



Itinerary

9 Day Galápagos Islands – In Darwin’s Footsteps (Eastern Route)

***IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

Day 1: Arrive Quito, Ecuador

Welcome to Ecuador. Your adventure begins in the vibrant city of Quito, set high in the lush Andean foothills on the Equator. At 9,350 feet, Quito is the second-highest capital city in the world.

On arrival, you will be transferred from the airport to your hotel where you can enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. Quito’s main highlight is its exquisite Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site founded on an ancient Inca settlement. Here, you will find colourful plazas, magnificent churches, handsome monuments and beautifully preserved colonial architecture.

If you have time, you may wish to arrive a few days earlier and join one of our pre-voyage options.

MEALS: Nil

OVERNIGHT: JW Marriott Quito

Day 2: Quito ~ City and Middle of the World Tour

Today you will enjoy a guided tour of Quito’s remarkable Old Town, one of the largest and best-preserved colonial-era quarters in South America. As you wander through its cobblestone streets, you will see colourful plazas, magnificent churches, handsome monuments and beautifully preserved colonial architecture that reflects the city’s rich history.

Along the way, enjoy a tasting of delicious chocolate made from some of Ecuador’s finest cacao. Ecuador is well known for its high-quality chocolate, making this a wonderful chance to sample one of the country’s most famous products.

After exploring the Old Town, continue to the iconic Middle of the World City, located around 16 miles north of Quito. After lunch, visit the famous monument that marks the imaginary line of the Equator.

Have your camera ready as you stand with one foot in each hemisphere, a memorable highlight of your time in Ecuador.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: JW Marriott Quito

Day 3: Quito ~ Baltra ~ Embark MS Santa Cruz II

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your short flight to Baltra Island in the spectacular Galápagos archipelago. Please note that flight details will only be provided once you are in Quito.

On arrival in Baltra, you will be transferred directly to the port, where your comfortable expedition ship, MS Santa Cruz II, awaits. Once on board, settle into your cabin, meet the Expedition Team and get ready to begin your Galápagos adventure.

Your first wildlife encounter takes place at Mosquera Islet, a small sandy island known for its beautiful coastline and large sea lion colony. Travelling by small panga boat, you will go ashore for a closer look at this remarkable island environment.

As you stroll across the flat, sandy dunes, keep watch for Blue-footed Boobies, Sally Lightfoot crabs and other coastal wildlife. Your naturalist guides will introduce you to the Galápagos' unique marine and terrestrial ecosystems, helping you understand what makes these islands so extraordinary.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 4: San Cristóbal Island

Today's first stop is the Cerro Colorado Tortoise Reserve, a breeding centre dedicated to the protection of the endangered Galápagos giant tortoise. The reserve also provides habitat for other endemic species, including the San Cristóbal Mockingbird and lava lizard.

The giant tortoise is one of the most iconic animals in the Galápagos, known for its impressive size and lifespan of more than 100 years. As you explore the reserve, you will have the chance to see these remarkable creatures moving slowly through forested areas that closely resemble their natural habitat.

Later, you will likely explore Punta Pitt by small panga boat. This remote coastal site is one of the best places in the Galápagos for birdwatching and is the only location in the islands where you may see all three species of boobies.

Depending on conditions, you may enjoy a guided nature walk, explore the coastline by boat, or take the opportunity to snorkel and swim in the clear waters. Keep watch for seabirds, sea lions and the dramatic volcanic scenery that makes this part of San Cristóbal so memorable.

NOTE: Activities at Punta Pitt are dependent on local authority restrictions and may be subject to change.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 5: Santa Fe and South Plaza Islands

Begin the day with a scenic nature walk along the beautiful beaches of Santa Fe. This peaceful island is home to the endemic Barrington land iguana, found only in this part of the Galápagos, as well as a lively colony of sea lions resting along the shore.

Depending on conditions, you may also have the chance to swim or snorkel from the small panga boats, paddle by kayak around the island, or join an excursion in the glass-bottomed boat to observe the colourful marine life below.

After lunch, prepared by the onboard chefs, continue to South Plaza Island. As you approach, keep watch for frigatebirds, Swallow-tailed Gulls and Galápagos Shearwaters gliding above the cliffs and coastline.

South Plaza is known for its striking landscapes, with bright coastal plants and dramatic sea views creating a beautiful backdrop for wildlife viewing. Here, land iguanas can often be seen lazing near the shore, while marine iguanas move between the rocks and the water.

With its rich birdlife, colourful vegetation and close wildlife encounters, this is another memorable day exploring the natural wonders of the Galápagos Islands.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 6: Santa Cruz Island

Today you will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station in Puerto Ayora, one of the most important centres for Galápagos conservation, research and education.

At the giant tortoise breeding centre, you can see recently hatched tortoises and learn about the ongoing work to protect these remarkable animals. This is also a great place to gain a deeper understanding of the conservation challenges facing the islands and the efforts being made to preserve their unique wildlife.

You may also spot Darwin's famous finches, the birds that helped shape his theory of evolution by natural selection. The station is surrounded by an impressive forest of prickly pear cacti, which provides important habitat for many land birds.

Later, travel into the lush highlands of Santa Cruz, where the cooler climate offers a refreshing change of scenery. Enjoy lunch in this peaceful setting, where giant tortoises can often be seen grazing on grass or wallowing in muddy pools.

You will also have time for another activity, such as mountain biking or visiting a local sugar plantation, giving you another glimpse into island life beyond the coastline.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 7: Española Island

Your Galápagos Islands cruise reaches Española today, the most southerly island in the archipelago and one of the best places for wildlife viewing. Birdlife here is extraordinary, so keep watch for Nazca Boobies, Blue-footed Boobies and Swallow-tailed Gulls along the coastline.

On cruises from April through December, you may also see the magnificent Waved Albatross, one of the island's most impressive seasonal visitors.

Española is also home to red Española lava lizards and marine iguanas, both adding colour and character to the island's dramatic volcanic landscape. You will also have the chance to see the famous blowhole, El Soplador, where waves force water up to 75 feet into the air.

After lunch on board, continue to the picturesque coral beach of Gardner Bay and nearby Osborn Islet. Here, look out for sea lions resting on the sand, as well as mockingbirds and finches moving through the coastal vegetation.

If you are feeling active, you may also have the opportunity to go snorkelling or kayaking, giving you another perspective on the island's rich marine life.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 8: Eden Islet and North Seymour

The wildlife viewing continues today at Eden Islet, where the surrounding waters are often alive with activity. Keep watch for Galápagos green turtles, rays and reef sharks, while along the shore you may spot frigatebirds with their distinctive red throat pouches.

Depending on conditions, you may have the chance to swim or snorkel over the reefs and see the underwater world up close. Alternatively, you can view the marine life from the glass-bottomed boat or explore the coastline by kayak.

After lunch on board, sail to North Seymour, a small island known for its excellent birdlife. This is a wonderful place to look for colonies of Blue-footed Boobies and Swallow-tailed Gulls, as well as other seabirds nesting or gliding overhead.

Sea lions and marine iguanas also gather here, attracted by the rich marine life in the surrounding waters. With wildlife on land, in the air and beneath the surface, this is another rewarding day in the Galápagos Islands.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OVERNIGHT: MS Santa Cruz II

Day 9: Baltra Island ~ Disembark Ship ~ Quito

Your Galápagos expedition cruise comes to an end today as you disembark MS Santa Cruz II at Baltra Island.

After saying farewell to the crew and Expedition Team, you will be transferred to Baltra airport for your flight back to Quito, or to Guayaquil if preferred, to connect with your international flight.

As you leave this remarkable region, you will take with you incredible memories of unique wildlife, dramatic volcanic landscapes and unforgettable experiences that few travellers have the privilege of seeing.

If you would like to discover more of Ecuador, you may wish to extend your stay with one of our post-voyage options.

MEALS: Breakfast