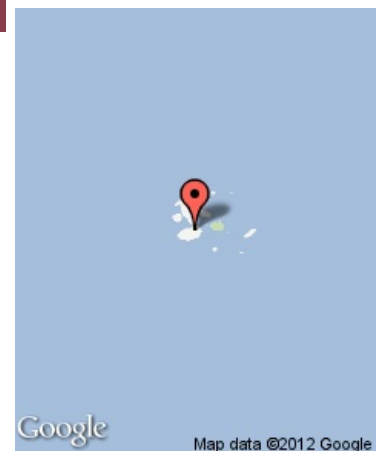


Galapagos Walking Tour on Isabela Island



Highlights

A Galapagos in miniature, Isabela Island is famed for its volcanoes, mangroves and diverse endemic fauna, from iguanas and tortoises to finches and boobies! This 4-day walking tour captures all the magic of this incredible island!

Like flotsam detached from some ancient wreck, the Galapagos Islands appear lost and lifeless, adrift in the eastern Pacific. Straddling the Equator 1000km off the coast of Ecuador, the volcanic archipelago rises from the waves like a jagged reptilian crest, a lacerated lava-scape of barren brilliance. From the scattered mangroves, through the arid cactus lowlands to the lush cloud forests of the upper regions, these young islands embody life in its infancy. Flora and fauna of unparalleled diversity confound modern visitors just as they did Charles Darwin some 175 years ago. It was here, observing the specific variation between islands, that the naturalist refined his theory of evolution. The species that inspired him – the finches, tortoises and marine iguanas – remain to this day (along with sharks, rays and near-tame sea lions), a timeless testament to nature's genius.

This 4-day tour is the perfect introduction to the wild wonderlands of the Galapagos. Beginning in Quito, the highland capital of Ecuador, you'll transfer by plane to Isabela Island, your home for the next few days. Having drunk in the awesome seascape on the flight over, it's time to explore the islands on foot. First off is the local tortoise breeding centre, where you'll get up close and personal with these gentle giants. It's then on to El Cura and El Mango, with their stunning views over the south of Isabela, before climbing up to the spectacular crater of Sierra Negra, the second largest in the world! You will tour the small islands of Tintorerias, a Galapagos in miniature. Here you'll see white tipped sharks at rest, as well as sea lions, rays and penguins. After a spot of snorkeling, it's on to the coastal mangroves for an unforgettable encounter with the islands' marine iguanas, one of the world's most unique species!

Is it for me?

This is the perfect introduction to the timeless wonder of the Galapagos. Children and adults alike will be impressed by the islands' charismatic inhabitants, not to mention their 'end-of-the-world' topography. This tour is ideal for people who want a Galapagos adventure that combines spectacle and safety. Adrenalin junkies may find the pace a bit leisurely, but it's all the better for wildlife watching.

Accommodation

For this tour you'll be based at one of a selection of charming beachfront hotels in the pretty village of Puerto Villamil, located on the southeastern edge of Isabela Island. All of the locally owned guesthouses are clean, comfortable and spectacularly situated, with the water and boardwalk just a stone's throw away (ideal for bird, shark and tortoise watching).

Food-wise you'll be spoilt for choice; the hotels serve up lavish continental breakfasts and lunches, while Puerto Villamil is home to a host of little cafes and bistros. Expect excellent seafood and organic meats, not to mention a terrific variety of tropical fruits and vegetables and some of South America's finest wines and coffees.

Itinerary

Prices from

798 GBP (4 days) per person

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Day One: Quito - Baltra - Isabela Island

You will leave Quito in the morning and fly to the island of Baltra. From here you will transfer for a short flight to Isabela, passing over the spectacular Galapagos marine scenery. Finally at your destination you will pay a visit to the breeding centre where the Islands' giant tortoise population is presently recovering. Expert guides will explain the process of breeding and releasing into the wild these giant slow-moving creatures, whose Spanish name (meaning saddle) gave the Islands their present title.

Day Two: El Cura - El Mango

You start the day by visiting El Cura and then El Mango, with their stunning views of the southern part of Isabela. The walk then takes you up to the spectacular crater of the Sierra Negra, the second largest in the world. From here it's on to Volcán Chico (little volcano) at the eastern rim of the crater. At Volcán Chico you can see in miniature the process that formed the Galapagos. Two recent eruptions have laid bare the geology of the islands: massive lava flows, small cones and miniature tunnels can all be easily viewed and explored. Here you will be able to picnic on the top of the volcano and enjoy truly spectacular views over the central and northern parts of Isabela, as well as Fernandina, Pinzón and Santa Cruz Islands.

Day Three: Tintoreras

Today you will take a short tour of the small islands of Tintoreras, a Galapagos in miniature. Here you can see white tipped sharks at rest, plus sea lions, turtles, rays and penguins. You will also have the chance to snorkel in the bay. In the afternoon you can walk the Wetlands Trail through the mangroves (all four types can be seen here) and marine iguana colonies. At the end of the trail is the Wall of Tears, built in the late 1940's by Second World War prisoners held at the US base on the island.

Day Four: Isabela Island - Baltra - Quito

Today you say goodbye to Isabela Island and fly over the spectacular scenery once more to Baltra where you board our return flight to Quito.

Details

Getting there

Flying from the UK...Major airlines flying to Ecuador are Iberia, Intercontinental, British Airways and LAN Ecuador. All flights require at least one stop over in José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport - Guayaquil (GYE), and often two, possibly in Madrid or Houston.

From Mariscal Sucre International Airport - Quito (SEQU) you must then catch another plane to Isabela Island. Please note the latter flight does not operate on Sundays.

Price includes

Price based on 2-3 participants.

Accommodation; English-speaking certified naturalist guide; breakfast and lunch; activities described on itinerary; snorkelling equipment.

Not included:

- Airfare Quito - Galapagos - Quito
- Flights between islands
- Speed boat transfer between islands
- Airport taxes in Isabela (\$15)
- Entrance fee to the Galapagos National Park (\$100 per person cash on arrival to the islands)
- Galapagos transit card (\$10)

When is best

The weather is by nature very changeable in Ecuador - so be aware of what is forecast for your visit and be sure to pack accordingly. The ocean currents determine the weather in the Galapagos islands. From June to December conditions are cool, cloudy and mostly dry. From January to May conditions become warm and sunny with a few afternoon showers. Water temperatures range between 18 to 30°C.

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed