

EXPLORE!



Galapagos - Central, South & Eastern Islands aboard the Monserrat

ECUADOR, GALAPAGOS - TRIP CODE GMOB

WILDLIFE

Why book this trip?

On this tour we spend seven nights on the Monserrat embarking on a Galapagos cruising adventure through the archipelago's central, southern and eastern islands. Hike the dramatic black lava flows of volcanic Bartolomé Island, snorkel with sea lions and other aquatic beasts, go for a hike on Española or opt to laze about on her white-sand beaches instead. Please note that this tour is operated in conjunction with a local specialist company and is not exclusive to Explore customers. Your fellow passengers may come from a number of different countries although all guiding is done in English, and may include families.

- **Seven night cruise** - exploring the Galapagos Islands aboard the Monserrat
- **Expert naturalist guides** - you will have two on hand to answer all your questions
- **Prolific wildlife** - including boobies, giant tortoises, iguanas and flamingos
- **See giant lava formations** - at Sullivan Bay



INCLUDED MEALS
 Breakfast: 9
 Lunch: 7
 Dinner: 7



TRIP STAFF
 Boat Crew
 Driver(s)
 Naturalist(s)



TRANSPORT
 Bus
 Flight
 Monserrat
 Zodiac



ACCOMMODATION
 7 nights standard boat
 2 nights standard hotel



TRIP PACE:
 Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
 14 - 20

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour Quito

Quito is Ecuador's mountain capital and the second highest capital city in Latin America (2850m). One of South America's most beautiful cities, Quito lies in a narrow valley at the foot of the Pichincha Volcano, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and extinct volcanoes. Quito is separated into the old and the new cities. The old city is a UNESCO Heritage site due to its rich blend of colonial architecture, imposing churches and bustling local markets. Some of the main sites include the Plaza de la Independencia, the cultural heart of the colonial city which is home to the Catedral de Quito, and La Compania church which is considered one of the most beautiful churches in the Americas with its magnificent gilded altars, walls and ceilings. The church of San Francisco, Quito's largest and oldest colonial church built in 1553, is also worth a visit. A climb to the top of Cerro Panecillo affords one of the best views across the city and the surrounding mountains, presenting you with an unparalleled vista of the encircling Andes from the viewing platform offered by the statue of the Virgen de Quito. There will be plenty of time to explore the city on your own, before returning to your hotel for the welcome briefing in the early evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
 Hilton Colon (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Fly to San Cristobal Island, transfer to the Monserrat

Today we transfer to the airport early for our flight to the Galapagos Islands via Guayaquil (refuelling stop only, you will not disembark the plane).

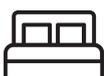
Lying on the Equator, 970km west of the Ecuadorean coast, the Galapagos National Park is a unique collection of islands, formed by volcanoes over hundreds of thousands of years and consists of six main islands, 12 smaller islands as well as over 40 small islets, supporting a distinct and unique flora and fauna, including prehistoric creatures found nowhere else on earth. This desolate and fantastic habitat was discovered in 1535 by Fray Tomas de Berlanga. One of the original designations by him was Las Islas Encantadas, the Enchanted Isles. Charles Darwin visited the islands on the Beagle exactly three hundred years later, in 1835. He observed the total isolation of the giant reptiles and other creatures, and this played a substantial part in his formulation of the theory of evolution.

The Galapagos have never been connected with the continent. Gradually, over many hundreds of thousands of years, animals and plants from over the sea somehow migrated there and as time went by they adapted themselves to Galapagos conditions and came to differ more and more from their continental ancestors. Thus many of them are unique: a quarter of the species of shore fish, half of the plants and almost all the reptiles are found nowhere else. In many cases different forms have evolved on the different islands.

Of the extraordinary animals to be found in the Galapagos many are reptiles, such as the great tortoise, large land iguanas, numerous lizards and three species of non-poisonous snakes. There are also several species of turtle, which come ashore to mate. Up to three quarters of a million seabirds flock to the islands, including a third of the world's blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, pelicans, cormorants, albatross and petrels. Only 35cm tall, the Galapagos penguin can be seen swimming among tropical mangroves, whilst offshore it is common to see dolphins, sea lions and fur seals playing in the water. Fearless though not tame, the extraordinary wildlife can be easily approached and the opportunities for photography are superb.

The Galapagos National Park charges a visitor fee of \$110 USD, payable on arrival, which funds park maintenance and supervision in the Galapagos, as well as ecological study, conservation and infrastructure development in Ecuador's other national parks. Entry fees and the funds they generate for the national park system are among measures taken by the Ecuadorian government to protect its natural heritage.

On arrival in San Cristobal, we will meet our naturalist guide and transfer to our home for the next seven nights, the Monserrat. San Cristobal is the easternmost island of the Galapagos archipelago and one of the oldest geologically. The principal town is Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Galapagos. We will spend the afternoon visiting Isla Lobos, where we will be greeted by frolicking sea lions. Explore this tiny island for great wildlife encounters. Either by foot or by panga, view the sea and shore birds nesting and feeding. Snorkel the waters of peaceful Isla Lobos, amid the families of sea lions and their inquisitive pups looking to play. Spot nesting frigatebirds and the famous blue-footed boobies resting on the shore. Be sure to bring your camera to catch some snaps at this prime wildlife watching haven.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)

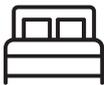
Grade: Standard Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 3 - Walk to Cerro Brujo and visit the Highlands

Our first landing for the day is at Cerro Brujo, where there is a chance to go hiking, swimming and snorkelling. The sandy beach is home to Sally Lightfoot crabs, brown pelicans, blue footed boobies and California sea lions. We will spend the afternoon visiting in the Highlands - a tortoise natural breeding area, surrounded by endemic flora of the islands. Visit the Jacinto Cordillo Breeding Center, a giant tortoise breeding centre and see all of the different species of tortoise up-close. See newborn as well as fully-grown adult tortoises that can live well over 100 years.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)

Grade: Standard Boat

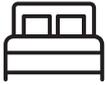


MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 4 - Discover Punta Suarez on Espanola Island

Today we head to Punta Suarez on Espanola Island. The southernmost island in the Galapagos archipelago is home to several wildlife species, including masked and blue footed boobies. A hike to the top of the cliff makes for spectacular photo opportunities. Punta Suarez on the western side of Espanola Island is spectacular: gargantuan waves break on jagged cliffs and large bird colonies thickly populate the interior of the island; there is a distinct feel of desolate wilderness here. The waved albatross is seen here from April to December during its mating/nesting season. This bird leaves land between January and March each year to make its annual odyssey far out to sea. Amazingly, Espanola is the nesting site of virtually the entire world population of this species, with more than 12,000 pairs residing here. Large numbers of masked and blue footed boobies are also found here, red-billed tropicbirds dash madly through the air, and both marine iguanas and sea lions are common. A huge blowhole, where the surf is forced through a natural rock formation spouting seawater 15 to 20m into the air, adds to the island's impression of untamed beauty. We follow the trail through a rookery and learn the geological history of the island from our naturalist guide, including its dramatic volcanic features, climate, flora and fauna. Visit Gardner Bay's magnificent white sandy beach and spectacular landscapes. This incredible place is home to sea lions, hood mockingbirds, Nazca boobies, waved albatross, red-billed tropic birds, lava lizards, Galapagos hawks, and blue-footed boobies. Snorkel through the beautiful turquoise water and

enjoy its incredible sea life - spot playful young sea lions and large schools of tropical fish, including yellow-tailed surgeonfish, king angelfish, and bump-head parrot fish.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)

Grade: Standard Boat



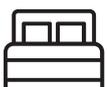
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 5 - Observe the wildlife of Floreana Island, visit Post Office Bay

The history of Floreana Island has gradually evolved to reach near mythic proportions. The story begins when a baroness and her two lovers, a German doctor and his mistress, and a German couple and their young son all came to settle on this land. Their dalliances and disasters, shrouded in mystery, were chronicled in John Treherne's book 'The Galapagos Affair'. Descendants of the German family, the Wittmers, still live on the island in the small community of Puerto Velasco Ibarra. Mrs. Margaret Wittmer has also written a book entitled 'Floreana' and this can be purchased at the airport in Baltra or at a local bookstore.

This morning we make our way to Punta Cormorant on the northern part of Floreana Island. The landing is on a beach of green sand, coloured by olivine crystals, volcanic-derived silicates of magnesium and iron. The trail leads to a lake normally inhabited by flamingos and other shore birds and continues to a beach of fine white sand particles known as 'Flour Beach', an important nesting site for turtles.

Later in the afternoon we stop at Post Office Bay, which has a lot of history. A barrel was placed here in the late 18th century by English whaling vessels to be used as a post office. Passing ships would stop to leave mail for loved ones, collecting at the same time any mail destined for ports on their itineraries. Today the box is used mainly by tourists, who may drop off and pick up unstamped letters to be carried to far destinations. The remains of a Norwegian canning factory are the only evidence of the island's history prior to its designation as a protected area. A short hike up past the post barrel takes you to an interesting lava cave. With the aid of a torch, you can descend about 80m to the point where the sea enters the cave. We will end our day's activities with a snorkelling excursion at Champion Islet. Keep an eye out for sea lions, sea turtles, rays and colourful reef fish swimming by.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)

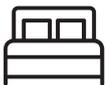
Grade: Standard Boat



DAY 6 - Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station

In the morning we arrive in Puerto Ayora, on Santa Cruz Island. Santa Cruz is the second largest island in the Galapagos and has the largest population, with Puerto Ayora as its main town. It also boasts the most varied of the islands' vegetation zones: coastal, transition, scalesia, miconia and pampa. Spend some time walking around the small town of Puerto Ayora. Visit a local fish market or buy some souvenirs and discover how people live in the Galapagos. Visit the Fausto Llerena Breeding Center, a great place to observe many species of tortoises and land iguanas in captivity. Brought back from the brink of extinction, see the famous Galápagos tortoise up close - a corral houses adult tortoises, and a nursery cares for the young until around age three when their shells have hardened. This area also houses the Charles Darwin Research Station, a scientific organization initiated in 1964, which works to preserve the Galápagos' ecosystem through the conservation efforts of scientists, researchers, and volunteers. While the offices themselves are not open to visitors, the research station provides a study location for international scientists and environmental education for the local community.

Enjoy the highlands of Santa Cruz and see the Galápagos giant tortoise in its natural surroundings. Explore the area and its incredible underground lava tunnels. Wander along the volcanic tubes and keep an eye out for the (mainly) nocturnal barn owls that sometimes roost here.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)

Grade: Standard Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 7 - Travel to Santiago and Bartolome Islands

In the morning, we will travel to Sullivan Bay on Santiago Island to witness the striking and fascinating giant lava formations. Very few plants have managed to survive on this island due to its harsh environment and relatively new lava flow. Enjoy a walk along the lava formations before coming to a white coral sand beach, where plentiful Sally lightfoot crabs and sea lions can be seen. Enjoy a cool dip after exploring Sullivan Bay on foot. Grab a snorkel and discover many species of fish and other marine life in the shallow waters. Keep an eye out for turtles, rays, and large schools of colourful fish.

Later, we visit Bartolome Island. A hike to the summit of the island (Pinnacle Rock) provides a clearer perspective of the islands' not-too-distant volcanic origins, and the panoramic view is one of the best among the islands. From here the double-sided beach of Bartolome directly below, the volcanic tower rising out of the water next to it, and Santiago Island in the distance are all visible. After the summit hike, we stop at the beach to relax in semi-tropical tranquility. There is great snorkelling among the submerged volcanic rock and around the base of the tower. Home to Galápagos penguins, friendly sea lions, sea turtles, and a huge variety of fish, Bartolomé and its surrounding waters are a fantastic place to explore the natural wonders of the Galápagos. A short hike to the beach on the opposite side is worth the effort. It is not unusual to see sharks in these shallow waters, and marine turtles nest here from January through

till March.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)



Grade: Standard Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 8 - Visit Bachas Beach and Cerro Dragon, Santa Cruz Island

We visit Bachas Beach in the morning, located on the northeastern tip of Santa Cruz Island. This is a great beach to stroll on with crystalline waters perfect for swimming. The sand is made of decomposed coral, making it soft and white, and the beach is a favourite site for nesting sea turtles. Spot abundant Sally Lightfoot crabs on the lava rocks along the water's edge. Trek to see a wide range of wildlife, including flamingos, hermit crabs, black necked stilts, and marine iguanas. You will also have the opportunity to go snorkelling or swimming right off the beach. Spot all sorts of marine wildlife in its shallow waters and tidal pools.

In the afternoon, we will explore Cerro Dragon, on the western coast of Santa Cruz Island. Here we will see land iguanas as well as visit a salt water lagoon frequented by flamingos, common stilts, pintail ducks and other species of birds. Pass through a Palo Santo tree forest; endemic to the area, there are only 400 specimens of Scalesia trees left in the world.



ACCOMMODATION:
Montserrat (or similar)



Grade: Standard Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Visit Black Turtle Cove then fly back to Quito

Early morning, we visit Black Turtle Cove in search of marine life. Take a morning panga ride, offering a peaceful and fascinating glimpse into the diversity of the area. Spot sea turtles and different species of rays, often seen in this cove.

In the afternoon, we transfer to the airport on Baltra Island for our flight to Quito via Guayaquil (refueling stop only, you will not disembark the plane). On arrival back on the mainland, we transfer to the hotel for our final night in Ecuador.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hilton Colon (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Tour ends Quito

The tour ends in Quito this morning after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

Ecuador

Climate

Temperature ranges are similar all year round. In the highlands: the dry season lasts from June to mid-September. November and December are partially dry. The rainy months are October and from January to May, but showers are short and mostly in the afternoons. Temperatures range from 12°C to 24°C. Nights are cold at altitude (4°C - 10°C). The Coastal Region: from December to May it is hot and wet. From June to November it is generally cool and misty with sudden light showers.

Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. The Amazon Area: it is humid all year round. Temperatures range from 16°C to 32°C. From April to August the rainfall is heavier. The Galapagos: On the Galapagos, the hot season is January to April with largely sunny days and the possibility of heavy showers; the cool season runs from May to December and is generally more cloudy with much cooler seas. Please note that although it is windier from July to November the sea can be rough at any time of the year. On the mainland the dry season lasts from June to October, though September can be wet.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-5	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic	Spanish

Galapagos

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

The below optional activities are bookable locally in Quito in the reception area of the Hotel Hilton Colon.

Please note, the following prices are a guideline only and may be subject to change. Due to International flights timings and the times of flights to and from the Galapagos, excursions will require extra days in Quito which we can arrange for you before travel, please speak to one of our travel consultants to secure additional nights and extra transfers :-

Quito city tour (Half Day) - US\$50 (1 pers) / US\$40 (2+ pers), Plus entrance fees approx. US\$ 9pp

Quito city tour + Equator Line (Half day) - US\$60 (1 pers) / US\$45 (2+ pers) Plus entrance fees approx. US\$ 9pp Equator line museum US\$9

Equator Line (Half day)- US\$50 (1 pers) / US\$40 (2+ pers) Museum ents. US\$9

Mindo Cloudforest (Full day) - US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+ pers) plus entrance fees US\$20

Otavalo Market (Full day) inc visit to Calderon - US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+pers)

Cotopaxi Volcano (Full day) US\$100 (1 pers) US\$70 (2+pers) plus Park Entrance fee \$35 USD per group (this can be split between group)

Papallacta Hot Springs (Full day) - US\$100 (1 Pers) US\$50 (2+ pers) plus US\$7 Entrance fee per person. This is transport only Spa treatments are extra.

Cable Car - US\$3 taxi ; Entrance US\$8 You can get from 2.800 m to 4.200 m in 10 minutes and view Quito at your feet.

Please note that optional activities will need to be paid in cash and do not include lunch - please allow US\$10 accordingly.

Clothing

We recommend that you do not bring too much clothing as space is limited in the cabins. We would recommend you bring a fleece top, waterproof jacket, 4 shirts / T shirts, 1 pair of shorts, 2 pairs of trousers and 1 pair of hiking trousers. You will also need a swimsuit for the additional water-based activities offered. Full snorkelling equipment is provided on board.

Footwear

Bring comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals with a good grip. Plastic sandals (not flip flops) are useful for wet landings.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend the use of a duffel bag or backpack (whichever you find easiest to carry). A good size daypack is also essential. If you don't wish to take your entire luggage with you to Galapagos, please ensure you have an extra bag you can leave behind at hotel storage and pick up on your return.

Please note that the amount of luggage you can bring on the boat is LIMITED due to small cabin size. We recommend travellers use soft sided duffel bags of 40-50 litres in capacity. We will accept luggage types onboard, however if you are a single traveller sharing with another traveller, it's especially important to keep in mind that cabins are small in size and it's best to pack light.

Equipment

Pack a torch, water bottle, sunglasses, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, a beach towel, waterproof bag for camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. You may also wish to take binoculars. Full snorkelling equipment is provided on board.

Tipping

Local crew

Onboard the Galapagos yacht, tipping the naturalist guide and boat crew is customary. There will be two envelopes presented at the end of the voyage, one for the guide and one for crew members. The recommended amount is \$15-18 USD per day from each traveller (\$5-7 USD for the guide and \$10-11 USD for the crew members). This is only a suggestion as we understand that tipping is a personal choice.

Local fees

The Ecuadorian government currently levies a Galapagos Islands Park entry fee of \$120 USD per person. This is payable at the airport upon arrival in the park. It is not included in the cost of the tour, and must be paid in CASH. This fee funds park maintenance and supervision in Galapagos, as well as ecological study, conservation and infrastructure development in Ecuador's other national parks. Entry fees and the funds they generate for the national park system are among measures taken by the Ecuadorian government to protect its natural heritage.

The Galapagos National Park authorities have implemented a system of Transit Control Cards at a fee of \$20 USD per person. This card is to be purchased in CASH at a counter in the Quito airport before boarding the flight to the Galapagos. Please retain this card along with your passport as you will be required to present this upon arrival to the Galapagos Islands. Please note that this applies to all tourists entering the Galapagos Islands and is a supplement to the existing entry fee to the national park and is not controlled by tour operators or travel agencies. It is the first of a number of initiatives to track, control and maintain the sustainable tourism targets set out by the Galapagos National Park and the Ecuadorian government in an attempt to preserve the fragile environment of the archipelago.

Ecuador

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£13	£1.7	£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

US Dollar.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

US Dollars are used in Ecuador. You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the USD is approximately USD 1.28 to the British Pound. We recommend you take small denominations as 100US\$ bills are very difficult to use. Please check on line for up to date information

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in USD. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Galapagos

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Foreign Exchange

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight, Monserrat, Zodiac

Ship description

Featuring a spacious top deck with a bar, a large sundeck and a comfortable dining room and lounge area for briefings and relaxing, the Monserrat's common spaces are as roomy as her cabins. All cabins have side by side berths, private bathrooms and air conditioning. All meals are provided and are served aboard the vessel. The Monserrat boasts our highest passenger to expert ratio including a cruise director and a naturalist guide for every ten passengers. Snorkelling equipment and beach towels are included at no extra charge and wetsuits are available to rent. At times, when the Monserrat is being serviced, we will use another boat of equivalent standard and size.

The daily schedule consists of a shore excursion immediately following breakfast then lunch aboard and perhaps a siesta before the afternoon shore excursion. In the evening after dinner, your naturalist guide will brief you on the islands to be visited the following day. You are ferried from the yacht to shore via small boats called pangas. Landings are either 'dry' or 'wet', where you may have to wade ashore in shallow water. Your naturalist guide will accompany you during all excursions. Snorkelling and swimming are a large part of this trip and water-based activities will be offered on most days while travelling in the Galapagos. Please note, if you are not keen on water sports, there will often be no alternative to the extra water-based activity offered, other than staying and relaxing aboard the vessel. In some landing spots, there might be an option to walk on shore but this would be without a guide.

Our Galapagos trips are often part of longer or shorter itineraries, so it is not unusual that some of the group may change mid-way through your trip.

Cabins

Please note that the rooming on our Galapagos yachts is done on a first-come, first-serve basis, and we are not able to guarantee the specific cabin you will receive on board. The cabins are comfortable and clean, all with private bathrooms. Due to the specific location of the cabins on board, the window sizes vary as well as the noise at times when the boat is navigating, given the proximity of the cabins to the engine room. Our friendly and competent crew will ensure a smooth and comfortable journey for the duration of your tour.

On this tour, the price is based on a lower deck cabin. You can upgrade to an upper deck cabin if you wish, prices vary depending on dates and start from £180 per person.

Ship dining

On our Galapagos yachts, food is included, plentiful and made of fresh local ingredients. Dining is casual, tables are unassigned and the dining room is capable of seating the entire passenger compliment at one time. There is always a selection of different meals available, and vegetarians will find plenty of options. Special dietary requirements can be accommodated with advance notice, please advise us at time of confirmation. Coffee, tea and water are all provided free of charge. All other beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic are not included and can be purchased at the bar.