



Gems of the Galapagos

Photographic tour with tour leaders Mark Sisson & Pablo Cersosimo

15th - 25th August 2026

Trip Overview



Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 12 guests.

Cost: £7,895. Due to the nature of the trip we will have to take an interim payment of £1000 on the 15th December and the amount will be deducted off your final balance.

Deposit: £750

Cost includes:

Full board accommodation in Quito at the beginning and end of the trip, domestic flights from Quito to Baltra, all local transfers, full board accommodation on our catamaran and all Galapagos entry fees and permits. Basic snorkelling equipment is provided on the boat.

Cost excludes:

International flights, sundry items, non-local alcohol/spirits, gratuities for boat crew (a guideline of \$US200 is recommended).

Trip Overview

Accommodation:

In Quito (for the first and last nights) we will stay in a modern international-style airport chain hotel, where single supplements will be available on request. Onboard the catamaran we will have shared twin cabins with en-suite facilities and personal storage space: two of these are specifically suited to couples on a first come first served basis. Images of the boat facilities are available on request.

Fitness Level:

The weather should be pleasantly warm and sunny and we will look to go ashore most mornings and afternoons as highlighted in the itinerary. Boat life and the resulting fresh air can bring its own tiring qualities though. There will be an opportunity to snorkel from the boat and occasionally form ashore on most if not all days as well. There are no major walks involved on our shore based time but some of them will involve walking on rocks and be generally uneven in their nature.

LEVEL 3



Trip Overview

The extraordinarily confiding wildlife of the Galapagos almost needs no introduction such is its reputation for showing little fear in the proximity of people. Throw in some stunning locations and the opportunity for some highly dramatic images of seabirds including blue-footed boobies and frigate birds, reptiles such as marine iguana, the extraordinary giant tortoises, playful and relaxed sealions, colourful sally lightfoot crabs and this new trip, timed to coincide with the breeding season of the rare waved albatross will provide the opportunity for a diverse portfolio and experience. With a programme that will look to maximise our shore time to the beginning and end of the days for the best light, also applying the same approach to our choice of snorkelling locations between times (a GoPro or equivalent here will add hugely to the experience as well) and with rays, turtles, reef sharks and sealions in the water among the many close up encounters we can have in this environment, this will be a full and absorbing week on our comfortable catamaran home for our time in these iconic islands.



Itinerary

Day 1: A day of travel will take us to Quito, the main city of Ecuador where on arrival we will look to rest up at an airport hotel before an early start and onward travel to the Galapagos islands the next morning. Full flight details/recommendations will be advised nearer the time, and please note these may necessitate a late departure on the 14th of August with an additional overnight and associated costs in Madrid to fit the long haul flight schedule.

Day 2: We'll be leaving Quito early in the morning and flying to Baltra Island where a member of crew from our catamaran will be waiting for us for a short bus drive to the port where we will board our catamaran, a comfortable home for the next week. After a welcome conversation with the captain and our biologist, we will get our gear settled into our cabins and start our trip.

After only a short 30-minute navigation we will arrive at Bachas beach where we'll have the first chance to photograph frigate birds, blue-footed boobies and other birds before returning to the boat for dinner and our first night onboard, during which we will navigate to our next destination in time for the next morning.

Day 3: South Plaza (or Plaza Sur as it is locally known) is a small island, which is rich in unique plants and vegetation. After being greeted by sea lions as we come ashore, we will have the chance to photograph the giant yellow terrestrial iguana and many other bird species surrounded by enormous cactus and on a colourful carpet of Galapagos carpetweed. Swallow-tailed Gulls are among the bird highlights here.

On returning to the catamaran, we'll enjoy refreshments and lunch as we head to arrive to Santa Fe island where we'll have the first chance to snorkel, with sea lions, white tip reef sharks, green turtles and eagle rays all possible visitors while we do so. At the end of the afternoon, we'll go ashore once more. There is a gigantic Opuntia cactus forest here where land iguanas can often be found, and this is a prime location for Galapagos hawks as well as several of Darwin's finches. With the sun set behind us we'll go back to the boat and start our overnight navigation to the next island.



Itinerary

Day 4: Arriving very early in the morning before the sunrise we will approach to the Kicker Rock, an outstanding massive vertical rock located in front of San Cristobal Island. This small island is the home of many different birds such as frigate, nazca booby and blue-footed booby, among others. The highlight of arriving early at this location is the snorkelling close to the walls that disappear deep into the ocean, we'll swim with sea lions, black tip sharks, turtles, rays and if we are lucky with hammer head sharks: go Pros very much recommended here! We'll then return to our catamaran for some drinks and start approaching San Cristobal island, and after lunch we'll visit one of the beautiful beaches of the island where sea lions should pose for us with white sand and turquoise water whilst we also watch the blue-footed boobies diving for food offshore. At the end of the day and after a dinner on board we'll start moving overnight to our next destination.

Day 5: This morning will be another highlight of the trip as we will be visiting Española Island, which is the only island here where the Waved Albatross can be found. At this time of year, the birds will have young so the colony will see plenty of activity and interaction whilst we are there. The island is also home to boobies, hawks and iguanas so it will be a very full morning ashore.

After a full and absorbing visit, we'll move with the boat to Gardner Bay on the eastern side of the island where we'll have lunch in front of a fantastic beach with white and soft sand and turquoise water; these waters will offer the chance to snorkel with hammer head sharks if we are lucky as well as an array of tropical fish and the almost ever-present sea lions.

By late afternoon, the sea lions will host us on the beach itself, along with an array of bird species, before going back to the catamaran for dinner and moving on as usual, this time for a longer overnight leg to Santa Cruz Island.



Itinerary



Day 6: After a 6-hour overnight transfer, we will arrive at Ayora Port on Santa Cruz Island. This is the main town of the Galapagos and is very welcoming. After breakfast we'll go inland to visit the research station and spend time with the resident giant tortoise population. This was the home of the famous Lonesome George who passed away in 2012 at what was believed to be over 100 years old.

We will have lunch in town before returning to the catamaran when we will then navigate to Post Office Bay on Floreana Island, approximately 3 hours away and where flamingos and other birds are part of the wildlife that await us.

Days 7 – 8: After another long overnight relocation we'll arrive to the extraordinary and volcanic Bartolome Island where we will be based for 2 days. The island is a huge volcano and youngest of the Galapagos Islands with amazing frozen lava shapes, volcanoes cones and needle-shaped Pinnacle Rock are stunning features.

We will walk through different areas and snorkel in the transparent waters looking for the Galapagos penguin, marine iguanas, red rock crabs and Galapagos snakes while we are ashore, and snorkelling here will offer many big fishes, turtles, sharks and rays once more.

Day 9: After our final breakfast and return to Baltra Island we will say goodbye to the crew, transfer to the airport and catch our flight back to Quito where we'll spend our last night sharing memories of our time at sea over our final dinner.

Day 10: Departure flights to Europe will likely be in the afternoon and so we'll have time to relax and rest at the hotel before transferring in time for these overnight journeys.

Day 11: Arrive home in Europe.

Please note that the running order of the various locations may be changed at the discretion of the captain based on weather and other factors but the essential circuit and key destinations we have planned will not.

Things to bring

Our hotel accommodation in Quito is a typically clean and comfortable modern airport hotel. On the boat the 7 guest cabins are predominantly twin bedded and those that aren't and have larger beds have been allocated to some of the couples on the trip so all berths will be full. There is the usual storage, basin and toilet/shower facilities you would expect on board a catamaran of this nature and a good amount of indoor and on deck communal living space to spread ourselves through as well. As with all ship-based trips though being organised and not overloaded with gear will be important. Please let us know any special dietary requirements you may have though. It will be predominantly warm and sunny so appropriate light and easy to dry clothing will be the order of the day, with swimming costumes essential. For the beach and zodiac transfers you might want to consider bringing some neoprene shoes/footwear (beach "jelly" shoes or windsurfing plimsol style will also do the job) and you will also need plenty of sun block, sunhat and sunglasses etc. as well.



Camera equipment

In terms of camera gear, most of the wildlife here is incredibly tolerant and so you are able to work up close almost all the time. As a result, a 100-400mm lens and a good wide-angle zoom as well will cover pretty much all of your needs. That said for the small bird enthusiasts in particular, bringing a longer lens option like a 500mm if you have one will be of definite benefit, but it is by no means essential for this trip. A Go Pro (or similar) and support for underwater stills and video is very much recommended and for any of you with more serious underwater housing-based options these too can be accommodated. In the evenings and downtime on the boat we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish so, please feel free to bring anything you'd like to share on either a laptop or iPad.



Useful Contact Information

Our contact numbers for the build up to and for the duration of the trip are:

Mark: +44 (0) 7905 569685

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Please don't hesitate to contact us even if you think it is a minor question, we're here to help.



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