



ECUADOR
Custom Sample Itinerary
The Galapagos Islands & Coastal Guayaquil
11 days/10 nights
(can be adjusted longer or shorter according to preference)



[Map of South America](#) (interactive links)

Destination Maps: [Galapagos Islands](#) & [Ecuador Mainland](#)

SEASON: Year round

TRIP RATING: Easy/moderate island tour & natural history cruise (Grade I) - This expedition includes activities at low elevation with occasional wet landings (ankle to knee deep water) to reach observation sites. Optional water activities include swimming, snorkeling and kayaking with marine wildlife and slow-paced hikes up to 4 hours duration on occasionally rough or rocky trails. Anyone in reasonably good fitness and condition can enjoy a visit to the *Enchanted Isles*.

This is a personalized guided trip with your own private guide and vehicle/driver in Guayaquil and at Safari Camp. On the cruise, you'll have an all-inclusive stay with daily nature excursions led by on-site expert guides in small groups with other guests.







INTRODUCTION: Galapagos National Park straddles the equator 600 miles west of Ecuador's Pacific coast. Undisturbed for centuries and isolated from the mainland, unusual species of birds, plants, reptiles and some mammals developed on the island's rocky, volcanic atolls. Darwin's visit and subsequent studies of the island's flora and fauna in 1835 contributed to the formulation of his theory on the evolution of species and brought this fascinating ecosystem to the world's attention. Ecuador's largest park, was established in 1959 to protect the archipelago's unique environment and wildlife. The landmass consists of nearly 3,000 square miles which is divided between 6 large islands, 12 smaller islands, and over 40 islets. The creation of the Marine Resources Reserve expanded the preserved area to include more than 27,000 sq miles of ocean.





After arrival to **Guayaquil** on the coast of Ecuador, the first day is spent touring this historical and vibrant city. Then, following a morning flight to Baltra Island, we settle into the **Galapagos Safari Camp**, a distinctive luxury tent hotel located in the highlands of Santa Cruz Island. Take in sunset views from the deck of the main house looking over the slopes of the volcano to the Pacific Ocean. Each tent is fully equipped with a private bathroom, hot water shower and a deck with sitting area and hammock. The nearby village of Puerto Ayora is home to the Charles Darwin Research & Visitor Center and a pleasant main street along the bay with cafes and shops. Neighboring the camp are farms where giant tortoises roam in the wild (and sometimes in the camp itself). Explore with a private guide through lava tunnels, along pristine beaches with kayaking and snorkeling among marine iguanas, reef sharks and rays. Try a surf lesson or bike ride along quiet island roads. One of the main benefits of Safari Camp is that we can arrange private excursions for your party with your own guide and vehicle to explore Santa Cruz Island's natural wonders according to interest.


Continue exploring the archipelago aboard a deluxe **16 passenger motor catamaran**. Accompanied by an expert English-speaking naturalist guide, we learn about the natural history of these enchanted islands, visiting outlying sites as well as important central and southern islands. We learn about fascinating species such as marine and land iguanas, flightless cormorants and blue-footed boobies. We also swim and snorkel with sea lions and fur seals! Enjoy beautiful views of white, olive or red sand beaches with turquoise water and prepare to be impressed by powerful forces of nature.

DATE TOURING / HOTELS / MEALS (indicated as B,L,D)

<p>DAY 01 Tue</p>	<p>TO ECUADOR Depart home and arrive this evening to Ecuador's coastal, vibrant city of Guayaquil, located at the western banks of the Guayas River. Meet your friendly Southwind guide at the airport and transfer 15 min by private vehicle to one of the city's finest hotels, the riverfront Wyndham Hotel for the night. Meals are on your own today. Wyndham Hotel Guayaquil</p>	
<p>DAY 02 Wed</p>	<p>GUAYAQUIL An exciting city tour of Guayaquil awaits today. At the historical park, catch a glimpse into the beginnings of this important port city, as well as its lively present-day culture and natural environment. The park's gardens burst with the region's endemic flora. It is also an ideal location to learn about the birds, reptiles, and mammals of this region. Then head to the Southern Malecon 2000 boardwalk overlooking the Guayas River to see the Integration Plaza, Southern Marketplace and Crystal Palace. Lunch is included at a traditional Ecuadorian restaurant serving local cuisine. This afternoon, we head over to the Olmedo Plaza which has a tribute to the beloved Ecuadorian poet, Jose Joaquin Olmedo. At the Morisca Tower, take in views of the city and a monument to the four elements of the planet. Nearby is the Ecu-Andino hats workshop where we gain insight into famed Panama hats made of Toquilla straw and learn how despite the name, these hats originated in Ecuador. We finish touring in the colonial neighborhood of Las Peñas (declared as Cultural Heritage in 1982) walking narrow streets while admiring magnificent wood architecture and colorful houses. Return to the hotel with dinner on your own at leisure. (B,L) Wyndham Hotel Guayaquil</p>	 
<p>DAY 03 Thu</p>	<p>GUAYAQUIL / GALAPAGOS SAFARI CAMP Early pick up at the hotel and transfer 15 min to the airport with check-in assistance for a flight from Guayaquil to the Galapagos-Baltra Airport (2 hours). Pass through inspection where park officials ensure no foreign plants or animals are introduced to the islands. Meet your naturalist guide and transfer to nearby Santa Cruz Island. Drive to the top of the island to explore the Gemelos twin craters and enjoy lunch at a local farm while searching for giant tortoises in the wild. Descend through a lava tunnel on the farm before continuing to the Galapagos Safari Camp to begin your 4 day/3 night visit. Dinner is served in the lodge dining room this evening. (B,D) Galapagos Safari Camp (private safari tent with porch & private bath)</p>	 
<p>DAY 04 Fri</p>	<p>GALAPAGOS SAFARI CAMP / DAY YACHT EXCURSION After breakfast, transfer to the port to board a day yacht for a charter excursion to a nearby island. Enjoy a relaxed full day on the water with wildlife viewing, nature walks, swimming and snorkeling. This is a guided group excursion with other travelers onboard (up to 16 maximum), the boat has several comfortable sitting areas including an observation deck. Snorkeling gear and wetsuits are provided. A prepared lunch is included on the yacht. Return to the safari camp to take in the sunset and relax over dinner at the lodge. (B,L,D) Galapagos Safari Camp (private safari tent with porch & private bath)</p>	

<p>DAY 05 Sat</p>	<p>GALAPAGOS SAFARI CAMP / SANTA CRUZ ISLAND</p> <p>This morning's guided excursion is Cerro Mesa Hill for an impressive view of the archipelago. This is an excellent location to observe numerous endemic plants as well as up to 7 subspecies of finch and the Vermillion Flycatcher. The area is characterized by a persistent mist 8 months of the year making for a lush landscape. The west side features the largest crater on Santa Cruz. Afterwards, continue to the pristine Garrapatero Beach for a nature walk and picnic lunch. Black lava, mangroves, white sand, Pioneer cacti and turquoise water combine to create a spectacle setting. A small lagoon near the beach sometimes has pink flamingos and bahama ducks. Enjoy sea kayaking, snorkeling and swimming according to local conditions. Biking is also possible today according to interest.</p> <p>En route back to Safari Camp, a stop can be made at the Trapiche ecological farm to meet a local family and learn about traditional farming of sugar cane and coffee. Return to the Safari Camp this afternoon to swim in the pool or enjoy a cocktail on the deck before a gourmet dinner. (B,L,D)</p> <p>Galapagos Safari Camp (private safari tent with porch & private bath)</p>	 
<p>DAY 06 Sun</p>	<p>GALAPAGOS SAFARI CAMP / BEGIN CRUISE ON M/C ENDEMIC</p> <p>Enjoy sunrise and breakfast at the camp before transferring to the airport to meet staff of the M/C Endemic. With fellow cruise passengers, transfer to the port to board the luxurious motor catamaran to begin your 5 day/4 night cruise through the Galapagos archipelago. Settle in to your spacious modern stateroom with your own private balcony and bathroom.</p> <p>After a safety briefing and lunch onboard, join your naturalist guide for an afternoon visit to Dragon Hill on Santa Cruz Island. Some say the rocky hill got its name because it's shaped like a dragon, others say it's because there are so many land iguanas along the trail (that just a few decades ago were on the brink of extinction). Either way, Dragon Hill is a fun hike along a dusty trail winding through cacti and Palo Santo trees. Look for birds, including flycatchers, warblers and flamingos and pintail ducks in the salty lagoons. This visit is followed by the opportunity to snorkel offshore.</p> <p>Excursion type: nature walk / dry landing / easy (B,L,D)</p> <p>M/C Endemic</p>	 
<p>DAY 07 Mon</p>	<p>M/C ENDEMIC CRUISE: SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND</p> <p>MORNING: Kicker Rock</p> <p>No one seems able to agree what Kicker Rock looks like. This distinctive rock formation off the coast of San Cristobal island is called León Dormido, or "Sleeping Lion" in Spanish, but "Kicker Rock" in English. Depending on how you squint at it, it can be seen as vaguely shaped like a lion or a boot. As one of the archipelago's most iconic features, we sail around it for some incredible photographic opportunities. Lucky visitors may even get a glimpse of rays and sharks swimming just below the surface.</p> <p>Excursion type: Circumnavigation viewing (no landing)</p> <p>Witch Hill</p> <p>This visitor site gets its name from the "pájaro brujo," or witch bird, better known in English as the Vermillion Flycatcher. The site bewitches visitors even without the little red birds: it consists of a white coral sand beach perfect for playing in the sand, kayaking or snorkeling. You can snorkel or kayak in the gentle surf off the beach or take a zodiac ride among intriguing rock formations.</p> <p>Excursion type: nature hike, snorkeling, kayaking / wet landing / easy</p>	 

	<p>AFTERNOON: Sea Lion Island This site lives up to its name! One of the best snorkeling spots in the Galapagos, Isla Lobos is a long islet off of San Cristobal Island. The calm channel is perfect for beginning snorkelers. The island is home to a large colony of sea lions who sometimes splash into the calm bay and frolic with swimmers and snorkelers. It's also a great place to practice your kayak skills! There's a small population of blue-footed boobies, marine iguanas and great frigate birds nesting here. Excursion type: short hike, photography, snorkeling / dry landing / easy-moderate (B,L,D) M/C Endemic</p>	
<p>DAY 08 Tue</p>	<p>M/C ENDEMIC CRUISE: ESPAÑOLA ISLAND MORNING: Gardner Bay A gorgeous white-sand beach greets visitors. You can simply lounge and catch some sun alongside sleeping sea lions or take a stroll down the beach among bright orange-reddish Sally Lightfoot crabs and prehistoric looking marine iguanas as well as wading birds. The gentle surf here may lure you into the water to snorkel or float among the waves.</p> <p>Islets Osborn & Gardner One of the best snorkeling spots in all of Galapagos, Osborn Islet is known for tranquil waters and abundant sea life. Sea lions frolic with snorkelers while brilliant parrot fish nip at the coral on the sea bed and sea turtles swim by. Nearby, Gardner Islet is also home to a sea lion colony. These islets are near each other so guides may decide which to go to see depending on conditions. Excursion type: Snorkeling, zodiac ride, kayak, short hike / wet landing / easy</p> <p>AFTERNOON: Suarez Point An astounding visitor site, Punta Suarez is a personal favorite of many veteran Galapagos guides. It is the only place in all of the islands for a chance to see the majestic Waved Albatross. The winged giants migrate away from Española between January and April, but are found here the rest of the year. Suarez Point is also home to Nazca Boobys, Masked & Blue-footed Boobys, Red-billed Tropic Birds, marine iguanas, the endemic Hood mockingbird and more. (B,L,D) Excursion type: nature hike (1.9 mi) / dry landing / moderate M/C Endemic</p>	 
<p>DAY 09 Wed</p>	<p>M/C ENDEMIC CRUISE: SANTA FE ISLAND & SANTA CRUZ ISLAND MORNING: Isla Santa Fe Santa Fe is a small island with a memorable trail winding its way through a forest of tall, prickly cacti. The cacti are the preferred food of a thriving population of endemic Land Iguanas. The Santa Fe rice rat, one of the few mammals in the islands, is also found here, although the elusive rodent is seldom seen. The native population of giant tortoises on Santa Fe was wiped out by whalers over a century ago, but in 2015 some Española tortoises were released back onto the island. It is possible to go snorkeling and kayaking after the hike. Excursion type: nature hike, snorkeling / dry landing / moderate</p> <p>AFTERNOON: Charles Darwin Station/Fausto Llerena Breeding Center The breeding center is home to hundreds of baby tortoises of different subspecies being raised until they are large enough to be released. Over the years, thousands of tortoises have been released into their natural habitats. Here, visitors can learn all about the tortoises and other conservation programs run by the prestigious Charles Darwin Foundation. The famed Lonesome George tortoise is found here, he died in 2012, but his legend and conservation story lives in an exhibit at the center. (B,L,D) Excursion type: Walk through center & village / dry landing / easy M/C Endemic</p>	 

DAY 10 Thu	M/C ENDEMIC CRUISE / SOUTH PLAZA ISLAND / DEPARTURE Our final excursion is to South Plaza, a low, rocky island populated by cacti and a healthy population of land iguanas waiting for a prickly pear to fall from the branches. This favorite spot among visitors to Galapagos is home to the sesuvium plant, which is bright red at certain times of the year. This gives the site an otherworldly look and makes it one of the most picturesque sites in the archipelago. As you hike, look for boobys diving for fish offshore! Excursion type: nature walk / dry landing / easy Back onboard, as the ship navigates back to the port, we'll make final departure preparations and say farewell to the crew. We disembark with a short transfer to the Baltra airport with assistance checking in for the return flight to the mainland. Fly Galapagos to Guayaquil (2 hours). Reception on the mainland by your local guide and transfer to the familiar Wyndham Hotel near the airport. The hotel provides a nice base to relax, walk the riverfront boardwalk and have dinner on your own at leisure. Your guide will return to bring you back to the airport later this evening to help check-in for your overnight flight home. (B)	
DAY 11 Fri	ARRIVE HOME Arrive in your gateway city this morning, clear customs and make onward connections home.	

Meals: B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner. If a meal is not indicated above, you have flexibility to dine out at your leisure.

NOTE: During July-October, the Galapagos highlands experience a cool misty season. During these months, we recommend the [Finch Bay Hotel](#), a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, which is located on the coast near Puerto Ayora. The lower area of the islands along the coast have mild and warmer weather July-October.

OPTIONAL LONGER OR SHORTER TRIPS: Travelers with an extra day can consider a 1 or 2 night cultural and activity oriented pre-extension to the historic family-owned Hacienda La Danesa, a 1 hour 15 min drive from Guayaquil. La Danesa offers biking, horseback riding, a cacao experience, river tubing, hiking and lovely gardens. If you need to reduce the trip by a day, we can arrange a 3 night cruise instead of 4 nights.

NEXT STEP: Please contact Tom Damon to setup a custom planning phone call. With your feedback on the destinations, activities and accommodations in this sample itinerary, Southwind will create a custom proposal tailored to your travel style, goals, dates and budget. Your proposal will provide Land Cost pricing and more details. Accommodations shown in this sample itinerary are in the 4-5 star category with superior or preferential rooms with views. Optional upgrades to exclusive top tier hotels can be provided during the planning. Note that space or room types cannot be guaranteed until a design fee or deposit is paid and Southwind receives confirmation. It will help to finalize plans at your soonest convenience for best selection. For high season or holiday dates, we are able to place a complimentary hold with a design fee to help secure space while we fine tune your itinerary.

We look forward to having you travel with us in Ecuador & the Galapagos Islands!

For more information please contact your personal travel planner:
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