

South America- Ecuador - GALAPAGOS - October 2023

Summary:

Day 1 : Arrive today at Quito Airport - Quito

Day 2 : Quito - Otavalo - Cuicocha Lake - Peguche

Day 3 : Quito City Tour - Old Town

Day 4 : Travel from Quito to San Cristobal Island - Galapagos

Day 5 : Junco Lake - La Galapaguera Center - San Cristobal Island

Day 6 : Leon Dormido - San Cristobal Island

Day 7 : Española Island - San Cristobal Island

Day 8 : San Cristobal Island - Santa Cruz Island

Day 9 : Bartolome - Santa Cruz Island

Day 10 : Santa Fe Island - Santa Cruz Island

Day 11 : Santa Cruz Island - Isabela Island

Day 12 : Isabela Island - Sierra Negra Volcano

Day 13 : Isabela Island - Santa Cruz Island - Baltra Airport - Back to Quito - Departure Day



Day by Day Detailed Itinerary:

(Lucky you! Kick off Friday the 13th in Paradise)

Day 1 - Friday - October 13, 2023:

Transfer from the airport to your selected hotel in Quito. Look for a sign with your name on it. The airport is located in the town of Tababela, about 43 km from Quito and it will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour to arrive at the hotel.

You will spend the night at Casa El Eden Hotel, or similar.

Day 2 - Saturday - October 14, 2023:

OTAVALO & SURROUNDINGS EXCURSION (Full day)

You'll be picked up from your hotel to head towards Imbabura known as "The Province of the Lakes". The highway offers a lovely view passing through Calderón and Guayllabamba valleys. We will make short stop here to get to know more about local culture. Passing through Cayambe we can get a sight of the snow-capped volcano, the world's highest point crossed by the Equator Line. This small town is also famous for its salt biscuits with "leaf cheese" and "manjar". We can make a stop here to try this delicacy, before we continue to the Imbabura province, named after the Imbabura Volcano, where we will first head to the largest lake in Ecuador, the San Pablo. We will then enter Otavalo City that holds a local Market every day, and is an ancient tradition and cultural exchange site among the Otavalo community. Furthermore we visit the peaceful Cotacachi Village, famous for its leather, and meet the local craftsmen. After a last visit to the charming Cuicocha Crater Lake we will head back to Quito in the late afternoon.



Info - Peguche: Peguche, an indigenous Quichua community in Imbabura province just north of Otavalo, is surrounded by high mountains and inactive volcanos like Imbabura (5380 mt.) to the South, Cotacachi to the North West and Fuya Fuya to the Southwest. Also near Peguche are San Pablo and Mojanda Lagoons and the Peguche Waterfall, a natural park admired by both Ecuadorian and foreign tourists.

The production of local arts and crafts is the main economic activity. The natives of this area, "Pegucheños", are pioneers in making and designing textiles and often travel around the world as handcrafts merchants..

Info - Cuicocha Lake boat ride: The Cuicocha Lake is in the beautiful Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve. The lagoon is located at an altitude of 3246 meters and with its deep blue water and the two small islands in the middle, Cuicocha is a feast for the eyes. On a clear day, you even have a panoramic view of the area, including the volcanoes Imbabura and Cayambe.

You will spend the night at Casa El Eden Hotel, or similar.

Day 3 - Sunday - October 15, 2023:

QUITO CITY TOUR: OLD TOWN (Full day)

During the historical city tour of Quito, you will explore the best preserved colonial center of all of South America. As one of the first World Heritage Sites, it will be an unforgettable experience as if you were stepping back in time. The first stop is the Basilica del Voto Nacional. Due to its size and style, it is

considered the largest neo-gothic temple in the Americas, and the most important piece of neo-gothic architecture in Ecuador. You will continue to the Plaza Grande, or Independence Square. Admire the historical buildings surrounding the square and its important history! Located here is the Presidential Palace, the Catholic Cathedral, and the Archbishop's Palace.

Another visit you will enjoy is the most impressive of all churches, the San Francisco de Quito. The church houses masterpieces of talented indigenous artists from the famous methods of "Escuela Quiteña" Quito School, which are the artistic traditions associated with the 17th and 18th centuries. Walk through the lively colonial streets of the old town to visit other historical highlights such as the Panecillo, from where you will have an amazing 360 degree view over the city.



Info - La Compañía Church: One of the highlights of the city tour is the visit of La Compañía Church, considered to be a masterpiece of the barroque style. The facade is made by volcanic stone and the interior is all covered with gold.

Info - Tasting Experience in Quito: Treat your senses to a whole new world and delight in new flavors and aromas while sampling various local and Ecuadorian products in the most traditional sites of Quito. While walking the vibrant streets of the historical old town, you will find small shops that offer a variety of traditional sweets made with peanuts, guava fruit, coconuts, nougats and other delicious ingredients. You will also visit a local market where you can understand on a deeper level why Ecuador is such a diverse country. As you explore spices of all shapes and colors, wide varieties of delicious and colorful fruits and vegetables, you may realize you do not recognize many of them as they are only grown locally; such as the popular tree tomato, chirimoya, soursop, variations of passion fruits, naranjilla and others.

You will spend the night at Casa El Eden Hotel, or similar.

Day 4 - October 16, 2023:

Transfer from your selected hotel to the airport in Quito for your flight to the Galapagos Islands! The airport is located in the town of Tababela, about 43 km from Quito and it will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour to arrive.

Transfer from San Cristobal Airport to the Interpretation Center

Info - INTERPRETATION CENTER, TIJERETAS HILL & MANN BEACH

In this tour, lasting about half the day, you will visit the San Cristobal Interpretation Center where you can learn more about both the natural history of the Galapagos Islands, as well as the geological history from its volcanic origins, conservation issues, the importance of the islands, and see various exhibits. Not far from the center is a trail leading up Frigatebird Hill, or as it is known locally, Tijeretas Hill. You'll soon see why it was named this as you'll view the many Magnificent Frigatebirds and Great Frigatebirds circling above. This is a great location to compare both birds as they are commonly thought of as the same. Later on, you will be able to visit Playa Mann, or Mann beach. It has beautiful white sand and is a great place to enjoy the refreshing Galapagos ocean water or watch the sunset go down.

Transport from the interpretation center to your selected hotel, as noted below, or similar.

You will spend the night at Galapagos Eco Friendly B&B; or similar.

Day 5 - Tuesday - October 17, 2023:

Highlands of San Cristobal with El Junco, La Galapaguera & Lobería

The highlands of San Cristobal form one of the many hidden treasures of the Galapagos Islands. After breakfast, your guide takes you to El Progreso to learn more about the human history of this island and the ecosystem of its lush green highlands. Here, the remains of an old sugar factory show how the islands were used as detention camps for prisoners.



The next stop is at the fresh water lagoon of El Junco Lake. Many birds, among which blue footed boobies, Galapagos finches, and gulls, come to bath themselves and drink from the fresh water of this beautiful lake. This wonderful day is concluded with a visit to La Galapaguera, the breeding center of San Cristobal where you can admire baby and adult giant tortoises; amazingly impressive animals. After three to four hours you return to Puerto Baquerizo.

La Loberia: The visitors site of Lobería has a long path through areas of the Galapagos National Park. Part of the trail is made up of rocks and other parts, sand. The main attraction of this site is the presence of Galapagos Sea Lions that are on the beach and in the bay of the Lobería. Marine iguanas are also seen along the shores and lots of sea turtles in the rocky reefs of the Bay.

You will spend the night at Galapagos Eco Friendly B&B; or similar.

Day 6 - Wednesday - October 18, 2023:

Visit Kicker Rock (Half Day)

Kicker Rock (locally known as León Dormido), is the remains of a volcanic cone that has been eroded by the sea. Above the water, the towering rock formation soars over 500 feet above the Pacific Ocean and is home to a number of tropic birds, blue-footed boobies and frigate birds.



The true appeal, however, of this location occurs below the surface of the sea. The natural erosion of this ancient cone has created a channel between the rocks that provides the ideal habitat to view a variety of sharks and rays including spotted eagle rays, white-tip reef sharks, the elusive Galapagos shark, as well as hammerheads!

This tour can be centered around snorkeling (or scuba diving at an extra cost), this tour ends with a beach visit and finally we go back to town.

You will spend the night at Galapagos Eco Friendly B&B; or similar.

Included: Snorkeling Gear

Day 7 - Thursday - October 19, 2023:

ESPAÑOLA ISLAND EXCURSION (Full day)

This island is known as the oldest in the Archipelago. Located two hours from San Cristobal, best known for its population of endemic Waved Albatross. This day tour offers an up close and personal experience of birdwatching as well as a glimpse of the incredible life under the water and the famous Española blow hole. You will depart from Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. Arriving to Suarez Point, we have a quick snack before a two-hour hike. Sunscreen, a water bottle and closed-toe shoes are recommended for the rocky trail, but we have a “wet landing” first, with a quick ride on the zodiac from boat to beach.



On the beach, you will first notice the fine white sand and the black lava rocks, hiding the marine iguanas and Sally Lightfoot crabs, even some slumbering sea lions! Keep on the lookout for lava lizards and Galapagos snakes (harmless, like a common garden

snake). Your Naturalist Guide will assist in pointing out all the wildlife found along the trail, from the Nazca boobies, Galapagos Mockingbirds, to the famous Waved Albatross found nesting in the area from April to December. If you are lucky, you will have the opportunity to see the Waved Albatross do their “dance” with their mate, quite a spectacular thing. You will also see many colonies of marine iguanas, Galapagos Hawks, Galapagos Doves, Warbler finch, and the Large-billed cactus finch endemic to the island. There is an impressive blow hole along the way which has an impressive fountain of water shooting into the air when the waves crash into it. Most of the trail meanders along the rocky shore, with the turquoise waters crashing onto the rocks, providing a light ocean spray and a cool breeze to enjoy the trek.

After a delicious packed lunch on-board you will visit Gardner Bay. We will prepare our snorkel gear and wetsuits (yes, it can be a little chilly so we recommend you opt to use a wetsuit) and jump overboard! The snorkel activity is in a protected bay. The water is not too deep and it is a good thing, because the ocean floor is inhabited with various species of sea stars, corals, urchins, schools of fish, sea lions and rays. The sea lions are very friendly here and will want to play and swim up and down with you.



You will spend the night at Galapagos Eco Friendly B&B; or similar.

Included: Snorkeling Gear, boxed lunch

Day 8 - Friday - October 20, 2023:

Santa Cruz Island

Private transfer from your hotel to the port of San Cristobal.

You will take a Public Speedboat from San Cristobal Island to Santa Cruz Island.

Highlands of Santa Cruz and Charles Darwin Research Station:

Upon arrival to Santa Cruz port, you will travel to the lush green highlands of Santa Cruz and see different types of vegetation on the way. The first stop is at ‘Los Gemelos’ (The Twins), two immense craters located in the middle of the island. These giant holes are actually not real craters; they are the remains of volcanic magma chambers that collapsed and are now covered with vegetation.



Next, you visit another unique place: the Primicias Ranch. Here, giant tortoises wander around freely at their own, very slow, pace. It is a unique experience to see this ancient animals in their natural habitat. You can also explore a beautiful lava tunnel located close to the ranch.

In the afternoon, you go to Puerto Ayora, the main town of Santa Cruz Island. Here, you visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. Founded in 1959, the center has an interpretation center where you can learn more about the ecosystems and species of the archipelago, as well as the conservation efforts of the government and NGOs. Also, you can admire the tortoises, land iguanas, and other species that are part of the programs of the research station.

You will spend the night at Semilla Verde Boutique Hotel; or similar.

Included: Public speedboat, breakfast, lunch

Day 9 - Saturday - October 21, 2023:

Excursion to Bartolome Island

Bartholome Island is one of the most spectacular volcanic sceneries, spatter cones, lava flows, lava lizards and once you get to the top, you will have the opportunity to see it and photograph this unique and famous landscape including the famous pinnacle rock , it’s like going to the mars or the moon. There is always a chance to spot the Galapagos penguin which is the only one to live right along the equator line. After this you will go snorkeling and enjoy the beautiful golden sand beach.

PLEASE NOTE - Moderate to Strenuous Activities:

- *Wooden boardwalk with 300+ stairs to summit
- *Dry landing - Boat to zodiac to land
- *Wet landing - Boat to zodiac to beach
- *Snorkeling from beach
- *Bring closed shoes, water, hat, sunscreen, bathing suit, change of clothes and light jacket

You will spend the night at Semilla Verde Boutique Hotel; or similar.

Day 10 - Sunday - October 22, 2023:

Visit Santa Fe Island

The oldest island of all (4.5 million years), is the result of the uplifting of a layer that previously suffered geological folding, although recent data suggests it has also had volcanic origins. Due to its geological nature and age; most of the animals on this island are endemic to this only location. Here the Marine Iguana of Santa Fe can be found as well as the Santa Fe Mockingbird, the Santa Fe rice Rat and the Santa Fe lizard. Other animals that can be seen are frigate birds, blue footed boobies, sea lions, marine iguanas, swallow-tailed gulls, snakes, herons, hawks, sharks, rays.



You will spend the night at Semilla Verde Boutique Hotel; or similar.

Day 11 - Monday - October 23, 2023:

Transport from your selected hotel in Santa Cruz Island to the port.

(You will take the Public Speedboat from Santa Cruz Island to Isabela's Island.)

WETLANDS EXCURSION & WALL OF TEARS (2-3 hours)

The Wetlands are located on the Southern Coast of Isabela Island next to Puerto Villamil. The area is one of the few places where you can see all four native species of Galapagos mangrove. Mangroves have an important ecological role in helping to preserve the coastline and resisting the eroding action of the waves. The area is home to amazing species of birds such as flamingos, stilts, whimbrels, white-cheeked pintails, and gallinules. Later on, you will head to 'The Wall of Tears', a historic site where prisoners from the time when Isabela was a prison colony, between 1946 to 1959, were forced to build the wall from huge blocks of lava as punishment. Finally, you can finish this interesting excursion by visiting the Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Center, where eggs are nursed in a hatchery and the adults are observed in supervised corrals. This breeding program is helping to increase the populations of these wonderful animals, and ensure their survival as wild species unique to the Galapagos Islands.

You will spend the night at Iguana Crossing Hotel; or similar.

Day 12 - Tuesday - October 24, 2023:

EXCURSION TO SIERRA NEGRA VOLCANO (5 hours)

In the morning, you will travel by car to the highlands of Isabela, following the route until the end of the road. On the way to the Sierra Negra Volcano, there is an evident change of scenery as you get closer to the highlands, from volcanic dryness with black soil and little vegetation to a humid forest with local and foreign plants introduced into the environment. Once there, you will begin your hike to a new geological world. During the hike, you will have the opportunity to admire the beautiful views and incredible contrasts between the volcanoes and the sea.



There are two paths to take, depending on each person's stamina, one is a circuit which goes until the Sierra Negra Volcano observation deck, and the other path goes straight to the Chico Volcano. If choosing the first path, you will arrive to the edge of the Sierra Negra volcanic crater, the second largest active volcanic crater in the world. From there, you will walk around this enormous 30 square mile crater. If you choose the second trail, or still have energy after hiking to Sierra Negra, you can continue walking to the Chico Volcano, a place with very

unique scenery where there is a fusion of shades of reds, oranges, yellows and blacks. Here, you can observe fumeroles and spectacular lava formations.

You will spend the night at Iguana Crossing Hotel, or similar.

Day 13 - Wednesday - October 25, 2023:

Final Day in Paradise

On the final day of your visit to the Galapagos Islands, you will leave Isabela Island early in the morning in order to arrive in time for your departing flight. You will have a transfer from Isabela Island to Santa Cruz on a speedboat, leaving from Puerto Villamil. You will need \$1 USD for the water taxi to the speedboat leaving Puerto Villamil and another \$1 USD to board the water taxi arriving to Santa Cruz. The speedboat transfer will take about 2.5 hours. When you arrive at Santa Cruz, you will have another land transfer, crossing the highlands back to Baltra Airport for your flight back to mainland Ecuador.

Included for your departure transfer: Public speedboat, Baltra Ferry Ticket, Lobitos ticket

Notes:

*Please note all itineraries are subject to change without previous notice due to policies of the Galapagos National Park authorities, weather conditions, emergency procedures and operational purposes.

*The payment for the water taxis cannot be made in advance and is only accepted in cash.

* All lodging as noted, or similar.

* All activities as noted, subject to change for any reason, such as availability, cancellations, weather, etc.

INCLUDED

Accommodations in the mentioned room category.

Transportation is provided on the days mentioned.

English-speaking driver/guide on the days mentioned.

Excursions and visits as mentioned in the program.

Meals as mentioned in the program.

Flight from Quito to the Galapagos and return.

Entrance fees as mentioned in the program.

Please inquire for the price

**Cost to include internal flights*

****Pre or post trip to Peru/Macchu Picchu can be arranged.**

NOT INCLUDED

Any excursions not mentioned in the program.

Any meals not mentioned in the program.

Alcoholic beverages and/or additional drinks.

Tips and personal expenses.

International flights.

Travel and/or Cancellation Insurance.



The following services in the Galapagos Islands must be paid in cash only:

Transit Control Card (TCC): \$20 USD per person.

Galapagos National Park Entrance Fee: \$100 USD per adult.

Wetsuit, scuba or snorkeling gear (subject to each cruise).

Isabela Island Entrance Fee: \$10 USD per person.

Itabaca Channel Ferry: \$5 USD per person / one way.

Water Taxi: \$1 USD per person / one way.

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