



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 Grand Daphne. Blue and red-footed boobies, frigatebirds, vermilion 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.

Check out some of the other itineraries on the Grand Daphne: [10 Day Ultimate Galapagos](#), [10 Day Complete Galapagos](#), [6 Day Galapagos at a Glance](#), [7 Day Galapagos Adventure: Northern Islands](#)

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE

ECTSABG

DEPARTURE

Selected Tuesdays

DURATION

17 Days

LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos Islands, South America



ECUADOR - ABSOLUTE GALAPAGOS CRUISE | GRAND DAPHNE

DAY 2: Baltra - Santa Cruz Highlands

Today is mostly a long travel day, and your Galapagos activities will begin after lunch. Rise early and transfer to the airport (approximately 1 hour) for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. Pick-up may be as early as 4:30 am (your leader will confirm this at the welcome meeting) and a boxed breakfast will be provided. You will be met in the arrivals hall of the airport by a transfer guide (look out for 'Daphne' signs). Your transfer guide will take you on an airport public bus for a short distance (approximately 5 minutes), then you'll board the public ferry and head across the Itabaca Channel (approximately 7 minutes). All public transport fees are included. Once you reach Santa Cruz Island, it's time for your first Galapagos destination - take a private bus to the Highlands. After a short journey (approximately 10 minutes), arrive at Los Gemelos, which are twin sinkholes (not volcanic craters) created by the collapse of surface material in underground fissures and chambers. It is surrounded by the unique Scalesia cloud forest, so be on the look-out for the abundant bird life including different species of Darwin finches, woodpeckers, warbler finches and vermilion flycatchers. Continue into the highlands (approximately 30 minutes) and explore a rancho farm, where you will take a walk and enjoy your first lunch on the islands. The walk around (approximately 2 kilometres) reveals giant tortoises in their natural habitat. After lunch, travel to Puerto Ayora (approximately 45 minutes) where your yacht Daphne and her crew will be waiting for you. Once on board, you'll be assigned a cabin and meet your crew and naturalist guide. Settle in for your first night on the islands. Please note the Transit Card & National Park Fees are not included in the cost of the trip as they need to be paid locally: There is a US\$20 Galapagos Islands transit card fee that needs to be paid at the airport in Quito prior to departure to the islands. All visitors must pay the Galapagos National Park fee of US \$200 upon arrival at the airport in the Galapagos. If your trip visits Isla Isabela, there is also port fee of US\$10 which is to be paid locally. These fees are to be paid in cash.



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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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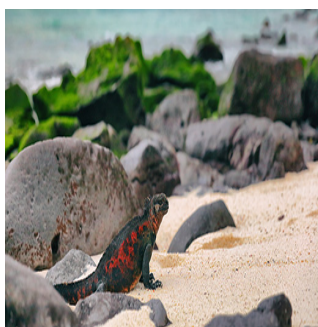
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DAY 4: Isla Española

Sail overnight and wake up on the island of Española, the spectacular southernmost island of the Galapagos. Because of its remote location, this island has a large population of endemic fauna. It is the breeding site for nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of waved albatrosses and also home to colonies of blue-footed and masked boobies. Trails from the golden beaches, where sea lions bathe and marine iguanas make their way towards the water, lead you right through the middle of booby colonies, and Galapagos doves and mockingbirds are also often seen. Land at Punta Suarez, one of the most attractive locations in the Galapagos, home to a large and varied wildlife population. A walk along its rocky trails (approximately 3 km) takes you to a clifftop viewpoint that affords magical panoramas. Boobies line the rocky shoreline below, while frigate birds can be seen overhead. Enormous male sea lions lounge nearby, and albatross use the cliffs as their 'runway', getting airborne on the southeast winds. If you're lucky you might spot the elaborate courtship rituals performed by albatrosses before the female chooses her lifelong mate. Next, head to Gardner Bay, one of the most beautiful beaches of the Galapagos Islands. It's full of sea lions and hooded mockingbirds. Enjoy a walk (approximately 1 km) along the beach, and do some snorkelling which could be great for playing with sea lion pups and many fish. The rocks off the coast provide particularly great snorkelling, with reef sharks, turtles and many species of tropical fish (such as surgeon and angelfish). Small white-tipped reef sharks are also often spotted resting under the rocks.



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DAY 5: Isla San Cristobal

Shake off any early morning doziness with a trip to Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock). This basalt crater rises 150 metres above the water and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel. Cruise around kicker rock as nesting seabirds flank the boat, tropicbirds soar overhead and sea lions lounge by the water. Next, spend some time snorkelling at Cerro Brujo, providing opportunities to see Galapagos sharks and sea turtles. Or perhaps enjoy the beautiful beach with a leisurely walk to photograph the interesting sea lions who can often be seen at this location. Later, sail to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on the island of San Cristobal. Some passengers will be leaving and others joining the group today, so you have some free time to explore the town of San Cristobal. In the afternoon you will visit the San Cristobal Interpretation Centre, which brings the history and geography of the archipelago to life, from its volcanic origins to the present day. If there's time, your guide may be able to organise an optional visit to the highlands of San Cristobal, for a chance to see giant tortoises in the wild. The price of this optional activity depends on the number of passengers attending. Relaxing on the beach is a great option for those who don't wish to partake in this excursion.



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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 7: Isla Genovesa

After an overnight sail, reach Isla Genovesa, the archipelago's north-eastern outpost. It's undeniably worth the voyage. Dolphins are often spotted in the waters around beautiful Genovesa. These varied landscapes are a twitcher's paradise, with all three kinds of boobies, including the rare red-footed booby, and numerous other species such as tropicbirds and frigate birds. Next, Bahia Darwin (Darwin Beach) is another superb site with large breeding colonies of seabirds and frigates and other birds such as lava herons, swallow-tailed gulls, mockingbirds and, hopefully, vampire finches. Enjoy a moderate walk (approximately 2.5 hours) that passes tide pools, sea lions and diamond stingrays. This walk involves sand and some rocky sections. The steep Prince Philip's Steps lead you to the heart of the seabird rookeries, with birds overhead and nesting among the cliffs. Look out for storm petrels on the island's rocky plains; Genovesa is the only place in the world where these birds can be seen flying during the day. Afterwards, perhaps cool off with a snorkel. The island's magnificent marine life makes for spectacular snorkelling - you might encounter manta rays, sharks, turtles and moray eels, plus many species of fish. Later tonight, depart Isla Genovesa for Isla Santiago.



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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 pahoehoe 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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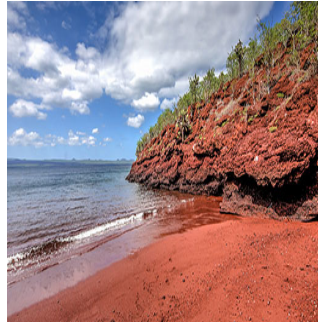
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DAY 10: Isla Rabida - Isla Isabela

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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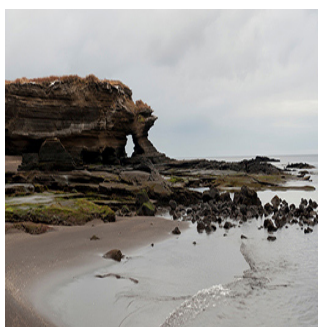
DAY 12: Isla Fernandina - Isla Isabela

Today we visit Punta Espinosa that is a narrow ledge of lava and sand extending from the base of La Cumbre volcano. Take a walk around the beautiful peninsula, which boasts such wildlife and plant life as lava cacti, marine iguanas, barking sea lions, tiny penguins and Sally Lightfoot crabs. Keep a lookout for that marvelous Galapagos predator hunting from the treetops: the Galapagos hawk. Top-notch snorkeling opportunities await in the clear waters, and turtles and sea lions can be seen swimming around and feeding on the shore. This is also a great spot to see flightless cormorants drying their atrophied wings on the rocks. In the afternoon head to Punta Vicente Roca, this site allowed for panga rides to observe the abundant wildlife and offers one of the best snorkeling spots of the Archipelago. The snorkeling "route" takes us along the cliffs and offers the not so common chance of exploring two shallow underwater caves. The primitive and unaggressive bullhead shark, known locally as the Port Jackson shark, is often seen here sharing its space with red-lipped batfish, frogfishes, Pacific seahorses, the endemic Camotillo, schools of barracuda and brown-striped snappers. Sponges, corals, and other marine invertebrates are also abundant in the area.



DAY 13: Isla Santiago

Sail this morning to Puerto Egas, a black-sand beach on the west side of James Bay, northwest of Isla Santiago, home to incredible volcanic tuff formations. Take a stroll along the beach with the native marine iguanas, pelicans, finches, mockingbirds, oystercatchers, Galapagos sea lions and Galapagos fur seals. You can see the amazing tidal pools, formed from ancient lava flow, providing a home for sponges, snails, hermit crabs, barnacles and fish. You might also end up snorkelling with a Galapagos fur seal - they're always looking for a friend! In the afternoon travel to the northwest side of Santiago Island where you'll find Caleta Bucanero, named after the pirates and buccaneers who once found shelter in the bay. Here you'll have the chance to go snorkelling and take a dinghy ride to look for blue-footed boobies, pelicans and nocturnal seagulls nesting in the cliffs.



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DAY 14: Isla Bartolome - Isla Sombrero Chino

Wake up in Bartolome Island, a spectacular volcanic landscape full of spatter cones and lava flows, and home to Galapagos penguins and lava lizards. Put on your walking shoes and climb up 360 wooden steps to the summit, where an amazing view of Pinnacle Rock awaits. This is one of the most photographed sights in the Galapagos - an abrupt jag of rock protruding from the earth like a tooth, providing a focal point for two nearby bays. Hike to the top of a once-active volcano and enjoy superb views across to Bahia Sullivan on nearby Isla Santiago. If you're in luck, you might catch a glimpse of the Galapagos hawk. There's also the chance to go snorkelling among the colourful marine life. In the afternoon, travel to the small island of Sombrero Chino, found on the southeast side of Santiago Island. With lovely sandy beaches and a striking volcanic landscape, this is a fantastic place to take a hike and look out for the sea lions and penguins that rest here, and snorkel in search of reef sharks and sea turtles.



DAY 15: Isla North Seymour - Isla Santa Cruz

Wake up this morning in North Seymour, one of the most visited islands of the Galapagos. First up is a walk around the island to spot some blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls. Boobies and frigates have an interesting relationship, sharing the same nesting area on North Seymour. Blue-footed boobies nest on the ground while the frigate birds nest just above them in the saltbushes. As you walk, look out for land iguanas, marine iguanas, Galapagos sea lions and the endemic incense tree. After the walk, cool off and go snorkelling and encounter a great variety of fish and perhaps some white-tipped reef sharks, rays and sea lions. Later in the day, travel to Isla Santa Cruz, the second largest island in the Galapagos. Pay a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station in the small town of Puerto Ayora. As well as undertaking vital conservation work, the station also makes for interesting exploration and offers the best opportunities for close encounters with giant tortoises. You may also see baby tortoises and land iguanas.



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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 it's 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

INCLUSIONS

- 1 night pre and 1 night post cruise group hotel in Quito including breakfast
- Arrival Transfer in Quito (must have flight arrival plans confirmed 30 days prior)
- Group transfers in Galapagos
- Round trip flight to/from Galapagos (from Quito with group)
- Accommodation on board Grand Daphne in chosen cabin
- All meals during the cruise
- Guiding by Galapagos National Park Certified English Speaking Guide
- All visits and excursions/landings according to the itinerary*
- Snorkel Gear (mask, tube and fins)
- Kayaks
- Unlimited purified water, coffee and tea

Inclusions

EXCLUSIONS

- Local Taxes
- 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 (US\$20 per person - Subject to change)
- Passport & Visa Expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Alcoholic & soft drinks
- Additional visits
- Additional meals
- Excess baggage charges
- Telecommunications charges
- Wetsuit Hire
- Personal expenses and tips
- Items not specified

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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