



The Galapagos Islands

Wildlife Islands on the Equator



"You walk among clattering four-foot marine iguanas heaped on the shore... You swim with penguins; you watch flightless cormorants dance beside you, ignoring you, waving the black nubs of their useless wings... The animals are tame. They have not been persecuted, and show no fear of man. You pass among them as though you were wind, spindrift, sunlight, leaves."

Annie Dillard

Life on the Rocks: the Galapagos

A Galapagos tour offers a nature-lover's dream: encounters with wildlife that is unafraid of humans.

A Living Natural Laboratory

The Galapagos Islands, in all their dramatic and desolate volcanic beauty, lie 600 miles west of mainland Ecuador's Pacific coast.

This living natural laboratory, inspiration for Darwin's theory of evolution, is home to marine and land creatures - some found nowhere else to the world - which have no instinctive fear of humans.

Travelers sailing around the islands, one of the greatest diving sites on earth, come in close contact with an impressive array of animal and bird life including fur seals, hammerhead sharks, iguanas, boobies, manta rays, penguins, turtles, and tortoises in this, the greatest wildlife sanctuary on earth.

A Trip With Enhancements

We are proud of this new expedition itinerary which has been crafted with much deliberation and with input from naturalists and guests.

The result is a unique Galapagos cruise that no-one else offers:

- First, we have limited the number of guests to a small group tour of 14.
- We charter one of the best yachts in the Galapagos. The crew and onboard naturalist we hire are the most experienced and competent in

the islands.

- We chose the timing and the itinerary of our trips to coincide with the best weather as well as the best times for diversity of wildlife activity.
- We explore places that are rarely visited by other outfitters.
- In addition to the tours by Zodiacs, snorkelling and on foot, we also offer paddling excursions with our fleet of kayaks, allowing us to get far off the beaten path.
- We offer an amazing "behind the scenes" tour of Old Quito with a guide we have come to know and love.

From a beautifully restored hotel in Quito's 500-year "Old Town" (a UN World Heritage Site), you will fly to your yacht in the Galapagos Islands.

Once you have boarded and settled into your private cabin, you'll begin a journey through the islands that involves wildlife viewing shore trips on foot, snorkelling and kayaking. You will be accompanied by an expert naturalist.





The Galapagos Islands

Dates & Prices

2010:

May 6-16, Jul. 15-25, Oct. 28-Nov. 7
10 nights, 11 days

Land Cost: USD \$ 4190* per person

Single Supplement:

Hotel nights: \$225

Ship nights: \$325

(Single accommodation *may* be available and this will be determined prior to the trip. If you are interested, let us know.)

Luxurious owner's state room available for a couple: USD \$ 650 surcharge pp.

*Includes: accommodation in hotels and on motor yacht, guide services, transfers to and from airports, mini-bus transfers on Santa Cruz Island, all meals as indicated in the itinerary. Does not include: international flights, domestic flights (approx. USD \$350), park fees (approx. USD \$100), beverages, gratuities, insurances, etc.

Depart: Quito, Ecuador

Return: Quito, Ecuador

Maple Leaf Adventures

PO Box 8845 (28 Bastion Sq.),
Victoria, B.C., V8W 3Z1 Canada

toll free 1-888-599-5323

local 1-250-386-7245



Proposed Itinerary

Day 1 Arrival in Quito

Arrival in the evening and transfer from the airport to a colonial boutique hotel in the center of Quito's Old Town.

Day 2 Quito (B,L,D)

Morning "Hidden Places of Old Quito" walking tour with our esteemed and highly knowledgeable local guide. Lunch in a café. Afternoon free.

Evening Welcome dinner.

Day 3 Quito to Galapagos Islands, South Plaza Island (B, L,D)

3 hour flight to the Galapagos Islands. Embark on our mothership. South Plaza Island.

South Plaza is an ideal introduction to the Galapagos, hosting a large colony of sea lions that are so unafraid of humans we have to walk around them as we go ashore! Not far from the landing point we encounter land iguanas wandering among the tree cacti.

A short walk takes us to the edge of surf-sprayed cliffs, where swallow-tailed gulls, Audubon's Shearwaters and Red-billed Tropic birds wheel above us.

Day 4 Genovesa Island (B,L,D)

Equatorial crossing overnight. Anchor in Darwin Bay, which is formed by the submerged caldera of an extinct volcano.

Going ashore, we encounter a huge colony of great frigate birds. It is an unforgettable sight, especially if we are lucky enough to see the male frigate birds inflating their red pouches and calling to attract females flying overhead.

We also view red-footed boobies, Nazca boobies and swallow-tailed doves. In the afternoon, we paddle and snorkel along the island's submerged crater walls where angelfish and parrot fish are in abundance.

Finally, we climb the Prince Philip Steps to watch tropicbirds riding the thermals and storm petrels flying back to their lairs, and hopefully, we get a glimpse of the illusive short-eared owl.

Day 5 Santa Isabela and Fernandina Islands (B,L,D)

Heading westward at night, we cross the Equator once more to reach Tagus Cove on the west coast of Santa Isabela.

Snorkeling and kayaking along the cliffs, we marvel at Galapagos penguins - the second smallest and most northern in the world - and the rare flightless cormorants.

Meanwhile, blue-footed boobies execute risky diving maneuvers close by! Going ashore, we walk through a dramatic volcanic landscape, past a salt lake crater and up to a dramatic viewpoint.

After lunch our mothership moves to Fernandina, one of the most volcanically active islands in the archipelago.

We cross black lava flows where marine iguanas lie in heaps, warming up after a day of feeding in the sea, and we encounter more flightless cormorants, sometimes on their seaweed nests.

We return to our yacht for dinner and from the deck of our mothership we keep a sharp lookout for the sperm whales that are often spotted in these waters.



Photo credits: Kevin Smith



The Galapagos Islands



"The islands are magnificent. They were more than I could have hoped for."

"Your compassion and sensitivity to guests is first class. Your planning and attention to the specifics of what makes a memorable adventure is fantastic. Thank you!"

K.S., Toronto

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Day 6 Santiago Island, Bartolome Island (B,L,D)

Today we reach James Bay, situated on the western side of Santiago Island.

We explore the shoreline, looking for fur seals in the intricate grottos and caves, and marine iguanas on the beaches.

We encounter a variety of herons, and with luck we spot the Galapagos Hawk. In the afternoon we cruise to Bartolome Island, where we climb many easy steps, through a stunning moonscape, reaching the 600 ft summit for some great views and photography.

We also enjoy the great snorkeling on the shores of Bartolome, with the chance of swimming with Galapagos penguins.

Day 7 Puerto Ayora and highlands of Santa Cruz Island (B,L,D)

During the night, our mothership reaches Academy Bay, and the small town of Puerto Ayora.

We transfer to the lush greenery of the highlands of Santa Cruz, where we hike and look for giant tortoises. After lunch in a local ranch we visit the Charles Darwin Research Station to learn about the institute's tortoise breeding programs.

The rest of the afternoon is free for shopping in Puerto Ayora or using facilities in internet cafés.

Please note: anyone interested in diving can opt to do this as an alternative to the provided activities. This not part of the program and can be arranged with local dive operators.

Day 8 Floreana Island (B,L,D)

On Floreana Island we walk along a beautiful beach to a lagoon, observing flamingoes and other wading birds.

Next we visit a superb snorkeling location, for some very special underwater experiences! Our naturalist will have told us the intriguing human history of Flo-

reana, and in the afternoon we will visit the legendary Post Office Bay.

Day 9 Espanola Island (B,L,D)

From our anchorage in a protected bay on the north eastern shore of Espanola Island, we paddle and snorkel along the cliffs of Gardner Island, finding our way into a spectacular cave and playing with sea lions along the way!

Later we transfer to a stunning white sandy beach dotted with hundreds of basking sea lions and many friendly mocking birds. After lunch we cruise along the northern shores of Española to Punta Suarez.

Here we hike past marine iguanas sunbathing on the rocks, through large colonies of blue-footed and Nazca boobies, and up to the edge of steep cliffs which are the mating and nesting area of waved albatrosses.

These huge birds have wing spans of over seven feet and they majestically soar above us on updrafts rising from the wave battered sea cliffs – a fitting finale to a magical week!

Day 10 Galapagos Islands to Quito (B,D)

Flight to Quito. Afternoon is free to shop and explore on your own. Farewell dinner in Quito's best restaurant.

Day 11 Flight home (B)

After breakfast we transfer to the airport for our flights home.

Galapagos Tour Activities: Easy hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, wildlife and bird watching, cruising.

Galapagos Tour Accommodation: 7 nights aboard the motor yacht. 3 nights in hotels

If you are interested in add-on tours (such as to the Amazon), please contact the office.

Note: Trip itinerary and price may change slightly, due to changes in National Park policy and fuel surcharges on the yachts.



About the Ship

Your trip will be aboard a luxury yacht - one of the top serving the Galapagos Islands. The specifications below are for our most commonly-used yacht, although the actual ship you are on may be slightly, but not significantly, different.

The ship is a 90-foot, fibreglass power boat with eight double-occupancy, private cabins. Each cabin has a "head" (bathroom) with sink, shower and toilet, as well as a double-bunk down and top bunk up and some storage.

There is one luxurious "owner's stateroom", very popular, that can be reserved for an extra per person charge.

The ship has a dining lounge and a salon for reading and relaxing in, as well as an upper deck with chaise longs for lounging in.

There are kayaks and snorkelling gear, and two inflatable shore boats (called "pangas") for visiting the islands.



The crew are excellent and very experienced, having worked together for a decade on the ship.

About May and November in the Galapagos Islands

The islands lie directly on the Equator, so you can expect it to be warm for most of the year.

May to November is considered the "cool" season with average temperatures ranging from a low of 68 to a high of 82 F (19 - 27 C).

At this time of year, there are more animals on different islands, and the cold currents bring more animal life to the ocean. It's a cooler time in the water for snorkelling, but we found it quite pleasant.

Generally, there is little difference in the wildlife-viewing opportunities between May and November as they are both excellent months for it.



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