

LatinDiscover.com

rediscovering the New World

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TRIP DETAILS

8 days / 7 nts - Ecuador

Departures Daily

Trip Ref 2392

ITINERARY IN BRIEF

Quito 3 nts

Galapagos cruise 4 nts



PRICES FROM \$2,183

Essence of Galapagos

This trip includes 4 nights cruising around the Galapagos islands on board the [Aida Maria](#), a 16 passenger tourist class motor. 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 at Quito

Upon arrival in Quito transfer to the hotel. Accommodations.

Day 2: Quito

Breakfast at hotel. Around 9am you will be picked up for a tour of Colonial Quito and the Middle of the World (5hrs approx.). Accommodations.



Day 3: Quito - Galapagos

Breakfast at hotel and transfer 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 arrive at Baltra, peer out the window. The landscape below will seem otherworldly - and it is for you have come to a place like no other. The Galapagos Islands are unique 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.



Day 4: South Plazas Island & Santa Fe Island

After breakfast we will sail to Plazas Island, where a large colony of sea lions lounges daily in the equatorial sun. Without doubt these gregarious flippered clowns are the "stars" of the archipelago. They inhabit almost every island you'll visit and they seem to think you are there for their entertainment. In the sea they will pull at your flippers and on shore they are happy to pose for the photographer. Isla Plaza is also peppered with hundreds of land and marine iguanas: Be careful where you step, what you thought was a stone may just be a sun-basking iguana. Soon you will notice their subtly diabolic grins and wonder what they find so humorous; you only hope the joke isn't on you! Plaza also boasts excellent examples of typical Galapaganean flora such as the towering cacti "trees" that form the principal diet for both the land iguanas and the cactus finch. Other birds that may flutter by include lava gulls, yellow warblers and red-billed tropicbirds with their elaborate tails.

After lunch on the yacht, we continue to Santa Fe Island, a sea journey of 2 1/2 hours. Upon arrival to the island, we will be treated to a noisy welcome by the local sealion colony. Following our naturalist guide on the island paths we will come to Santa Fe's main attraction, a towering forest of giant cacti. Scattered around the cacti trees you will see a number of the island's indigenous sun-seekers: marine and land iguanas, the rainbow-streaked lava lizards and, if you are lucky, land tortoises - the namesakes of the islands. After our walk we will plunge into the salty sea and snorkel in the company of sealions, lion fish and sea turtles. Finally, we will return to the yacht for dinner.

Day 5: Espanola Island, Suarez Point & Garner Bay

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. Nearby may be a Galapagos Hawk. If it is boobie mating season watch the bonded pairs do the infamous boobie dance (if it's not mating season ask your guide to demonstrate - after all it's his job to teach you about the local fauna). As we follow the foot path around the island, we will pass hundreds of boobie nesting sites including one colony of masked boobies. There is a good chance we 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) we 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 world's 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. Astonishingly, four or five years may pass before the fledglings return to Espanola. As we make our way around the island we pass by El Soplador, a giant blowhole that explodes to heights reaching 70 feet. In the nearby tide pools you can often find lounging sea lions enjoying the blowhole's misty spray.

Following lunch on board the yacht, we will visit Garner Bay, a great place for sunbathing, swimming and snorkeling. Lion fish, flycatchers, and Galapagos hawks will keep us company as we relax under the rays of the evening sun. Dinner on the yacht completes our day.

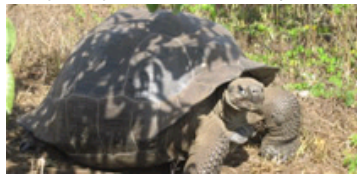
Day 6: Floreana Island, Cormorant Point & Corona del Diablo

Today when you awake and peer out your porthole 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.

Our first stop is Punta Cormorant, where we follow a footpath to a lagoon inhabited by flaming-pink flamingos. We will also pass by Carolina Beach, a sea turtle nesting area and a superb spot for watching sea birds and sea rays.

Back on our yacht, we skirt the island's coast until we arrive at La Corona del Diablo (the Devil's 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 endemic to the islands as well as purple sea stars and spiky sea urchins. The crater's 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 without fear.

After returning to the boat for lunch we will sail on to Post Office Bay, where the island's 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!).



Day 7: Santa Cruz Island - Baltra - Quito

After breakfast we sail to Santa Cruz Island, where we visit the world-famous Charles Darwin Station, a non-profit institution that dedicates itself to studying and protecting Galapaganean flora and fauna. In the late afternoon we return to town. The visit to Charles Darwin Station will complete your Galapagos adventure. From the station we will take a bus to the airport for departure. Upon arrival in Quito transfer to the hotel.

Day 8: Fly out from Quito

Breakfast at hotel. Transfer to airport for your international flight Quito.

2010 Price per person

Category	Hotels / Cruise	Price
SUPERIOR	Hotel Mercure (Quito) Aida Maria (Galapagos cruise)	\$2,183

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. Twin or double room in the hotel you select (assumes 2 pax) 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. Domestic air fares to/from Galapagos. International and domestic airport departure taxes. Galapagos entrance fee (\$100pp), Migration Card/Ingala (\$10pp), 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).

Notes:

- Galapagos Cruise itineraries are subject to change by the authorities of the Galapagos National Park or acts of providence.

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