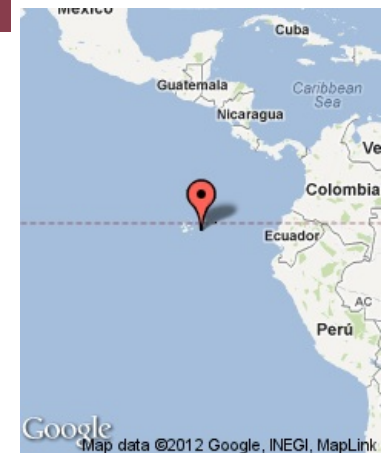


Galapagos Adventure



Highlights

This Galapagos adventure is a week-long thrill-packed outdoor adventure! Snorkel, kayak and hike amid one of the world's most unique ecosystems with an exceptional array of wildlife that will captivate you just as it first did Darwin.

The Galapagos Islands lie in the Pacific Ocean about 1000 km from the South American coast straddling the equator. The archipelago is a mix of large and small islands and 107 islets and rocks covering about 8000 square kilometres. The islands are volcanic and some volcanoes to the west of the archipelago are still active. Many species exhibit fearlessness, largely due to the lack of natural predators. The wealth of biodiversity have made the islands a World Heritage site.

Famously, Darwin was influenced by the Galapagos in his concept of evolution and studied its plant and animal life extensively; such as finches, iguanas and giant tortoises. Day Boat tours show the dolphins, sea lions and whales that circle the islands and closer to shore there is sea-kayaking and snorkeling. Guided hikes take in the flora and fauna of islands where no human hand has left its trace.

This tour offers a week of wildlife combined with outdoor sports in the incomparable surroundings of the Galapagos Archipelago. You will hike and mountain-bike through dry forest lowlands and the lakes of the highland interior to visit the Galapagos' giant tortoise and see the incredible birds that stimulated Darwin's evolutionary theory. You will explore the craters and tunnels created by volcanic activity in the region and even visit an active volcano!

Not content to keep you on one island, you will take a fast boat over to another two locations over the week where you can enjoy more excellent kayaking and snorkeling opportunities among rays, sharks and tropical fish. A bilingual guide will help you explore the coastline's white sand beaches, mangroves and lagoons.

Is it for me?

A Galapagos adventure is what David Attenborough would ask for at Christmas! The diversity of species is astonishing and nature-lovers, especially ornithologists, will be in their element. Those who enjoy the physical side of outdoor pursuits will be amply rewarded by the water-sports and biking that this trip offers. Trips to the remote Galapagos are a once in a lifetime experience with a price to match, so groups of younger people might find it less affordable than older groups.

The physical activities are adaptable to your requirements and there is nothing too challenging for someone of average fitness. Beaches and bars will cater for those looking to combine a bit of nightlife and sun-tanning with this marvellous nature trip. Groups are a maximum of 8 people.

Accommodation

You will stay in three different hotels on three different islands over the week. Casa Opuntia or Casa Blanca or Pimampiro in San Cristobal; Hotel Fernandina, Red Bobby or Mainao in Santa Cruz; Casa de Marita, Casa Sol or Wooden House in Isabela. The Galapagos have a sophisticated standard of accommodation and service; all rooms are well-appointed with private bathrooms. Two are centrally located in sizeable towns giving easy access to a selection of restaurants serving local and international cuisine.

Your final two nights will be at a picturesque small harbour town set on sweeping white beaches near mangrove forests and saltwater lagoons with flamingos. Here there are also good hotel-restaurants and bars serving

Prices from
1,555 GBP (7 days) per person

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visitors a high standard of local and international cuisine.

Itinerary

Day One: Galapagos Museum - Frigate Hill

After a morning flight to Galapagos, you will be received at the airport and given a briefing over lunch at a sea side restaurant. Begin your adventure at the Interpretation Center to learn about the wildlife, geology, history, and social dynamics of the Galapagos. Hike to Frigate Hill along lava rock trails. Along the way, your naturalist guide will explain all about the Galapagos cotton, palo santo, acacia, and cacti you encounter. You will also spot blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, pelicans, herons, gulls, warblers, mockingbirds, and finches amongst the vegetation and sea cliffs. In addition to unique species, the hike provides marvellous views of the rugged coastline and the tranquil town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. On the way back, you can stop for a refreshing snorkel or swim at postcard worthy Carola Beach. Here you will find sea turtles, sea lions, and marine iguanas, as well as surfers riding world-class waves. After a gorgeous sunset, you can explore the town. You might like to take a 5-minute walk from the hotel down the boardwalk to view the immense colony of endemic Galapagos sea lions. (L)

Day Two: Isla Lobos - Kicker Rock

Today you will experience a real Galapagos Adventure as you take to the seas in kayaks! The morning is spent exploring coastal bays and coves full of wildlife. You will see bluefooted boobies, frigate birds, sea lions, and sea turtles. Upon reaching Playa Ochoa, you head away from the coast and on to nearby Isla Lobos. Here you will snorkel with marine iguanas, sea lions, and countless reef fish. Paddle out towards the open sea to reach Kicker Rock, two breathtaking rock massifs that jut out from the ocean. Above the waters, thousands of sea birds cling to its walls and below millions of fish call the rock home. In the channel between the two rock walls, you will find some of the best snorkeling in the islands. You will likely see spotted eagle rays, golden rays, Galapagos sharks, starfish, clams, and fish of every shape, size, and colour. If you are lucky, you will also see hammerhead sharks! (B, L)

Day Three: Coastline - Tintorerias

In the morning, take a quick plane ride over to Isabela Island. This is the largest island in the Galapagos and is still being formed by 6 shield volcanoes. Hence, Isabela is one of the most volcanically active spots on the planet. Tomorrow you head to the volcanoes, but today explore the natural treasures of the coastline in sea kayaks and mountain bikes. Visit El Muro de las Lágrimas (Wall of Tears). Isabela used to be used as a penal colony and here prisoners constructed a massive wall of lava rocks for no other purpose than to keep busy. Continue by bike along white sand beaches, mangroves, brackish lagoons, and a lava tube. The area is filled with giant tortoises and birdlife. Here, you will also have a chance to spot flamingos. After lunch, explore Tintorerias, a set of small islets filled with hidden coves and beaches. Here, you will find the endemic Galapagos penguin as well as reef sharks, sea turtles, and sea lions. In the late afternoon or evening, feel free to take a leisurely stroll down the seemingly endless beach or the sand streets of this idyllic beach town. (B, L, D)

Day Four: Isabela Highlands

This morning, drive up to the highlands until the road ends. Hike into a world of recent geological history. On the hike up, soak in the incredible views of the surrounding volcanoes and sea. However, when you arrive at the rim of Volcan Sierra Negra, your jaw will drop. This is the second largest active caldera on the planet. You will walk along the rim of this enormous 30 square mile crater, and if feeling energetic, continue your hike into the caldera of Volcan Chico. Volcan Chico is an otherworldly landscape with endless hues of oranges, reds, blacks, and yellows. Here, you can explore puffing fumaroles and spectacular lava formations. After a day on terrain reminiscent of Mars, return to paradise on earth. Spend your last afternoon in this lazy beach town relaxing on its stunning beaches and soaking up the island-life atmosphere. (B, L, D)

Day Five: Santa Cruz Island

After breakfast, take a speedboat to Santa Cruz Island. Along the way look out for whales and dolphins. Upon arrival, head to El Chato in the Santa Cruz highlands to find the giant tortoise in its natural habitat. It is truly an honour to hike amongst these fascinating giants, who can live to be over 175 years old. You will also see pintail ducks, finches, frigate birds, egrets, and hopefully the vermilion flycatcher - a red jewel of a bird. Explore some incredible lava tunnels in which pirates frequented and perhaps hid Inca gold. Tortoise meat was actually a major reason pirates came to the Galapagos. The metabolism of giant tortoises is so slow that they could be stored alive on pirate ships for up to 6 months without food or water. We then carry on to Los Gemelos, two deep volcanic craters at the top of the island. The hike around these craters is through a forest of endemic scalesia trees. The trees are covered with ferns and epiphytes and exude an almost eerie feel. Be on the lookout for the short-eared owl. (B, L)

Day Six: Tortuga Bay

This morning, take to sea kayaks once again and explore Punta Estrada and Divine Bay. Paddle through serene turquoise waters that meander through towering lava channels walls. Below the clear waters, you should be able to see rays and white-tipped reef sharks. You can also paddle right up to the fearless red-billed tropic birds, blue footed boobies, herons, Sally-footed crabs and marine iguanas perched along the cliffs. After lunch, visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. Here, you can learn about the ongoing conservation efforts on the enchanted islands you have spent the last 7 days exploring. The Research Station rears endemic Galapagos plants, land iguanas, and giant Galapagos tortoises for educational, scientific, and conservation purposes. Here, you can compare the diverse evolutionary paths of the various giant tortoise subspecies from different islands. You will also meet Lonesome George, the only remaining member of the Pinta Island subspecies. From here take a 40 minute hike to Tortuga Bay through a unique dry forest. Along the hike, you will find many birds and interesting plants. When you reach the beach, you will hardly believe your eyes, as words can fail to describe its beauty. Take time to relax on its fine sands or in its azure waters. Return to Puerto Ayora to enjoy your last evening on this island full of fantastic dining and nightlife options. (B, L)

Day Seven: Home/Onwards

Today, you say goodbye to the Galapagos, and transfer to nearby Baltra island for your return flight to the mainland. (B)

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 San Cristobal Island. Please note, the airfare from Quito to the Galapagos is not included in the price and costs \$363 in the low season (May - June, Sept - Oct) and \$416 in the high season.

Price includes

Accommodation in standard and superior tourist hotels; meals; adventure and protective equipment; professional English speaking guide; land and sea transportation.

When is best

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

Travellers should bring

Waterproof sandals; hiking shoes; light rainjacket; water bottle; non-cotton trekking gear; sun block; hat and mosquito repellent.

Reviews (1)

Reviews of this experience

“ We very much enjoyed our trip and met great people on our guided tour. The combination of sea kayaking/biking/hiking/diving etc really suited our penchant for activity holidays. The hotels were basic but absolutely fine, the food great and the Island to Island transfers exciting. You cannot help being impressed by the wildlife in the Galapagos Islands. We combined it with a visit to Quito where we did an awesome mountain bike ride down the slopes of Cotopaxi, then managed to climb the same mountain over the next 2 days - 19,000 feet!
I would thoroughly recommend this holiday as organised by Tourdust!
That's our second great trip with this company. ”

John Donald reviewing Galapagos Adventure