



## Galapagos Cruise

Cruise the Galapagos Islands and enjoy wildlife viewing, hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, swimming, learning about the islands natural and human history, and relaxing on spectacular beaches.

The Galapagos Islands are unmatched as a nature destination. The history of the islands, as the place that inspired Charles Darwin into developing the theory of evolution, alone is worth the trip. Because most of the islands and surrounding ocean are protected as a national park, visitors today can still hike among giant tortoises, snorkel and kayak 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 will visit a number of islands by private boat, snorkeling our favorite places, hiking among the birds and animals, enjoying the towns and discovering the unparalleled wildlife while cruising among the islands on a four, five, or eight day adventure vacation itinerary.

This trip is completely customizable—you choose what type of boat you would like, how many days you would like to spend on board, your hotel for your nights in Quito, and any optional activities in mainland Ecuador, from visiting the equator or the market town of Otavalo, to birding from a remote Amazon lodge, to rafting a whitewater river or hiking in a national park. The account below describes one possible itinerary, based on a five-day cruise through the islands on one of our favorite boats, the Anahi. Your exact itinerary will depend on the boat, length of the cruise, and time of year.

### Day 1: Arrive in Quito and transfer to your hotel

You'll be met at the airport in Ecuador's capital of Quito and transferred to your hotel. 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 arriving early may opt for a tour of the colonial part of Quito, with its plazas and colonial buildings. Choose from

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hotels such as Café Cultura, a restored mansion in the lively Mariscal district, a vibrant area full of travelers exploring Ecuador; the Dann Carlton, a modern business hotel; or 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)
- Optional tour of colonial Quito (dependent upon arrival time)

## **Day 2: Flight to Baltra Island, hike on South Plaza Island**

Today, after breakfast in the hotel, you will fly two and an half hours 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 M/C Anahi, a luxury motor catamaran that will be your home for the next 4 nights.

After a welcome describing the boat and its safety features and a delicious lunch, we will visit our first island. Plaza Island consists of two small islets near the east coast of Santa Cruz. Here, we’ll catch a glimpse of some of Galapagos’ indigenous wildlife, such as land iguanas, swallow-tailed gulls, sea lions, and yellow-tailed mullets.

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 (two and a half hours)
- Transfer to M/C Anahi
- Explore South Plaza Island
- Overnight on M/C Anahi ([www.anahicatamaran.com](http://www.anahicatamaran.com))

## **Day 3: San Cristobal and Isla Lobos (Sea Lion Island)**

After breakfast, we will dock at San Cristobal Island, home of the Interpretation Center, where you will receive a brief introduction to the Galapagos Islands, its marine and land life, fauna and flora. After our orientation, we will drive to Tijeretas Hill. The Hill provides a spectacular view of white sand beaches on one side and the town of Puerto Baquerizo on the other. Here, we have a rare opportunity to see magnificent frigate birds and great frigate birds in the same colony.

Later this morning, we’ll stop for our first snorkeling opportunity. As good as the terrestrial wildlife is on the Galapagos, the snorkeling is equally amazing. Because the islands are situated

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at the intersection of two major oceanic currents, the water alternates between warm and cold, and brings an incredible array of marine species: sharks, rays, barber fish, butterfly fish, sea lions, sea turtles, and penguins are among the species you're likely to spot.

After our swim and a break for lunch, we will board the yacht for our visit to Isla Lobos (Sea Lion Island). This is a spectacular island, home to both blue-footed boobies and sea lions, and a wonderful place to hike among more sea lions than you thought could live in one place.

- San Cristobal Island and Interpretation Center visit
- Snorkel or kayak San Cristobal Island
- Sea Kayak Isla Lobos
- Overnight on M/C Anahi

#### Day 4: Española and Gardner Bay

Today we will explore the island of Española. This is the southernmost island in the Galapagos chain and because of its remote location it has a high proportion of endemic fauna. It is the breeding site of nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of waved albatrosses. Española is home to mockingbirds, blue-footed and masked boobies, Darwin finches, Galapagos doves, hawks, red and green marine iguanas, and sea lions.

A visit to Gardner Bay offers great opportunities for enjoying some beach time in the Galapagos. Punta Suarez is quite an amazing site and one of the most attractive in the Galapagos because of the quantity and variety of wildlife. The trail along the island will take you past sea lions surfing the breaking waves, iguanas basking in the warm sun and boobies nesting right in your path. The trail continues towards the cliffs and the blowhole, which is a fissure in the lava where water spurts high in the air like a geyser.

- Explore the flora and fauna of Española
- Enjoy the sun, sea and sand, or hike the trails at Gardner Bay
- Overnight on M/C Anahi

#### Day 5: Floreana and Post Office Bay

On our last full day aboard the Anahi we will explore Floreana Island and Cormorant Point. This site offers one of the largest flamingo lagoons in the Galapagos. The island has two spectacular beaches, "green beach" named after the high percentage of olivine crystals in the sand and "flour sand beach" which is made up of fine coral.

Later this afternoon, we visit Post Office Bay. The practice of leaving a mailing barrel began in 1793, when ships bound for the Pacific whaling grounds would leave letters here to be picked up by homeward-bound ships whose crews would deliver the mail by hand. Today the barrel has evolved into a wooden box on a pole surrounded by a fascinating assortment of driftwood, bones, T-shirts, business cards, luggage tags, even email addresses scratched into the wood. Tradition dictates that if you find a letter addressed to someone near where you live, you're supposed to take it home with you and deliver it in person. Feel free to leave a postcard or letter (no postage is necessary). Apart from being the local post office, this site was the landing area for some of the first colonists.

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- Discover the flamingo lagoons of Floreana Island
- Explore Post Office Bay
- Overnight on M/C Anahi

### Day 6: Charles Darwin Research Center, Flight to Quito

After breakfast, we will travel to Santa Cruz Island, home of the Charles Darwin Research Station. Here you can tour the Galapagos National Park Information Center and the breeding and rearing center for young tortoises.

We will then transfer back to the airport on Baltra, driving across the island, through the highlands, passing through agricultural lands and into the mist-covered forests. The highlands are also home to several lava tubes, sinkholes, and craters, at which we will stop for a quick visit if time allows.

This afternoon, transfer to airport in Baltra, where you will catch the flight back to Quito. Arrive in time to explore the city before a farewell dinner.

- Learn about the evolution of Darwin's acclaimed theory
- Transfer to Baltra
- Flight to Quito and overnight there

### Day7: Flight home, or extension on mainland

#### Mainland Ecuador activities

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 to visit any of many lodges there: 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 shape and go with an experienced guide. There are climbs of all different levels and abilities.
- Rafting: A popular Class III 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 cruise 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 Galapagos cruise lodging

Your main lodge will be the boat on which you spend between three and seven nights. On the Anahi, the cabins have a queen or two single beds, private bathroom with hot water shower (but no tub), two small closets, and a small desk. The six main cabins are on the boat's middle deck, meaning that all have windows that open to the outside well above water level; they also have air conditioning in case you prefer to keep the windows closed during a windy or choppy day. The cabin doors open to an inside hallway that runs between the dining and meeting areas and the boat's bridge.

The two upper level cabins are a bit larger, with much larger windows opening to both the front and sides of the boat. The upper level cabins have a queen bed and a chair that pulls out to a single bed, so can sleep one to three people. (Note however that because the Anahi is limited to 16 guests on board, the triple rate is not lower than the double rate.) Their private, hot-water baths are very similar to the baths in the below-deck cabins.

Of course, on board the cabins are primarily used for sleeping, and guests spend much of their time elsewhere. The main deck has a large dining and meeting area, where the daily briefings are held. The second deck, with the upper-level cabins, has an open-air bar that is partially shaded, allowing guests to enjoy sun or shade. For hot days there's a Jacuzzi tub that can be filled with sea water to allow a soak with a view. Finally, the top deck has several lounge chairs that provide the perfect place for reading the *Origin of Species*, *Voyage of the Beagle*, or *Beak of the Finch*—or to nap while "reading."

Most guests will spend at least two nights in Quito, and have their choice of countless hotels. A few that we suggest include:

- For guests seeking a modern, business-class hotel on a budget, the Dann Carlton is the best choice. It has wireless internet, a bar and restaurant, and very modern rooms. It is located in the new part of Quito.

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- The Swissotel is the apparent choice of the President of Ecuador (he was visiting when we were there)—which seems as good an endorsement as we can come up with. The hotel has five restaurants, a good fitness center and spa (not the usual small-room-with-two-exercise-bikes), and a top-notch staff. Of course, this level of pampering doesn't come cheap; the Swissotel is one of the most expensive in Quito and depending on room type and date can cost over \$250.
- For guests interested in history, location, and culture, the Patio Andaluz is the best choice. The hotel is an historic building within the colonial center of Old Quito, in short walking distance to many of the sights. It also has one of the best restaurants in Quito.
- Café Cultura and Cuba Viejo offer guests alternatives in smaller, European-style hotels. They are both located near the Mariscal district, an area with many restaurants, internet cafes, and shops catering to tourists.

### What's included?

On the cruise itself, all meals, snacks, and activities are included. Drinks (beer, liquor, and soda) are additional, as are wetsuit rentals for \$15 for the week.

Because the details of each guest's cruise will vary, it's impossible to detail exactly what will and won't be included in the price. Typically, however, the itinerary price includes at least the hotel nights in Quito before and after the cruise, all airport transfers, and the flight between Quito and the islands.

The items NOT included on most trips are:

- Personal expenses such as telephone bills, laundry, and alcoholic beverages
- Airport departure tax of \$40.80 USD for your return flight
- Wetsuit rental on board
- 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

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# 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. 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 our travel insurance plan. Offering comprehensive coverage and peace of mind, our 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 arrange 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.

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# General Information, Questions & Answers

## What weather conditions can I expect?

We can expect generally cool temperatures with day time 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.

## Passport and visa information

A passport valid 90 days beyond your anticipated arrival date in Ecuador is required. Currently no visas or immunization certificates are required in most cases for citizens of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand or the USA.

## 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 which you will receive upon registration.

## To book this trip:

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