its interior (running from Puerto Ayora in the south to the Itabaca Channel crossing in the north), thus providing visitors a great opportunity to easily see the higher elevations. We'll drive to the Santa Cruz highlands where we will see wild Galapagos Tortoises. These huge creatures weigh 200 to 500 pounds and are scattered all over the island. Walking on level paths gives us the chance to observe the giant tortoise roaming in its natural habitat. (B, L)

Overnight: Lobo de Mar hotel or similar

DAY 8

This morning we'll visit the Charles Darwin Station, formerly the home of Lonesome George, the famous of his subspecies on Pinta Island. We'll learn about the Foundation's successes in repopulating the islands with the once endangered land iguana and several species of giant tortoise and see the most representative animals of the islands.

In the afternoon we'll take a speed boat to San Cristobal (about 2.5 hours), our last island on this journey. San Cristobal Island is the easternmost island in the archipelago chain. It is also one of the oldest and thus its volcanic peaks are greatly eroded, and vegetation is more abundant than on the other islands. Upon arrival in the provincial capital and second-largest town in Galapagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, we'll have some time to settle into our hotel, Casa de Nelly, before going on a walking tour to get oriented to the town. (B, L)

Overnight: [Casa de Nelly](#) or similar

DAY 9

This may be your favorite day, particularly if you like snorkeling. It begins with a short boat ride to Sea Lion Island where we'll disembark and take a short hike through and around the island observing the Frigatebird and their unusual mating rituals. The males have a distinctive red throat pouch, which they inflate during the breeding season to attract females. Sea lions and Blue Footed Boobies are also inhabitants and entertainers on the island. After observing the island by land, we'll next observe it by water - snorkeling! We'll snorkel the length of the island on the lagoon side where we'll be treated to a beautiful array of tropical fish and sea stars. We'll most likely be joined by playful young sea lions and enjoy their graceful antics in the sea. After snorkeling, we'll return to the boat for lunch and then head over to Ochoa Beach where we can choose between finding a shady spot to relax, soak up some sun on the beach or float around in this gorgeous lagoon watching for turtles - or maybe all three! Returning to Isla San Cristobal we'll have a bit of free time to do whatever we want. Perhaps you might go for a hike to Frigate Bird Hill for panoramic views of the Pacific Islands and some bird watching. Or you may find it hard to leave Mann Beach, with its delightful setting and more opportunities to swim with sea lions. Perhaps you just want to sit on a quiet beach and reflect on everything you've seen and done in the past 2 weeks. However, you want to spend it, it will be just perfect. (B, L)

Overnight: Casa de Nelly or similar

DAY 10

This morning we'll visit the Interpretation Center where we'll learn about the history of the 'Enchanted Islands' and the conservation projects which seek to preserve the unique Galapagos wildlife. It's a fitting way to spend our last time here and particularly meaningful after we've seen it all up front. And then it's time to head to the airport for our flight back to Quito and transfer to the hotel. If you're extending your trip to the Amazon Jungle (which we recommend if time allows), you'll have a briefing that afternoon along with anyone who is joining for just that portion. Afterwards you'll share a final farewell dinner, saying goodbye to each other and to this amazing country. (B, D)

Overnight: Wyndham Quito or similar

DAY 11

This morning our adventure comes to an end. There are no planned activities and you can leave whenever you want. Our hotel is located almost directly across from the airport with a convenient airport shuttle. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

You will be flying into the Mariscal Sucre Airport (UIO) in Quito, Ecuador. The hotel has a shuttle and you can arrive anytime.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito 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: Exito charges a one-time, non-refundable processing fee of \$35 per passenger.

Accommodations

We will spend the first and last nights in Quito at the Wyndham Airport Hotel, which offers an airport shuttle for arrival and departure convenience. In the Galapagos we'll be staying at three different locally-owned and small hotels (see itinerary for specifics). Hotel rooms are double occupancy with ensuite bathrooms unless you have requested a single supplement.

Of note: Purified/filtered water is available (free of charge) at all the accommodations that will be used during your trip. Water will be provided in large containers to enable you to fill and refill your personal water bottles and/or hydration systems.

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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