



YOUR GUIDE TO THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



HOW TO GET THERE

Situated west of Ecuador's mainland in the Pacific Ocean, lies one of the world's most prolific wildlife destinations – the Galapagos Islands. The archipelago itself is comprised of 13 main islands, each with their own diverse range of flora and fauna. With a lack of predators in the area, travellers can observe each island's distinct species from as little as a few metres away!

FLYING FROM THE MAINLAND

With the Galapagos Islands being located 1000km off the coast of Ecuador, travellers must take a flight from Ecuador's mainland. Flights depart from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Airport, located near the island of Santa Cruz, or San Cristobal Island. If you're flying from Quito, you'll have a short transit in Guayaquil.

INTER-ISLAND FLIGHTS

There are light aircraft flights from San Cristobal Island to Isabela Island and from Isabela Island to Santa Cruz Island for those on island hopping tours. When seas are calm, we recommend taking the local ferry between Isabela Island and Santa Cruz Island.



GALAPAGOS CRUISES

Most cruising companies require that guests book their flights as part of their cruise package, as the flights are co-ordinated with the cruise embarkation and disembarkation times. This way, if the flight is delayed, you do not miss your cruise!

If you are travelling as part of a land-based itinerary, then you can book your own preferred flights. We can recommend the best times for these depending on any activities you may have booked on the first or last day of your journey.

LARGE SHIP CRUISING

Accommodating 40 to 100 guests, these vessels offer a wider range of facilities compared to smaller ships and generally have more room to move around and socialise. Most importantly, the larger ships have more guides onboard, allowing guests to enjoy a wider range of activities at one time. They also offer greater stability when cruising through rough seas.

SMALL SHIP CRUISING

These vessels typically accommodate 16 to 24 guests and generally have one or two guides onboard, meaning excursions may be done in larger groups. When arriving to a site, your guide will liaise with any other groups visiting the island at the same time to ensure visitors are spread out in different parts of the island. For comfort we recommend double-hull catamarans as the best choice for stability.

WHEN TO GO AND WHAT TO SEE



The Galapagos Islands are a year-round destination, each season offering its own highlights. Snorkelling is available in every season and wetsuits may be available for rent in the winter months.

DRY SEASON - JUNE TO NOVEMBER

During the dry season, the Humboldt current brings cooler weather, slightly rougher waters, and plankton to the seas surrounding the Galapagos Islands. This treats snorkellers to an abundance of young wildlife and a more active range of marine life. Bird-watchers particularly enjoy this time of year as well, with species such as the American flamingo initiating elegant mating rituals.

HOT SEASON - DECEMBER TO MAY

This is the busiest time for Galapagos travel as waters are warmer and the seas are calmer. It is more humid and although there tends to be showers in the afternoon, they are generally short-lived. The vegetation is lush and the increased food supply means you have a better chance of seeing a higher abundance of land-based wildlife.

WHAT WILDLIFE WILL YOU SEE?

The islands are a natural habitat for plenty of noteworthy and endemic species. The famed 'Big 15' are:

- The Galapagos Albatross
- Blue-footed, Nazca and Red Footed Booby
- Flightless cormorant
- American flamingo
- Frigatebirds
- Galapagos hawk
- Sea lions and fur seals
- Galapagos penguin
- Giant tortoise
- Land, marine and Santa Fe iguanas

There is just as much to see under the water, with a range of fish, sharks, turtles and rays. If you're lucky enough and visit at the right time of the year, you may even spot whales! Most people go to the Galapagos Islands wanting to see as much wildlife as possible, however many animals are endemic to certain areas. If you have specific sightings in mind, such as baby chicks hatching or a particular bird migration, we can recommend an itinerary and the best time of year to visit.





EXPLORING THE ISLANDS

The Galapagos National Park Authority regulates the way people can visit the various islands of the archipelago to ensure the protection of the environment and wildlife. Visitors can only visit sites alongside a certified guide, who are all trained park rangers. A maximum of 16 visitors can be assigned per guide.

Each site in the Galapagos allows 100 visitors at a time, so often a larger ship will be the only one in the area. If travelling on a smaller vessel, or you're on a day trip from your hotel, there may be other ships and guests exploring the area at the same time as you.



LAND-BASED EXPLORATION

While cruising is our preference for exploring the Galapagos Islands, there are also some great land-based options available for those prone to sea-sickness or maybe just prefer to stay in hotels. Whether staying at one lodge or several, a land-based Galapagos adventure offers a mixture of wildlife, marine activities and great food, with boutique 4 – 4 ½ star accommodation.

ISLAND HOPPING

Visit the islands of San Cristobal, Isabela and Santa Cruz, each offering unique experiences. This is a great alternative to regular Galapagos Island cruises, allowing guests more time on the islands and to interact with the locals. Itineraries are flexible around departure days and sightseeing inclusions. Travel between islands is by public ferry or regional light aircraft flights.

FINCH BAY GALAPAGOS HOTEL

This unique award-winning hotel is a short water taxi ride and walk from the town of Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island. This is perfect place to relax in at either end of a cruise, or to base yourself at, taking day trips to nearby islands. Great accommodation and wonderful food paired with superb excursions make this hotel our most popular choice.

We highly recommend combining your Galapagos Islands experience with some of Ecuador's other highlights. Let us tailor-make the perfect itinerary for you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL

