ECUADOR - CLASSIC SOUTHERN ISLANDS | GRAND QUEEN BEATRIZ

TRIP CODE

ECTSCGSI

DEPARTURE

Selected Saturdays

DURATION

10 Days

LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos Islands, South America

INTRODUCTION

This 10-day Galapagos trip aboard the Grand Queen Beatriz sees you sailing the **Galapagos** archipelago to the southernmost island of **Espanola**, as you encounter spectacular landscapes and a myriad of wildlife from blue-footed boobies to land and marine iguanas. From the colony of white-tipped reef sharks at **Las Tintoreras** to the world's largest breeding site of waved albatrosses to Galapagos giant tortoises in their natural habitat, you will be mesmerised by the incredible and often unique wildlife of the islands. Walk through mangroves and across lava flows, past Galapagos sea lions basking on an olive-green beach to lagoons filled with flamingos, pintails and stilts. Snorkel in an eroded volcanic cone and discover the history of **Post Office Bay.**

Check out some of the other cruise itinearies on the Grand Queen Beatriz: 10 Day Central Southern Islands, 6 Day Southern Islands, 7 Day Southern Islands, 6 Day Central Islands, 10 Day Central Eastern Islands

ITINERARY

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DAY 1: Quito

On arrival at Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day will be at your leisure. A welcome meeting will be held in the evening at either 5pm or 6 pm when you meet others travelling with you on your cruise to the Galapagos Islands. Please check with hotel reception or check the reception notice boards for the time and place of the meeting for your trip. As today is an arrival day, you can arrive at any time as there are no activities planned until this important meeting. If you can't arrange a flight that will arrive in time, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). Quito sits at high altitude under the towering Pichincha volcano. It is a beautiful city, arguably one of the most beautiful in South America. The city stretches along the valley and is surrounded by the Andes. The Old Town of Quito is awash with history, with more than 30 churches to explore, and a number of fascinating museums. La Compania de Jesus is considered to be the most beautiful and ornate churches in the Americas. The city's oldest street, Calle La Ronda, is well worth exploring. As this trip spends very little time in Quito, we recommend you spend a few extra days before or after your trip to experience all the city has to offer. You may even wish to explore further beyond the city and visit Otavalo, Cotopaxi, the Cloud Forest or the Equatorial Monument.



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DAY 2: Morning flight to Baltra - Visit Punta Carrion

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. Please note the pick-up time will usually be as early as 4:30 am (a boxed breakfast will be provided), as the airport is a one-hour drive away and you must allow for delays and check-in times. (Your tour leader will confirm this time with you at the Welcome Meeting on Day 1). The flight to the Galapagos will make one stop in Guayaquil to pick up other passengers. (Total flight time is about 3.5 hours). On arrival in the Galapagos, you will be met in the arrival hall of the airport (look out for 'Grand Queen Beatriz' signs) by a transfer guide and transferred to our catamaran - 'M.Y. Grand Queen Beatriz', anchored on the other side of Santa Cruz Island. Our transfer guide will take you on a short trip via airport bus to board a public ferry across the Itabaca Channel to Santa Cruz Island. Once you reach the Island, you will board a private bus to Puerto Ayora, the main port of the island. Here, there will be two dinghies to transport you and your fellow travellers to the 'MY. Grand Queen Beatriz'. Once on board, cabins will be assigned and there will be a welcome briefing and safety drill. You will then get to meet our crew members and get to know your naturalist guide while enjoying a delicious lunch. (Please note that all transportation costs are included). Your first stop in the afternoon will be Punta Carrión, located on the eastern side of the Itabaca channel that separates the islands of Baltra and Santa Cruz. This is a shallow and protected cove, ideal for your first snorkel and swim in the Galapagos! From a boat ride, wildlife is plentiful - keep your eyes peeled for occasional sights of blue-footed boobies, Galapagos herons, great blue herons and underwater swim among rays and white-tipped reef sharks. Tonight, enjoy a welcome cocktail and crew presentation on board. Please note the Transit Card & National Park Fees are not included in the cost of the trip as they need to be paid locally: There is a US$20 Galapagos Islands transit card fee that needs to be paid at the airport in Quito prior to departure to the islands. All visitors must pay the Galapagos National Park fee of US $200 upon arrival at the airport in the Galapagos. If your trip visits Isla Isabela, there is also port fee of US$10 which is to be paid locally. These fees are to be paid in cash.



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DAY 3: Isabela - Las Tintoreras - Tortoise Breeding Cente

Today you will wake up on the south Coast of Isla Isabela (Isabela Island), the largest of the Galapagos Archipelago. Isabela was formed by five giant volcanic craters, all of which are still considered active. The island is located in one of the youngest geological areas in the world, having been formed less than 1 million years ago. Please note that there's a US$10 fee to be paid upon landing on Isabela Island. This southern coast of turquoise blue waters has the largest area of beaches in the Galapagos. You will visit Las Tintoreras, where from the viewing walkway you can look down into this narrow channel to see a colony of white-tipped reef sharks swimming and sleeping, and the occasional playful sea lion among them! Blue-footed boobies and penguins, marine iguanas and crabs also make their home here. Enjoy a nice long walk on a gravel path through ‘Ahh-ahh’ lava flow and see plenty of marine iguanas. The natives of the islands call white sharks 'tintoreras', hence the name of this spectacular site. In the afternoon we visit the Arnoldo Tupiza Tortoise breeding center. We have a leisurely walk through a coastal lagoon, where you might see Flamingos. This mangrove-lined path leads to Isabela’s Giant Tortoise Breeding Center (Arnoldo Tupiza) where you'll observe giant tortoises in all stages of development. Here you can see the five sub species of tortoises from Isabela Island, some of which are bred in captivity. You will then have the choice for optional swimming at the beach or out for some shopping in Puerto Villamil.



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DAY 4: Floreana - Post Office Bay - Devil's Crown

The island of Floreana is a highlight of any Galapagos cruise, rich in natural wonders and wildlife. Enjoy a panga ride around the loberia to observe marine iguanas, sea lions and crabs before taking a leisurely walk to Post Office Bay, where 18th century whalers used a barrel as an unofficial mail drop. This custom continues to this day with visitors to the Galapagos – post one of your own, or see if there are any you could deliver back home! You will also have the chance to go snorkelling with sea turtles. Today is also one of your finest opportunities to see pink flamingos and other water birds wading in the lagoons, including pintails and stilts. Just offshore, the Devil's Crown is an old eroded volcanic cone and a popular roosting site for seabirds such as boobies, pelicans and frigates. Red-billed tropicbirds can also be seen nesting in the rocky crevices. The centre of the cone is an outstanding snorkelling spot, perhaps the most remarkable in the entire archipelago, full of sea lions and colourful fish. You will go ashore at Punta Cormorant where the sand is made up of fine olivine crystals, a glassy volcanic mineral, giving the beach an olive-green colour. It is the best place to see Galapagos sea lions.



DAY 5: Santa Cruz - Charles Darwin - Santa Cruz

Today you will visit Santa Cruz, the second largest island in the Galapagos. The small town of Puerto Ayora is the economic centre of the archipelago, and home to the Charles Darwin Research Station. As well as undertaking vital conservation work, the station also makes for interesting exploration and offers the best opportunities for close encounters with giant tortoises. You will also observe baby tortoises and land iguanas. Afterward you will head up into the highlands for a total change of scenery. Beginning at the coast you'll travel across Santa Cruz through the agricultural region and into the misty forests with the journey taking about 45 mins. This is a lush humid zone containing miconia bushes, scalesia and inactive volcanic cones. Santa Cruz has more endemic plants than any of the other islands and you are likely to see Galapagos giant tortoises in their natural habitat and perhaps even the bright red feathers of a vermillion flycatcher! Today there will be some passengers leaving the tour and some new passengers joining.



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DAY 6: Isla Santa Fe - Isla Plaza Sur

Santa Fe Island is home to many sea lions and these ones are very eager for swimming partners! It’s a lovely place to take a dip, offers a dense concentration of wildlife, and is a fantastic place to see many of the stars of the Galapagos in one relatively small area. Expect to see Galapagos hawks, land iguanas, a variety of finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, sea lions, marine turtles, frigatebirds, Galapagos doves and lava lizards. It’s a naturally beautiful island as well with one of the most attractive coves in the archipelago and the jade-green waters are ideal for snorkelling. A trail follows the coast into the opuntia forest, where you see Santa Fe's trees - the largest in the Galapagos. The island is also home to a unique sub-species of land iguanas. Hiking towards the cliffs on Santa Fe will lead you to a forest of prickly pear cactus. A member of the cactus family, their name comes from the pear-shaped fruit the plant produces. Santa Fe is home to endemic land iguanas. Once back at the beach you will have free time to snorkel back in the lagoon. Playful sea lions pups and florescent fish make for fascinating company. A small island, Plaza Sur is nonetheless a place of great beauty, where you will get close to sea lions and on to trails past one of the Galapagos’ largest land iguana populations, resting amid cacti and volcanic landscapes coloured bright red and green by sesuvium. The island’s rugged southern cliffs are an excellent place to spot tropicbirds and swallow-tailed gulls, as well as the 'Gentlemen’s Club’, a gathering of male sea lions either too young or too old to be beachmasters!



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DAY 7: Isla Espanola - Bahia Gardner - Punta Suarez

After an overnight sail you will wake up near Isla Espanola – the southernmost island of the Galapagos (and one of the most spectacular). Because of its remote location, this island has a large population of endemic fauna. It is the breeding site for nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of waved albatrosses and also home to colonies of blue-footed and Nazca boobies. Trails from the golden beaches, where sea lions and marine iguanas bathe, will lead you right through the middle of booby colonies, Galapagos doves and mockingbirds. You will also pay a visit to Punta Suarez, home to a large and varied wildlife population. A walk along its trails will take you to a cliff top viewpoint, where you'll gain a scenic view of the island. Boobies line the rocky shoreline beneath you, while frigate birds may be seen overhead, and nearby male sea lions can be seen lounging around. Albatross use the cliffs as their ‘runway’, helping become airborne by the southeast winds that blow across this part of the island. If you’re lucky, you’ll see the elaborate courtship rituals performed by albatross before the female chooses her lifelong mate. Stop at Bahia Gardner (Gardner Bay), considered by many as one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galapagos Islands, full of sea lions and hood mockingbirds. Walk along the pristine white sands or take another opportunity to swim with sea lion pups and lots of fish. The rocks off the coast provide an excellent spot to snorkel, with their abundance of reef sharks, turtles and many species of tropical fish, including surgeon and angelfish. The small white-tipped reef sharks are also often spotted resting under the rocks.



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DAY 8: San Cristobal - Leon Dormido - Isla Lobos

This morning you will visit Punta Pitt on the eastern end of San Cristobál Island. Walk to the top of the volcanic hill for expansive views of the sparsely vegetated area. A variety of seabirds nest here, including blue-footed boobies and frigates. On a 'panga' ride you can observe the three varieties of boobies nesting in the Galapagos and enjoy a snorkel from the beach. Close by you will pass through Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock), the magnificent basalt remains of a crater in the middle of the sea, the shape resembles a sleeping lion. The rock rises 150 metres above the surface and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel. You cruise through the channel with nesting seabirds on either side of the boat, tropic birds overhead, marine iguanas in the water and many sea lions present including many resting on the rocks. Snorkelling gives us the opportunity to see Galapagos sharks, and possibly a hammerhead shark among sea turtles and an incredible biodiversity of invertebrates on the rock wall. You will also visit Isla Lobos, a tiny island almost touching San Cristobál Island. This is the perfect time to witness the always friendly sea lions as they play in the calm shallow waters here. Blue-footed boobies, frigate birds and marine iguanas are also easily seen.



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DAY 9: Fly from San Cristobal to Quito

As flights to the mainland from Galapagos depart mid morning, it is an early start for our last morning on the islands. Depending on the time of our flight, our time spent on this final excursion could be limited. Visit San Cristobal Interpretation Center in the morning. This centre brings the history and geography of the archipelago to life, from its volcanic origins to the present day. The human history exhibit offers an insight into the discovery and colonisation of the Galapagos, and the reality of the problems the islands face today is also explored. This is a great way to complete your time in the Galapagos. This will be your final excursion before you head to the airport in San Cristobál for your flight back to Quito. As you will be leaving the boat this morning, please remember that if you have enjoyed the services provided by your guide and crew, a tip would be very much appreciated by them. As a guideline we recommend each passenger consider US$15 per day for the crew and US$10 per day for your guide. You can leave tips in envelopes that are placed in your cabin on this last day of your journey. Upon arrival in Quito Airport you are transferred back to our hotel for an overnight stay.



DAY 10: Quito

Your Galapagos adventure will come to an end today after breakfast. There are no activities planned for the final day so you are able to depart the accommodation at any time. There are many fascinating things to do in and around Quito, so please speak to our customer service representative about any optional activities that might be of interest. They can also assist you in booking a departure transfer to the airport.



INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship & hotel

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Inclusions	**INCLUSIONS** - 1 night Pre and 1 night Post cruise at group hotel in Quito with breakfast - Arrival Transfer in Quito (must have flight arrival plans confirmed 30 days prior) - Transfers in Galapagos - Round trip flight to/from Galapagos - Accommodation on board Grand Queen Beatriz in chosen cabin - All meals during the cruise - Guiding by Galapagos National Park Certified Guide - All visits and excursions/landings according to the itinerary* - Snorkel Gear (mask, tube and fins) - Kayaks - Unlimited purified water, coffee and tea onboard the vessel **EXCLUSIONS** - Local Taxes - Any other airfares unless otherwise specified in the itinerary - Galapagos National Park Entrance fee (US$200 per person from Aug 2024 - Subject to change) - Galapagos Ingala card (USD 20,00 per person - Subject to change) - Passport & Visa Expenses - Travel Insurance - Alcoholic & soft drinks - Additional visits - Additional meals - Excess baggage charges - Telecommunications charges - Personal expenses and tips - Items not specified
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	A single supplement surcharge applies and is subject to availability. Please contact us for more information.
Notes	- Before checking in on a flight from Quito to the Galapagos there is a US$20 transit fee that must be paid. On arrival in the Galapagos you must pay a US$200 national park entrance fee per person from August 2024. - All entrance fees are subject to change without prior notice. - Please note kayaking and water based activities are subject to weather conditions. * Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions and government regulations.

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Price Dependent upon	Seasonality, fuel surcharges, currency fluctuations and availability at time of booking.

SUSTAINABILITY

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