

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS - ESTRELLA



INTRODUCTION

Cruise the Galapagos Islands aboard the Estrella del Mar, discovering the amazing wildlife and spectacular scenery of the northern, central and southern islands of the Galapagos archipelago made famous by Charles Darwin.

Explore the marine wonderland of Kicker Rock - one of the most famous sites of the Galapagos, snorkel in the caldera of a collapsed volcano and search for marine life on Genovesa Island. Hike over the dramatic volcanic rock formations on Bartolomé, search for land iguanas on Santa Fe and blue-footed boobies on North Seymour and come face-to-face with giant 100-year-old giant tortoises.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival transfer in Quito

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office. Please note this service is with a driver only.



NO IMAGE
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08/12/2019, 22/12/2019

DURATION

10 Days

LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos
Islands



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DAY 1: Quito


Sitting at 2,850 metres above sea level high in the Andean foothills lies Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The city, a short distance from the Equator and with an amazing backdrop of snow-capped mountains, is known for its stunning colonial architecture and art-work. Founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city, Quito has one of the largest, least-altered and best-preserved historic centres in the Americas. It was declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 1978.



DAY 2: San Cristóbal

This morning you will be transferred early to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. On arrival in San Cristóbal you will be met by your guide and transferred to the ship. Please note that the Galapagos National Park charges a visitor fee of USD100, payable on arrival, which funds park maintenance and supervision in the Galapagos, as well as ecological study and conservation. The Galapagos Islands are located about 1000 kilometres (620 miles) off the Pacific coast of South America. The archipelago is comprised of 13 major islands and scores of islets that served as a living laboratory for Charles Darwin, the renowned evolution theorist. Long before Darwin arrived in the Galapagos, seafarers knew these isolated islands as home to some of the strangest and most wonderful wildlife imaginable, including birds that could swim but no longer fly, aquatic iguanas, dragon-like lizards left over from prehistoric times and the giant Galapagos tortoises for which the islands were named. Later in the day we explore the tiny Islas Lobos, home to a large sea lion colony and abundant marine life. There is the opportunity to snorkel off the beach, amidst the families of sea lions and their inquisitive pups looking to play. You may also spot nesting frigatebirds and the famous blue-footed boobies resting on the shore. We return to the Estrella del Mar for our first night on board. Carrying only 16 passengers, the Estrella is modest yet surprisingly roomy. We sail overnight to ensure that you arrive refreshed and ready to explore a new destination each day.




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DAY 3: San Cristobal

We make a landing this morning at Punta Pitt on the eastern tip of San Cristóbal, where we will see a group of eroded volcanic cones. Here you can see fascinating geological formations and enjoy amazing wildlife opportunities including nesting birds and sun bathing sea lions. Punta Pitt is made up of volcanic tuff substrate and it is the only site in the Galapagos where three species of booby and two species of frigatebird can be seen. This afternoon we land at Cerro Brujo on the north coast of San Cristóbal, where we explore the coastline and look for wildlife and seabirds and learn about the island’s natural and human history. The sandy beach is home to Sally Lightfoot crabs, brown pelicans, blue-footed boobies and California sea lions as well as marine iguanas. There will be time to take a refreshing swim and to walk to a freshwater lagoon frequented by flamingos. We also visit the dramatic León Dormido, or Kicker Rock, which is a magnificent rock with steep vertical walls that rise from the ocean, set in a shape resembling a sleeping lion. The rock rises 150 metres above the surface of the water and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel navigable by small vessels. Kicker Rock is one of the most stunning landmarks in the Galapagos Islands, home to an incredibly diverse range of marine life that inhabits the nutrient-rich water. Sharks and fish are drawn to the rock and provide an exhilarating and unique snorkelling experience.



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DAY 4: Española

Today we visit Gardner Bay and Punta Suárez on Española Island, one of the oldest in the archipelago, with guided walks to observe wildlife and free time for swimming or snorkelling. Gardner Bay is an excellent site for swimming and snorkelling and features a magnificent white sandy beach, home to sea lions and seabirds. The beautiful turquoise waters support incredible sea life. Look out for young sea lions and schools of large tropical fish, including yellow-tailed surgeonfish, king angelfish and bump-head parrot fish. There is the option to snorkel at Gardner Bay. Further out towards Tortuga Rock and Gardner Island you may see schools of large colourful tropical fish, manta rays and whitetip reef sharks. You may get the chance to swim with the sea lions - an opportunity not to be missed! In the afternoon we sail to Punta Suarez on the western side of Española Island. Española (also known as Hood) is the southernmost island in the Galapagos archipelago and is home to several species of wildlife including masked and blue-footed boobies and the waved albatross. A hike to the top of the cliff provides spectacular photo opportunities. We follow the trail through a rookery and learn the geological history of the island from our guide, including its dramatic volcanic features, climate, flora, and fauna.



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DAY 5: Floreana Island

This morning sees us visiting Mirador de la Baronesa on Floreana Island. We also visit historic Post Office Bay. In the late 18th century, English whaling vessels placed a barrel here to be used as a post office. Today, the box is used mainly by tourists, who drop off and pick up unstamped letters to be carried to far destinations. We make a landing at Punta Cormorant, the only landing site on Floreana Island. The landing site is a green sand beach, coloured by olivine crystals, volcanic-derived silicates of magnesium and iron. The trail leads to a lake normally inhabited by flamingos and other shore birds and continues to a beach of fine white sand particles known as “Flour Beach”, an important nesting site for turtles. You may see Galapagos penguins and marine iguanas and there will be the chance to explore the lava tubes with your guide. Around the point, Corona del Diablo, or Devil's Crown derives its name from the broken remains of a partially submerged volcanic cone. This is a perfect spot to go snorkelling from the boat, as the waters are home to large schools of colourful tropical fish, rays, reef sharks and sea turtles that make their home among the coral reef. You need to be a strong swimmer to snorkel here as the currents can be intense.




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DAY 6: North Seymour & Bartolomé

This morning we visit North Seymour Island, lying just north of Baltra, an island that teems with wildlife, offering an amazing wildlife experience. Trails pass alongside marine iguanas and sea lions and blue-footed booby nests where mating pairs perform their courtship dance and mating rituals. We head out to a rocky shore where pelicans can be seen dive bombing in a feeding frenzy. Inland there is a large nesting site of magnificent frigatebirds. These incredible birds have wingspans that extend to two metres and the males display puffed-up scarlet throat sacks as they sit perched precariously in low bushes watching over their large chicks. Enjoy another snorkelling opportunity here at North Seymour Island in amongst the sea lions and rays. We sail to Bartolome for a guided tour of the dramatic volcanic features of the island, before hiking to a panoramic viewpoint. At the summit of the island you will gain an understanding of its volcanic origins and enjoy a spectacular view. The island is famous for Pinnacle Rock, one of the most iconic rock formations in the Galapagos and an excellent spot for swimming and snorkelling. Here you may encounter Galapagos penguins, sea turtles, sea lions, whitetip reef sharks and a huge variety of fish. The Galapagos penguin is the only species of penguin found north of the Equator.



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DAY 7: Genovesa Island

Today we make a landing at Genovesa, also known as Bird Island, an old imploded volcano. We walk along the white coral sands of Darwin Bay and follow the trail to see the massive colonies of frigatebirds, red-footed boobies, gulls and other seabirds as well as striking volcanic cliffs that rise from the ocean. There is an option to snorkel at Darwin Bay in the sunken caldera. Here you can see huge schools of tropical fish that swarm near the vertical walls and you may be lucky enough to see a hammerhead shark or manta ray. We also visit El Barranco, or Prince Philip's Steps, a steep pathway with excellent views and amazing birdlife. Located on the southern tip of the island, this is an amazing wildlife watching opportunity. We hike up the steps to see a seabird colony teeming with life including the breeding grounds for red-footed boobies and masked boobies.



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DAY 8: South Plaza & Santa Fe


We make a morning landing at South Plaza (Plaza Sur), one of the smallest islands in the Galapagos. This island is home to one of the largest populations of land iguanas as well as a wide range of other fauna and incredible birdlife. We walk along a path through a cactus forest and view a combination of dry and coastal vegetation. We may see red-billed tropicbirds and indigenous swallow-tailed gulls resting on the cliffs, as well as sea lions playing in the water. This afternoon we land at the tiny island of Santa Fé for a guided walk through the giant prickly pear forest in search of land iguanas and other amazing wildlife. The hike takes us towards the cliffs on the northern shore of the island. The island, also known as Barrington, is home to an endemic species of land iguana and rice rat. It is also one of the best locations to see sea turtles, swim with sea lions and maybe get a glimpse of a whitetip reef shark. There is the opportunity to snorkel off the beach at Santa Fé, an amazing chance to swim with playful sea lions and search for sea turtles, rays and reef sharks in amongst large schools of brightly coloured tropical fish.



DAY 9: Santa Cruz & Baltra Island

This morning we make an early visit to the highlands of Santa Cruz to see the giant tortoises and lava tunnels. El Chato Reserve is located in the highlands of Santa Cruz Island and here it is possible to see giant land tortoises in the wild in their natural environment. We explore the reserve’s lagoon and lava tunnels, keeping an eye out for owls that often roost in the entrances to the tunnels. The lava tunnels are massive underground lava tubes found throughout the island that extend several kilometres in some places. After disembarking in Baltra, we transfer to the airport for the flight back to Quito. On arrival there is a transfer to the group hotel with time to enjoy one last night in Ecuador’s historic capital.



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DAY 10: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 nts in the Galápagos Islands aboard the Estrella del Mar • Flights to and from the Galápagos Islands • Certified Galápagos National Park Service guide • All landings, excursions, and transportation • Snorkelling equipment. Visit to a wildlife interpretation centre. • 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 7 dinners. (Allow USD75-100 for meals not included. Drinks and tips while on the yacht are extra. • Hotels (2 nts), aboard the Estrella del Mar in twin-share cabins (7 nts). • Local flight, Estrella del Mar motorized yacht, van, Zodiac, public bus. • Galápagos National Park Service guide while in the islands. • Small group experience; Max 16, avg 12. <p>Not included: You must pay a USD20 Transit Control Card fee at the Quito airport and a USD100 (cash) Galápagos park entry fee immediately upon arrival to the Islands (subject to increase)</p>
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structured to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.

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