



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galapagos Archipelago is a perfect place for families, honeymooners, adventure travellers or those seeking to relax.

These magical islands comprise of 50 volcanic islands of varying shapes and sizes, which lie 1,000 kilometres off the coast of Ecuador.

Here, unlike anywhere else on Earth, you can enjoy a thousand close encounters with a weird and wonderful variety of 'friendly locals', including giant tortoises, fur seals, iguanas, frigate birds and blue-footed boobies.

In 1535, Tomás de Berlanga, Bishop of Panama, floated into this archipelago and named it Galapagos after the giant tortoises he encountered. Pirates used the islands for refuge and to bury their stolen treasure after that.



Galapagos celebrity

The islands' most celebrated visitor was Charles Darwin, who arrived aboard the HMS Beagle in 1835. The rare life forms he found helped him finish his theory of evolution, which he published in *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

It wasn't until 1959 when it became part of Ecuador's national park system that this fragile ecosystem with its rare and endemic species came under protection. In 1979 the Galapagos archipelago was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Cruise or hotel-based trip?

You can cruise the islands on a yacht, join a group hotel-based trip or tailor-make your own private land-based trip. All offer: Great wildlife; Once-in-a-lifetime trip; Small groups; Responsible travel; Local & certified guides.

Cruises (pros)

Spectacular sunrises and sunsets at sea; Ease of travel around the islands, with no changing hotel room
Lots of activity and relaxation time too; Plenty of snorkeling; Most travel between highlights done overnight or during lunch;
Some boats offer kayaking; Plenty of good food, and all meals included;
Only cruises visit the northern islands and other more remote/uninhabited islands.

Hotel-based (pros)

Get to see more of the islands and the people that live there; More free time, to explore beaches, swim, walk around etc;
Different activities/island combinations that are not available on all cruises; More space in hotel rooms than in cabins;
Less time spent on board boats, more time exploring; Greater dining options;
Itinerary can be tailor made and custom to your exact requirements.

You fly from Quito or Guayaquil to Galapagos and our web www.andeantrails.co.uk provides detailed information,

Boats range from Tourist motor boats to First Class yachts, and hotel-based trips from three star five stars, so there are plenty of options to suit your travel plans and budget.



On board the Sagitta

First class boats will typically offer larger cabins with twin or double beds and private bathrooms, more deck space, faster cruising speeds and sometimes free extras such as a Jacuzzi, sea kayak or drinks. The boats could be sailers, yachts or catamarans and will be the most comfortable option.

Superior Tourist boats generally offer bunk beds in cabins with private bathrooms, and offer great comfort & value. There are a huge variety of boats in this bracket.



Tourist standard boats will offer a standard service, ideal for those on a budget or backpacking. Cabins will be bunks, often with private bathroom, but may not have some extras such as air conditioning and hot water showers.

We have hotel-based group trips departing most months of the year, or we can design a private trip, perfect for everyone from families to honeymooners. Choose from standard accommodation upwards.



Iguana relaxing in the sun

Various itineraries

All cruises offer two different, week-long itineraries. Broadly speaking, one itinerary will incorporate the northern islands, the second the southern islands. This has been introduced to reduce visitor numbers to some of the more central sites.

A trip to the Galapagos will always be special. If you have something specific you would like to see, such as the red-footed boobies, then contact us and we will be happy to advise on which boats and trips may be best suited.

What's included

All cruises include three meals a day and some non-alcoholic drinks (non-bottled drinking water, juice, coffee, teas, depends on the boat), visits, excursions to the islands according to the itinerary authorized by the Galapagos National Park, a bilingual (Spanish and English) naturalist guide, lodging, assistance at the Quito airport.

Extras will include the round-trip flight tickets to Galapagos, alcoholic and bottled drinks, snorkeling equipment (available to hire, and some boats include this at no cost), wet suits, personal expenses, extras, tips, entrance fees and taxes to the Galapagos National Park, diving

Diving

Diving is not permitted on almost all standard cruises, although some can offer one day of diving. Please ask for details as National Park rules are complex and dive availability in this form is scarce.

Divers can choose to take day dives on land-based (hotel-based) packages, or live aboard a specified dive boat that only offers week long dive-only cruises.

Climate

Galapagos climate is strongly influenced by two oceanic currents; the relatively cold Humboldt Current and the warm tropical current from the Gulf of Panama. These converge north of the islands, but the meeting point moves south from January to April bringing warmer currents to the islands.

The Galapagos has two marked seasons: The warmer months with occasional heavy rain from January to May/June and the cooler drier months of May/June to December.



Having a snooze

During the cooler months, skies are often overcast, with little rain in the lowlands, but considerable garúa (mist) in the highlands of the larger islands. February is the hottest month and August and September the coolest (when you may need a jacket in the evenings). Seas are often choppy in the cooler months when southeast winds prevail, and sea temperatures are also cooler (around 20°C). From January to June the average sea temperature is around 25°C.



The weather in between the two marked seasons is a little unpredictable, and varies from one part of the archipelago to another.

Annual rainfall at sea level is less than 350mm, while in the highlands it can be over 1,000mm.

A typical day

After breakfast aboard your vessels, you go ashore with your naturalist guide in a small boat, called a "panga".



Snorkelling

Well marked paths lead you to fascinating wildlife discoveries, including sea lions, iguanas and Galapagos penguins. Snorkeling is encouraged, with opportunities most days to explore an incredible underwater world and enjoy close encounters with a host of colourful fish, sea lions and sea turtles.

You return to your vessel for a delicious lunch, followed perhaps by a short siesta while sailing to the next visitor's site. The rest of the afternoon is spent on shore, before returning to your boat to enjoy a spectacular sunset.

After dinner, your naturalist guide will usually offer a briefing on the next day's activities. Since each island has its own unique landscape and diverse animal, bird and plant species, every day is a new adventure.

Note: The captain may find it necessary to vary the itinerary to allow for unexpected weather conditions, domestic flight alterations or in order for the cruise to reach a desired destination.

Crew

Most guides, captains and other crew members were born and raised in the Galapagos Islands. They know the archipelago intimately and are happy to show you around as only a native can. Our English-speaking naturalist guides have studied and been trained at the Charles Darwin Scientific Station, and have long years of experience guiding in the Galapagos.

Flight Information

Flights from Quito or Guayaquil to the Galapagos depart on the morning of the day your cruise begins. You have to arrive in Quito or Guayaquil at least the night before the flight to the Galapagos.

Flights from the Galapagos arrive in Quito or Guayaquil around midday or later in the afternoon of the day your cruise ends (depends on the vessel).

Flights are usually included in your package to ensure all passengers are arriving with the same flights.

There are two intercontinental airports on the Galapagos one is on Baltra Island and the other is on San Cristobal Island and is also known as the Baquerizo Moreno Port. On Isabela Island there is a landing area available only to inter-island flights for small planes.



Expert crew on Mary Anne

Single passengers

As all boat cabins are for double occupancy a single passenger will share a double cabin with another single passenger, if the vessel is full. The only way to guarantee a double cabin for single occupancy is by paying at least a 50-100% supplement of the cruise rate, depending on the boat. Only a handful of boats offer single cabins with no supplement.

Single supplements for hotel-based trips are usually a lot lower.



National Park Fees

The National Park fee is subject to change without prior notice. You need to pay USD 10pp for a transit control card before you leave mainland Ecuador (at Quito airport), with no discounts for anyone.

On arrival in the Galapagos, you will be asked by a representative of the Galapagos National Park to pay the Park fee in cash (currently US\$ 100 per person, USD 50 per person for under 12s).

The dock tax is US\$5 on Isabela Island, and the airport tax is US\$15 for flights between islands.



Local taxis

Baggage Allowance

Airline regulations recommend traveling with a suitcase having a maximum weight of 20kg plus one small lightweight carry-on bag. Inter-island flights accept 20lbs (9kg approx) plus a carry-on bag.

Purchases in towns and on board

Cash, traveller's cheques and credit cards (Visa, MasterCard and American Express) are accepted in towns. On board ships, it is best to pay in cash or traveller's cheques. Some boats will accept credit cards, please ask in advance.

ATMs can be found only on Santa Cruz Island and San Cristobal Island - not on any other islands. Nevertheless it is recommended to take cash with you as a backup should any of the ATMs fail.

Park Rules

1. To visit the Galapagos National Park you must always be accompanied by a certified Galapagos National Park guide.
2. Galapagos is unique and fragile environment. Take only photographs and video. Professional shooting needs authorization from the Galapagos National Park.
3. Please stay within the limits of the walking trails, for your safety and that of the flora and fauna.
4. To avoid affecting the wildlife's natural behaviour please avoid getting closer than two metres to the animals.
5. Camping is only allowed in specific sites. If you wish to camp, you must first obtain a permit from the Galapagos National Park.
6. Help conservation by cooperating with the authorities in their inspection, monitoring and control duties. Report any anomalies to the Galapagos National Park.
7. Do not introduce foreign organisms to the islands, as these can have a negative impact on the ecosystem.
8. Please do not buy souvenirs which are made from black coral, sea shells, sea lion teeth, tortoise shell, volcanic rock or endemic woods.
9. Galapagos animals have their own feeding behaviour. Never feed the animals. Feeding them can be detrimental to their health.
10. Galapagos landscapes are beautiful and unique. Do not spoil them by writing or etching rocks or trees.
11. Smoking or making camp fires in the Galapagos National Park areas is forbidden and can cause devastating fires.
12. Fishing is strictly forbidden, except on those boats specifically authorised by the Galapagos National Park for that purpose only.
13. Jet skiing, submarines, water skiing and aerial tourism are all forbidden.



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

January

Beginning of the rainy season.

Land birds start nesting, generally after the first rain.

On Hood (Española) Island adult marine iguanas become brightly coloured (green & red + black).

The green sea turtles arrive to beaches in the Galapagos, for the egg-laying period.

Land iguanas begin reproductive cycles on Isabela Island.

Both, water and air temperatures rise and stay warm until June. Ideal time for snorkelling.



Flamingoes on Isabela

February

On Floreana Island, greater flamingos start nesting.

Bahama pintail ducks (Black-tailed pintail) start their breeding season.

Nazca (masked) boobies on Hood are at the end of their nesting season.

Marine iguanas nest on Santa Cruz Island.

The highest water temperature reaches 25C (77F). This temperature remains constant until April.

Very few penguins are sighted at Bartolome Island (most have followed the cool waters back to the west or near upwelling areas).

Nesting season of the Galapagos dove reaches its peak.

March

The rainy season reaches the highest precipitation (this does not mean it rains everyday)

Sporadic tropical rains, intense sun and hot climate. Air temperature can reach up to 30C (86F). Humidity is high.

Marine iguanas nest on Fernandina.

March 21st, the beginning of the summer equinox signals the arrival of the waved albatross to Española.

Even the western islands have warm waters where snorkelling is excellent. Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) can be an amazing site. Penguins still active in the water, next to tropical fish!

Some shores, especially those facing the north side, can receive deep surge (ola de fondo) coming from the northern currents. Wet landings at places like Puerto Egas, Gardner Bay, Bartolome can sometimes be a challenge.

Snorkelers can remain in the water for long periods of time.

April

Massive arrival of waved albatrosses to Española. Amazing courtship starts.

End of hatching season of the giant tortoises.

Green sea turtle and land iguana eggs begin to hatch.

Good visibility in the water for snorkelers

Perhaps, along with May, the best months in Galapagos (weather, animals, water temperature)

May

North Seymour's blue-footed boobies begin their courtship.

Sea turtles are still hatching on Gardner Bay, Punta Cormorant, and Puerto Egas.

Most of marine iguanas' eggs hatch from nests on Santa Cruz.

Palo santo trees begin to shed their foliage.

Waved albatross on Española start laying their eggs.

Ban-rumped storm petrels begin their first nesting period.



June

Beginning of the garúa (mist) season.
 Giant tortoises on Santa Cruz Island migrate from the highlands to the lowlands in search of suitable nesting places.
 Beginning of the nesting season of giant tortoises.
 South east trade winds return. Currents become a bit stronger.
 Seas pick up in surge and wave action.
 Many red pouches by males of Magnificent Frigatebirds on North Seymour.
 Southern migrants have started their journey towards the north.
 Galapagos is a rest stop for such birds. Some species of cetaceans also follow this pattern of migration. Some groups of Humpback whales that migrate up to equatorial latitudes along the coast of Ecuador, can reach the Galapagos too.



Male frigatebird

July

Sea bird communities are very active (breeding), especially the Blue footed boobies on Española. Flightless cormorants perform beautiful courtship rituals and nesting activities on Fernandina. If you walk along the shores of Puerto Egas (Santiago Island) you could find American oystercatchers nesting. Lava lizards initiate mating rituals until November.
 Cetaceans (whales & dolphins) are more likely to be observed, especially off the western coast of Isabela.
 Great month to see the four stages of nesting in Blue footed boobies: eggs, chicks, juveniles and sub-adults.
 Water temperature does not reach more than 21C (68F).

August

Galapagos hawks court on Española and Santiago. Nazca (masked) boobies and Swallow-tailed gulls nest on Genovesa Island. The temperature of the ocean drops to 18C (64F), which obviously varies according to the geographic zones among the islands.
 Migrant shore birds start to arrive, and stay on the islands until March.
 Giant tortoises return to the highlands of Santa Cruz.
 Oceans are quite choppy, currents at the strongest levels, surge can be expected along the shores that face west or south.
 Popping season (births) of sea lions has started. Western and central islands are common places for such sightings.

September

Peak of the cold (garúa) season.
 The air temperature reaches its lowest levels (19C-66F).
 Galapagos Penguins show remarkable activity on Bartolome. Since May swimmers and snorkelers will be delighted at Bartolome with penguins active at the surface or torpedo-like while underwater.
 Sea lions are very active. Females have reached estrus stage, and so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting.
 Shore fighting is heavy. Western and central islands are the most active ones in terms of sea lions' activities.
 Most species of sea birds remain quite active at their nesting sites.

October

Lava herons start nesting until March.
 The Galapagos Fur Sea lions begin their mating period.
 Blue footed boobies raise chicks all over Española and Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela).
 Giant tortoises are still laying eggs.



Days are not always sunny. *Garúa* can be expected in most locations, except the western islands where most days have a misty start but after few hours of daylight it burns off.

Sunrises in the west can be quite beautiful as the *garúa* disperses and covers only certain locations of the western volcanoes.

Summits are clear, but low-lying fog covers the shoreline.



Sally Lightfoot Crab

November

Pupping of sea lions continue.

Sea lions are sexually active on the eastern part of the archipelago.

Breeding season for the brown noddies.

Some species of jellyfish can be seen around the islands. The genus *Physalia* is commonly seen floating around Gardner and Tortuga Islets. Some can also be seen stranded at the shores of the Flour Beach at Floreana.

Band-rumped storm petrels begin their second nesting period.

Seas are calm. South east trade winds have decreased strength.

Water temperatures are slowly rising.

Generally great weather due to transition between one season and the next one.

Good visibility for snorkelers.

Sea lion pups (specially at Champion Islet) play aqua-aerobics next to snorkelers.

Most pups here are curious enough to nibble at fins of snorkelers.

The average age of most pups is 3-4 months.

December

Hatching of giant tortoise's eggs begins and lasts until April.

Green sea turtles display their mating behaviour.

The rainy season begins, all of the plants of the dry zone produce leaves. Galapagos becomes "green".

The first young waved albatrosses fledge.

Great weather.

ISLAND BY ISLAND

Please note that you may visit only some of the highlights mentioned for each island and/or site. Please check your cruise itinerary carefully. These are the general groupings:

Central Islands

Santiago, Bartholomew, North Seymour, Daphne Island, Mosquera Islet, Santa Cruz, Rabida, Santa Fe, Plazas Islands, Pinzon Island,

Southern Islands

Floreana Island, Española

Western Islands

Fernandina, Isabela

Eastern Islands

San Cristobal, Kicker Rock

Northern Islands

Genovesa Island, Marchena



Central Islands - more details

Santa Cruz (Indefatigable) is the most populated island and *Puerto Ayora* the archipelago's main town and harbour, and is the only island with six different vegetation zones.

The *Charles Darwin Research Centre*, within walking distance, is worth a visit. It is dedicated to scientific research and the conservation of the Galapagos National Park. From town you can walk to Turtle Bay (3km) to the Centre, home to Lonesome George, the last remaining Pinta Island tortoise and symbol of the Galapagos conservation efforts.



Kayaking at Tortuga bay

Tortuga Bay is a vast white sandy beach, whose name derives from the black sea turtles (*Tortugas*) that lay their eggs here. It's a 30 minute walk along a flat path from the town, and on arrival, you can swim in the sea or have a go at surfing in the waves, or go for a leisurely walk to the salt lagoon behind the mangroves which is often frequented by flamingos. It's also an excellent spot for birdwatching and spotting white tipped sharks and marine iguanas.

Black Turtle Cove is an inlet situated in the northern part of Santa Cruz, surrounded by mangroves and only accessible by dinghy. Blacktip and whitetip reef sharks, sea turtles, and a variety of rays are often spotted here, and occasionally Hammerhead shark babies.

Some 10km from Puerto Ayora lie the *Santa Cruz Highlands*. There are lava tubes which can be entered, a surreal experience. These tubes were formed when the outer layer of flowing lava cooled, leaving molten lava still inside. As the lava flowed on, it left a space behind it, thus creating a tunnel. Another interesting visit is to the Tortoise Reserve near Santa Rosa.

Cerro Masa offers great views of the Galapagos. At 490m above sea level, and with a persistent drizzle ('la garúa') that falls horizontally throughout 8 months of the year, it feels like a different land to the coastal strips often visited on Galapagos.

It is an excellent location to observe numerous endemic plants as well as up to seven subspecies of finch and the Vermillion Flycatcher.

Also recommended is a trip to the island's interior to see the *Los Gemelos* twin volcanic craters amid lush highland *Scalesia* forest. These formations were created when underground fissures and chambers collapsed, and the site now affords great views.

Situated on the north coast side of Santa Cruz, *El Garrapatero* is a gorgeous sandy beach surrounded by mangroves and with turquoise waters. A fresh water lake behind the beach is home to flamingos, herons, stilts and other shore birds, while the sea provides a great place for swimming and snorkeling.

El Chato Tortoise Reserve is divided into two areas; Caseta and Chato. It features a 22km trail linking Santa Rosa to Puerto Ayora. The Caseta route is the more challenging, but both trails allow hikers the chance to observe giant tortoises in the wild during the dry season. The area is also a good place to spot short-eared owls, Darwin's finches, yellow warblers, Galapagos rails and paint-billed crakes.

Baltra is the island where most travellers will land, by plane, after the flight from the mainland. On arriving in Baltra, all visitors are immediately transported by bus to one of two docks. The first dock is located in a small bay, where the boats cruising Galapagos await passengers. The second is a ferry dock, which connects Baltra to the island of Santa Cruz.

North Seymour is flat and arid. A trail passes colonies of blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, marine iguanas and sea lions on this island, formed by a series of layers of sediment lifted up by tectonic activity.



Mosquera Islet is located between the islands of *Baltra* and *North Seymour*, and is a reef of rocks and coral (the result of an uprising). At some points it is only 160 metres wide but that hasn't stopped it housing one of Galapagos' largest populations of sea lions and shore birds.

There have been occasional reports at this site of Orcas feeding on sea lions, but this is considered very rare.

Bartholomew Island is the home of the famous Pinnacle Rock, an icon of the Galapagos. The island itself consists of an extinct volcano with multi-coloured volcanic formations and a lovely beach, ideal for snorkeling.



Land Iguana

Following the trail of stair to the summit of the volcano will give you one of the best views anywhere in the Galapagos Islands, because of the central position of Bartholomew in the archipelago.

Santiago Island is a beautiful island of cliffs and pinnacles where hundreds of marine birds rest. During the 17th and 18th centuries, pirates used this site, as it gave them a chance to fix their boats, replenish fresh water supplies and look for meat and firewood.

Egas Port, also known as *James Bay*, features a 2km hike to see some lovely tide pools and 'grotto' type formations full of Galapagos fur sea lions. The area is also home for Galapagos Hawks and Quick-footed Galapagos Lava Lizards.

Espumilla Beach is a popular place for marine iguanas and Sally Lightfoot Crabs, who run at surprisingly fast speeds across the terrain but still attract the attentions of hunting herons. Snorkeling highlights include sharks, eels and octopus sightings.

Buccaneer Cove is a living historical footnote to the British buccaneers that sought refuge here. Pirates would anchor in the protected bay to make repairs and stock up on tortoise meat. The steep cliffs, where hundreds of seabirds perch in front of the dark red sand beach, are a magnificent site.

South Plaza Island is quite a small island, characterised by steep cliffs and its covering of cacti. There is a large sea lion colony here as well as yellow and red land iguanas. The *Sesuvium* plant seems to act as some form of inspiration to these animals, as in the rainy season it is a green/yellow colour, yet in the dry season (June-Jan) it turns red. Shearwaters, gulls and Nazca boobies all abound here too.

Santa Fe Island

Santa Fe (Barrington) has two trails to explore. The first leads to a lovely viewpoint from a cliff, and the second to a cactus forest. Land Iguanas are found throughout.

Rabida Island (Jervis) is one of the most colourful islands, with a maroon beach and lovely landscapes. It is a top spot for snorkeling, and also great for birdwatchers.

Some of the rarest species are in abundance, such as nine varieties of finches, Large-billed Flycatchers, Galapagos Hawks and Brown Pelicans.

Daphne Islands

Daphne Mayor and Daphne Menor are located between Santa Cruz and Santiago Islands.

The islands are a popular stop for scientists researching the unique qualities of the Galapagos Finches, but more tourists are banned from landing here. There are some dives available here, and you can 'birdwatch' from your boat as it passes by.



Western Islands - more details

Fernandina (Narborough) is the most volcanically active island (and the least contaminated, in terms of introduced species) and is one of the world's most pristine eco-systems. At Punta Espinoza there are marine iguanas, flightless cormorants, Galapagos Hawks, sea lions and penguins on relatively young lava landscapes.

The volcano 'La Cumbre' dominates the landscape, and its lava fields reach right to the ocean, and a 2km hike around these highlights is possible.



Playa Vilamil, Isabela

Isabela (Albemarle), the largest island, consists of five shield volcanoes (including Volcan Wolf, 1,707m) where we can find five distinct subspecies of the Galápagos tortoise.

Puerto Villamil is the town and it is a small fishing village in the southeast of the island, with a large and beautiful sandy beach. Nearby there are lagoons and mangroves with flamingoes and other wading birds. *Las Tintorerías*, just a few minutes by boat from the Villamil, is a good place to observe the White tipped shark.

The *Wetlands* are visited by foot, using a path that winds from just outside of Puerto Villamil through the swamps. The Wetlands consist of lagoons, swamps, and mangroves. They are the perfect home to a variety of unique bird species such as Common Stilts, Whimbrels, White-Cheeked Pintails, and Gallinules. The Wetlands can be visited on foot via a path that winds through the swamps.

Located in the Port of Villamil, the *Concha de Perla* is a calm, shallow bay with clear waters, accessed by a wooden walkway. It is an ideal place to snorkel and swim alongside an array of marine life and observe up to 20 bird species.

The last Galapagos eruption was on Isabela in 2005, when Cerro Azul erupted and Isabela boasts dramatic volcanic scenery.

A four to six hour trek gets you to the crater rim of *Alcedo Volcano*. Views are outstanding, with steaming fumaroles and Galapagos giant tortoises of the Alcedo subspecies. At the foot of this volcano lies *Urbina Bay* which experienced a huge uplift of 16ft (4.8m), stranding marine life on the new shore. The coast expanded by more than half a mile as a result, and is now a great place to snorkel with tropical fish, see the largest land iguanas in Galapagos and take short hikes.

The crater of *Sierra Negra Volcano* at the southern end of Isabela measures 10km across. You can visit this area, and also *Volcan Chico* to the north. This comprises a group of craters with fumaroles, and most people hike or hire horses to visit the crater.

Elizabeth Bay, on the east coast, is a bay with many inlets, accessible by dinghy and with no landing area. The water is usually clear here, making it ideal for sporting marine turtles, rays and sealions, with the rocky islets playing home to penguins and Blue-footed Boobies.

Moreno Point is located near Elizabeth Bay and is a birdspotter's dream, with flamingoes, gallinules and Pintail ducks here. A hike beside the tide pools on the rocky shores may reveal green sea turtles or white-tip sharks.

Tagus Cove was popular with pirates and whalers as an anchorage site in the 1800s, and the names of the many ships that visited the cove are painted on the cliffs. Paths wind via Lake Darwin to a ridge from where there are great views. Hikes and snorkeling possible here, with penguins and Flightless Cormorants found.

Vicente Roca Point is a large bay with two coves on the north-western coast of the island where sea life abounds. Seahorses, sea turtles, and the strange yet fascinating Mola-mola (sunfish) may be spotted here and it's a great place for diving and snorkeling with sea lions. Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies nest on land.



As well as natural life, there is a human history to Isabella. *The Wall of Tears* was a penal colony from 1945-1959. Prisoners were forced to build this wall, stone by stone, in isolation. This now historical site (El Muro de las Lágrimas), towers at 65 feet (25m) high, and claimed the lives of thousands during its construction. Some locals may claim that they hear cries emanating from the site.

Humans are also leaving their mark at the *Tortoise Breeding Station*. Giant tortoise eggs are collected and brought to the centre where they are hatched and kept for five years before being released to their natural environment.



Blue footed Boobies

Southern Islands - more details

Floreana (Charles) has three areas to visit; *Post Office Bay*, the *Devil's Crown* and *Punta Cormorant*.

Post Office Bay is the site of the original Post Office barrel placed by British Whalers to send letters home in 1793.

Punta Cormorant has two contrasting beaches; one dark coloured and, beyond a salt lagoon (with flamingos), there is a golden sandy beach with a nesting site for green sea turtles. You may also see sting rays in the water.

Just offshore from *Punta Cormorant* lies the *Devil's Crown*; a half-submerged rock crater. The snorkeling around here is excellent, with plenty of fish and the chance to play with young sea lions. The rocks themselves are a popular roosting site for pelicans and frigate birds.

A good vista can be found at *Baroness Viewing Point*. Once inhabited by a Baroness and her three lovers, the history of this island is intriguing. As well as the views and the tales, there are also lots of nice and easy trails to explore.

Española (Hood) is the oldest island, and has eroded to such an extent that it is quite small and flat.

The two places to visit here are *Gardner Bay* on the east and *Punta Suarez* on the west.

Gardner Bay's long white beach is a nesting area for marine turtles, and is also used by sea lions. Snorkelling is good; you might see sea turtles and sharks.

Near *Punta Suarez* is the only colony and nesting site of the waved albatross (12,000 pairs breed here from late March to December). Other interesting species found here include an endemic marine iguana, Hood mockingbirds, lava lizards, cactus finch, blue-footed boobies, masked boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, redbilled tropic birds and oyster catchers.

Suarez Point is great for spotting Blue-footed Boobies, albatrosses and Nazca Boobies. A beautiful site on the ocean front, the large Waved Albatrosses use the cliff as a launching pad. The famous attraction is the magnificent blowhole, spurting water high into the air. This site presents wonderful photograph opportunities.

Eastern Islands - more details

San Cristobal

San Cristobal is home to the capital of the province of Galapagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, located on the southern tip of the island.



The Interpretation Centre & Galapaguera was opened in 1998 and aims to inform visitors about the natural history, human history, and conservation of the island. The conservation efforts represent the movement to protect the wildlife and natural environment through means of population and tourist control.

This striking formation of *Kicker Rock* is located a couple hours off the western shore of San Cristobal. *Kicker Rock* is the remains of an underwater volcano rising vertically 150m out of the sea, with a channel of sea full of marine life separating the two huge rock formations.



Kicker Rock

It is a real highlight to snorkel or dive here, keeping an eye out for sharks, tropical fish, turtles, manta rays hammerhead sharks, spectacular rock formations and sea birds.

Lobos Island or 'Sea Lion Island', is aptly named and replete with sea lions. Great for snorkeling with sea lions and for spotting frigate birds and blue-footed Boobies.

Located on the northern coast, this eroded hill called *Witch Hill* and its surroundings offer one of the most picturesque beaches in the Galapagos. The sand is white and soft and there are a lot of animals living here, from sea turtles to rays to Booby birds and sponge coral in the clear waters.

For Booby fans, it has to be *Pitt Point*. Here, on the north-eastern tip of San Cristobal, all three types of Booby Birds congregate: the Nazca, Blue-footed and Red-footed Boobies. You can hike up a steep trail and then through a ravine to an area popular with birds, or dive and snorkel in this excellent site.

Red Mangroves and birds are the main attractions of *Tijeretas Hill*, which also provides a good views of the bay and the main town of San Cristobal. Very safe area for swimming and snorkeling.

El Junco Lagoon is one of the few freshwater lakes in the Galapagos, nestling in the hills some 730m above sea level. Frigate birds can be seen here, washing the salt from their feathers, as well as pintail.

Northern Islands - more details

Genovesa is uninhabited and a must for bird lovers. There is an abundance of frigatebirds and other interesting seabirds. There are tide pools to see too, but high tide will cover the trails here. Other birds to spot include Red-footed Boobies, and swallow-tailed gulls.

The white-sand coral beach of *Darwin Bay* features a half mile trail (0.75km) that winds through mangroves filled with land birds. There are tidal pools where sea lions play, and snorkelers will have the chance to spot colourful reef fish and, with luck, hammerhead sharks. In the air, there are Nazca Boobies, Red-footed Boobies and gulls, and the final part of the trail has a spectacular view too.

El Barranco, also known as *Prince Phillip's Steps*, is a steep path leading up to a high cliff-face, which offers a great view at the top. Plenty of birds swoop about and you may also spot Short-eared Lava Owls, Galápagos Swallows and Galápagos Doves.