



Galapagos Islands by sea

Hike and snorkel among the amazing wildlife while cruising the islands a luxury catamaran

The Galapagos Islands are unmatched as a nature destination. The history of the islands alone, as the place that inspired Charles Darwin into developing the theory of evolution, is worth the trip. Because most of the islands and surrounding ocean are protected as a national park, visitors today can still walk among giant tortoises and nesting sea birds, snorkel with sea lions, sharks, and penguins, and view the finches that compelled Darwin to think about how such unique species came into being. Aventouras guests visit a number of islands on an intimate 16-passenger boat, snorkel our favorite coves, walk among wildlife and venture into the highlands on some islands.

Day 1: Arrive in Quito¹

You'll be met at the airport in Ecuador's capital of Quito and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy a stay at the Patio Andaluz, a luxury hotel in the colonial part of Quito.

- Transfer from airport to your hotel (about a half hour, depending on the hotel and arrival time)
- Dinner on your own
- Overnight at the Patio Andaluz in Quito (or similar lodging)

Day 2: Tour of Quito

Situated in a high valley in the Andes, Quito has views to hills and mountains in all directions. Because of the combination of high elevation and being close to the equator, the city is blessed with a wonderful spring-like climate most of the year. Guests will enjoy a half-day tour of the colonial part of Quito, with its plazas and colonial buildings.

¹ This 8-day trip always departs the US on a Wednesday and returns on Wednesday. Sunday through Sunday trips are also available.

Day 3: Fly to the Galapagos Islands and embark on your cruise

After breakfast in the hotel, you will fly from Quito to the island of Baltra (with a stop in Guayaquil), where you will be met by your guides. After a short bus ride to the harbor, motorized rafts called “Pangas” will transport you to the Journey I, a luxury motor catamaran that will be your home for the next four nights.

After a welcome describing the boat and its safety features and a delicious lunch, we will visit our first site. In the afternoon, we visit Bachas Beach, two small beaches made of white, soft decomposed coral; a favorite nesting site for sea turtles. Behind one of the beaches there is a small brackish water lagoon, where occasionally is possible to observe flamingos and other coastal birds, such as black-necked stilts and whimbrels. The other beach is longer, but it has two old barges that were abandoned during the Second World War, when the USA used Baltra Island as a strategic point to protect the Panama Channel.

On the first land excursion your guide will explain the rules that are strictly enforced in order to protect and preserve the environment and wildlife of the islands. No smoking or eating is permitted on the islands, you must stay on the hiking trails, and you must stay with the group. No harassing of the wildlife is allowed in any form.

These strict regulations provide one of the world’s most unique and incredible animal viewing experiences - the wildlife on the islands is amazing because the animals do not fear people, and also have not been habituated to expect food from people. They don’t run away from visitors, nor do they approach visitors; they simply don’t notice people. You’ll likely find yourself a few feet from iguanas, boobies, sea lions, and other wildlife—which is why visitors’ behavior must be carefully monitored in order not to harm or influence the animals.

- Scenic flight from Quito to Baltra Island via Guayaquil
- Transfer to Journey I
- Explore Bachas Beach
- Overnight on Journey I

Day 4: Genovesa Island, Darwin Bay, El Barranco

After breakfast on the boat, you will explore Genovesa Island starting with Darwin Bay. This bay has its origin when the crater of this island collapsed below sea level and is a favorite for birdwatchers: red footed booby, masked boobies, wandering tattlers, lava gulls, whimbrels, yellow-crowned and black-crowned lava herons, and yellow warblers can be seen in the area. From a “wet landing” on the beach, climb gradually to the edge of the cliff seeing red-footed boobies nesting in the mangrove trees below. Bird watching includes sightings of sharp-beaked finches, large cactus and ground finches, Galapagos doves and swallow-tailed Gulls.

After lunch on the boat, you will return to another area of Genovesa and the southern part of Darwin Bay. El Barranco is the youngest area of the island, with cliffs composed of very fragile lava. The natural erosion that has occurred in these lava flows has become the ideal place for nesting Storm Petrels. You can see two species of petrels that nest in cavities and holes in the lava, along with one of its main predators, the short-eared owl. Also present on this island is the masked booby.

- Visit Genovesa Island and Darwin Bay in the morning for sea birds
- Return to Genovesa in the afternoon to explore the cliffs El Barranco
- Overnight on Journey I

Day 5: Plazas Sur (Santa Cruz Island), Santa Fe Island

The day begins with a visit to Plazas Sur on Santa Cruz Island. Despite its small size, Plazas has some of the most interesting and outstanding species of the Galapagos are found here. The Plazas land iguanas are smaller than its relatives found at other islands. Throughout the island are several hybrid iguanas, a result of crossing a male marine iguana and a female land iguana, they are unique, recognizable at first glance by their black/gray color, with a land iguanas crest, but face and tail of the marine iguana. The big population of iguanas is due to the presence of tunas, their favorite food.

In the afternoon you Santa Fe Island, which may well be the oldest of the Galapagos Islands. Santa Fe is the home of a number of endemic species like the Galapagos hawk, Galapagos snake, Galapagos mockingbird, rice rats, and one of the two species of land Iguanas found in the islands. There is a possibility of snorkeling with playful sea lions and tropical fishes.

- Morning visit to Plazas Sur
- In the afternoon visit Santa Fe Island with endemic species and snorkeling
- Overnight on Journey I

Day 6: San Cristobal Island, Punta Pitt, Kicker Rock, Lobos Island

After breakfast we visit San Crsitobal Island and Punta Pitt. Here we see endemic species such as lava lizards and red-footed boobies with an impressive view from the high part of the island. It's also home of the Chatham mockingbird, only found here on San Cristobal island.

In the afternoon walk Kicker Rock, also known as the Sleeping Lion. The remains of a lava cone eroded by the sea, the two vertical rocks rising 500 feet from the ocean form a small channel that is navigable by small boats. Then on to Isla Lobos where we hope to see blue-footed boobies and common frigate birds nesting, and two species of sea lions present in the archipelago. Time permitting we will snorkel, where its common to see juvenile sea lions, manta rays and sea turtles.

- Morning visit San Cristobal Island and Pitt Point
- In the afternoon walk Kicker Rock and explore Lobos Island
- Overnight on Journey I

Day 7: San Cristobal Island, Interpretation Center, Baltra airport

After breakfast, we will visit the Interpretation Center before we transfer back to the airport on Baltra, driving across the island, where you will catch the flight back to Quito. Visitors to the Interpretation Center can learn about both the geological and human history of the islands, conservation issues, and natural history. The older Museum of Natural History attempts to preserve the natural history of the islands. Then walk up Tijeretas Hill for a spectacular view of the white beaches on one side and the roofs of Puerto Baquerizo on the other. Arrive in Quito in time to explore the city before a farewell dinner.

- Morning trip to the Interpretation Center, walk Tijeretas hill
- Scenic flight from Baltra to Quito (via Guayquil) and overnight there

Day 8: Flight to the U.S.

Fly back to the U.S., or extend your trip with a few days in the Ecuador highlands.

- Breakfast at hotel
- Transfer from your hotel to airport

Alternate 8-day Tour of the Galapagos (Sunday to Sunday)

Logistically this tour is very similar to the one described above, but it leaves on a Sunday and returns on a Sunday. Guests can expect the same quality and abundance of wildlife, but you will visit different islands and locations:

- Day 1: Arrive in Quito, Ecuador
- Day 2: Quito city tour
- Day 3: San Cristobal Island - La Loberia and Highlands
- Day 4: Espanola Island - Suarez Point, Gardner Bay, Gardner Island, and Osborn Island
- Day 5: Floreana Island - Cormoran Point, Devils Crown, and Post Office Bay
- Day 6: Santa Cruz Island - Charles Darwin Station, Highlands, and Twin Craters
- Day 7: Santa Cruz Island - Garrapatero, Trapiche - Transfer to the airport in Baltra
- Day 8: Quito and flight to the US

Extend Your Adventure in Ecuador

There is so much to do within a short drive or flight of Quito that it's well worth staying for as long as you can before or after your Galapagos journey. There are so many options that we won't list them all here (see our Ecuador pages), but a few include:

- Extended trips into the Amazon basin: Enjoy bird and wildlife watching, hiking,

swimming in the rivers, and learning about the indigenous people of the Amazon. Most guests fly from Quito to Coca and then motor up or down the Rio Napo to reach their jungle lodge.

- Hiking and mountain climbing near Quito: There are countless hikes near Quito, and the more adventurous may choose to hire an experienced guide to climb Cotapaxi or one of several other volcanoes. They reach an altitude of nearly 20,000 feet, and are technical climbs that require participants to be in excellent physical condition and go with an experienced guide. There are climbs of all different levels and abilities.
- Rafting: A popular Class III white-water rafting run from Quito is the rivers Toachi and Blanco (they join mid-way so this is one run). An early morning departure, lunch along the river, and return in the evening makes this a perfect active day.
- Colonial Quito: Quito has a charming, extensive colonial section that can easily fill a day of shopping and sightseeing. The plazas bustle with life, the churches are beautiful and worth a visit (although perhaps not to all of the rumored seven dozen), and the markets provide plenty of shopping options.

About Galapagos activities

Aventouras trips are active, designed for people who want a lively vacation with a variety of activities. Galapagos cruises include short walks and snorkeling, but are less active than most Aventouras trips because of the focus on wildlife viewing and natural history exploration. A hike will rarely be at a break-a-sweat pace, because it's likely that before you get your heart rate going you'll have come across a sea lion pup wanting his picture taken, or a collection of marine iguanas blocking your path. Similarly, the snorkeling will tend to be at a leisurely rate that allows us to concentrate on looking for sea lions, penguins, sea turtles, manta rays, and other sea life. Still, at the end of most days you'll feel that you've been moderately active and appreciate the hearty dinner back on board!

The trips from cruise boat to shore will be either "dry landing" or "wet landing." As the names suggest, dry landings allow you to keep your feet dry, usually because there's a simple dock at which you'll land. On wet landings you're likely to be at a sandy beach that requires that you jump into water that will be no more than knee-deep.

About the yachts

The M/C Galapagos Journey I is one of the most luxurious cruise boats cruising the Galapagos Islands. The catamarans are very comfortable and the service standard is second to none.

Great shore excursions: Our shore excursions are packed with several activities and lots of fun. A typical visit to a landing site includes a nature hike, zodiac ride, snorkeling or kayaking visit and of course time to relax on the beach or by the trailhead. Your guide will bring out the best of the islands throughout these activities sharing knowledge and fun facts about the Islands natural history.

Well Planned itineraries: We believe that the key to a great itinerary is variety, the M/C Galapagos Journey I visits several types of ecosystems within the Galapagos Archipelago. You will find your trip to include several types of landscapes, a good combination of bird sightings as well as visits to land and marine iguana sighting areas, research centers and tortoise breeding projects. The itinerary is also optimized, sailings are short and land/snorkel visits are longer.

Nature lectures: After a full day visiting the islands you will get to learn a little more about the

places you visited and will be able to ask your guide specific questions about wildlife, geology, marine life, biology, and other topics that interest you regarding the Islands. You will find your evening briefings are also a great opportunity to get to know your fellow travelers and share anecdotes from the day's activities.

Knowledgeable guides: All of our guides are certified by the Galapagos National Park and have gone through extensive training. They have several years of experience, yet they also have a passion for sharing their knowledge of the wildlife, biology, geology and natural history in general. You will also find that your guide is passionate about conservation of the Islands and is very strict when it comes to following and enforcing Galapagos Park guidelines and rules. Your guide is eager to share his knowledge as he gives on sight briefings during your shore excursions as well as during the evening lectures.

Fine dining and cuisine: Each meal on board is a celebration of the taste buds, our chef will prepare the finest international and local dishes using fresh ingredients of the highest quality. All meals include choices of meat, poultry, and seafood. We also have options for vegetarians and individuals with other dietary choices and needs. Salads are freshly tossed and fresh fruit is always available. We also have a nice selection of the best wines from around the world to enhance your meals.

Well-equipped boat: You will find that in addition to being a spacious and comfortable yacht the M/C Galapagos Journey I carry state of the art navigation and communications equipment on board. It also carries entertainment equipment such as snorkeling gear, wetsuits, sea kayaks, a DVD player with a flat panel screen and other amenities on board.

Crew to passenger ratio: Our crew to guest ratio is almost 1 to 1 (11 crew members for 16 passengers). We are the only small yacht in the Islands to have a 24/7 cruise director on board.

What's included?

Almost everything, so it's easier to list what's NOT included:

- Personal expenses such as telephone bills, laundry, gratuities, and alcoholic beverages
- Airport departure tax of approximately \$40.80 USD for your return flight
- Wetsuit rental on board - rack wetsuits are provided by the boat, but personal reservation requires a rental to secure your requested suit size
- Insurance against illness, accident, and/or theft
- Standard clothes for the activities listed (e.g., hiking boots); we provide the snorkeling gear
- Any additional costs incurred due to circumstances beyond our control
- International airfare

And here is a list of what IS included:

- Seven nights accommodations as listed above, double occupancy with a single supplement optional
- All breakfasts and most meals and snacks starting on Day 2 in Quito, and ending with breakfast on the last morning in Quito
- Quito city tour including guide, entrance fees and lunch
- Permanent English-speaking tour leader throughout the trip
- Domestic flight from Quito to the Galapagos

- All entrance tickets wherever applicable, including Galapagos entrance fee and transit card
- All excursions and activities included above, including local expert guides and gear
- A detailed pre-trip departure packet with packing suggestions, background reading, and other trip-specific information

Tour Details

Trip length

8 days/7 nights

Cost

8 days/7 nights all-inclusive price: \$3,548 for 8-day trip

- Aventouras strives to make each trip as cost as inclusive as possible - no surprises. Our trip price includes your domestic air flight from Quito to the Galapagos Islands, and the park entrance fee. Please note that many tour operators add those costs to the published trip price.
- All trip-length options qualify for a \$100 discount when paying by cash or check

Single supplements on our Galapagos trips are based on the ship and cabin available, and are usually 75% of the cabin price for the cruise portion of the overall trip. Please contact us if you are traveling alone and want to explore a single supplement option.

Group size

Limited to a maximum of 16 participants; register early in order to ensure space is available

Activities

Snorkeling, walking, city tour, wildlife viewing

Gateway city meeting time and place

You will be greeted as you leave customs and immigration. Check-in for international flights to and from Ecuador is usually three hours before departure. Valuable items such as camera equipment and essentials such as prescription medications should always be hand carried on all flights to avoid loss or damage. Checked luggage should be properly labeled.

Gateway city transfer

Airport transfers on the first and last days of the tour are included in trip costs.

Trip conclusion

Most flights to the U.S. are overnight, and we will end the trip with our domestic flight coming into the same airport that you will fly out of. Any overnight flight can be accommodated. If you wish to stay overnight and fly the next day we can arrange transfer and hotel for an extra charge.

The Next Step...

How do I join this trip?

Call Aventouras at 800-930-2846 and a trip consultant will reserve your space(s). Your travel agent can also book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Special requests

If you have any special dietary needs or any special request that will make your trip more enjoyable, please be sure to notify your trip consultant or travel agent upon booking.

Leave the rest to us...

Before you go, we will send you a pre-departure package, including your reservation payment receipt and confirmation, detailed information about the area, a packing list, suggestions for preparing for your trip, a guest questionnaire, information on pre/post trip arrangements, and a liability release agreement.

Unsurpassed value

We offer the highest quality trips at the best value. Our itineraries include most meals, transportation (in-country flights) and entrance fees. If you find a trip of equal quality that matches our itinerary and inclusions at a lower fare within 30 days of booking with us, we'll refund the difference. A simple guarantee that assures you the best trip at the best fare!

Travel protection

To make your trip with Aventouras even more carefree, we strongly recommend the purchase of a travel insurance plan. Offering comprehensive coverage and peace of mind, a travel insurance plan is designed to protect you in case of trip cancellation for medical reasons, travel delays, medical expenses, accidental death, lost baggage and medical evacuation. We're happy to supply information about travel insurance coverage for you, so contact us at 800-930-2846 with any questions.

How do I book airfare for this trip?

Book online, call your travel agent or call us at 800-930-2846 for assistance and suggestions. We are familiar with most flight options from the U.S. and can give you suggestions as well as an idea of usual fares. We can also help you with pre- and post-trip lodging ideas if you wish to arrive early or stay longer.

General Information, Questions & Answers

What weather conditions can I expect?

We can expect generally cool temperatures with daytime highs in the mid 50s to high 60s; nighttime lows can get into the 30s. Showers are unlikely, but possible, as most of our trips run during the dry season. Please contact us for additional specific weather information for any departure dates you are considering.

Tour operator

Aventouras operates this adventure in partnership with Latin Trails, dedicated to sustainable and responsible travel.

Regarding accommodations...

While we plan to use the accommodations specified in this itinerary, changes are occasionally required due to availability of facilities. We recognize that most guests need detailed accommodations information to leave behind with relatives, etc. We're more than happy to provide this when it is finalized - typically at least 30 days prior to departure.

Passport and visa information

A passport valid at least 90 days beyond your anticipated arrival date in Ecuador is required, along with a tourist card (available on arrival). Currently no visas or immunization certificates are required for citizens of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand or the USA.

We're always improving!

This itinerary details this trip's planned activities, routes, accommodations, departure and conclusion times. However, we're constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this program and your experience. Our actual activities and sites may vary due to season, special events, or weather. Therefore, we reserve the right to alter the itinerary because unforeseen circumstances that mandate change may arise. Naturally, we will keep you up-to-date on any changes that may affect your arrival or departure times.

Cancellation policy

If you must cancel your trip, you're required to notify us in writing. We will calculate your refund on the day we receive your written cancellation. For all cancellations, we will refund you the cost of your trip less the following per person charges:

- 91 or more days before trip departure: The deposit less \$150 is refundable.
- 61-90 days before trip departure: Full trip payment less the \$500 deposit is refunded.
- 31-60 days before trip departure: 50% of the trip payment is refunded.
- 0-30 days before trip departure: No refund is given.

Exceptions to these policies cannot be made for any reason, including weather or personal emergencies. We recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance. We provide information about travel insurance upon registration.

To book this trip:

Call us at 800-930-2846, book online at www.aventouras.com, or email us at info@aventouras.com