ECUADOR - GALAPAGOS EXPLORER SOUTHERN ISLANDS | GRAND QUEEN BEATRIZ



TRIP CODE

ECTSGESI

DEPARTURE

Selected Tuesdays

DURATION

7 Days

LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos Islands, South America

INTRODUCTION

Follow in the footsteps of **Charles Darwin** as you sail around the Southern islands of the remote **Galapagos** archipelago, one of nature's most incredible wonders. Encounter the sea lions of **Santa Fe**, also home to frigatebirds, lava lizards and the Galapagos mockingbird. Walk through forests of prickly pear, snorkel in jade-green waters alongside turtles, reef sharks and tropical fish and meet the giant tortoises of **San Cristobal.** The archipelago abounds with incredible wildlife and spectacular landscapes.

Check out some of the other cruise itinearies on the Grand Queen Beatriz: 10 Day Central Southern Islands, 6 Day Southern Islands, 6 Day Central Islands, 10 Day Central Eastern Islands, 10 Day Southern 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: Baltra - Santa Cruz Island

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. Please note the pick-up time can be as early as 4:30 am (a boxed breakfast will be provided), as the airport is a 1-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). 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 by a transfer guide to take you to the M/Y Grand Queen Beatriz, anchored on the other side of Isla Santa Cruz. Our transfer guide will accompany you on an airport public bus to then take a short journey on a ferry across the Itabaca Channel. Once you reach Santa Cruz, take a private vehicle for a 45-minute drive to Puerto Ayora, the main port of the island. Here, you and your fellow travellers will be transported to the boat. 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. After lunch, 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 walk taking about 45 minutes. 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! 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: Santa Fe & South Plaza

Santa Fe is home to many sea lions and these ones are happy to share the sea and shore with you! It’s a lovely place to take a dip 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, frigate birds, Galapagos doves and lava lizards. It’s a naturally beautiful island with small coves and jade-green waters ideal for snorkelling. 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. The island is also home to a unique sub-species of land iguana. On to Isla Plaza Sur: a small island packed full of wildlife, where you will get close to sea lions and walk on trails past one of the Galapagos’ largest land iguana populations, who rest among cacti and bright red and green volcanic landscapes. 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 4: Isla Espanola - Bahia Gardner - Punta Suarez

After an overnight night sail, you will wake up at Isla Espanola – the southernmost island of the Galapagos. 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 masked boobies. Trails from the golden beaches, where sea lions and marine iguanas bathe, will lead you right through clusters of boobies, Galapagos doves and mockingbirds. Head to the cliffs of Punta Suarez, home to large and varied wildlife population – a walk along its trails will take you to a viewpoint, where you'll gain a magical panorama of the clifftop and crashing waves. Boobies line the rocky shoreline beneath you, while frigate birds may be seen overhead; nearby enormous male sea lions can be seen lounging and 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 might see an albatross performing their elaborate courtship rituals before the female chooses her lifelong mate! Stop at Bahia Gardner (Gardner Bay), which is considered by many as one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galapagos Islands – full of sea lions and hood mockingbirds. The rocks off the coast provide excellent snorkelling opportunities to see 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 5: Isla 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 6: San Cristobal Interpretation Center, fly 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. You will then head to the airport for our 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 the last day of your journey. Upon arrival in Quito Airport you will be transferred back to your hotel for an overnight stay.



DAY 7: 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 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 double 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 **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) - Galápagos 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 (Wi-Fi is not available on the boat at all whilst in the Galapagos Islands) - Wetsuit Hire - 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.

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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 kayak and water based activities are subject to weather conditions. * Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions and government regulations.
Price Dependent upon	Seasonality, fuel surcharges, currency fluctuations and availability at time of booking.

SUSTAINABILITY

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