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CHOOSE WISELY

TRAVEL SMART

TIPS FOR A GREAT GALAPAGOS JOURNEY



Galapagos Islands Travel

PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

You've dreamt of it for a lifetime. The Galapagos Islands. A place where history has been made. For centuries, home to pirates and whalers, but mostly to highly unusual fauna, inspiration for Darwin's theory as presented in [On the Origin of Species](#). And one of the few places on Earth where the wildlife shows no fear of humans, meaning you can observe it from just a few metres away. You want to see and do everything. **But with so many options available in this magical, exhilarating, iconic destination, you know there will be some trade-offs.** How to determine what works best for you? How to separate the essential from the merely beautiful? The transformative from the enticing? The perceptions from the realities...

1

Perception

Cruise ships are too massive for exploring Galapagos.

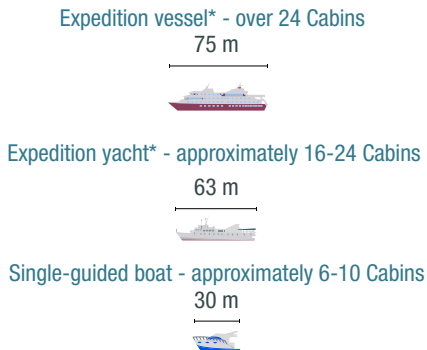
Reality

In other parts of the world, cruise ships can, indeed, be massive. But in Galapagos, the largest ships hold a maximum of 100 passengers and are perfect for exploring the islands. The options range from single-guided boats, with approximately 6-10 cabins, to two different types of multi-guided ships: Expedition yachts (approximately 16-24 cabins) and expedition vessels (over 24 cabins).

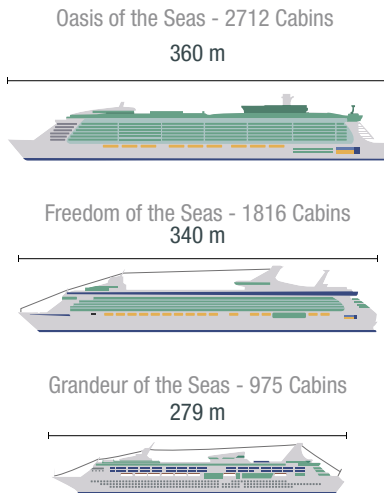
TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask about your ship's capacity.

Authorized vessels in Galapagos



Massive cruise liners are not authorised in Galapagos



2

Perception

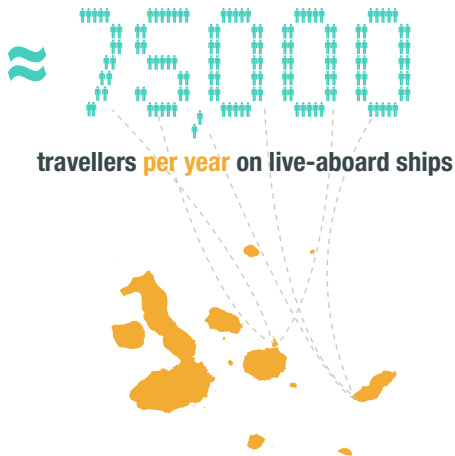
Mass tourism is damaging the Galapagos National Park.

Reality

The Galapagos National Park strictly controls the number of visitors allowed to visit the area each year, making the archipelago one of the most highly protected and monitored destinations in the world. As a result, the total number of people staying on live-aboard ships over an entire year is close to 80,000...and that is less than what a world-class sports stadium holds at just one sold-out event!

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask about how tourism helps the Galapagos National Park.



3

Perception

I've done a great deal of sailing in calm harbours, so I guess in the tropical waters of Galapagos my boat won't move enough to cause me any discomfort?

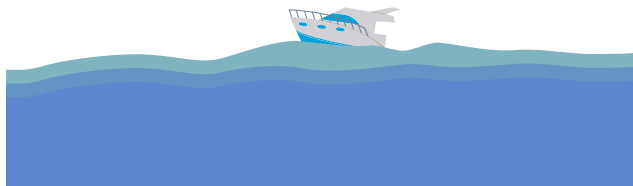
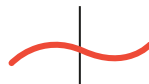
Reality

Stability can make all of the difference for an enjoyable cruise vacation and it is a strong feature of an expedition vessel. Contrary to common assumption, tropical waters are not always calm and an expedition vessel, by its very nature, reduces movement at sea. Single-guided boats often face interesting challenges when sailing between islands.

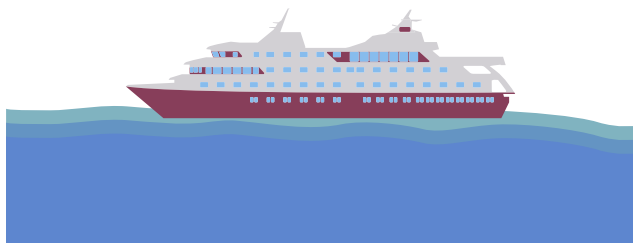
TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask what kind of ship will be the most comfortable for you.

Less Stability



More Stability



4

Perception

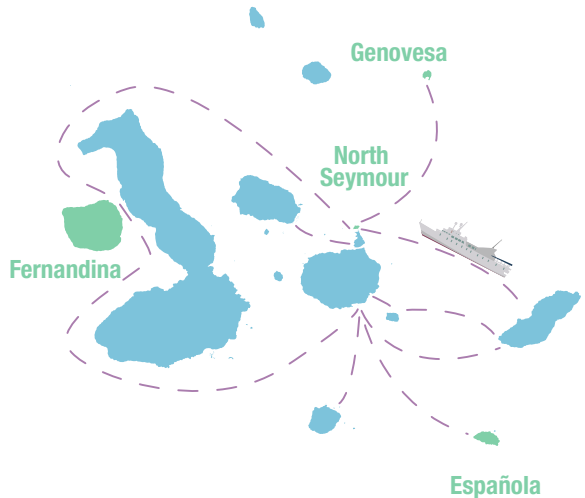
I can go on any ship. After all, they all cover the whole archipelago.

Reality

Not all ships reach all of the islands you might want to visit, such as Genovesa, Fernandina, Española and North Seymour. The archipelago covers a vast area of 138,000 km² (about half the size of Great Britain) and the ship and the itinerary that you choose will determine how you access the unique wildlife of the Galapagos National Park.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask which itinerary or programme will give you the best island and wildlife coverage.



Top-ranked islands for wildlife viewing according to Galapagos Expedition Leaders and Naturalist Guides

5

Perception

Only single-guided boats let you select full-week trips.

Reality

Expedition vessels, yachts, and land-based options offer a wide variety of choices for voyage length. You choose what's best for you with itineraries that range from 5 to 15 days. You can even combine two shorter itineraries to make sure you get the island coverage you want.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask about the best trip date and length for you.



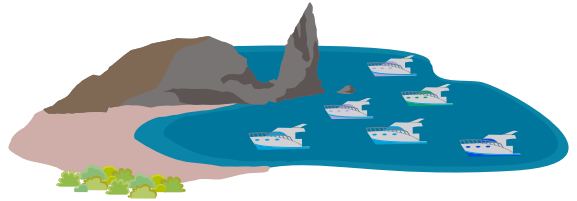
6

Perception

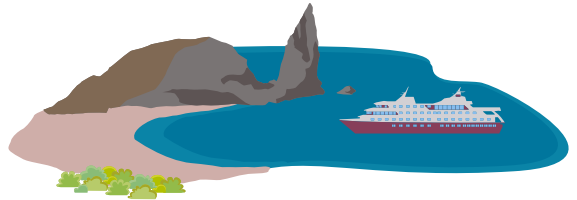
Single-guided boats get exclusive access to secluded National Park locations and do not share the islands with other visitors.

Reality

At each visitor site, you will generally find more than 4 single-guided boats per visitor site or only 1 expedition vessel. Why? Because according to Galapagos National Park (GNP) rules, each visitor site has its own maximum number of guests permitted at any given time. All itineraries must be approved by the authorities. Careful itinerary design, not ship size, is what ensures exclusivity and top wildlife viewing opportunities on island visits.



or



TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:
Ask about your ship's
Galapagos Exclusivity Rate.

7

Perception

If I want to go ashore in a small group, I must go on a small ship.

Reality

The Galapagos National Park official regulation authorizes 16 or fewer guests per guide. On expedition vessels, the number of guests per guide comes down to an average of just 12.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:
Ask about the Guide/Guest Ratio on your ship.

Single-guided boat:
16 guests per Naturalist Guide



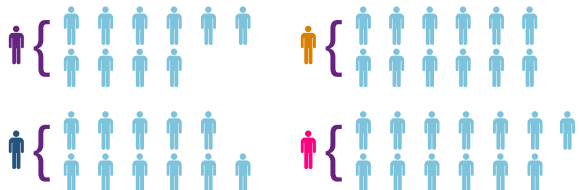
One Naturalist Guide



Expedition vessels and yachts:
16 or fewer guests per Naturalist Guide



Several Naturalist Guides



8

Perception

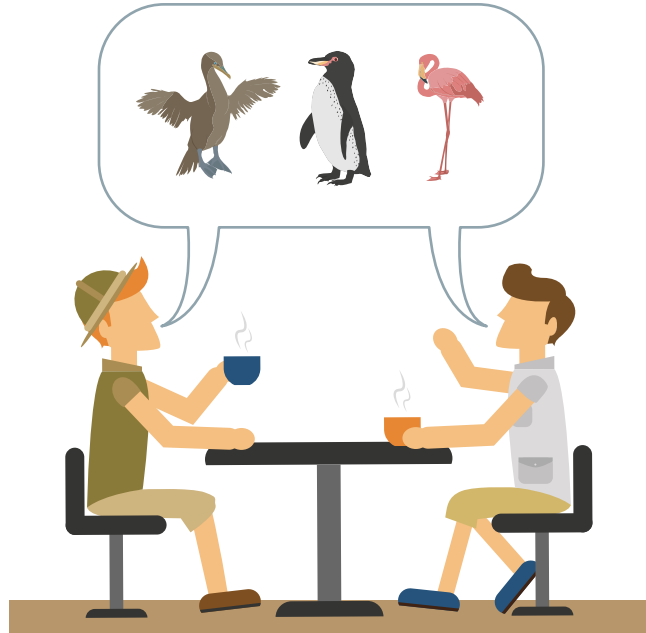
If I travel on a cosy single-guided boat, all my travel mates will be congenial and we will get along just fine.

Reality

Not necessarily, unless you have chartered the entire single-guided boat in order to travel exclusively with a group of dear friends or loved ones. Expedition vessels and yachts give you the freedom to find your own space when you want it or to seek out different guests for company while dining or when you want a friendly conversation.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask about any specific interests you may have.



9

Perception

All guests on single-guided boats speak my language and so language issues will not affect my experience.

Reality

Not everyone on a single-guided boat will necessarily speak your language. Naturalist Guides are generally multilingual and on single-guided boats, they must tailor their guiding to the group on board, which means that they often must repeat information in two or more languages each time they go ashore. Expedition vessels and yachts, with multiple Naturalist Guides, are better able to handle varied language requirements. This means that each group can receive more in-depth, outstanding natural history interpretation in various languages.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask how many guides are on your ship.

Single guide



Multiple guides



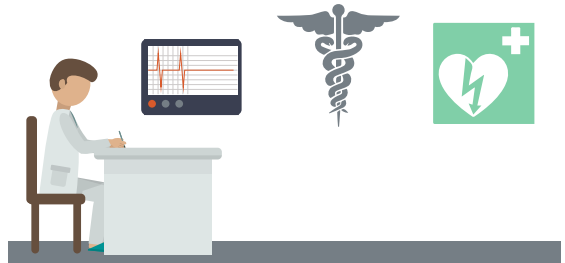
10

Perception

I'm in great shape. Basic first aid on board is enough for me.

Reality

Lucky for you if you enjoy constant good health, but having an MD Officer (Doctor) on your vessel can make all the difference, considering that you're travelling in a remote region. All operators watch out for the safety and security of their guests, and the National Park authority has its own facilities and emergency medical transport available. But some operators take guest safety to another level by investing in a permanent medical presence on board.



Travel Expert tip:

Ask if there is a
Medical Officer on board.

11

Perception

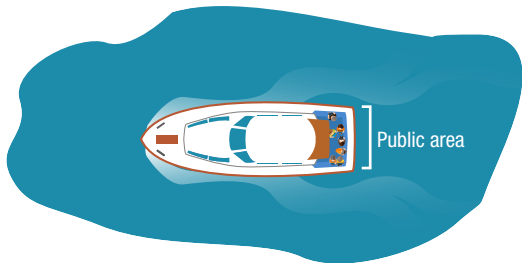
With so few guests on board a single-guided boat, I'll never feel cramped.

Reality

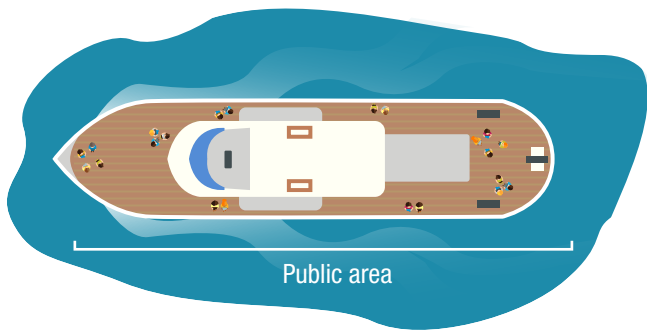
If it's space and freedom you want, take a look at the **Guest Space Ratio (GSR)**, a cruising industry benchmark designed to show how much room each guest has on any given ship and provide a common number that can be compared from ship to ship. Divide the ship's gross tonnage by the total guest capacity. Anything above a GSR of 20 is considered comfortable.

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask about the Guest-Space Ratio!



Average **GSR** on single-guided boats is approximately **14**



Average **GSR** on Expedition Vessels and Yachts is approximately **28**

TRAVEL EXPERT TIP:

Ask for **detailed information** about your ship's facilities and where you can go, besides your cabin, when you want some extra space?

12

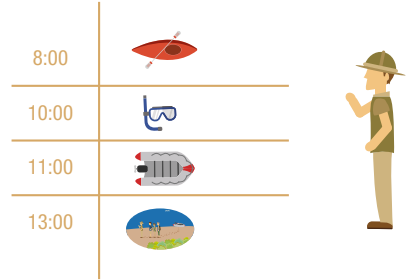
Perception

I can do any Galapagos National Park approved activity I want, whenever I want, no matter how I visit the islands.

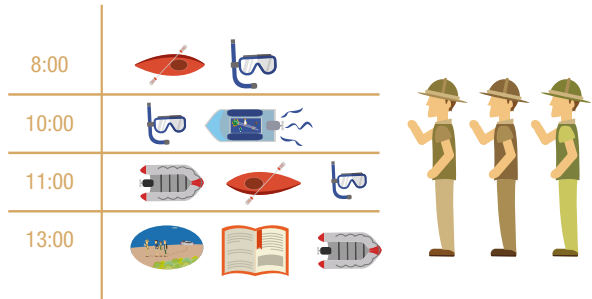
Reality

There are numerous ways to explore and have fun in Galapagos. With land-based travel, you have greater scheduling options for any activity occurring outside the park boundaries. But if you want to visit any sites within the park limits, it's important to remember that the National Park Authorities require that you do so accompanied by a licensed Naturalist Guide, which means you will have the greatest flexibility on multi-guided expedition vessels and yachts.

Activities inside park boundaries are limited to the number of accompanying guides



Simultaneous activities inside the National Park are possible when you have multiple guides



Travel Expert tip:

Ask if more than 1 activity is available at the same time.