



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

FACT SHEET

Live for today...

INTRODUCTION

The Galapagos Islands are located west of Ecuador and are renowned for being the home to a vast array of fascinating species of wildlife, including lava lizards, the giant tortoise as well as red and blue-footed boobies. They are one of the world's foremost destinations for wildlife viewing, many of the plant and animal species being found nowhere else in the world. Located at the confluence of three ocean currents and surrounded by a marine reserve, the islands abound with marine species.

The Galapagos Islands, of which there are 19 main islands, are an archipelago of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean. They lay either side of the Equator and 1,000km west of the South American continent and mainland Ecuador of which they are a part. The islands were formed as a result of processes caused by volcanic and seismic activity. These processes along with the isolation of the islands resulted in the development of unusual animal life. Charles Darwin's visit to the islands in 1835 was the inspiration for his theory of evolution by natural selection.

The largest island Isabela, measures 5,827 square kilometres and accounts for nearly three quarters of the total land area of the Galapagos. Volcan Wolf on Isabela is the highest point of the Galapagos at 1,707m above sea level.



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CLIMATE

The Galapagos Islands have a subtropical and dry climate with comfortable temperatures year-round. The warmest months are usually from December to June (high season) and this is the recommended time to visit. It is generally warmer and sunnier during this time with higher ocean temperatures (of up to 24°C). It can be hot and humid from January to March. From July to November (low season) it is generally not as warm and you can expect cool winds that occasionally bring with them a light misty drizzle called "garúa". From June, ocean temperatures can dip to as low as 15°C. The average year-round temperature is 24°C (76°F).

Each month brings unique climate variations to the Galapagos and with it varying wildlife viewing opportunities. Peak season for naturalist tours is typically December through to May when the seas are the calmest and the weather the warmest. The months June, July and August are also very popular, as the animals tend to be more active. For divers the peak season is from July to November when whale sharks can be found at Wolf and Darwin Islands.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE ON THE GALAPAGOS

Month	Air Temperature (°C)	Water Temperature (°C)
January	16-27	22-23
February	16-29	22-24
March	18-32	22-23
April	16-29	21-24
May	16-27	21-23
June	16-24	18-23
July	16-24	17-21
August	15-21	17-19
September	16-24	15-19
October	16-24	17-21
November	16-24	18-22
December	16-27	19-22



USEFUL TIPS

Galapagos Tourist Transit Card

At Quito or Guayaquil airport on mainland Ecuador, all passengers flying to the Galapagos Islands are required to have their bags inspected by the Galapagos Biosecurity Agency quarantine staff and obtain a mandatory US\$20 tourist transit card, prior to checking in. This card is known as the 'tarjeta de control de transito' in Spanish, or TCT, and must be paid for in US\$ cash. Please note that the fee is subject to change.

Galapagos National Park Tax

All visitors to the Galapagos Islands are required to pay a National Park entry tax of US\$100 for adults and US\$50 for children under 12 years old. This is payable in cash only on arrival and is in addition to all tour costs previously paid. Please note that the fee may be subject to change.

Funds from the entry tax are used to finance the conservation of biodiversity of flora and fauna, terrestrial and marine, and benefits the local community by improving basic services, education projects, sports, health, environmental sanitation, environmental services and services directly related to tourists.

Currency Information

The Galapagos Islands currently use the US Dollar as their main currency.

Landings

- **Dry Landings:** Passengers step directly from a dinghy onto rocks or onto a dock.
- **Wet Landings:** The dinghy will edge up to a beach, allowing you step into knee-deep water assisted by crew members and guides.

Safety

Once on board, you will be given a safety talk and vessel orientation, a necessary procedure for the unlikely event of an emergency during your stay on board.



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Electrical Outlets

Most of the newer Galapagos boats have both 110 Volt (USA) and 220 Volt (Europe/ Australia) outlets on board, although some of the older boats may only have 110 Volt outlets.

Payments On Board

On most boats you can charge your drinks, souvenirs and other expenses to an account to be settled at the end of the cruise. Only a few boats accept credit cards with payment to be settled in US\$ cash.

General Health Tips:

- If you need any special medication, be sure to take enough for the duration of your trip and a little more, in case of any emergency.
- If you have a special diet, please inform Chimu Adventures in advance, preferably at the time of booking.
- UV rays are very strong on the Galapagos Islands. Do not forget to take 30+ sunscreen protection.
- We recommend that passengers be in reasonably good physical condition as some trails are difficult and too hard for elderly or disabled people.
- The local operators reserve the right to refuse a passenger if they have failed to inform Chimu Adventures of any physical disability, or who in the opinion of the company constitutes a danger to themselves, other guests, members of the crew, or to the operation of the vessel.
- Please notify Chimu Adventures of any medical or physical disabilities at the time of booking.

Hazards

In general, crime is not a problem on the Galapagos Islands although petty crime may occur in the towns. We advise you to keep personal items and valuables locked away in bags in your cabins or in safety deposit boxes if available. Most animal life on the islands is docile with the exception of the larger sea lions and in particular the bulls that vigorously protect their females, and can inflict dangerous and potentially lethal bites.

Do not snorkel close to sea lion colonies. There is a minimal danger from sharks but in general sharks will not attack unless provoked.

Personal Gear

Casual and light clothing is recommended on board the ship and there is no need to dress up. A wind-proof jacket is recommended for windy nights.

What to Pack

- Small daypack for excursions
- Cotton long sleeved shirts
- T-shirts
- Lightweight pair of trousers
- Shorts
- Good, comfortable walking shoes
- Thongs/ flip flops or tevas
- Wide brimmed hat (straps can be helpful especially in the windy season)
- Swimwear
- Sunglasses (preferably with straps)
- Wind-proof jacket
- Light sweatshirt or fleece
- Sunscreen (30+ & waterproof)
- Camera with spare memory cards and batteries
- Binoculars
- Toiletries including biodegradable soap, shampoo, conditioner etc.
- Personal medications
- Dry sacks are recommended for camera gear



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SUSTAINABILITY & PRESERVATION OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

Approximately 97% of the total land area of the archipelago is National Park, but tourists can visit only 3% of the total land area. The Charles Darwin Station was established in 1961. The National Park Service and Charles Darwin Station work for the protection and the sustainable management of the Galapagos Islands.



While on the cruise, you will have multilingual, naturalist guides who are trained by the Charles Darwin Station and licensed by the Galapagos National Park. The park is strictly regulated and during island visits, passengers must be accompanied at all times by a guide. Visitors are only allowed on land from sunrise to sunset and all itineraries are registered with the park in advance. The guides know each site intimately, and will share their knowledge on walks and hikes, as well as during slide shows, briefings or informal conversations at the end of each day. Do not hesitate to approach them with any questions.

Please note that this is a unique ecosystem and as such please ensure that you do not leave any rubbish or drop anything overboard while on or near the Galapagos Islands. Wildlife should never be disturbed and generally 2 metres is the minimum distance to keep between you and wildlife.

One of the greatest dangers to the islands is introduced species, as after evolving for thousands of years without predators, the Galapagos wildlife is not adapted to dealing

with new species. The park service is trying to eliminate goats, rats, cats, dogs, and introduced plant species on many of the islands. When travelling to the islands, please ensure that you do not bring any plant or animal life with you, and always clean your footwear when travelling between islands to avoid transferring seeds.

The park rules include the following:

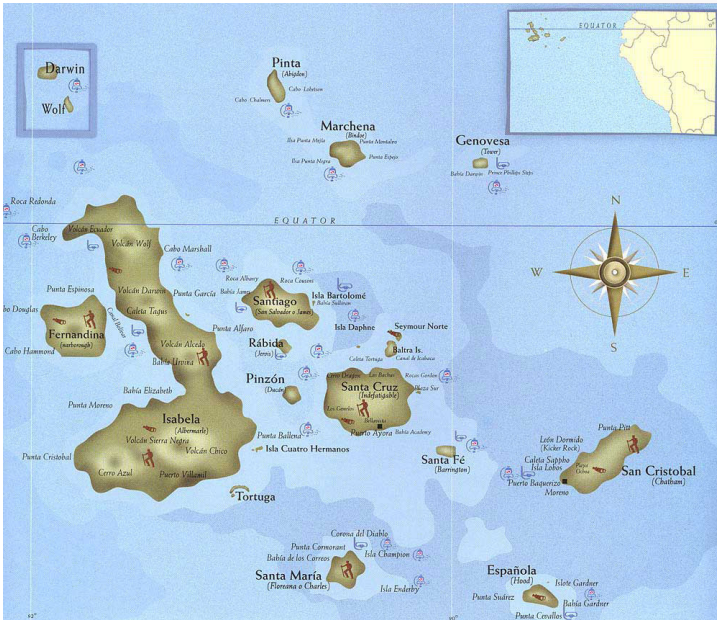
- To visit the National Park, you must always be accompanied by a certified Galapagos National Park guide.
- Galapagos is a unique and fragile environment. Take only photographs and video. Professional shooting needs authorisation from the National Park.
- Please stay within the limits of the walking trails, for your safety and that of the flora and fauna.
- To avoid affecting the wildlife's natural behaviour please avoid getting closer than two metres to the animals.
- Help conservation by cooperating with the authorities in their inspection, monitoring and control duties.
- Do not introduce foreign organisms to the islands as these can have a negative impact on the ecosystem.
- Please do not buy souvenirs that are made from black coral, seashells, sea lion teeth, tortoise shell, volcanic rock or endemic woods.
- Galapagos animals have their own feeding behaviour. Never feed the animals, as this can be detrimental to their health.
- Galapagos landscapes are beautiful and unique. Do not spoil them by writing or etching on rocks or trees.
- Do not leave any litter while on the islands. Always dispose of rubbish in a safe and appropriate way.
- Smoking or making campfires in the National Park areas is strictly forbidden and can cause devastating fires.
- Fishing is strictly forbidden, except on those boats specifically authorised by the Galapagos National Park.
- Jet skiing, submarines, water skiing and aerial tourism are all strictly forbidden.
- Do not disturb the animals.



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ISLAND INFORMATION



Baltra (South Seymour)

Also known as South Seymour, Baltra is a small flat island located near the centre of the Galapagos and created by a series of uplifts of submarine lava. The island is very arid and vegetation consists of saltbush, prickly pear cactus and Palo Santo trees.

During World War II, Baltra was established as a US Air Force Base, chosen due to its flat topography and location at the centre of the archipelago. The base included a 1.5km airstrip and over 200 buildings. After the war the facilities were given to the Ecuadorian government. Today the island continues as an official Ecuadorian military base. The foundations and other remains of the US base can still be seen as you cross the island.

During the 1940s, scientists moved 70 of Baltra's land iguanas to neighbouring North Seymour Island as part of an experiment. This move proved extremely useful when the native iguanas became extinct on Baltra as a result of the island's military occupation in World War II. In the 1990's, land iguanas were reintroduced to Baltra.

Until 1986, Baltra Airport was the only airport serving the Galapagos. Now there are two airports, which receive flights from the continent, the other being located on San Cristóbal Island.

Arriving into Baltra, visitors are immediately transported by bus to one of two docks. The first dock is located in a small bay where the boats cruising the Galapagos Islands await passengers. The second is a ferry dock that connects Baltra to the island of Santa Cruz.

There are no visitor sites on Baltra, but there are several visitor sites on nearby islands such as North Seymour and Mosquera.

Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz is the most heavily populated island on the archipelago, the majority of residents living in the town of Puerto Ayora. It is the second largest of the Galapagos Islands, and is home to many inhabitants who work in agriculture and are involved in the raising of cattle.



The island is home to the Galapagos National Park Service but probably the most important site on this island is the **Charles Darwin Scientific Station**. A visit to this station will provide an excellent outlet to begin learning about the islands, their origin and formation. The Scientific Station has its own beach and also operates a tortoise-breeding centre in conjunction with the National Park Service, the **Fausto Llerena Tortoise Centre**. Young tortoises are hatched, reared and prepared for reintroduction back into their natural habitat. In the 1980's, iguanas from North Seymour were brought to the Charles Darwin Research Station as part of a breeding and repopulation project.



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The Highlands of Santa Cruz offer exuberant flora and are famous for the lava tunnels. Large tortoise populations are found here, roaming wild and in the Tortoise Reserve. The road to the highlands travels through the agricultural zone before reaching the mist-shrouded forests of the highlands. It is a good area to spot the vermilion flycatcher.

Los Gemelos (Twin Craters) is another visitor site, made up of two large pit craters that were formed by the collapse of empty magma chambers. A circular trail to the larger crater passes through Scalesia forest, where vermilion flycatchers, short-eared owls, the Galapagos dove and several finch species can be seen.

Black Turtle Cove is a site surrounded by mangroves that sea turtles, spotted rays and small sharks sometimes use as a mating area. Three species of sharks can be found here – black-finned and white-tipped reef sharks and the Galapagos shark.

Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill), known for its flamingo lagoon, is also located here.



Bachas Beach is located on the northeastern coast of Santa Cruz. It is a major nesting site for sea turtles, with flamingos, lapwings and migratory birds also being seen here. Bachas Beach is a picturesque white sand beach surrounded by crystal clear waters. The name Las Bachas originates from World War II when the US Army discarded two barges on this beach. The first settlers could not pronounce the name correctly in English, which resulted in 'las bachas'. The remains of a floating dock abandoned by American soldiers in World War II can also be seen here. Around the beach, the vegetation is typical of the coastal zone.

Puerto Ayora is the main tourist hub of the archipelago, with a good selection of hotels and small restaurants that serve delicious seafood. It also offers banks, a post office and a range of shops.

Plaza Sur (South Plaza Island)

This is part of a pair of islands and one of the smallest to be visited. It is named in honour of a former president of Ecuador, General Leonidas Plaza.

Located only a short distance from Santa Cruz, the flora of South Plaza includes Opuntia cactus and Sesuvium plants that form a reddish carpet on top of the lava formations. This landscape makes for some of the most interesting wildlife observations in the Galapagos. Visiting South Plaza begins with a dry landing. The rocky trail circumnavigates the island and includes both dry and coastal vegetation zones.

South Plaza has one of the largest populations of land iguanas in the Galapagos. The iguanas seem to be everywhere once you land. A large colony of noisy sea lions, numbering about 1,000 bulls, cows and pups, has its prime habitat on the smooth rocks. The small cactus forest is populated by land iguanas, which can be seen sunning themselves or feeding on Opuntia pads and fruits. Swallow-tailed gulls, which nest on the rugged southern cliffs are usually seen, along with tropicbirds and Audubon's shearwaters. There are also marine iguanas in abundance.

During the rainy season the red Sesuvium turn bright green and the leafless evening-blooming Portulaca bursts into large yellow flowers, which are loved by the iguanas.



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Española

At approximately 4 million years old, Española is considered one of the oldest of the islands. It was named in honour of Spain and is also known as Hood Island after Viscount Samuel Hood.

Situated in the extreme southeast of the archipelago, it is one of the most isolated islands in the Galapagos, with a resulting number of endemic species to add to the already extensive variety found here, including such animals as the Española mockingbird, with its longer and more curved beak, the Española lava lizard and the marine iguana with red markings on its back. Española's marine iguanas exhibit a distinctive red colouration change between the breeding seasons. Española is the only place where the waved albatross nests. Some of the birds have attempted to breed on Genovesa (Tower) Island, but unsuccessfully. Española's steep cliffs serve as the perfect runways for these birds, which take off for their ocean feeding grounds near the mainland of Ecuador and Peru.

Gardner Bay is a 45-minute boat ride from Punta Suarez. The long, white, sandy beach is home to colonies of sea lions and green sea turtles and you may also see land iguanas at close range. Birds include three species of Darwin's finches and the Española mockingbird.

Gardner Bay offers marvellous opportunities for scuba diving and snorkelling. You can swim with sea lions, spot schools of tropical fish, glide along the surface with manta rays and delve deeper down to swim with white-tipped reef sharks.



Floreana

Named after Juan Jose Flores, the first President of Ecuador, Floreana Island is also known as Isla Santa Maria. It has the most interesting human history of all the Galapagos Islands - one of the earliest to be inhabited, the site of the first 'post office' established in 1793 by whalers, and a former penal colony.

Flamingos and green sea turtles nest on this island between December and May. The patapegada or Galapagos petrel, a sea bird that spends most of its life away from land is found here.

Corona del Diablo ('Devil's Crown') offers excellent opportunities for scuba diving and snorkelling. The beautiful coral formations and underwater volcanic cone offer a wonderful underwater panorama. Schools of multi-coloured fish, sharks and marine turtles can easily be seen at a depth of only 6 metres.

Post Office Bay is home to the famous barrel that served as the mailbox for 18th century whaling ships. Mail could be picked up and delivered to its destination, mainly Europe and the United States, by ships on their way home. Now tourists leave their unstamped letters or postcards for the next passengers to mail.



Punta Cormorant is unique in that it has two contrasting beaches, one that consists of olive-green sand and the other known as Flour Beach, made up of fine, pulverised coral. Despite the name, no cormorants are encountered here but there are pink flamingos at the lagoon,



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as well as pintail ducks, large-billed flycatchers and several species of finch. Green sea turtles nest on Flour Beach and rays can be seen in the surrounding waters.

Fernandina

Named in honour of King Fernando II of Aragon who sponsored the voyage of Columbus, this is the most westerly of the Galapagos Islands and the youngest at 700,000 years old. Most of the volcanic activity over the past few hundred years has occurred on this part of the Galapagos. Eruptions occur every few years, changing the landscapes and life on the island.

Wildlife found here includes Galapagos hawks and penguins, pelicans, marine iguanas, sea lions, fur seals and the flightless cormorant – the only flightless cormorant in the world.

Punta Espinosa is the only visitor site on the island, a narrow stretch of land where hundreds of marine iguanas gather, largely on black lava rocks. Snorkelling, scuba diving, bird watching and walking tours are popular here. Different types of lava flows can be seen here, as well as red mangroves and the lava cactus.

Santiago

Also known as Isla San Salvador or James Island, this is one of the more popular Galapagos Islands to visit, with a number of excellent tourist sites. Centrally located between Santa Cruz and Isabela Islands, this island is the fourth largest in the archipelago at 585 square kilometres. It was the second island to be visited by Charles Darwin aboard the Beagle.



The volcanic rocks here are mostly black and since there is no real shade, it can get very hot on the island particularly around midday so it is best to visit early in the morning or before dusk.

One of the best visitor sites on the island has to be **Puerto Egas** on **James Bay**, on the western coast. Along the blackened coastline where lava has eroded, there are many lava pools as well as caves and inlets that are home to an amazing variety of wildlife. Here you can spot marine iguanas along with hundreds of Sally Lightfoot crabs and herons. In the inlets, Galapagos fur seals can be seen swimming with many species of tropical fish, sharks, moray eels and octopuses. This place therefore offers wonderful snorkelling opportunities.



Just behind the Puerto Egas shoreline is a 2km trail leading to **Sugar Loaf Volcano**, with some spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. This 395m (1,300ft.) high extinct volcano is home to lava lizards, Galapagos doves, Darwin's finches, vermilion flycatchers and Galapagos hawks among others. Once a region rich in vegetation, the landscape is now quite barren due to the feral goats that lived here until their eradication in 2006.

North of the volcano is an abandoned salt mine, which can be visited by walking along a 3km coastal trail. Towards the end of the coastal trail is a rock formation known as **Darwin's Toilet!** Caused by a vertical chute that lets water rise through it when waves crash against the rock face, Darwin's Toilet presents visitors with a unique photo opportunity.



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On the northern end of James Bay is **Espumilla Beach**, which offers some good swimming opportunities. Here a number of wading birds including pink flamingos can be seen.

On the northwestern end of Santiago is **Buccaneers Cove**, another popular tourist haunt. Known as a safe haven in the 17th and 18th centuries for buccaneers and pirates to stash their loot or refurbish their supplies, this cove is today the habitat of several species of seabirds.

Sullivan Bay, on the eastern coast is a barren landscape with lava fields left from a 100 year old volcanic eruption. There are un-eroded lava formations such as pahoehoe and schriet, as well as 'hornitos' or little ovens that are created when bubbles escaped from the hot lava. There are also a number of colonising plants here such as Brachycereus cactus and Mollugo carpetweed. The bay was named after the lifelong friend of Charles Darwin, Sir Bartholomew James Sullivan, who was a lieutenant aboard HMS Beagle.



Bartolomé

Named after Sir Bartholomew James Sullivan, Bartolomé is a barren islet situated to the east of Santiago Island in Sullivan Bay. On this island it is possible to see interesting formations of lava and ash cones. From a viewpoint, accessed by a wooden stairway, there is a beautiful view of the nearest bays.

This island is one of the most visited and photographed because of **Pinnacle Rock** and the sea lions and penguins around its base. The Galapagos penguin is the only wild penguin species to live on the equator.

The island has a variety of red, orange, green and glistening black volcanic formations along with an extinct volcano. Offering some of the most beautiful landscapes in the archipelago, it is one of the "younger" islands in the Galapagos.

It is possible to snorkel with penguins and marine turtles, white-tipped reef shark and other tropical fish. Green turtles also reside on the island and the Tequila plant can be seen here, adapted to prevent water evaporation and reflect sunlight.

Isabela

The largest in the archipelago, Isabela Island is extremely narrow, measuring 120kms in length and shaped like a sea horse. It is more than four times larger than the next largest island, Santa Cruz and greater in size than all the other Galapagos Islands combined. At approximately 1 million years old, the island was formed by the merger of 6 shield volcanoes into a single land mass – Alcedo, Cerro Azul, Darwin, Ecuador, Sierra Negra and Wolf. All of these volcanoes except Ecuador are still active making it one of the most volcanically active places on Earth. Its highest point is Volcán Wolf, with an altitude of 1,707m (5,600 ft.).

Isabela offers a plethora of flora and fauna. This young island is unique in that its vegetation zones do not follow the normal patterns. There are a number of relatively new lava fields and the high elevations of Cerro Azul and Wolf Volcanoes means that they loft above the cloud cover and are arid on top.



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Isabela's rich animal, bird, and marine life is beyond comparison. It is home to more wild tortoises than all the other islands. Bird watchers have opportunities for sightings of Isabela Galapagos penguins and flightless cormorants, which feed from the Cromwell current upwelling. These endemic birds nest along the coast of Isabela and neighbouring Fernandina. The mangrove finch, Galapagos hawk, brown pelican, pink flamingo and blue heron are among the birds that make their home on Isabela and Darwin's finches and doves can also be seen. Marine iguanas and Sally Lightfoot crabs abound and at the skirts and calderas of the island's volcanoes, land iguanas and Galapagos tortoises can be observed. The nutrient-rich Cromwell current provides a feeding ground for fish, whales, dolphins and birds and the waters surrounding Isabela are one of the best places to see whales in the Galapagos.



Sierra Negra is one of the island's visitor sites, involving a walk of several hours to reach the volcano. Its caldera measures 10km across and is considered to be the second largest caldera in the world.

The **Wall of Tears** is a historic visitor site on Isabela. It was built by prisoners who were held on the island when it was a penal colony (1944-59).

Tintonerias can only be reached by dinghy and here the tranquil waters are home to sea lions, marine turtles, marine iguanas, reef sharks and rays.

Urbina Bay is unique in that following an uplift of the island in 1954, a 6 kilometre stretch of coral reef was raised up by 5 metres, exposing the coral heads to the air.

Tagus Cove was a haunt of early pirates and whalers, many engraving their names on the cliffs. A steep hike leads to Darwin Lake, where large-billed flycatchers, finches, hawks and yellow warblers can be seen.

Genovesa Island

Located in the northeastern part of the archipelago, this horse-shoe shaped island was formed from the eruption of a shield volcano and eventual collapse of one side of the caldera. Its name is derived from Genoa, Italy. The submerged crater formed Darwin Bay, surrounded by cliffs that are home to many seabirds. Lake Arcturus lies in the centre of the island. This salt-water crater lake contains sediment that is less than 6,000 years old. Despite the lack of eruptions on Genovesa, there are very young lava flows on the flanks of the volcano.

This island is known as Bird Island, because of the large and varied bird colonies that nest here. There is an abundance of frigatebirds and it is among the best places in the archipelago to see red-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, storm petrels, red-billed tropicbirds, Darwin's finches and Galapagos mockingbirds. The storm petrels here are different from any others in the world because they fly around during daytime. To avoid predators, they only return to their nest holes at night.

Prince Philip's Steps are named after Prince Philip who visited the Galapagos Islands in 1965 and 1981. A steep path leads through a seabird colony full of life up to cliffs that are 25m high. At the top, the trail continues inland, passing more nesting booby colonies in the thin Palo Santo forest.



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Santa Fe

Santa Fe, also known as Barrington Island, lies in the centre of the archipelago, southeast of Santa Cruz Island. It is one of the oldest islands, formed by submarine basaltic lava that rose from the ocean floor over four million years ago. A walk along the beach will reveal little animal life beside a handful of playful sea lions. Still, exploring the island can be a great way to see the quieter, more elusive Galapagos fauna. The island hosts a forest of Opuntia cactus, the largest of the archipelago and Palo Santo. Weathered cliffs provide a haven for swallow-tailed gulls, red-billed tropicbirds and shearwaters. The Santa Fe land iguana is endemic to the island. A sub-species of the famous endemic Galapagos land iguana, the Santa Fe variety is yellowish-green in colour and can grow to over 1m in length. Lava lizards are also seen on the island.

San Cristobal

San Cristobal is the most easterly of the Galapagos Islands and one of the oldest and the fifth largest with 85% of the island belonging to the National Park. This was the first island in the Galapagos that Charles Darwin visited during his voyage on the HMS Beagle.

This island hosts frigatebirds, Galapagos sea lions, Galapagos giant tortoises, blue and red-footed boobies, tropicbirds, marine iguanas, dolphins and swallow-tailed gulls. Its vegetation includes Calandrinia galapagosa, Lecocarpus darwinii and trees such as Lignum vitae and Matazarna. In the waters nearby are sharks, rays and lobsters.

In the northeast of the island is **Punta Pitt**, a unique volcanic formation. The area is a nesting site for all three species of the Galapagos booby, frigates and it is home to an endemic species of the lava lizard. Cerro Brujo and Turtle Bay, where flamingos and turtles can be seen, are often visited during trips to Punta Pitt.

Heading up the coast from Wreck Bay and Puerto Baquerizo, you will see **Isla Lobos (Sea Lion Island)** across a small channel from San Cristobal Island. As well as sea lions and

fur seals found here, it is also a nesting place for blue-footed boobies and an excellent spot for snorkelling.

Cerro Tijeretas or **Frigatebird Hill** is located 2 kms from the Interpretation Centre, in the southwest of Isla San Cristobal and here both magnificent and great frigatebirds can be seen in the same colony. This was one of the first places in the Galapagos that English biologist Charles Darwin, landed. It is the ideal place to enjoy a spectacular view of white sand beaches on one side and the roofs of Puerto Baquerizo on the other.

The largest freshwater lake in the archipelago, **Laguna El Junco**, is located in the highlands of San Cristóbal. It is a permanent lake and a great place to see white-cheeked pintail ducks, frigatebirds, the endangered Chatham mockingbird as well as endemic tree ferns.

The capital of the province of Galápagos, **Puerto Baquerizo Moreno**, lies at the southern tip of the island.

North Seymour

Lying just north of Santa Cruz Island, North Seymour was formed by a series of uplifts of submarine lava. In the 1930's, around 70 land iguanas were moved here from Baltra to increase their chances of survival. Today the island is home to 2,500 land iguanas as well as significant populations of magnificent frigatebirds, common noddies and blue-footed boobies. Marine iguanas and sea lions are seen along the coast.

Mosquera sits between North Seymour and Baltra and is home to one of the largest populations of sea lions. Sally Lightfoot crabs are also seen here.



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Rabida

Rabida is a relatively small island with steep slopes and a rocky coastline, and distinctive red colour due to the high levels of iron in the lava. There is just one visitor site on the island where marine iguanas and sea lions are often spotted. Blue-footed and Nazca boobies are often seen on the cliffs and brown pelicans nest on the salt brush. The saltwater lagoon on the island is a feeding area for flamingos as well as common stilts and pintail ducks. Rabida is also a great place to snorkel with sea lions, sea turtles, eagle rays, sharks and the occasional penguin.



The Galapagos Calendar

January

- Beginning of the rainy season
- Land birds start nesting after the first rains
- Española Island – adult marine iguanas change to their bright mating colours
- Green sea turtles arrive at the beaches to lay eggs
- Isabela Island – land iguanas begin their reproductive cycle
- Giant tortoise eggs are hatching
- Migrant shore birds are visiting
- Lava herons are nesting
- Young waved albatross fledge
- Water and air temperatures rise and stay warm until June
- Ideal time for snorkelling

February

- Floreana Island – greater flamingos start nesting
- Bahama pintail ducks (black-tailed pintail) start their breeding season
- Española – Nazca (masked) boobies at the end of their nesting season
- Santa Cruz – marine iguanas nesting
- Lava herons are nesting
- Water temperatures reaches a high of 25°C (77°F). This temperature remains constant until April
- Very few penguins are sighted at Bartolome Island (most have followed the cool waters back to the west or near upwelling areas).
- Nesting season of the Galapagos dove reaches its peak
- Penguins migrate to cooler waters around Isabela & Fernandina
- Giant tortoise eggs hatching
- Migrant shore birds are visiting

March

- The rainy season reaches its height (NB. this does not mean it rains every day)
- Sporadic tropical rains, intense sun and hot climate. Air temperatures can reach up to 30°C (86°C) and humidity is high
- Fernandina & North Seymour – marine iguanas nesting
- Española – March 21st, the beginning of the summer equinox signals the arrival of the waved albatross who begin to locate their mates through their complex dance
- Isabela – Galapagos penguins can be seen
- San Cristobal & Genovesa – frigatebirds begin their mating display
- Giant tortoise eggs hatching
- Even the western islands have warm waters where snorkelling is excellent. Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) can be an amazing site. Penguins still active in the water, next to tropical fish
- Some shores, especially north facing, can be choppy (ola de fondo) as a result of northern currents. Wet landings at places like Puerto Egas, Gardner Bay, and Bartolome can sometimes be challenging



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

FACT SHEET

April

- Española – massive arrival of waved albatrosses and amazing courtship starts
- End of hatching season of the giant tortoises
- Eggs of the green sea turtles begin to hatch
- Isabela – eggs of land iguanas hatch
- North Seymour – blue-footed boobies begin their courtship dancing
- Genovesa & San Cristobal – frigatebirds are displaying and mating
- While the rains have ended, the islands continue to be green
- Good visibility in the water for snorkelling
- Together with May, perhaps the best month in the Galapagos (weather, animals, water temperature)



May

- North Seymour – blue-footed boobies begin their courtship and mating dance
- Gardner Bay, Punta Cormorant & Puerto Egas – green sea turtle eggs still hatching
- Santa Cruz – most of marine iguanas' eggs hatching
- Palo Santo trees begin to shed their foliage
- Española – waved albatross start laying their eggs
- Band-rumped storm petrels begin their first nesting period

June

- Beginning of the garúa (sea mist) season
- Santa Cruz – giant tortoises migrate from the highlands to the lowlands in search of suitable nesting places
- Beginning of the giant tortoise nesting season
- Southeast trade winds return. Currents become a bit stronger. Seas pick up in surge and wave action
- North Seymour – red throat pouches of male magnificent frigatebirds at their most visible
- Genovesa – endemic short-eared owl begins mating season
- Southern migrants have started their journey towards the north. Galapagos is a rest stop for such birds. Some species of cetaceans also follow this pattern of migration
- Some groups of humpback whales that migrate up to equatorial latitudes along the coast of Ecuador reach the Galapagos
- Whale sharks can be seen off Darwin and Wolf Islands in far northwest

July

- Española – sea bird communities are very active (breeding), especially the blue-footed boobies. Waved albatross chicks are hatching
- Fernandina – flightless cormorants perform beautiful courtship rituals and nesting activities
- Puerto Egas (Santiago Island) – American oystercatchers nest on shores
- Lava lizards initiate mating rituals until November
- West Coast of Isabela – whales & dolphin sightings (Cetaceas)) are common
- Darwin & Wolf Islands – whale sharks may be sighted
- Sea bird colonies are breeding
- Great month to see the four stages of nesting in blue-footed boobies – eggs, chicks, juveniles and sub-adult
- Greater flamingos court with a dance
- Frigatebird chicks are beginning to hatch
- Water temperature does not reach more than 21°C (68°F)



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

FACT SHEET

August

- Española & Santiago – Galapagos hawks courting
- Genovesa – Nazca (masked) boobies and swallow-tailed gulls nest
- Santa Cruz – giant tortoises return to the highlands
- Fernandina – fur seals are in breeding season
- Frigatebird chicks are hatching
- Greater flamingo courtship dances continue
- Wolf & Darwin Islands – whale sharks are sometimes seen
- Humpback whales pass Galapagos on migration route
- Migrant shore birds start to arrive and stay on the islands until March
- Lava lizards are mating
- Pupping season (births) of sea lions has started. Western and central islands are common places for such sightings
- The temperature of the ocean drops to around 18°C (64°F), although this varies according to the geographic zone of each island
- Oceans are quite choppy, currents at their strongest levels and surge can be expected along the shores that face west or south

September

- Peak of the cold (garúa) season
- The air temperature reaches its lowest levels 19°C (66°F)
- Bartolome – Galapagos Penguins are breeding
- Fernandina – fur seals are in breeding season
- Wolf & Darwin Islands – whale sharks sometimes seen
- Sightings of migrating humpback whales
- Lava lizards are mating
- Migrant shore birds are visiting Galapagos
- Sea lions are very active. Females have reached oestrous stage, so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting. Shore fighting is heavy. Western and central islands are the most active ones in terms of sea lion activities
- Most species of sea birds remain quite active at their nesting sites

October

- Española & Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) – blue-footed boobies raise chicks

- Darwin & Wolf Islands – whale shark sightings
- Lava lizards are mating
- Lava herons start nesting until March
- Migrant shore birds are visiting Galapagos
- Sea lions are very active. Females have reached oestrous stage, so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting. Shore fighting is heavy. Western and central islands are the most active ones in terms of sea lion activities
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October

- Española & Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) – blue-footed boobies raise chicks
- Darwin & Wolf Islands – whale shark sightings
- Lava lizards are mating
- Lava herons start nesting until March
- Galapagos fur sea lions begin their mating period
- Giant tortoises are still laying eggs
- Migrant shore birds are visiting
- Days are not always sunny. Garúa can be expected in most locations except the western islands where most days have a misty start but after few hours of daylight it burns off
- Sunrises in the west can be quite beautiful after the garúa covers only certain locations of the western volcanoes. Summits are clear, but low-lying fog covers the shoreline



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

FACT SHEET

November

- Darwin & Wolf Islands – whale shark sightings
- Fernandina – fur seals are in breeding season
- Pupping of sea lions continue
- Sea lions are sexually active on the eastern part of the archipelago
- Breeding season for the brown noddies
- Green sea turtles are mating
- Lava lizards are ending mating season
- Migrant shore birds are visiting
- Lava herons are nesting
- Some species of jellyfish can be seen around the islands. The genus Physalia is commonly seen floating around Gardner and Tortuga Islets. Some can also be seen stranded on Flour Beach at Floreana
- Band-rumped storm petrels begin their second nesting period
- Seas are calm. Southeast trade winds have decreased strength. Water temperatures are slowly rising
- Generally great weather due to transition between seasons
- Good visibility for snorkelling
- Sea lion pups (especially at Champion Islet) play aqua-aerobics next to snorkelers. Most pups here are curious enough to nibble at fins of snorkelers. The average age of most pups is 3–4 months



December

- Fernandina – fur seals are in breeding season, other pups are growing into teenagers and adults
- Hatching of giant tortoise eggs begins and lasts until April
- Green sea turtles display their mating behaviour
- The first young waved albatrosses fledge

- Migrant shore birds are visiting
- Lava herons are nesting
- Start of the rainy season – all of the plants of the dry zone produce leaves and the Galapagos becomes "green"

READING LIST

Wildlife of the Galapagos – Julian Fitter, Daniel Fitter & David Hosking

Albatross, Their World, Their Ways – Tui De Roy, Mark Jones & Julian Fitter

Darwin in Galapagos, Footsteps to a New World – K. Thalia Grant & Gregory B. Estes

Flowering Plants of the Galapagos – Conley K. McMullen

The Voyage of the Beagle – Charles Darwin

The Origin of Species – Charles Darwin

The Galapagos Islands – Pierre Constant

The Beak of the Finch – Jonathan Weiner

The Curse of the Giant Tortoise – Octavio Latorre

Galapagos, The Islands that Changed the World – Paul D. Stewart

Galapagos, A Natural History – Michael H. Jackson

**Enjoy your Galapagos experience!
If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us or your booking agent.**

The Chimu Adventures team

