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TRIP DETAILS

11 days / 10 nts - Ecuador

Departures Daily

Trip Ref 2391

ITINERARY IN BRIEF



PRICES FROM \$2,991

Intense Galapagos

This trip includes 7 nights cruising around the Galapagos islands on board the [Aida Maria](#), a 16 passenger tourist motor yacht. You can of course select any [other yacht](#) and even cruise length, and we will send you the revised itinerary and prices by email.

Day 1: Arrival in Quito

Upon arrival in Quito transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Quito.

Day 2: Quito (city tour)

Colonial city tour, due to the beauty and history of colonial Quito, the main emphasis of this tour is given to the old city, Visit some of its most important churches in Quito. Return to the hotel. Overnight in Quito.



(Included meals: breakfast)

Day 3: Quito - Galapagos (M/Y Aida Maria) - Bachas Beach

Transfer from the hotel to the airport to board the flight to Galapagos. Fly from the Ecuadorian mainland to the islands on an early morning 90-minute flight.

As you prepare to land in Baltra, peer out the window. The landscape below will seem out of this world - and it is for you have come to a place like no other. The Galapagos Islands are unique to the world and you are about to see why. Your bilingual naturalist guide will greet you at the airport and assist you through customs. During lunch he/she will introduce you to the islands and specifically the flora and fauna you will encounter at our first destination, Las Bachas Beach. On the sandy white beaches of Las Bachas we will get a close look at a sea turtle nesting area and a lake frequented by leggy pink flamingos and other migratory birds. Afterward, we cool ourselves off with our first dip in the deliciously blue Pacific Ocean. As this is our first evening together, the crew will invite us to a pre-dinner cocktail on the yacht before the welcome dinner. If the night is clear, as it usually is, the stars above will bedazzle; look for the Southern Cross, the Big Dipper (turned up-side down!) and Orion.

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)



Day 4: Genovesa Island

Tower: Darwin Bay - Prince Philip Steps

Early in the morning you will have breakfast and then you will disembark at Genovesa Tower Island, which is located in the northeastern part of the Galapagos (less than half a degree north of the equator).

At Tower Island you will anchor at Darwin Bay, which is located on the southern part of the island, and is actually the caldera of an extinct, partially eroded volcano, with the surrounding cliffs forming the inner lining of the rim. While the origin of the name Tower is not known, one can imagine it had something to do with these towering cliffs. The tour will be a long, fairly-easy walk, but it is usually hot and dry here, so you may want to carry some water. After a wet landing on a coral beach the trail begins in an area where there are several swallow-tailed gulls. As you walk back from the beach, you will see a variety of Opuntia cactus and mangroves. Tower is an outpost for many sea birds (as Española is in the south). Interestingly, there are almost no land reptiles on Tower, only very small marine iguanas. This is attributed to the direction of the ocean currents, which wouldnt have carried the terrestrial animals here. Visit El Barranco during the afternoon then return to the boat for dinner.



(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 5: Bartolome - Santiago: Sullivan Bay

Bartolome Island, which at its highest point is 114 meters, is one of the most photographed vistas in the archipelago. This island is quite young and quite volcanic, therefore, it is relatively unpopulated; only a small handful of die-hard plant and animal species have survived long enough to call this lava-land home.

After the visit to Bartolome Island you will visit nearby Sullivan Bay. At the turn of the century a huge lava flow spilled right down to the sea and today you can stroll across this black volcanic expanse, admiring its time-frozen ripples, bubbles and ropes.

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 6: Daphne - Santa Cruz: Black Turtle Cove & Cerro Dragon

Early in the morning you will arrive to Daphne Island, a cone formed by the accumulation of volcanic ash, which is home to thousands of birds such as blue footed boobies, frigate birds, tropic birds, and many more. We wont go ashore here, but well navigate around this volcanic cone, so binoculars are recommended to get a good look at the birds. Daphne has been a great research site on which many scientists have spent years studying the behavior of Darwins finches.

After this visit you will move on to our next site, Black Turtle Cove, which is a red mangrove lagoon on Santa Cruz and is a nursery for many sharks and rays. Its also a great location to observe mating turtles around this time of year. Youll see large groups of resting White-Tip Reef Sharks, schools of Golden Rays and Spotted Eagle Rays, and a few juvenile Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks and Black-Tip Sharks. The water very calm so we often used paddles instead of the loud panga engines to move around the area.

After lunch you will navigate for a couple of hours to Cerro Dragon, where you will make a dry landing on lava rocks. Cerro Dragon is a small bay on the west coast of Santa Cruz and got its name from the many land iguanas that live in the area. Land iguanas are endemic to the Galapagos Islands where they have found good mating and nesting areas.

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7: Santa Cruz: Charles Darwin Station - Highlands

Charles Darwin Station. After breakfast you will sail to Santa Cruz Island, where you will visit the world-famous Charles Darwin Station, a non-profit institution that dedicates itself to studying and protecting the flora and fauna of the Galapagos. This is one of the best places to see land tortoises. Then you will visit the station is Tortoise Rearing Center. Here you can find baby, hand-sized tortoises, between the ages of one and five, and marvel at how they achieve such large sizes as adults (500 lbs. or more!). Galapagos tortoises are believed to have a lifespan of over 100 years, so the young ones have a long life ahead of them as long as they receive the protection they need.



After shopping in Puerto Ayora and lunch on the boat (guests may dine in town if they desire), you will explore the upper region, parte alta of the island, which is a moisture-rich area with fertile volcanic soils. Youll learn about the vegetation and animal life of this zone, often strikingly different than that found at lower elevations. Finches, Yellow Warblers, and Bright Red Vermillion Flycatchers will fly in and out of the moss-covered trees. From this high vantage point you will be treated to beautiful views of the surrounding archipelago.

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 8: Floreana Island

When you wake up and look out your porthole on Day 6 you will see Floreana, one of the greenest islands in the archipelago. Ask your guide to tell you about its mysterious history laden with rumors of witches, murderous baronesses, blackmail, and dubious disappearances.

Your first stop is Punta Cormorant, where you will follow a footpath to a lagoon inhabited by flaming-pink flamingos. You will also pass by Carolina Beach, a Sea Turtle nesting area and a superb spot for watching sea birds and sea rays. Back on the yacht, you will skirt the islands coast until you arrive at La Corona del Diablo (the Devils Crown), a sub-marine crater that offers some of the most spectacular snorkeling in the Galapagos. This is a great spot for seeing the wide array of tropical fish, many endemic to the islands, including purple sea stars and spiky sea urchins. The craters most thrilling undersea creatures, however, are the white-tipped sharks. As with most of the creatures in the Galapagos they are unperturbed by your presence, so you can swim in their company freely and fearlessly.

After returning to the boat for lunch you will sail on to Post Office Bay, where the islands original post office (really only a wooden barrel) was established in 1793. The current system still functions as it did three centuries ago: Visitors drop off unstamped letters and postcards AND pick-up whatever mail they can hand deliver themselves when they return home! (Try it, it actually works!).

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 9: Espanola Island

Espanola is one of the most magical of all the islands. It is a place where the animals reign supreme and we humans are merely guests. As your dingy brings you to shore you will see Sea Lion pups sunbathing with Marine Iguanas and Blue Footed Boobies nesting in between, and nearby may be a Galapagos Hawk. If it is Booby mating season watch the bonded pairs do the infamous Booby dance (if its not mating season, ask your guide to demonstrate - after all its their job to teach you about the local fauna!).

As you follow the footpath around the island, you will pass hundreds of Blue Footed Booby nesting sites including one colony of masked



boobies. There is a good chance you will see the thief-like Frigate Bird (which has the habit of stealing other birds food), as well as the stunning Red-Billed Tropicbird and the nocturnal Swallow-Tailed Gull. If it is the right time of the year (mid-April to December) you will also encounter the giant Waved Albatross. Apart from a few pairs that breed on Isla de Plata, off the Ecuadorian mainland, all of the worlds 12,000 Waved Albatross breed on Espanola Island. At the end of the breeding season, the entire population leaves the island and heads out to sea, where they spend years without touching land; four or five years may pass before the fledglings return to Espanola.

As you make your way around the island you will pass by El Soplador, a giant blowhole that explodes to heights reaching 25 feet. In the nearby tide pools you can often find lounging sea lions enjoying the blowholes misty spray. Following lunch on board the yacht, you will visit Garner Bay, a great place for sunbathing, swimming and snorkeling. Lionfish, Flycatchers, and Galapagos Hawks will keep you company as you relax under the rays of the evening sun. Dinner on the yacht completes your day.

(Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 10: San Cristobal Island - Quito

You will arrive early in the morning to San Cristobal, the capital of the Galapagos. The first site will be Kicker Rock or Leon Dormido, After navigating around Kicker Rock you will continue on to the Interpretation Center in Puerto Baquerizo, the local branch of the Galapagos National Park Service, where your guide will explain the formation of the islands, how the flora and fauna arrived and were established in Galapagos , as well as visit the corrals where there are several species of giant tortoises under the care of the National Park Service. Before taking the flight back to the mainland you will have some time to visit the town on your own for last minute shopping or people watching in the Galapagos.

Arrival in Quito and transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Quito.

(Included meals: breakfast)

Day 11: Fly out from Quito

Transfer from the hotel to airport for your international flight.

(Included meals: breakfast)

2010 Price per person

Category	Hotels	Price
SUPERIOR	Hotel Mercure (Quito)	\$2,836
	Samba (Galapagos cruise)	

Prices can change without notice

Price includes:

Transfers in/out airport. Galapagos cruise includes: Accommodation in double cabins with air conditioning and private bathroom, All meals on board, daily visits to the islands conducted by bilingual naturalist guide, sightseeing, snorkelling opportunities and transfers in the islands. Single or Twin/double room in the hotel although if unavailable specific properties may be replaced by others of same quality. Meals as per itinerary. Hotel taxes.

Price does not include:

International Air fares. Round trip Air fares (\$580 pp) to/from Galapagos. International and domestic airport departure taxes. Galapagos entrance fee (\$100pp), Migration Card/Ingala (\$10 pp), alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, gratuities to cruise guides and crew, bar, gifts, travel insurance. Meals not mentioned in the itinerary. Personal expenses (laundry, beverages, communications, etc)

Note:

- Price per person in USDollars
- This tour is quoted with Aida Maria Itinerary A.
- Single supplement: for solo traveler, hotel room single basis and cruise cabin on shared basis.
- Galapagos Cruise itineraries are subject to change by the authorities of the Galapagos National Park or acts of providence. Recent changes to Galapagos National Park guidelines mean that cruise itineraries now vary greatly from departure to departure. The islands visited on each holiday will be determined by your departure date and the length of the cruise.

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