

ECUADOR - ABSOLUTE GALAPAGOS | GRAND DAPHNE



INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive 17-day tour of the stunning Galapagos Islands sees you sailing as far afield as Espanola, the spectacular southernmost island of the Galapagos, past Kicker Rock to the westernmost island of Fernandina and up to the north-eastern outpost of Genovesa. Spectacular scenery and an incredible array of flora and fauna, both land and marine, are all waiting to be discovered as you cruise between the islands aboard the M/Y Daphne. Blue and red-footed boobies, frigatebirds, vermillion flycatchers and Darwin's finches are amongst the colourful birds you are likely to spot. Be intrigued by the prehistoric-looking iguanas and lava lizards, the playful sea lions, the placid giant tortoises and the soaring albatrosses. Be mesmerised by the beautiful landscapes from mangrove wetlands to lava fields, Scalesia cloud forests, red sand beaches and picturesque coves. This will be an incredible experience that will be etched in your memory forever.

* Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions and government regulations.

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE

ECTSABG

DEPARTURE

Selected Tuesdays

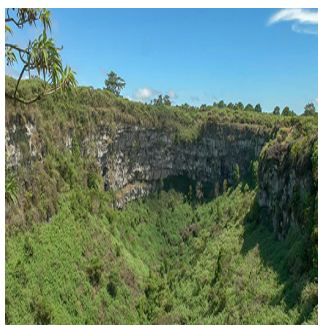
DURATION

17 Days

LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos Islands





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DAY 3: Isla Floreana

Discover the quirky maritime history of Post Office Bay, home of the oldest postal system in the Americas. Take the opportunity to post a letter in the historic post office barrel from 1793 which is still used today. Galapagos visitors can leave letters and postcards to be collected by the next passing boat. Snorkelling and a lovely panga ride are also included in this outing. Afterwards, head ashore at Punta Cormorant where the sand is made up of fine olivine crystal (a glassy volcanic mineral that gives the beach an olive-green colour). This is the best place to see Galapagos sea lions. Keep an eye out for pink flamingos and other waterbirds wading in the lagoons, including pintails and stilts. The moderate 2-kilometre walk continues to a white-flour sandy beach, which is an Eastern Pacific green turtle nesting site. Young diamond stingrays are commonly found in the shore line. Enjoy the view of the turquoise crystalline ocean. Just offshore, the famous Devil's Crown is an old eroded volcanic cone and a popular roosting site for seabirds such as boobies, pelicans and frigates. Red-billed tropicbirds can also be seen nesting in the rocky crevices. The centre of the cone is an outstanding spot and many people find this one of the best snorkelling experiences of their trip. You might see rays, sharks, sea lions and turtles.

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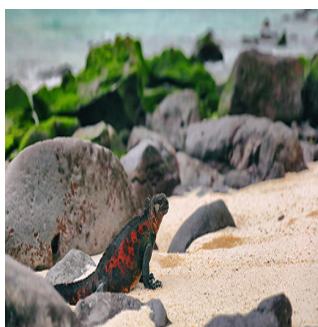
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DAY 6: Isla Santa Fe - Isla Plaza Sur

Isla Santa Fe is home to more sea lions, and these ones are very eager for swimming partners! It's a lovely place to take a dip, offers a dense concentration of wildlife, and is a fantastic place to see many of the stars of the Galapagos in one relatively small area. Expect to see Galapagos hawks, land iguanas, a variety of finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, sea lions, marine turtles, frigatebirds, Galapagos doves and lava lizards. This stunning island boasts one of the most attractive coves in the whole archipelago. The jade-green waters are ideal for snorkelling. Take a hike along the coast into the Opuntia forest (approximately 1.5 hours). From here you can see Santa Fe's trees – the largest in the Galapagos – along with a forest of giant cacti and palo santo trees. The trail can be a little rocky, so mind your step. Once back at the beach, you'll have time for a snorkel. Playful sea lion pups and fluorescent fish make for nice company. Afterwards, continue to Plaza Sur (South Plaza), a small, picturesque island. Take a walk (approximately 1.5 hours), getting close to sea lions and passing one of the Galapagos' largest land iguana populations which rest among cacti, volcanic landscapes dotted with brightly coloured sea-purslanes. The southern cliffs are great for spotting tropicbirds and swallow-tailed gulls, as well as 'the Gentlemen's Club' – a gathering of male sea lions. Today there may be an extra stop along the way to Plaza Sur to restock the provisions for the boat. Later tonight, set sail for Isla Genovesa.

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DAY 8: Isla Santiago - Isla Santa Cruz

On Santiago Island's eastern coast sits Bahia Sullivan, also known as James Island. Here you'll take a walk along pahoe-hoe lava (approximately 1 hour), which was created by an eruption that occurred in 1897, and witness the plants that have grown on the site since that last eruption. With some luck you might see some marine iguanas, Sally Lightfoot crabs, sea lions, finches, turtles, sharks and penguins. During your walk, your guide will recount the geological history of the islands. Then travel to Cerro Dragon (Dragon Hill): one of the best places to see land iguanas in the islands. From our dry landing, walk to a brackish, lagoon spotting lagoon birds such as stilts, pintail ducks, sandpipers, sanderlings and flamingos. Further inland, the trail offers a beautiful view of the bay and the western area of the archipelago. This area is a nesting site for land iguanas, which is constantly monitored and assisted by the Charles Darwin Research Station. The arid-zone vegetation makes for an ideal place to see Darwin's finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, the endemic Galapagos flycatcher and yellow warblers. The path can be challenging but it will be worth it for a spectacular view of the bay.



DAY 9: Isla Santa Cruz

Explore Caleta Tortuga Negra (Black Turtle Cove) on a Zodiac. This red mangrove wetland is located on the north shore of Isla Santa Cruz. Cruise through this peaceful cove and look out for mating green turtles, as well as golden cow-nose rays, eagle rays and Galapagos sharks. Head to Las Bachas, where the soft sand made of decomposed coral is a nesting site for the Pacific green turtle. Marine iguanas are also commonly spotted along the beach. The rocks make for excellent snorkelling and are populated by Sally Lightfoot crabs which are plentiful on the island. A saltwater lagoon just near the beach is home to flamingo and whimbrel - you might also see a great blue heron. Remnants of a floating pier, a testimony to the US presence in the Galapagos during World War II, can also be seen. Please note that today there will be some downtime spent on Le Grande Daphne, as the guide will be escorting other passengers to and from the airport.



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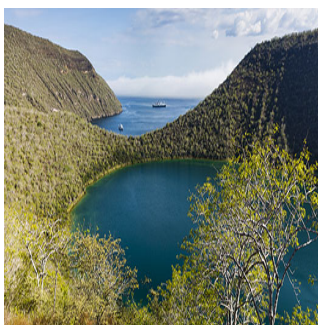
DAY 10: Isla Rabida - Isla Isabela

Today you will sail from Las Bachas to Isla Rabida, known for its spectacular red sand beaches, caused by the high content of iron in the sand which rusts to form the unusual shade. Follow a trail from the shore along to a lagoon which is one of the best spots in the Galapagos to view flamingos. Keep an eye out for nesting pelicans, pintail ducks, marine iguanas and sea lions – all are commonly sighted on the island. Check out a vast opuntia cactus forest, hinting at the previous habitation of land iguanas, Galapagos hawks, mockingbirds, doves, finches and lava lizards. You may like to take the chance to go snorkelling and seek out sea stars, damsels, gobbies and surgeon fish. In the afternoon, head to Albemarle on the northeast side of Isabela Island. Covered in mangroves, the bay is home to sea turtles, sea lions, penguins and flightless cormorants who feed on the algae and fish here. Take a walk inland and discover the remains of an old radar base from World War II and pass by pahoehoe and lava formations. Another fantastic location for snorkelling, you may like to have a look beneath the water's surface in search of sea turtles and flightless cormorants.



DAY 11: Isla Isabela

Sail overnight from Isla Santiago around to the western shores of Isla Isabela. Wake up near Tagus Cove, where pirates and whalers used to collect tortoises for their travels. Enjoy a short visit here (approximately 2 hours), perhaps snorkelling or checking out the graffiti on the walls (the oldest of which is from 1836). Witness flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies, a variety of waterfowl and the most northerly penguins in the world. You will walk to a lookout point for a stunning view of the north of Isabela Island and Volcan Wolf (Wolf Volcano). Today you will also visit Bahia Urbina on the west of Isabela Island, Urbina Bay has a wide variety of plant life which changes depending on the season. You will be able to observe the beautiful color of the plants which attracts many different insects. The site also features a short trek inland, where giant tortoises can be spotted amongst the bushes in their natural habitat. You may also see land iguanas which often nest in the middle of the trail where their distinctive, textured and yellowish skin can be observed from up close. Flycatchers, Darwin's finches and mockingbirds are common on the ground and in the trees.

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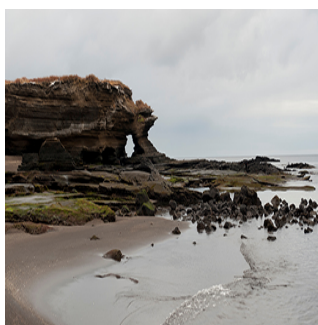
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DAY 16: Baltra - Quito

Flights to the mainland from Galapagos depart mid-morning, so it's an early start for your last morning on the islands. You will visit the Santa Cruz Highlands for a second time. Travel through the agricultural region and into the misty forests where you can see the unique *Scalesia* cloud forest and experience seeing the dome-shaped giant tortoises in the wild once again. Take in the serene atmosphere of the highlands and its wildlife and then it's time to bid farewell to the archipelago and head to the airport for your mid-morning flight back to Quito for the last night of the tour. This flight takes approximately 2.5 hours with a transit in Guayaquil. Upon arrival at Quito Airport, at about 4pm, you'll be transferred back to your hotel for an overnight stay. A local Intrepid representative might stop by the hotel this evening to get your feedback on the trip.



DAY 17: Quito

There are no activities planned for the final day so we are able to depart our accommodation at any time. If you have not spent time here before, we recommend you stay on a few days as there are many fascinating things to do in and around Quito, such as the Cotopaxi volcano, the Cloud Forest, hot springs, the Equatorial Monument or perhaps city tour of the fascinating Old Town. Please speak to our customer service representative about any optional activities that might be of interest. They can also assist you in booking a departure transfer to the airport.

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship & hotel
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INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights group hotel in Quito
- Arrival Transfer in Quito (must have flight arrival plans confirmed 30 days prior)
- Transfers in Galapagos
- Accommodation on board Grand Daphne in double cabin
- All meals during the cruise
- Guiding by Galapagos National Park Certified Guide
- All visits and excursions/landings according to the itinerary*
- Snorkel Gear (mask, tube and fins)
- Kayaks
- Unlimited purified water, coffee and tea

EXCLUSIONS

- Local Taxes
- Round trip flight to/from Galapagos
- Any other airfares unless otherwise specified in the itinerary
- Galapagos National Park Entrance fee (US\$200 per person from Aug 2024 - Subject to change)
- Galapagos Ingala card (USD 20,00 per person - Subject to change)
- Passport & Visa Expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Alcoholic & soft drinks
- Additional visits
- Additional meals
- Excess baggage charges
- Telecommunications charges (Wi-Fi is not available on the boat at all whilst in the Galapagos Islands)
- Wetsuit Hire
- Personal expenses and tips
- Items not specified

Inclusions

Difficulty Rating 2 (light adventure)

Single Surcharge A single supplement surcharge applies and is subject to availability. Please contact us for more information.

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