

Galapagos Discovered

6 days | Starts/Ends: Quito



Every year the Galapagos Islands tempt throngs of travellers to its shores in search of unique wildlife and other-worldly landscapes. Explore these volcanic islands on board a 4 day cruise, hopping from island to island, discovering what makes it so special.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- The UNESCO listed colonial city of Quito - independently explore the city
- San Cristobal Island - The Interpretation Centre and Tijeretas Hill with its spectacular views
- Espanola Island: Punta Suarez, where the albatross is endemic and Gardner Bay, famous for its sea lion population
- Floreana Island - renowned for its flamingoes
- Snorkelling in the crystal clear waters
- Relaxing onboard the boat, admiring the spectacular views

What's Included

- 2 nights 3 star hotel in Quito, including breakfast. (Option to upgrade to a 4 star hotel upon request)
- 4 day Galapagos Cruise - 3 nights onboard the M/C Anahi catamaran (First

Class category) in a twin or double cabin, on the main deck with en suite and A/C. (Option to upgrade to a suite)

- 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners
- Quito airport arrival transfer on day 1 with an English speaking guide
- Galapagos flights: Quito to San Cristobal and Baltra to Quito - including airport and port transfers
- Complementary soft drinks onboard (tea, coffee and water) plus welcome and farewell drinks
- The services of 9 crew members and an experienced English speaking Naturalist guide
- Two guided Galapagos excursions a day
- Kayaking and snorkelling at the permitted points (wetsuits can be hired onboard for an additional fee)

What's Not Included

- Entrance Fees: USD\$120pp Galapagos park fee & transit card, paid in USD
- International flights and visas
- Airport departure transfer on day 6
- Tips for the crew, your guide and drivers.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Quito

Monday. Upon arrival at Quito airport you will be met by an English speaking guide and transferred to your hotel in the city. The

remains of the day is free for you to explore Quito or simply relax. **Overnight - Quito**

Day 2 : San Cristobal Island

Quito - Galapagos. This morning, transfer back to the airport for your flight to San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos, where your guide will be waiting for you. Transfer to the M/C Anahi which will be your home for the next 4 days. Settle into your cabin and enjoy lunch onboard before your tour of the wildlife-rich Galapagos Islands begins.

San Cristobal is one of the easternmost of the Galapagos Islands and the site where Charles Darwin landed in 1835, marking the start of his romance with this fascinating archipelago. Our first port of call here is the San Cristobal Interpretation Centre, which offers intriguing insight into the history of the island and its development over time in regards to its flora and fauna, populace and conservation efforts. Later we will take a walk up the picturesque Tijeretas Hill, boasting spectacular views of the island. Here there will also be the chance to go snorkelling in a nearby inlet, and perhaps you'll even be lucky enough to spot a sight only seen here – of two species of frigate birds nesting in the same colony.

Overnight - Galapagos Islands - M/C Anahi (B, L, D)

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Day 3 : Espanola Island



Today we will explore Espanola, one of the oldest islands within the archipelago – dating back some 3.3 million years, and also one of its prettiest. Due to its distance from the other islands, Espanola is home to an incredible number of endemic species including the albatross, a variety of mocking birds, lava lizards and even Darwin's finches.

We will start the morning by exploring Punta Suarez, situated on the western side of the island, where you will hopefully be able to spot some of the island's unique birdlife. Later in the afternoon we will make our way to the northern coast to Gardner Bay, home to an enormous colony of sea lions which can be seen lazing on the beach and rocks during breeding season.

Overnight - Galapagos Islands - M/C Anahi (B, L, D)

Day 4 : Floreana Island



Our next port of call is Floreana. Although one of the smallest islands in the Galapagos, Floreana certainly makes up for what it lacks in size with its fascinating history. Home to one of the first settlements in the archipelago, this small island was once thriving with pirates and whalers. Floreana also boasts unprecedented flora, thanks to its nutrient-rich soil, and stunning beaches.

Here we will enjoy a morning excursion to Punta Cormorant on the northern coast, where we will discover a beautiful lagoon thriving with flamingos and a fine sand beach, which is a nesting area for sea turtles. Later we will cruise out to the Devil's Crown – a collapsed volcanic crown and perhaps one of the best snorkelling sites in the Galapagos Islands, where you can spot submarine life such as sea turtles, Galapagos sharks, moray eels and sea lines. Outside of the crown is a good place to see hammerhead sharks.

This afternoon we will visit historic Post Office Bay, which is where travelling seamen would leave letters in a wooden barrel with the hopes that the next person to come along might be able to take their letter in the right direction. Today, this tradition lives on with the tourists who visit the Galapagos. It's possible to send a letter or postcard from Post Office Bay without stamp, all you have to do in return is pick up a letter that is directed to where you live. **Overnight - Galapagos Islands - M/C Anahi** (B, L, D)

Day 5 : Santa Cruz



Our last stop will be Santa Cruz, the second largest of the islands, located at the centre of the archipelago. We will kick off the morning with a tour of Charles Darwin Station, which takes in the famous tortoise breeding centre. The Galapagos breeding program sees eggs are brought from the Galapagos Islands of Pinzon, Santiago and Santa Cruz to the station where they are incubated artificially; the galapaguitos are born and reared until the age of 5 years, and when they can survive the effects of introduced predators they are returned to their native areas. There is also a breeding program for iguanas.

After this visit, you'll be transferred to the airport on Baltra Island for your flight back to Quito. Upon arrival you'll be met and transferred to your hotel in Quito for your final night at leisure in the capital.

Overnight - Quito (B)

Day 6 : Quito

Saturday. Arrangements end after breakfast and hotel check out today. (B)

M/C Anahi

The M/C Anahi is a First Class category, Power Catamaran Yacht, built in Guayaquil, Ecuador and launched at the end of 2006 with high comfort standards. As the Anahi is a catamaran, it offers unparalleled stability, which helps to avoid sea sickness, ensuring that your cruise will be a restful and relaxed one. The Anahi is also one of the fastest boats of its size.

The Anahi can accommodate 16 passengers. It has six 14m² twin cabins on the main deck (including two which can transform into double bed cabins), and two spacious 25m² suite cabins on the upper deck which have a sofa bed in addition to a king size bed and are therefore suitable for those travelling with children. Every cabin has large windows - portrait type - for wonderful ocean views, a beautiful wooden floor and cozy private facilities with hot/cold water shower, in addition to a locker, closet and air conditioning.

On the main deck, the yacht has plenty of resting areas, including a library, TV-DVD room, comfortable dining room and lounge. The upper deck of the Anahi features a charming bar and an excellent area for relaxation, together with a jacuzzi for six people. In addition to this, above the bar area is a spacious sundeck with resting chairs for eight people to soak up the sunshine and admire the spectacular views.

Specifications

- Type: Motor Catamaran
- Category: First Class
- Year: 2006
- Length: 90.50 ft / 27.60 m
- Beam: 36.08 ft / 11 m

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- Capacity: 18 passengers (Authorization navigation : 16 passengers)
- Main Engines: 2 x John Deere IMO 300 HP each
- Electric System: 2 x 50 kw generators (IMO) (110v and 220v. AC)
- Speed: 10 knots
- Water Capacity: 3000 gal. plus water maker with capacity of 1000 gl/ day
- Diesel Capacity: 200 gallons
- Material Construction: Glass fiber
- Interiors: wooden flooring
- Exterior: Teakwood flooring
- Crew: 9 + 1 naturalist bilingual guide
- Accommodation: 16 passengers in 6 twin bed cabins on main deck and and 2 suits on upper deck

Navigation & Safety Equipment:

One 48 miles Radar; Echosounder; GPS; One VHF radio; Epirb; Magnetic compass; 2 Rigid life rafts for 15 passengers each; 30 SOLAS life jackets; fire & smoke detectors; complete fire system; 2 Zodiac rafts for 10 persons each. Safety equipment complies with international Coast Guard regulations

Entrance Fees

A Galapagos park entrance fee of US \$100 and a Transit Card of US \$10 are not included in the cost of the tour.

The Galapagos park entrance fee is to be paid IN CASH at the Galapagos Island Entrance Control on day 2. The Transit Card fee is to be paid in CASH at the desk in the New Mariscal Sucre Airport in Quito, before boarding the plane to Galapagos. Our representative will assist you with this.

What to Pack

Clothing

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Sandals with thongs or Tevas
- Light cotton socks
- Long-sleeved cotton shirts and T-shirts
- Light cotton scarf to protect your neck
- Shorts
- Lightweight long trousers or skirt / dress
- Light rain jacket or wind breaker
- Sweatshirt, Sweater, light jacket: the early morning/late evenings can get cool, often with a breeze
- Wide-brim hat

- Bathing suits

Equipment

- Sun block lotion
- Sunscreen (at least factor 15)
- Lip salve
- Sunglasses with a strap
- Insect repellent
- Personal medication
- Self-sealing bags for electronic equipment
- Camera, memory cards and extra batteries
- Underwater cameras to take photos of the animal life while snorkeling
- Binoculars in case you want to get a more detailed look at unique animals in Galapagos.

Money and Security

- Passport
- Copy of passport
- US Cash mostly low denomination bills (\$5 to \$20)
- Travel Insurance

Motion Sickness

- Salted Crackers
- Candied Ginger or ginger tablets
- Patch

First Aid

- Immodium or Lomotil for diarrhea
- Band - Aids
- Anti-biotic cream
- Aloe Vera cream or gel for sunburn
- Pain relief tablets

Wetsuits

Wetsuits can be hired onboard the Anahi. The cost of wetsuit hire is: US\$ 10 per day or US\$ 20 for the entire length of the cruise.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Ecuador Country Guide

Ecuador - Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Ecuador
- Capital: Quito (population 1.4 million)
- Government: Multiparty Republic
- Population: 13.4 million
- Total Area: 283,560 kilometres squared, including the Galapagos Islands (slightly smaller than Nevada, USA)

- Official Languages: Spanish. Others: Amerindian languages (especially Quechua)
- Religions: Roman Catholic 95%
- Voltage: 110 volts. Sockets are a mixture of the European, two-pronged round variety and US flat-pin.
- Time Difference: For time differences please visit www.timeanddate.com
- International airport departure tax: US \$25. This is sometimes included in your airfare - please check with your airline before departure.

Ecuador - Visas

Most nationals, including citizens of the EU, North American and Australasia do not need a visa to enter Ecuador. Entry is granted on production of a passport valid for more than six months, a return air/bus ticket and proof of funds to support yourself for the duration of the stay. You'll be issued with a T-3 tourist card on arrival, which you should keep safely with your passport as it will be collected when you leave the country. The tourist card can allow up to 90 days stay, although it's up to the immigration official to decide whether you're allocated 30, 60 or 90 days on arrival. Visa requirements do change periodically so you should check for the latest information on your specific visa requirements with your local Equadorian embassy or consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

Ecuador - Climate

Ecuador is divided into the coastal plain (costa), inter-Andean central highlands (sierra), and flat to rolling eastern jungle (oriente). There's no real summer and winter in Ecuador, with weather patterns varying according to geography, and temperatures determined more by altitude than by season or latitude. As a general rule, the warmest and driest months in the sierra are June to September, though this is complicated by various microclimates found in some areas. Outside these months, typical sierra weather is characterised by sunny, clear mornings and cloudy, often wet, afternoons. In the oriente, you can expect it to be warm, humid and rainy throughout the year, though there are often breaks in the rain between August and September and December to February.

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In the lowland areas it can get particularly hot on clear days, with temperatures easily topping 30°C. The coast has the most clearly defined wet and dry seasons, with the best time to visit being from December to April, when you'll get frequent showers but also clear blue skies and warm weather. From May to November, the southern coast, in particular, is often overcast and relatively cool, with less chance of rainfall.

Check the weather chart on our website or visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your trip.

Ecuador - Money

Important

In Latin America you will have problems changing the US\$100 CB B2 2001 series notes and it is important you do not to bring them. In some countries banks won't even take them. The serial number is located in the top left hand corner and bottom right hand corner on the side with the President's face. This serial number starts with CB and then a few more numbers and then directly under that B2. At the bottom of the note near the signature of the Treasurer it says which series of notes it is and it is there that it says 2001 series.

Local Currency

In April 2000, the government in Ecuador decided to 'dollarise' the economy due to the instability of their own currency, the sucre. The country now uses the US dollar as its own currency, which means that you do not need to change money on arrival (if you bring sufficient US dollars with you). If you do need to change money into dollars, you can do it at the bank after exiting the luggage hall or use one of the ATMs outside the terminal. Remember that if you are travelling through to other countries in South America, Ecuador is the best place to load up on US dollars cash without paying high charges. Having said that we do recommend that you bring as much US dollars cash as you feel comfortable carrying as it is not always easy to get money out on credit and debit cards. You should carry your US dollars in small denominations (US\$1, US \$5, US\$10 and US\$20 are best) as there is always a shortage of change.

Although bank cards are often the easiest way to go, there are times where they will not work for you even if your bank at home tells you it will! Do not rely on your card as your only source of money. Always have a few back-ups with you.

Ecuador - Local Transport

Most of Quito is easy to visit on foot, although there is a cheap trolley bus system which travels from north to south of the city. There are also normal buses which are cheap but can get very crowded. We recommend that you use taxis at night as they are fairly cheap but also have meters so you do not need to worry about bartering to get a good price – just make sure the driver puts the meter on when you get in.

In other Ecuadorian towns and cities walking is basically the best and cheapest way to see the sights.

Ecuador - Food & Drink

As a guideline a simple snack (e.g. a sandwich) can cost as little as US\$2, a light meal will cost around US\$4-5, and even a meal in one of the best restaurants in Quito or Cuenca costs very little in comparison to what you would expect to pay at home (usually around US\$30-40). Obviously this depends on what you order and if you have wine or other drinks which will certainly increase the bill.

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense at all times. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below;

- 1 litre of water - US\$1
- 30cl bottle of soft drink - US\$0.70
- 30cl bottle of beer - US\$1.20
- 50cl bottle of beer - US\$1.70

Food

In Ecuador the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly with french fries or rice (or both) and possibly a little salad. Ceviche is fish marinated in lemon juice, onion and hot peppers traditionally served with corn on the cob and tostado (roasted maize). Other popular dishes include

fritada (roast pork), lomo ala pimiento (pepper steak), humitas (ground corn steamed in a maize leaf) and quimbolitas (similar to humitas but with corn-flour and cooked in banana leaves). For a simple fish, you should ask for pescado which can be grilled, pan fried with breadcrumbs (apanado) or served with a sauce. An interesting local speciality is cuy (pronounced: cooee). This is roasted guinea pig which some people say tastes like chicken, others, like cooked cardboard!

Maize and potatoes feature in many dishes, particularly soups. Locro de papas is cheese and potato soup, sancocho de yucca is vegetable soup with cassava or manioc root and sopa de bola verde is vegetable banana dumpling soup. Typical snacks are empanadas (little fried pasties usually filled with meat, chicken, cheese or even prawns) and patacones (fried vegetable banana chips, served as a side dish).

Much of Ecuador's food is not too hot and spicy but you will find a bowl of aji (which is a chilli or hot pepper sauce) on most tables which can be added to spice things up.

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. You might find that you are eating a lot of omelettes and other egg dishes. Our tour leaders will do their best to organise interesting vegetarian alternatives for included meals, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drinks

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and are generally safe to drink. Please note however that fruit juices are sometimes made with unboiled tap water and could upset your stomach. An easy way around this is to order juice 'con leche' (with milk) instead. The choice of different juices is incredible e.g. mora (blackberry), piña (pineapple), naranjilla (mixture between mandarin and orange), maracuya (passion fruit), tomato de argol (like a tomato but with a harder texture), guanabana (custard apple) and curia (which has a great taste – just try it!).

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In Ecuador some of the hotels we use have bars or serve alcoholic drinks. If there is not a bar in the hotel then there is sure to be a bar within walking distance. In more up-market hotels, imported beers and spirits are available but usually at a high price. If you are happy to drink the local spirits then there is an array of rums, aguardiente (a kind of ouzo) and imported Chilean and Argentine wine can sometimes be found cheaply. There are various brands of beers including Pilsener, Club and Biela.

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