

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS - MONSERRAT



INTRODUCTION

7 nights cruising the Galapagos National Park aboard the Monserrat. See land iguanas feeding in the cactus forests on South Plaza Island, come face-to-face with 100-year-old giant tortoises, gain a deeper understanding of the ecology of the Galapagos at the Charles Darwin Foundation and hike along or simply relax on the white-sand beaches of Española Island.

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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TRIP CODE

SEV10ND

DEPARTURE

Fortnightly
Wednesdays

DURATION

10 Days

LOCATIONS

Galapagos Islands,
Ecuador



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DAY 1: Free day in Quito

Today is free for you to explore Quito at your leisure.



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.




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DAY 2: Baltra & Santa Cruz

This morning you will be transferred early to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. On arrival in Baltra you will be met by your naturalist guide and transferred across Santa Cruz to Puerto Ayora where you will board 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. This afternoon we head to the highlands of Santa Cruz Island and visit El Chato Reserve, 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. We return to our ship, the Monserrat, a spacious 20 person vessel, sailing overnight to ensure that you arrive refreshed and ready to explore the next destination. Enjoy the amenities while cruising - spend time on the top deck lounge and bar, indulge in a meal with new friends or relax in the indoor air-conditioned areas. The ship travels at night so you will wake up in a new destination, ready to explore.



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DAY 3: 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 sees us landing at the tiny island of Santa Fé for a guided walk through the giant prickly pear forest (Opuntia) in search of land iguanas and other amazing wildlife. The iguanas feed on the Opuntia pads and fruit. 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 generally plenty of free time to swim or snorkel in the lagoon off the beach. Swim with playful sea lions pups and see large schools of florescent tropical fish that make for fascinating company.



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DAY 4: Punta Pitt & La Galapaguera

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. There is also the opportunity to snorkel around Punta Pitt amongst the schools of fish swimming below. Later we head to La Galapaguera de Cerro Colorado on San Cristóbal Island, an area of land reserved for the repopulation of giant tortoises. Here you can get close to these magnificent ancient creatures and learn about their life cycle at the small breeding centre and interpretation centre.



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DAY 5: San Cristobal Island

San Cristóbal is the easternmost island of the Galapagos and also one of the oldest. Its principal town is Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Galapagos. We visit the Interpretation Centre where you can learn about the Galapagos Islands from the natural history of the archipelago and their volcanic origins through to their ecosystems, flora, fauna and today’s conservation efforts. The Human History exhibit provides information on the discovery of the Galapagos Islands and their colonisation. Later in the day we explore the tiny Islas Lobos, home to a large sea lion colony and abundant marine life. Here you will explore on foot and by boat for some great wildlife encounters, taking a panga ride to view the sea and shore birds nesting and feeding. You may spot a small colony of blue-footed boobies, nesting frigatebirds as well as two species of sea lion. There is also the opportunity to snorkel off the beach at Isla Lobos, in amongst the families of sea lions and their inquisitive pups looking to play.



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DAY 6: Cerro Brujo & Highlands

The first landing for the day is 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 then spend the afternoon visiting the highlands, a tortoise natural breeding area surrounded by endemic flora of the islands. We also visit the Jacinto Gordillo Breeding Centre in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. At this giant tortoise Breeding Centre you can see all of the different species of tortoises close up. The tortoises are bred in captivity in a protected wild area, safeguarded from predators. There are newly hatched tortoises as well as full-grown adults that can live well over 100 years. You may also see finches, warblers and mockingbirds in the vegetation surrounding the Breeding Centre.



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DAY 7: Española Island

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 head 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 8: Floreana Island

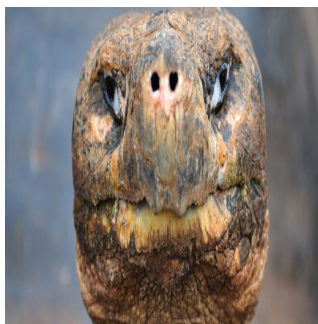
Punta Cormorant is the only landing site on Floreana Island. The landing site is a green sand beach, coloured by olivine crystals, volcanic-derived silicates of magnesium and iron. The trail leads to a lake normally inhabited by flamingos and other shore birds and continues to a beach of fine white sand 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. In the afternoon we 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 also plan to make a stop at Champion Islet where you will be able to snorkel with a colony of playful sea lions that reside in the waters off this tiny island. You may also see turtles, rays and tropical fish. You need to be a strong swimmer to snorkel here due to the currents around the island.



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DAY 9: Santa Cruz / Quito

This morning we disembark in Puerto Ayora on Isla Santa Cruz and visit the Charles Darwin Research Centre. Santa Cruz is the second largest island in the Galapagos, with the largest population and with Puerto Ayora as its main town. It also boasts the most varied of the islands' vegetation zones including coastal, transition, scalesia, miconia and pampa. The Charles Darwin Research Station is located a short walk from the centre of the town. It is a science organization that was initiated in 1964, working to preserve the ecosystem of the Galapagos through the conservation efforts of scientists, researchers and volunteers. It also provides a study location for international scientists and training for Naturalist Guides. We tour the exhibition centre to see photo displays of recent volcanic eruptions, charts outlining geological formations and drawings of the evolutionary development of endemic species. The station is also a great place to observe many species of tortoises and land iguanas in captivity, brought back from the brink of extinction. Here you can see the famous Galapagos tortoise up close. A corral houses adult Galapagos tortoises and there is a nursery in which the young are cared for until around age three when their shells have hardened. **Please note: The Charles Darwin Research Station has partially closed until December 2016. Groups affected will visit the highlands to see the giant tortoises in the wild.** After the visit you are transferred to the airport for your flight to Quito. On arrival there is a transfer to the group hotel with time to enjoy one last night in Ecuador's capital.



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.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cruise the Galápagos Islands aboard the Monserrat (7 nts) 2 Certified Galápagos National Park Service guide All meals aboard the Monserrat Highlands giant tortoises excursion Sante Fé hiking excursion Snorkelling at Sante Fé, Punta Pitt, Isla Lobos, Gardner Island and Champion Islet Interpretation Centre Visit (San Cristóbal) Jacinto Gordillo Breeding Center Post Office Bay Visit Charles Darwin Research Station Visit All landings and excursions Snorkelling equipment and wetsuits Internal flights All transport between destinations and to/from included activities • <p>Accommodations Hotel (2 nts), aboard the Monserrat in twin-share or double cabins (7 nts).</p> <p>Meals 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 7 dinners Allow USD80-105 for meals not included. Drinks and tips on board not included.</p> <p>Transportation Plane, motorized yacht, panga, private vehicle.</p> <p>Staff & experts 2 CEOs/Naturalist Guides while in the Galápagos Islands (certified by the Galápagos National Park Authority), local Rep in Quito.</p>
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request.
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability.

SUSTAINABILITY

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

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- 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 structures 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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