



## **THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR**

**'NOTHING CAN BE MORE IMPROVING TO A NATURALIST  
THAN A JOURNEY TO A DISTANT COUNTRY'**

**—CHARLES DARWIN**



The Galapagos Islands, a World Natural Heritage Site, is a paradise where animals have no fear of man with unique and fascinating forms with behaviors impossible to find anywhere else in the world. Cormorants forgot to fly, iguanas learned to swim, tortoises became gigantic, and sharks mild. This is a place where sea lions show off their swimming skills and blue-footed boobies perform their elegant two-step mating dance right under your nose.

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# Trip Summary

## Itinerary Snapshot

*(Meals included: B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)*

<b>Day 1</b>	Arrive to Quito and check in to hotel, SwissÔtel. Hotel website: <a href="http://www.swissotel.com/hotels/quito/">http://www.swissotel.com/hotels/quito/</a>
<b>Day 2</b>	Walking tour of historic Quito. B
<b>Day 3</b>	AM - Depart from Quito to Baltra. PM - Visit Charles Darwin Station with some free time to visit town and shop. B, L & D
<b>Day 4</b>	AM – Mosquera Islet, wet landing. Walking tour followed by snorkeling. PM – North Seymour Island, dry landing. Walking tour and snorkeling. B, L & D
<b>Day 5</b>	AM – Santa Fe Island, wet landing. Walking tour with snorkeling. PM – South Plaza Islet, dry landing. B, L & D
<b>Day 6</b>	AM – Kicker Rock circumnavigation & Cerro Colorado Tortoise Reserve, dry landing. PM – Interpretation Center & Tijeretas Hill, dry landing, dry landing. B, L & D
<b>Day 7</b>	AM – Cerro Brujo, wet landing. Walking followed by snorkeling. PM – Punta Pitt & Islet, wet landing. Walking followed by snorkeling. B, L & D
<b>Day 8</b>	AM – Punta Suarez, dry landing. Walking on the oldest extant island in the archipelago. PM – Gardner Bay, Osborn or Gardner Islets, wet landing. Walking, then snorkeling. B, L & D
<b>Day 9</b>	AM – Punta Cormoran/Devil’s Crown/Champion, wet landing. Walking tour on varied volcanic terrain, followed by snorkeling/swimming. PM – Post Office, wet landing. Walking followed by snorkeling/swimming. B, L & D
<b>Day 10</b>	AM – Highlands Tortoise Reserve, dry landing. Then catch return flight to Quito. PM – Check-in Hotel Casa de Hacienda La Jimenita, near the airport: <a href="http://hotelnuevoaeropuerto.com">hotelnuevoaeropuerto.com</a>
<b>Day 11</b>	Fly out of Quito. B

**\*Note: depending on availability we may choose a different hotel of similar type and equal quality.**



## Itinerary in Detail

**Meals:** Breakfast is served from 7:30 to 8:30, except for Sunday when it is served at 6:00 and Wednesday at 7:00. Lunch is at 12:30 and dinner at 19:30, except on Monday and Saturday when it will be served at 18:30.

**Dry Landings:** Passengers step directly from a dinghy onto rocks or a dock. We recommend: walking shoes. Special care is highly recommended when walking on wet rocks.

**Wet Landings:** The dinghy edges toward the beach, where you step into knee-deep water assisted by crew members and guides. We recommend: swimming suit or shorts, walking shoes or sandals, towel (provided by the crew while disembarking)

### Day 1

Arrive in Quito, Ecuador where a representative will meet and bring you to SwissÔtel. For more information on our hotel accommodations, please see their website at [www.swissotel.com/hotels/quito/](http://www.swissotel.com/hotels/quito/)

#### *A bit about Quito*

The capital of Ecuador was founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city and stands at an altitude of 2,850 m. Despite the 1917 earthquake, the city has the best-preserved, least altered historic centre in Latin America. The monasteries of San Francisco and Santo Domingo, and the Church and Jesuit College of La Compañía, with their rich interiors, are pure examples of the 'Baroque school of Quito', which is a fusion of Spanish, Italian, Moorish, Flemish and indigenous art.

### Day 2

Guided informational hike of Quito. Quito's old-town is like walking through time and back again amidst splendid 16th century architecture, churches bathed in gold, convents tucked away behind hand-carved, baroque doors and block upon block of Spanish-style.

### Day 3

AM – Baltra Airport

Departure from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Island (2 ½-hour flight). Arriving in the Galapagos, passengers are picked up at the airport by our natural guides and taken to a ten-minute bus drive to the pier to board the M/Y Coral I or M/Y Coral II (depending on date booked).

PM – [Charles Darwin Research Station & Fausto Llerena Breeding Center \(Santa Cruz Island\)](#)

Dry landing. Once home to the famous Lonesome George, the last tortoise of the Pinta race, the breeding and relocation center is named in honour of his long-time guardian. The center is set in the Galapagos National Park Service where various interpretative buildings are available to visit. The grounds, with large stands of native vegetation, are one of the better places to spot some of the seldom seen Darwin's finches such as the woodpecker, cactus and vegetarian finches.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: flat

Duration: 1½-hour walk

### Day 4

AM- Mosquera Islet

Wet Landing. This tiny, low lying islet, covered in coral sand, is set between North and South Seymour Islands. It is home to a group of sea lions that come to laze on the soft white sand. It is a good spot to observe shorebirds as well as herons, lava gulls, and boobies. Snorkeling or diving here one can often see sharks, rays, and barracudas.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy

Duration: 1 ½-hour walk & snorkeling

PM – [North Seymour Island](#)

Dry landing. This flat, uplifted, island is an important spot to see both magnificent and great frigatebird males courting the females by clicking, bill-clapping, shuddering and flapping their wings, all while showing off their grossly inflated, bright red, gular pouch. We will also likely see courting blue-footed boobies displaying their unique feet while 'dancing' to a prospective mate. Sea lions, swallow-tailed gulls, crashing surf and distant views of the Daphne Islands top off a great visit.

Difficulty level: moderate

Type of terrain: rocky

Duration: 2-hour walk / 30-minute snorkeling

## Day 5

AM – [Santa Fe Island](#)

Wet landing. After a fabulous snorkel in the turquoise waters of the protected bay, we may have enjoyed time with sea lions, turtles, reef sharks and spotted eagle rays. Landing onto a sandy beach we are immediately distracted by the abundant sea lions there with us. We begin a walk past a forest of island-endemic giant Opuntia cacti. Here we search for another island-endemic the Santa Fe land iguana, paler than its cousins on other islands. Galapagos hawks and even endemic rice rats are also things to look out for.

Difficulty level: moderate

Type of terrain: rocky

Duration: 1 ½-hour walk / 1-hour deep water snorkeling

PM – [South Plaza Islet](#)

Dry landing. Sea lions, swallow-tailed gulls, and land iguanas are all present at the landing site. The small island is covered with a carpet of a red succulent studded with Opuntia cacti. At the cliff edge, we spend time watching birds fly past at eye level in the updraught. These include frigatebirds, flocks of Galapagos shearwaters and of particular note, flights of displaying red-billed tropicbirds. Back at sea level, we once again encounter land iguanas, some of which have hybridized with their resident marine cousins.

Difficulty level: moderate

Type of terrain: rocky

Duration: 2-hour walk

## Day 6

AM – [Kicker Rock Circumnavigation & Cerro Colorado Tortoise Reserve \(San Cristobal Island\)](#)

Kicker Rock can be seen directly from the vessel. In the sea northeast of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno is this ancient and eroded volcanic tuff lavanamed Leon Dormido or Kicker Rock it is formed by two rocks approximately 148 m, named for its resemblance of a sleeping lion.

It serves as home to many of the typical Galapagos sea animals, such as birds, sea lions, blue and Nazca boobies and frigate. With rare sightings of swallow turtle gulls, tropic birds, and pelicans.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of Terrain: water

Duration: 1-hour circumnavigation

Later in the AM - Dry landing. In the moist highlands of San Cristobal, we will visit the giant tortoise breeding center "La Galapaguera" to witness the most iconic creature of the archipelago in its various life stages. The tortoises wander in a semi-natural habitat which lends itself to good photographic opportunities. The aim of the reserve is to help restore populations of the threatened San Cristobal tortoise back into the wild. In town, there are shops to purchase local handicrafts and souvenirs.

Difficulty level: moderate

Type of Terrain: sandy

Duration: 40-minute bus drive to the Reserve / 1-hour visit

PM – [Interpretation Center & Tijeretas Hill \(San Cristobal Island\)](#)

Dry landing. The interpretation center is full of interesting information and offers the perfect overview to the formation of Galapagos, its significance in the world, threats and conservation efforts. Followed by a hike to Frigatebird Hill (Cerro Tijeretas) we will have great looks at both species of frigatebird, with the bonus of a beautiful view of the bay below.

Difficulty level: easy /moderate  
Type of terrain: flat/stairs/rocky  
Duration: 1-hour visit / 1-hour walk

### **Day 7**

AM – [Cerro Brujo \(San Cristobal Island\)](#)

Wet landing. From our pangas, as we head to shore, we are first humbled by the immensity of the stunning cliffs of “Sorcerer’s Hill”. We can enjoy simply sharing the beach with sea lions, snorkeling from shore or take a walk to a hidden lagoon where we might spot black-necked stilts, ruddy turnstones, whimbrels and white-cheeked pintails.

Difficulty level: easy  
Type of terrain: sandy  
Duration: 1-hour walk / 1-hour snorkeling

PM – [Punta Pitt & Islet \(San Cristobal Island\)](#)

Wet landing. Sea lions will greet us as we land on the beach and prepare for our climb to a high point on the steep eroded tuff cone. This is the only place in the islands where we will enjoy the chance to see all three of the booby species in the same place. The red-foots will be perched on the Cordia lutea and small trees, the Nazca’s on the ground near the cliff edge while the blue-foots will be a little further inland. Frigatebirds will be all around and the views are breathtaking.

Difficulty level: demanding  
Type of terrain: rocky  
Duration: 2½-hour walk/ 40-minute snorkeling or kayaking

### **Day 8**

AM – [Punta Suarez \(Española Island\)](#)

Dry landing. One of the highlight visits of the trip. Punta Suarez seems to have everything – a naturalist’s paradise. A slew of marine iguanas and sea lions greet us at the landing site from where our walk continues with close encounters of boobies, endemic lizards, gulls and even a dramatic blowhole. The oldest extant island in the archipelago it is our only opportunity to commune with the endemic waved albatross during their breeding season between April and December. With luck, we can watch their complex courtship display.

Difficulty level: demanding  
Type of terrain: rocky  
Duration: 2½-hour walk

PM – [Gardner Bay, Osborn or Gardner Islets \(Espanola Island\)](#)

Wet landing. One of the most stunning beaches in all of Galapagos. The long, white, sandy beach, lapped by turquoise waters is home to a colony of Galapagos sea lions, indifferent to the humans that walk amongst them. The Hood mockingbirds, endemic to this particular island, will be eager to inspect the visitors and satisfy their innate curiosity. Darwin’s finches may also join the throng including the reclusive warbler finch. We can also snorkel here from the beach, in the shallows of the bay.

Difficulty level: easy  
Type of terrain: sandy  
Duration: 1-hour walk / 1-hour snorkeling

### **Day 9**

AM – [Punta Cormoran/ Devil’s Crown/Champion \(Floreana Island\)](#)

Wet landing. On arriving, the observant visitor will notice that olivine, a volcanic crystal, has proffered a subtle green hue on the dark beach. Our walk takes us past island-endemic Scalesia plants to a large, shallow, lagoon

often inhabited by a variable number of shockingly pink greater flamingoes. We continue through a forest of palo santo trees to arrive at a powdery white beach, a nesting area of green turtles. As we paddle barefoot in the shallow water we will spot diamond stingrays and white-tipped reef sharks. This coral-sand beach marks the end of our trail, and we head back to the olivine beach we landed on, to swim or snorkel amongst sea turtles, reef fish, sea lions and, on a good day, white-tipped reef sharks. A small colony of penguins resides on Floreana and can sometimes be observed as well.

One of the favorite snorkeling sites in the islands. Devil's Crown, an eroded volcanic cone, is home to an abundance of fish and marine animals. We will swim with big schools of yellow-tailed surgeonfish, salemas and creole fish and with luck may spot turtles, spotted eagle rays, parrotfish, and even hammerhead sharks! The jagged crown is a roosting area for boobies, noddies, tropicbirds, and frigates.

A truly magical place to snorkel. We would expect to see here green turtles, harmless white-tipped reef sharks, an impressive diversity and abundance of fish as well as some playful sea lions often approaching very close, itching to show off their prowess in the water. Champion Islet also happens to be the last remaining home of the island-endemic Floreana mockingbird which we may be lucky enough to see from our pangas.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy & flat

Duration: 1-hour walk / 1-hour snorkeling

#### PM – [Post Office \(Floreana Island\)](#)

Wet landing. A very short walk from the beach leads us to the famous Post Office Barrel. Claimed to have been the first set up in 1793 by Captain James Colnett it remains the oldest functioning post office in the Pacific. The system was that whalers and fur-sealers would leave addressed letters in the barrel to be picked up by homeward bound colleagues. In the spirit of maintaining tradition visitors, today will often take letters and hand-deliver them in their home countries.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: sandy

Duration: 30-minute walk / 1-hour snorkeling

### **Day 10**

#### AM – [Highlands Tortoise Reserve \(Santa Cruz Island\)](#)

Dry landing. In the central highlands of Santa Cruz Island, we have our best opportunity to interact at close quarters with totally wild, Galapagos giant tortoises. A short walk among these huge, 600lb, reptiles will also offer the chance for more highland species, especially several species of the famed finches.

Difficulty level: easy

Type of terrain: flat & muddy (depending on season)

Duration: 45-minute drive / 1 ½-hour walk

#### Baltra Airport

After the visit, passengers will be transferred to the airport for return flight to Quito and land around 4pm. We will check into our hotel, Hotel Casa de Hacienda La Jimenita, which is near the airport in Quito.

### **Day 11**

Transfer to airport for your flight back home, or begin your trip extension.

Call for details.

### **Welcome Aboard M/Y Coral II**

A deluxe expedition yacht that offers a world-class cruise experience featuring ocean view air-conditioned cabins with private facilities. Variety of observation decks for lounging and sea-gazing from all sides, Jacuzzi, BBQ terrace and chill out areas. This, combined with comfortable indoor areas with picture windows, cozy lounge and dining room, bar and library: the quality of expedition cruising maintaining that intimate flavor you have been looking for to explore Islands. Cruise-yacht that makes your island experience the most balanced

blend of vacation and adventure, with daily excursions and plenty of snorkeling and kayaking opportunities, you can join the enchanted animals fearless of men, breathtaking landscapes, paradisiacal waters, and distinctly colored beaches, making the most out of your discovery with the best in cruise service and value. Experienced crewmembers and naturalist guides, perfectly organized, safe, and environmental friendly operation, adds that extra sense of security so that your holidays are relaxing and carefree.

## **Visas and Passports**

U.S. citizens are required to have a passport that is valid for 6 months after your travel dates begin.

## **Flights and Airports**

You are responsible for booking all international flights. We will arrange for the between Quito and Baltra. Once ticket price is confirmed, we will update your invoice for these flights which typically cost \$600, per person. If you need additional help, feel free to call the Bio Bio Office. One travel agent we often use is:

G&G Travel and Tours:           Gilda Gutierrez  
gildagutierrez@comcast.net | 866-498-0530 or 786-206-0710

### **Flying In**

You will fly into Quito on Day 1 and check into the hotel. After breakfast at the hotel on Day 2, there will be a walking tour of the city.

### **Baltra**

On Day 3, you will be transported from the hotel to Quito airport for your flight to Baltra. Check-in time is usually 2 HOURS before departure. Go to the counter of AEROGAL, there will be a GoGalapagos representative with your boarding pass vouchers for the cruise ready and who will check your luggage with the airline after this has passed the control with SICGAL, which is located at the end of the room. For environmental reasons, your luggage will be checked for animals, seeds, plants, fruits, vegetables or anything that is forbidden on the Galapagos Islands.

You will be given an identification tag for the cruise. Please wear it so you can easily be identified when you arrive at the airport in Galapagos. Please do NOT get in line for the INGALA (Transit Control Card); GoGalapagos has already has your card.

Upon arrival you will be welcomed by our cruise staff, who will take you to the ship, take care of your checked luggage and show you to your assigned cabin.

### **Flying Out**

You can fly out of Baltra to Quito and then home all on the last day as you will return to Quito around 4pm. We suggest spending the night in Quito and then departing Quito the next day. Or you can choose to spend more time in Ecuador and fly home at a later date. We are happy to help you arrange tours and lodging.



## **Departure Tax**

There is a departure tax when leaving UIO which is included in your airline ticket price. If you have additional questions, we recommend contacting your air carrier.

### **TRAVEL TIMES BY PLANE**

Miami to Quito: 4 hrs

Quito to Balta: 2 hrs

**Ecuador is on Eastern Standard Time\*.  
The Galapagos Islands are on Central Standard Time\*.  
\*during non-daylight savings time**

## **Packing List**

### **Baggage Allowance and Suggested Gear**

Please see what restrictions your airline imposes, as the rules and allowances are constantly changing. Typically for international flights you are allowed two checked bags up to 50Lbs each, plus one carry-on bag and a purse.

Keep in mind the following luggage restrictions for flights to the Galapagos Islands (imposed by the airlines). Each tourist is permitted one standard carry-on (no greater than 8 kg or 17.6 lbs) and one check-in piece (20 kg or 44 lbs). It is advised to lock your luggage for this flight.

Remember when packing your carry-on bag, bring any medications needed as well as any toothpaste or lotions in a plastic zip loc bag for security. You may want to bring a toothbrush on your overnight flight as well as a change of clothing.

### **Equipment**

- Duffel Bag: Bring your gear packed in a soft duffel bag rather than suitcase for ease of storage
- Daypack: For day hikes it should be large enough to carry water bottles, camera and rain jacket and can double as your flight carry-on bag
- Spare soft duffel for purchases while in Ecuador (or purchase in Ecuador)
- Plastic Bags: Large trash bag and Ziploc bags to separate clean and dry clothes from wet and dirty.

### **Personal Items**

- Sunglasses with securing strap
- Toiletries \*
- Earplugs: It will sometimes be necessary to motor through the night to make it to the next day's destination
- Sunscreen (Waterproof & SPF 15 or higher) • Lip Protection (SPF 15 or higher)
- Moisturizing Lotion
- Insect repellent
- Personal First Aid Kit (Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, ibuprofen, moleskin)
- Spare pair of glasses and/or contact lenses
- Water Bottles: Heavy duty and minimum 2 quart capacity. For day hikes, hydration systems like a "Camelbak" or "Platypus" are great too
- Headlamp or Flashlight, extra batteries and bulb

- Camera, batteries, film or memory cards
- Notebook and Pen
- Cash for gratuities and souvenirs

\*Soap and shampoo is supplied on board the yacht as part of their conservation policy. If you want to bring your own please make sure they are biodegradable.

### **Clothing**

Any clothing you bring should be synthetic, quick drying, and breathable. This is a sub-tropical adventure and you will be exposed to sun, wind, and water. Long sleeves, long pants, and wide brimmed hats are recommended for sun protection. In general, you will need loose fitting clothes for the hotter parts of the trip and some extra layering for evenings. Keep in mind that some of what you bring may get sweaty and wet due to the humid climate. You will also encounter dust, sand, and salt, and may feel a little grubby from time to time. No fancy dress clothing is required.

- Long Sleeved Shirt: Lightweight and light color for sun protection
- Long Pants: Lightweight and light color for sun protection (jeans not recommended)
- Shade Hat or Visor with tie and a spare
- Bandana
- Rain Jacket & Pants: A hooded jacket is recommended with good, secure closures around your head, neck and wrists. Rain pants are optional
- Swimsuits: 2
- Rash guard top(s) for snorkeling: 1-2
- Underwear: Quick-drying
- Shorts: 2-3 pair lightweight, and fast drying
- T-shirts or lightweight fast drying tops
- Sport Sandals: Teva, Chacos or Keen brand s are recommended
- Athletic Shoes or Lightweight Hiking Boots: 1 pair, comfortable and with good tread
- Hiking Socks: 3 or 4 pair mid-weight
- Casual clothes for evenings and in Quito (Note: evenings are cool)



### **Optional Items**

- Walking Stick: collapsible
- Binoculars: compact
- Shortie wetsuit
- Electrolyte mix for flavoring water
- Personal snorkel gear (we provide gear but many prefer their own)
- Preferred bottle of wine or spirits to enjoy on the yacht

### **Cameras**

Bringing the right camera equipment will go a long toward determining the quality of your photographs. If you're an avid photographer, we recommend bringing a good digital SLR camera that can be used on land and when aboard the yacht. There are many great underwater digital cameras that are salt-water resistant and protected against sand.

Bring more memory card space than you think you'll need. And don't forget to pack spare camera batteries or a charger. You should be ready for bright sunlight, so you may want to bring a polarizing filter. Zip-Lock plastic bags help protect you camera against sand and salt. We strongly recommend

you take out a rider on your homeowner's policy to cover your camera -especially if it's fine equipment.

### **For Women**

Even if you aren't anticipating your menstrual period, come prepared for it. We recommend you bring some sandwich size zip-lock bags. They can be used during the day while you are on the water or hiking and can be disposed of when you reach your overnight lodging. (Hint for tampon users: o.b. tampons are 1/3 the size of regular tampons, tuck discreetly into pockets and have less paper wrapping). Many women suggest bringing a small supply of baby wipes.

## **Money Matters**

### **Currency**

Ecuador uses US dollars as their currency. Having between \$300 and \$600 for souvenirs and meals in Quito should be more than adequate depending on how much you like to shop! In the Galapagos Islands, you will most likely need cash as ATM machines are limited and credit cards are not widely accepted. In hotels and shops in Quito you can use credit cards to charge purchases such as food, accommodations, and clothing. American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are widely accepted.

### **Extra Expenses**

You are responsible for some meals as stipulated in the itinerary. These meals will cost between \$5 and \$25. And of course, you can go all out at a high-end restaurant. For meals that are included, you will need to pay for your own alcohol. You will also need money for gifts and tipping.

### **Business Hours**

In Quito most stores, banks, businesses, and money exchanges are open from 9:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. On Saturday many stores and some businesses are opened from 9:00 to 13:00. Shopping Malls open daily including weekends from 10:00 to 20:00 hours and have some bank branch offices, ATMs and money exchange.

### **ATMs**

Ecuador has a well-developed network of ATMs. Almost every bank in the country features ATMs, especially

### **Credit Cards**

Always ask your bank before you leave home about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad, the limit each day, and also let them know where you are going so they do not put a hold on your card. You may be charged a fee for each transaction.

Most of the bigger restaurants and shops accept credit cards. If you have American Express, Visa, MasterCard and Diners Club, you're probably equipped for any establishment that takes cards. If you only have one, have VISA. A shopkeeper may require you to pay the credit card fee for purchases, so for the most ease, we recommend you use cash whenever possible.

### **Banking Hours**

Banks are generally open from 9am to 6pm. Some banks close for 2 hours from 1pm to 3pm. It is recommended to go to an "exchange office". You must bring your passport to exchange money.

Never change a large sum (more than \$100) and again, go in pairs, and avoid being followed by robbers.

### **Personal Checks**

Personal checks are not accepted in shops or at your hotels. It's a good idea, however, to bring a few for possible emergencies.

### **Travelers Cheques**

Travel checks are less desirable as fewer and fewer places will change them, and you may end up in long bank lines. You will need to show your passport to cash your checks at the bank.



### **Optional Additions**

- Wet suits rental: \$50 per person for duration of cruise
- Kayak rental: each use per person \$30
- Alcoholic / non-alcoholic beverages

### **Payment for expenses onboard**

Upon arrival, a bill will be opened for you. If you wish to pay with your credit card, we ask you to come to reception to sign a voucher and to make copies of your passport and credit card. Authorizations take about 48 hours, so please

do this on your first cruise day. We accept all main credit cards: Diners, Visa, Mastercard, American Express. Travellers Checks, Euros and US Dollars are also accepted.

## **Tipping**

Tipping is, of course, entirely voluntary and how much you give depends on how you feel about the service you have received. Based on common practice, the suggested tip is: \$15 per person/per day for the crew and \$8 per person/per day for your guide. The last evening you will receive two envelopes at the reception desk: one for the crew and one for the guide, please deposit these at the boxes as the reception desk.

Other smaller tips might be for airport luggage carriers, hotel staff and drivers. This is where \$1 bills come in handy. The norm at restaurants is approximately 10-15%.

For some background information, Ecuador has a minimum salary of \$300 monthly. However, in many of the lower paid jobs (e.g. waiters, porters etc) this is not always enforced.

## **Travel Practicalities**

### **Trip Insurance**

Bio Bio Expeditions recommends 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, contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 05-8655. Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y.

## **Immunizations**

Currently, if you fly direct between the USA and Ecuador, no vaccinations are required. However, the CDC recommends the hepatitis A vaccine and Typhoid for most travelers. There is a chance of contracting hep A through contaminated food or water in Ecuador, regardless of where you are eating or staying. You can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in Ecuador, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.

Make sure you are up-to-date on routine adult vaccines before every trip. In general, we advise that you consult your physician at least 2 months prior to departure regarding recommended immunizations and other health precautions. Bio Bio Expeditions does not take responsibility for which medications or inoculations you and your physician deem necessary for your safe participation on the expedition in Ecuador.

For further information, call the CDC's International Traveler's Hotline:

Phone: 1-888-232-3228

Online: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## **Water**

Although it requires a little extra caution when drinking fluids in Ecuador, it is essential to stay well hydrated. We advise that you not drink any of the tap water in Ecuador; this includes no ice in your drink. Bottled water is fine to drink and can be ordered at most restaurants and found in local grocery stores. Ask for "agua mineral, sin gas (non-carbonated) or con gas (carbonated)". When ordering sodas, it is best to request them without ice (sin hielo), as the ice is usually made from tap water. Additionally, be sure to brush your teeth with bottled water.

On board you will find bottled water in your cabin. Ice used onboard is made with purified water as well. For ecological reasons, the crew asks you to refill your bottle during the cruise using the water purifiers at the main bar, pool bar, restaurant and disembarking area. Bottles must always be returned to the ship.

## **Food**

The major precaution regarding food pertains to raw, unpeeled fruits and vegetables (including lettuce) - avoid them unless you are dining in a high-end restaurant! If you can't peel it, don't eat it as it has probably been washed in tap water, or not washed at all, and that can make you sick. Ecuador has some of the finest, most delicious cuisine in the world! We want you to experience the many new flavors and local cuisine, but there are some things to consider when making food choices, especially where you are eating. The more high-end restaurants in Quito are fairly safe bets for trying new things. Street food should generally be avoided. This brings us to our next topic...

## **Digestive Worries**

Despite the many precautions we all take to stay healthy, occasionally one may experience diarrhea. The major problem associated with diarrhea is fluid loss leading to severe dehydration, so it is important to maintain plentiful fluid intake. Avoid milk and avoid caffeine, as it will only further dehydrate you. The best drinks are weak tea, mineral water, and caffeine-free soft drinks. Ideally it is best to let diarrhea run its course, however you may want to bring over-the-counter diarrhea medication to minimize your potential discomfort. We also advise that you carry your own supply of toilet paper, as most of the restrooms in South America either don't have TP, or they charge you for it.

The bottom line (no pun intended) is to drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest! Lastly, we encourage that you, and all our staff, practice impeccable hand hygiene – you can't wash your hands enough! Sanitizer gels are great when hand washing with soap and water is not available.

### **Prescriptions**

If you currently take prescription medications, be sure to have a plentiful supply and also the doctor's written prescription in case you need a refill. It is best to carry medications in your carry-on bag in case of lost luggage. Also, if you wear prescription glasses or contacts, we advise that you bring along a spare set.

### **Voltage**

Electrical current in Ecuador is 110 / 220 volts. European and American outlets are available on our cruise fleet. In Coral I and Coral II the frequency is 60 Hz and in the Galapagos Legend Is 50 Hz.

### **Safety**

Although the Ecuadorians are a warm, friendly, fun-loving people, thievery in Quito is a common problem. Always keep your wits about you and be aware of your surroundings. When with other people, watch out for each other. Large crowds are prime locations for pick-pocketing to occur. Keep your money in a money belt or hidden pouch around your neck and under your shirt. When purchasing items, do not pull out lots of money. **We advise that you leave all valuable jewelry, including watches, at home.** Thieves often work in pairs or groups - one tries to distract you (e.g.: by squirting food or paint on your clothing) and in the ensuing confusion, another one makes off with your belongings.

### **Jet Lag Precautions**

When you cross several time zones to reach your destination, you often lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then must suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue – often compounded by insomnia and restlessness – irritability, and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag' but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well rested. Try to begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before and during your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and or fruit juice while flying. You should buy a large bottle of water at a kiosk right before boarding – once you have cleared security and are "inside"
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap, unless you didn't sleep at all on the plane
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner

### **Altitude Sickness**

Quito sits at 9,350 feet. The altitude can cause some physical reaction in almost anyone. Some people experience shortness of breath, headaches, and some dehydration. If you are sensitive to higher elevations, we recommend taking it easy your first day and avoiding alcohol and tobacco. If you feel sick, be sure to rest, breathe deeply, drink lots of fluids (bottled water), and perhaps take a

mild pain killer for headaches. True altitude sickness is rare, but if the symptoms become severe, please let a Bio Bio Expeditions representative know.

### **Toilets**

Everywhere in Ecuador, including Quito, the Galapagos Islands and our yacht, people are asked not to throw anything into the toilets, including toilet paper. A wastebasket is provided for toilet paper and it is emptied often. This may seem strange to North Americans, but please obey this rule and avoid being the cause of a backed up septic system.

### **Smoking policy**

On board the ships it is forbidden to smoke inside the yachts or the vessel. Smoking is allowed ONLY on the sun decks.

## **Country Facts**

### **History**

The Galápagos Archipelago was discovered by accident in 1535, when Tomás de Berlanga, the first Bishop of Panama, drifted off course while sailing from Panama to Peru. The bishop reported his discovery to King Charles V of Spain and included in his report a description of the giant Galápagos tortoises from which the islands received their name, and an amusing note about the islands' birds that any visitor today can appreciate, '...so silly that they didn't know how to flee and many were caught by hand.'

It is possible that the indigenous inhabitants of South America were aware of the islands' existence before 1535, but there are no definite records of this and the islands don't appear on a world map until 1570 when they are identified as the 'island of the tortoises.' In 1953, Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl discovered what he thought to be pre-Columbian pottery shards on the islands, but the evidence seems inconclusive.

For more than three centuries after their discovery, the Galápagos were used as a base by a succession of buccaneers, sealers and whalers. The islands provided sheltered anchorage, firewood, water and an abundance of fresh food in the form of the giant Galápagos tortoises, which were caught by the thousands and stacked, alive, in the ships' holds. More than 100, 000 are estimated to have been taken between 1811 and 1844. The tortoises could survive for a year or more and thus provided fresh meat for the sailors long after they had left the islands.



The first rough charts of the archipelago were made by buccaneers in the late 17th century, and scientific exploration began in the late 18th century. The Galápagos' most famous visitor was Charles Darwin, who arrived in 1835 aboard the British naval vessel the Beagle. Darwin stayed for five weeks, 19 days of which were spent on four of the larger islands, making notes and collecting specimens that provided important evidence for his theory

of evolution, which he would later formulate and publish, but not for decades after. He spent the most time on Isla San Salvador observing and, for that matter, eating tortoises. The truth is that Darwin devoted as much of his attention to geology and botany as he did to the animals and marine life of the Galápagos.

The first resident of the islands was Patrick Watkins, an Irishman who was marooned on Isla Santa Maria in 1807 and spent two years living there, growing vegetables and trading his produce for rum from passing boats. The story goes that he managed to remain drunk for most of his stay, then stole a ship's boat and set out for Guayaquil accompanied by five slaves. No one knows what happened to the slaves – only Watkins reached the mainland.

In 1936 the Galápagos was declared a National Park to preserve its unique vegetation and wildlife. UNESCO declared Galápagos a World Natural Heritage Site in 1978 and subsequently a World Biosphere Reserve in 1985. Protection was further strengthened in 1994 with the creation of the Reserva Marina de Galápagos, which was recently extended to cover the 130,000 square kilometers within a 40-nautical mile radius of the islands making the Galápagos the second largest marine reserve in the world, after the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

The archipelago is purely volcanic in origin and features beautiful volcanic formations not found on the mainland. The islands emerged from lava eruptions that came from the bottom of the ocean and rise as much as 2,600 feet above sea level. Lava from more than 2,000 craters has continually altered the terrain of this region. Currently the archipelago contains 13 large islands, 6 minor ones, and more than 40 islets. Some of the younger islands still have active volcanoes. Many variables, such as isolation, climate, altitude, and the unique terrain account for the archipelago's distinct flora and fauna.

Ecuador officially claimed the Galápagos Archipelago in 1832. For roughly one century thereafter, the islands were inhabited by only a few settlers and were used as penal colonies, the last of which was closed in 1959.

Some islands were declared wildlife sanctuaries in 1934, and 97% of the archipelago officially became a national park in 1959. Organized tourism began in the late 1960s and now, an estimated 80, 000 foreign visitors visit the islands each year. Another 20, 000 or so are businesspeople or Ecuadorians visiting family and friends and don't enter the protected reserve.

Quito was declared a World Heritage site in the 1970s for having the best preserved and least altered historic center in Latin America.

### **Demographics**



The Ecuadorian National Census of 2010 reports the Galapagos population at 25,124. 81% of the residents describe themselves as Mestizo, 7.5% as Native Indian (from the Ecuadorian mainland), 7.3% as Caucasian and 4.2% as African-Ecuadorian. Of those living permanently in Galapagos, 74% migrated from outside of the archipelago.



## Wildlife

The Galapagos Islands are home to some of the highest levels of endemism (species found nowhere else on earth) anywhere on the planet. About 80% of the land birds you will see, 97% of the reptiles and land mammals, and more than 30% of the plants are endemic. More than 20% of the marine species in Galapagos are found nowhere else on earth. Favorites include the giant Galapagos tortoise, marine iguana, flightless cormorant, and the Galapagos penguin—the only penguin species to be found in the Northern Hemisphere.

## Flora

The plants of Galápagos are equally fascinating. Many species of indigenous *Scalesia* (“tree daisies”) as well as tree ferns, bromeliads, and orchids are found in the highlands. Giant prickly pear and candelabra cacti abound on the coast while tiny *Brachycereus* cacti grow on barren lava flows. Vivid morning glories and mats of bright red *sesuvium* blanket the shores. Galápagos also has its very own native species of cotton, tomato, pepper, guava, and passionflower. Many kinds of plants, particularly those belonging to the daisy family, have evolved into whole arrays of endemic species on the different islands, providing scientists with perfect examples of adaptive radiation.



## Language

The official language in Ecuador is Spanish. The good news is that in most places like restaurants, hotels, etc., there is usually someone who speaks English - and, of course, all our representatives and guides speak both English and Spanish.

If you do speak some 'Spanish' then you shouldn't have too many problems speaking with the locals in Ecuador. Many say that the Spanish spoken in Ecuador is proper and easy to understand, hence also

a great place to learn the language as well!

## Weather Tips

You will be in a sunny year round destination; the warmest months are from December to June. January to March can be hot and humid, but also mostly green at this time. The months from July to November are cooler. The average year-round temperature is 24°C. (76°F).

Average	Air Temperature		Sea Temperature		Rainfall	
	Fahrenheit	Celsius	Fahrenheit	Celsius	Inches	mm
January	71.6 - 86.0	22-30	76.1	24.5	2.4	60.9
February	75.2 - 86.0	24-30	77	25	4.6	116.8
March	75.2 - 87.8	24-31	77	25	4	101.6
April	75.2 - 87.8	24-31	77	25	2.9	73.7
May	71.6 -	22-28	76.1	24.5	0.6	15.2

	82.4					
June	69.8 - 78.8	21-26	73.4	23	0.2	5.1
July	68.0 - 78.8	20-26	71.6	22	0.3	7.6
August	66.2 - 78.8	19-26	70.7	21.5	0.2	5.1
September	66.2 - 78.8	19-26	71.6	22	0.2	5.1
October	68.0 - 78.8	20-26	72.5	22.5	0.2	5.1
November	69.8 - 78.8	21-26	73.4	23	0.2	5.1
December	71.6 - 80.6	22-27	74.3	23.5	0.3	7.6

## Recommended Reading

1. *Voyage of the Beagle* by Charles Darwin
2. *Galapagos, a Natural History* by Michael H. Jackson
3. *Galapagos Wildlife, A Visitor's Guide* by David Horwell & Pete Oxford
4. *The Enchanted Islands* by John Hickman
5. *Galapagos, a Natural History Guide* by Pierre Constant
6. *The Beak of the Finch* by Jonathan Weiner
7. *Galapagos, World's End* by William Beebe
8. *Evolution's Workshop* by Edward J. Larson
9. *The Enchanted Islands* by Herman Melville
10. 'Galapagos Islands Explorer Map' – Ocean Explorers Map

## Travel Resources

### Travel

[www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador) - Lonely Planet  
[whc.unesco.org/en/list/1](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1) – UNESCO information

### Money

[www.xe.net/ucc/](http://www.xe.net/ucc/) - This is a universal currency converter site.  
[www.oanda.com/](http://www.oanda.com/) -Exchange rates and currency forecasts  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator/index.jsp#\(page:home\)](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator/index.jsp#(page:home)) - A list of ATM machines world wide

### Clothing / Gear

[www.patagonia.com](http://www.patagonia.com) - Expedition clothing.  
[www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com) - Expedition gear and clothing.  
[www.mountainhardwear.com](http://www.mountainhardwear.com) - Tents, sleeping bags, expeditions wear.  
[www.exofficio.com](http://www.exofficio.com) - Lightweight travel clothes - Great for Safaris!  
[www.eaglecreek.com](http://www.eaglecreek.com) - Excellent travel gear and packing tips from the experts  
[www.cameraworld.com](http://www.cameraworld.com) - The best prices on camera and video gear!  
[www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com) - Gear and clothing for any adventure.

### Health

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) - All the latest recommendations on vaccination and important information on health concerns worldwide.

## Passport and Embassy Information

[www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html) - How to get a passport fast! - List of Embassies worldwide.

## Weather

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) - Find out the weather anywhere in the world!

## Travel Warnings

[www.travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html) - State department warnings for overseas travelers.

## Conservation

[www.galapagos.org](http://www.galapagos.org) – The Galapagos Conservancy – dedicated to the long term protection of the Galapagos Islands

[www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org) - Stay current on all environmental issues - Environmental Defense Fund

[www.worldwildlife.org/places/the-galapagos](http://www.worldwildlife.org/places/the-galapagos) – World Wildlife Fund

[www.savegalapagos.org](http://www.savegalapagos.org) – UK based conservation charity

[www.darwinfoundation.org](http://www.darwinfoundation.org) – Charles Darwin Foundation – scientific knowledge and assistance to conservation

## Maps of Ecuador and Galapagos Islands

