GALAPAGOS ISLANDS - ULTIMATE GALAPAGOS: CENTRAL ISLANDS | GRAND DAPHNE



TRIP CODE
ECTSUGC
DEPARTURE
Selected Tuesdays
DURATION
10 Days
LOCATIONS
Ecuador, Galapagos Islands, South America

INTRODUCTION

Cruise around the Central Islands of the **Galapagos** aboard the **Grand Daphne** to witness the myriad of colourful and fascinating wildlife that thrives on these remote islands and in the surrounding waters. Discover the stunning landscapes of these volcanic islands as you sail between **Santa Cruz, North Seymour, Bartolome, Santiago, Isabela and Fernandina**. Snorkel with sea turtles, white-tipped reef sharks, sea lions and Galapagos penguins. Follow frigatebirds, boobies, pelicans, Galapagos hawks and albatrosses as they soar overhead. Walk through mangrove forests, across lava fields and beaches and past flamingo lagoons. Panoramic vistas and extraordinary wildlife keep you mesmerised for the entire voyage.

Check out some of the other itineraries on the Grand Daphne: 17 Day Absolute Galapagos, 10 Day Complete Galapagos, 6 Day Galapagos at a Glance, 7 Day Galapagos Adventure: Northern Islands

ITINERARY

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DAY 1: Quito

Bienvenidos! Welcome to Ecuador. This country might be smaller than its heavyweight South American neighbours, but this audacious land stakes a legitimate claim as the continent's most complete package, blessed with perfect beaches and the remarkable Galapagos Islands. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 5pm or 6 pm on Day 1. You can arrive at any time during the day as there are no activities planned until this important meeting. Please check with the hotel reception or notice boards for where and when it will take place. If you can't arrange a flight that will have you arrive at the hotel by early evening, 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). If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please ensure you have all these details to provide to your leader. If you arrive early, get out and explore Quito (2,850 m), one of South America's most attractive cities. Stroll around the Old Town, and be sure to visit the majestic Monastery of San Francisco if you have time. Alternatively, check out Cotopaxi volcano, the Cloud Forest, the local hot springs or the Equatorial Monument.



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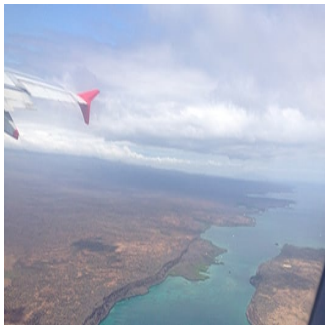
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DAY 2: Isla Santa Cruz

Transfer to Quito Airport for your early morning flight to the Galapagos Islands. You'll leave the hotel as early as 4:30 am. A boxed breakfast will be provided. On arrival in the Galapagos, you'll be met in the arrivals hall and transferred to your boat, Daphne. Once on board, you'll be assigned a cabin, meet the crew and get to know your naturalist guide and fellow travellers over a delicious lunch. Sail from Baltra to Las Bachas (approximately 30 minutes; 4 nautical miles). The lush sands of Las Bachas, on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island, are a nesting site for the Pacific green turtle. Marine iguanas are also commonly spotted. The sand here, made of decomposed coral, is particularly white and soft. The rocks make for excellent snorkelling and are populated by Sally Lightfoot crabs which are plentiful on the island. A saltwater lagoon just near the beach is home to flamingo and whimbrel – you might also see a great blue heron. Remnants of a floating pier, a testimony to the US presence in the Galapagos during World War II, can also be seen. 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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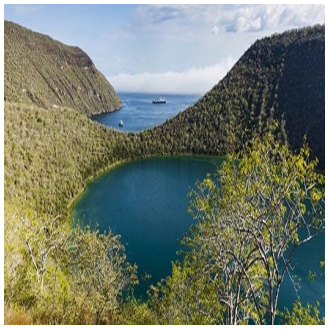
DAY 3: Isla Rabida - Isla Isabela

Today you will sail from Las Bachas to Isla Rabida, known for its spectacular red sand beaches, caused by the high content of iron in the sand which rusts to form the unusual shade. Follow a trail from the shore along to a lagoon which is one of the best spots in the Galapagos to view flamingos. Keep an eye out for nesting pelicans, pintail ducks, marine iguanas and sea lions – all are commonly sighted on the island. Check out a vast opuntia cactus forest, hinting at the previous habitation of land iguanas, Galapagos hawks, mockingbirds, doves, finches and lava lizards. You may like to take the chance to go snorkelling and seek out sea stars, damsels, gobbies and surgeon fish. In the afternoon, head to Albemarle on the northeast side of Isabela Island. Covered in mangroves, the bay is home to sea turtles, sea lions, penguins and flightless cormorants who feed on the algae and fish here. Take a walk inland and discover the remains of an old radar base from World War II and pass by pahoehoe and lava formations. Another fantastic location for snorkelling, you may like to have a look beneath the water's surface in search of sea turtles and flightless cormorants.



DAY 4: Isla Isabela

Sail overnight from Isla Santiago around to the western shores of Isla Isabela. Wake up near Tagus Cove, where pirates and whalers used to collect tortoises for their travels. Enjoy a short visit here (approximately 2 hours), perhaps snorkelling or checking out the graffiti on the walls (the oldest of which is from 1836). Witness flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies, a variety of waterfowl and the most northerly penguins in the world. You will walk to a lookout point for a stunning view of the north of Isabela Island and Volcan Wolf (Wolf Volcano). Today you will also visit Bahia Urbina on the west of Isabela Island, Urbina Bay has a wide variety of plant life which changes depending on the season. You will be able to observe the beautiful color of the plants which attracts many different insects. The site also features a short trek inland, where giant tortoises can be spotted amongst the bushes in their natural habitat. You may also see land iguanas which often nest in the middle of the trail where their distinctive, textured and yellowish skin can be observed from up close. Flycatchers, Darwin's finches and mockingbirds are common on the ground and in the trees.



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DAY 5: Isla Fernandina - Isla Isabela

Today we visit Punta Espinosa that is a narrow ledge of lava and sand extending from the base of La Cumbre volcano. Take a walk around the beautiful peninsula, which boasts such wildlife and plant life as lava cacti, marine iguanas, barking sea lions, tiny penguins and Sally Lightfoot crabs. Keep a lookout for that marvelous Galapagos predator hunting from the treetops: the Galapagos hawk. Top-notch snorkeling opportunities await in the clear waters, and turtles and sea lions can be seen swimming around and feeding on the shore. This is also a great spot to see flightless cormorants drying their atrophied wings on the rocks. In the afternoon head to Punta Vicente Roca, this site allowed for panga rides to observe the abundant wildlife and offers one of the best snorkeling spots of the Archipelago. The snorkeling “route” takes us along the cliffs and offers the not so common chance of exploring two shallow underwater caves. The primitive and unaggressive bullhead shark, known locally as the Port Jackson shark, is often seen here sharing its space with red-lipped batfish, frogfishes, Pacific seahorses, the endemic Camotillo, schools of barracuda and brown-stripped snappers. Sponges, corals, and other marine invertebrates are also abundant in the area.



DAY 6: Isla Santiago

Sail this morning to Puerto Egas, a black-sand beach on the west side of James Bay, northwest of Isla Santiago, home to incredible volcanic tuff formations. Take a stroll along the beach with the native marine iguanas, pelicans, finches, mockingbirds, oystercatchers, Galapagos sea lions and Galapagos fur seals. You can see the amazing tidal pools, formed from ancient lava flow, providing a home for sponges, snails, hermit crabs, barnacles and fish. You might also end up snorkelling with a Galapagos fur seal – they’re always looking for a friend! In the afternoon travel to the northwest side of Santiago Island where you’ll find Caleta Bucanero, named after the pirates and buccaneers who once found shelter in the bay. Here you’ll have the chance to go snorkelling and take a dinghy ride to look for blue-footed boobies, pelicans and nocturnal seagulls nesting in the cliffs.



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DAY 7: Isla Bartolome - Isla Sombrero Chino

Wake up in Bartolome Island, a spectacular volcanic landscape full of spatter cones and lava flows, and home to Galapagos penguins and lava lizards. Put on your walking shoes and climb up 360 wooden steps to the summit, where an amazing view of Pinnacle Rock awaits. This is one of the most photographed sights in the Galapagos – an abrupt jag of rock protruding from the earth like a tooth, providing a focal point for two nearby bays. Hike to the top of a once-active volcano and enjoy superb views across to Bahia Sullivan on nearby Isla Santiago. If you're in luck, you might catch a glimpse of the Galapagos hawk. There's also the chance to go snorkelling among the colourful marine life. In the afternoon, travel to the small island of Sombrero Chino, found on the southeast side of Santiago Island. With lovely sandy beaches and a striking volcanic landscape, this is a fantastic place to take a hike and look out for the sea lions and penguins that rest here, and snorkel in search of reef sharks and sea turtles.



DAY 8: Isla North Seymour - Isla Santa Cruz

Wake up this morning in North Seymour, one of the most visited islands of the Galapagos. First up is a walk around the island to spot some blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls. Boobies and frigates have an interesting relationship, sharing the same nesting area on North Seymour. Blue-footed boobies nest on the ground while the frigate birds nest just above them in the saltbushes. As you walk, look out for land iguanas, marine iguanas, Galapagos sea lions and the endemic incense tree. After the walk, cool off and go snorkelling and encounter a great variety of fish and perhaps some white-tipped reef sharks, rays and sea lions. Later in the day, travel to Isla Santa Cruz, the second largest island in the Galapagos. Pay a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station in the small town of Puerto Ayora. 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 may also see baby tortoises and land iguanas.



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DAY 9: Baltra - Quito

Flights to the mainland from Galapagos depart mid-morning, so it's an early start for your last morning on the islands. You will visit the Santa Cruz Highlands. Travel through the agricultural region and into the misty forests where you can see the unique Scalesia cloud forest, dome-shaped giant tortoises in the wild, different species of Darwin finches and possibly the world-famous woodpecker and warbler finches. You might also glimpse a vermillion flycatcher. Then it's time to bid farewell to the archipelago and head to the airport for your mid-morning flight back to Quito for the last night of the tour. This flight takes approximately 2.5 hours with a transit in Guayaquil. Upon arrival at Quito Airport, at about 4pm, you'll be transferred back to your hotel for an overnight stay. A local Intrepid representative might stop by the hotel this evening to get your feedback on the trip.



DAY 10: Quito

There are no activities planned for the final day so we are able to depart our accommodation at any time. If you have not spent time here before, we recommend you stay on a few days as there are many fascinating things to do in and around Quito, such as the Cotopaxi volcano, the Cloud Forest, hot springs, the Equatorial Monument or perhaps city tour of the fascinating Old Town. 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 group hotel in Quito with breakfast - Round trip flight to/from Galapagos - Arrival Transfer in Quito (must have flight arrival plans confirmed 30 days prior) - Transfers in Galapagos to/from the vessel - Accommodation on board Grand Daphne 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 - 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.
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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