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GALAPAGOS

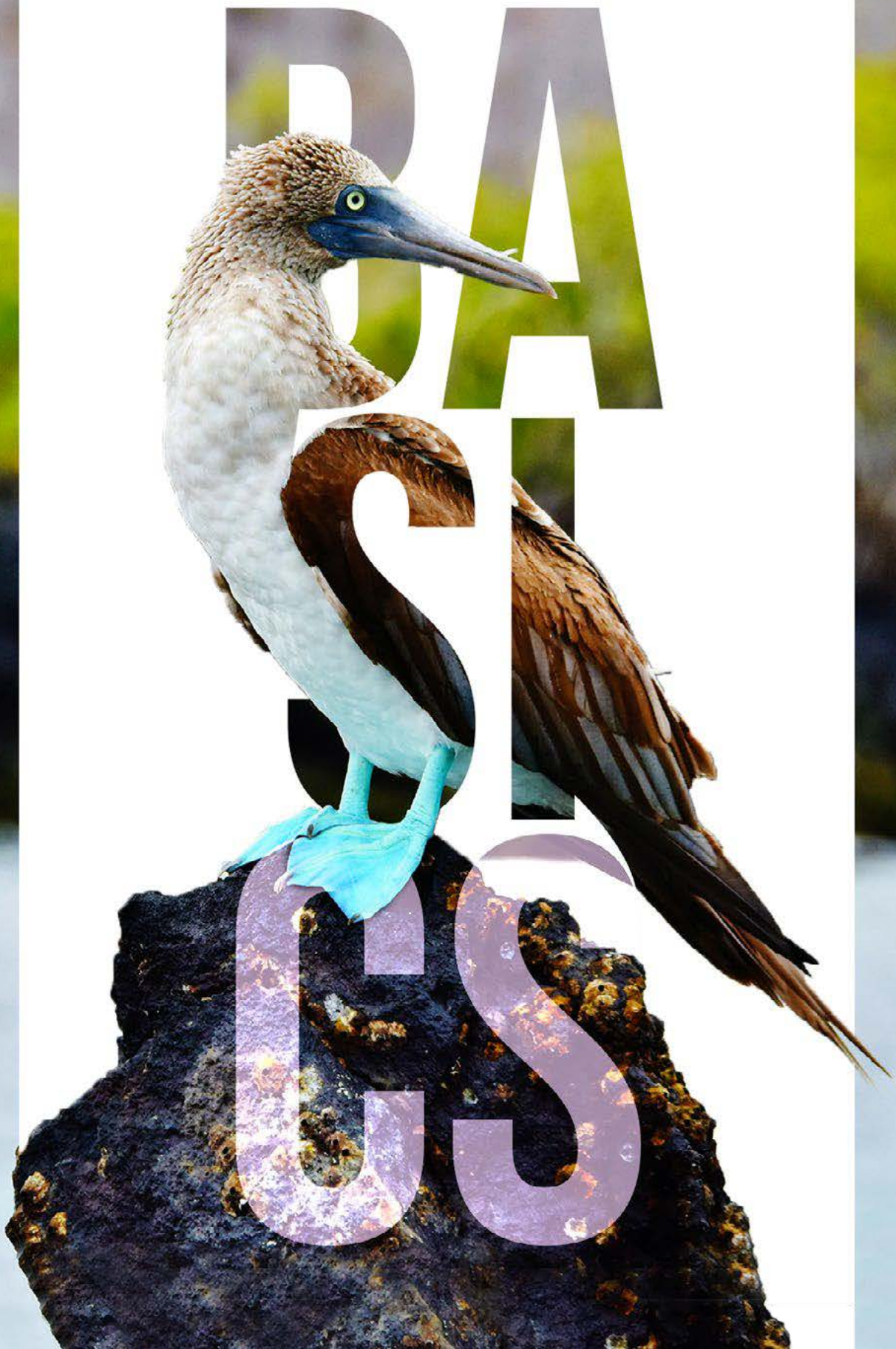


Table of Contents

Introduction
- Where are the Galapagos Islands? 04
- Quick Facts 05
- Galapagos Terrain, Flora and Fauna 13

Traveling to the Galapagos
- How do you get to the islands? 15
- Who can travel to the Galapagos? 17
- Health and Safety 18
- Galapagos National Park 22
- A Land-based Option 24

Activities
- What can you do in the Galapagos Islands? 26
- When is the best time to go? 45
- How long should I stay? 46
- Food and Dining in the Galapagos 47

Tips Before You Go
- What should you pack? 48
- Budget 50
- 5 Red Flags to Avoid When Considering the Galapagos 51

How to Choose the Best Galapagos Cruise
- Why Metrojourneys? 56

Giant Tortoise Reserve,Santa Cruz Island

Nazca Booby, Genovesa Island

Why should you visit the Galapagos Islands?

With some of the most unique wildlife in the world and the presence of islands so young that they're still forming, the Galapagos truly are a timeless spectacle to behold.

The absence of natural predators has led to **fearless fauna** that permits up-close-and-personal observation like nowhere else in the world.

There is a minimal presence of humans, with **97% of the archipelago** designated as a highly controlled and strictly regulated **National Park**.

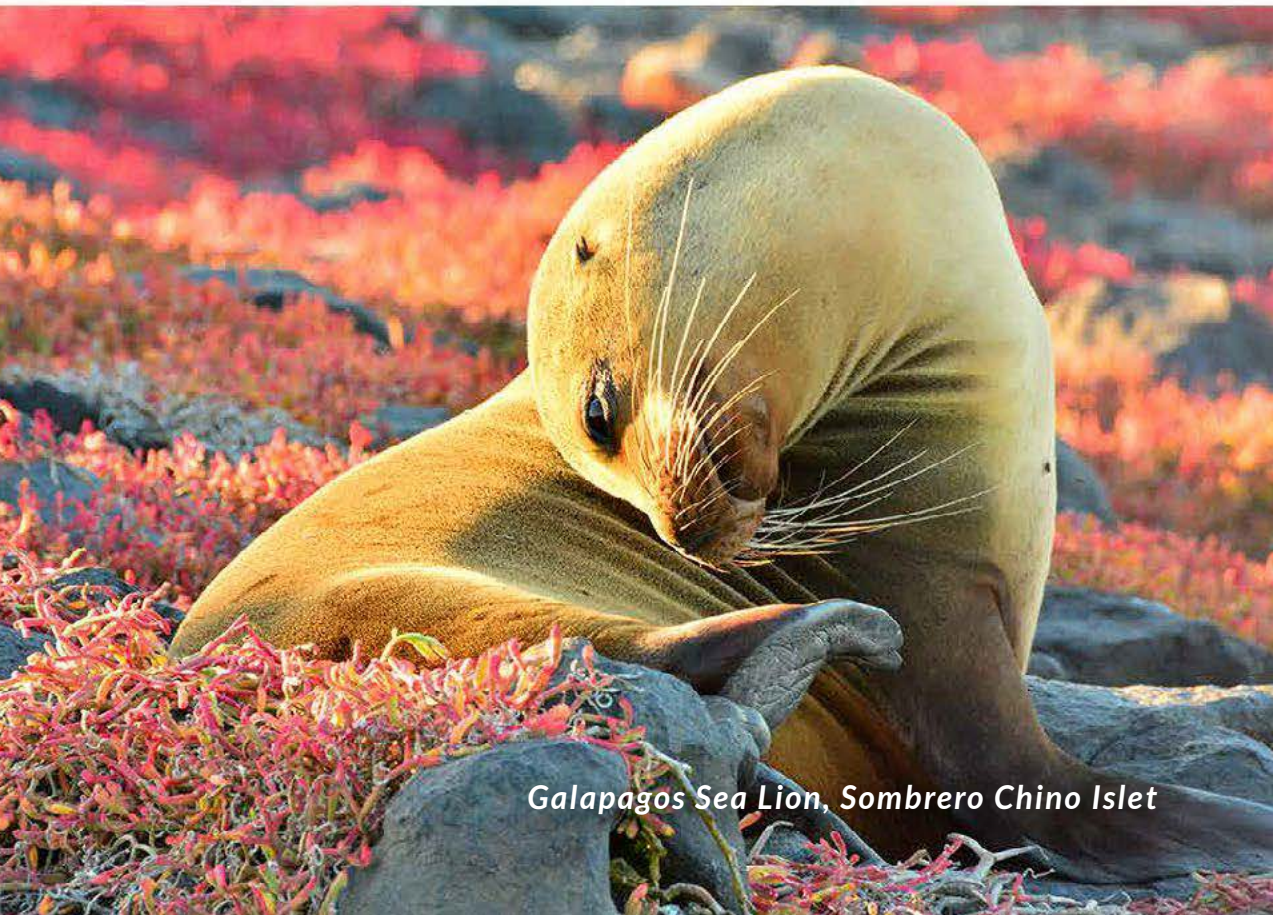
> It also happens to be the conceptual birthplace of groundbreaking theories that have altered our perception of living organisms.

Where are the Galapagos Islands?

Located in South America, the **Galapagos Islands are a part of Ecuador**, situated in the Pacific Ocean about **620 mi (1,000 km)** off the coast.

Ecuador & Galapagos Quick Facts

Population of Galapagos Province in 2018: 31,600 (across four inhabited islands)
Official Language: Spanish
Currency: US Dollar
Time Zone Ecuador: UTC/GMT-5
Time Zone Galapagos: UTC/GMT-6
Galapagos Demographics: Mainly mestizo (a mix of Spanish and indigenous South American lineage), arriving on the islands during the last century
Galapagos Weather: Pleasant all year round, with two distinct seasons: a humid **hot season** (December through May) and a slightly cooler **dry season** (June through November)



Galapagos Sea Lion, Sombrero Chino Islet

Government: Democratic constitutional republic
US State Department Travel Advisory: Level 1 (normal precautions)
Hospitals in the Galapagos: 2 hospitals, additional smaller health centers
Connectivity in the Galapagos: Internet and cellular service is available in thepopulated centers of the inhabited islands.
Reported Cases of Major Diseases in the Galapagos: None
Reported Cases of Zika in the Galapagos in 2018: None

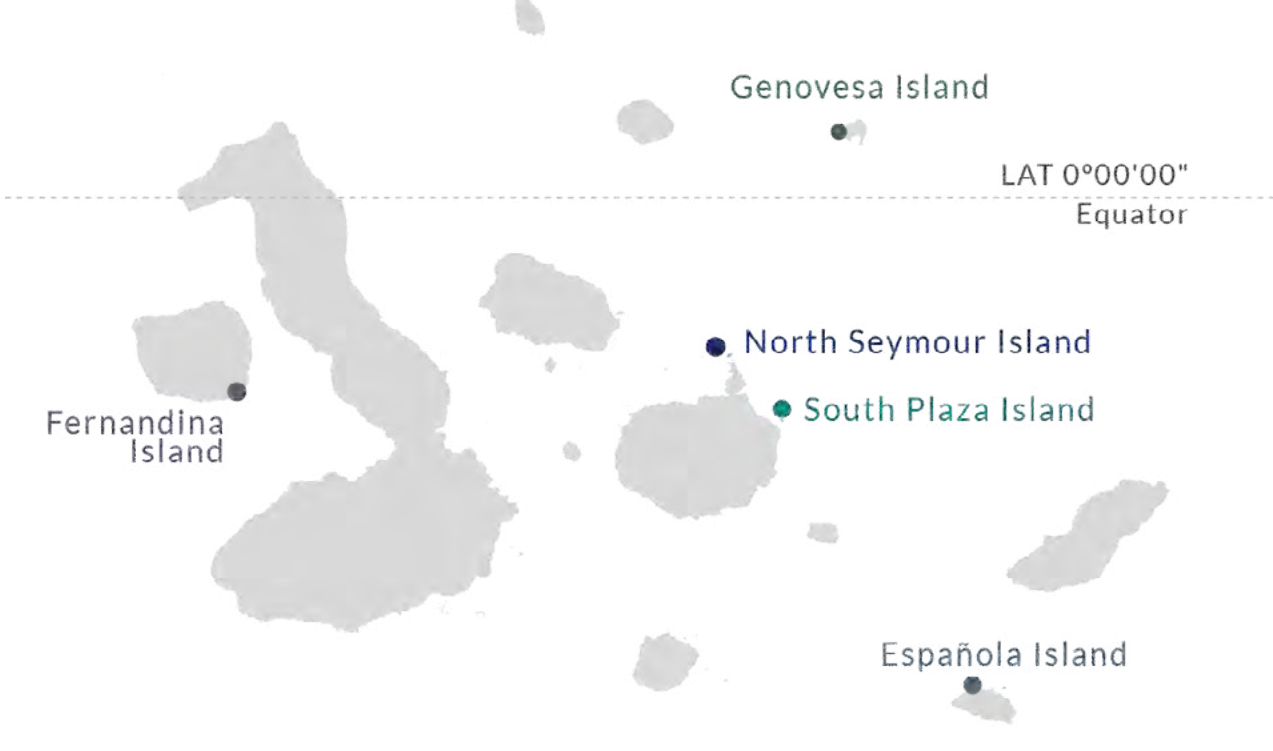
More information www.metrojourneys.com

Sullivan Bay, Santiago Island

Top 5 Galapagos Islands to Visit:

The archipelago consists of 19 islands, **13 of these can be visited** (as established by the Galapagos National Park rules). The islands, as well as the dozens of smaller islets and rocks that surround them, cover a vast area of approximately 17,375 mi (45,000 km). Below, we detail our **Top 5 Galapagos Islands to Visit!**

- Española: **Albatrosses** and **Nazca boobies** (more frequently seen April-December)
- Fernandina: **Galapagos penguins, flightless cormorants**
- Santa Fe: **Santa Fe land iguanas, sea lion** colonies, **Galapagos Hawks**.
- North Seymour: **Blue-footed boobies, great** and **magnificent frigatebirds**
- Genovesa: **Red-footed boobies, Galapagos fur seals**



Galapagos Wildlife

It is no surprise that many travelers come to the **Enchanted Isles** to **experience wildlife** that they simply **can't see anywhere else on the planet!**

The Galapagos Islands are one of the **most important biodiversity hotspots in the world.** As such, they happen to have one of the **highest numbers of endemic* species.**

Galapagos Hawk, Bartolome Island

There are **approximately 2,000 endemic species** living in and around the Galapagos Islands. Close to 80% of all land birds, 97% of all reptiles and land mammals, and more than 30% of all plants in the Galapagos are **endemic.** From this vast amount of species, we've created our list of the most iconic ones in the Galapagos.

***endemic (adj.):** referring to a native species found exclusively in a particular area

The 15 Most Iconic and Emblematic Species of the Galapagos Islands

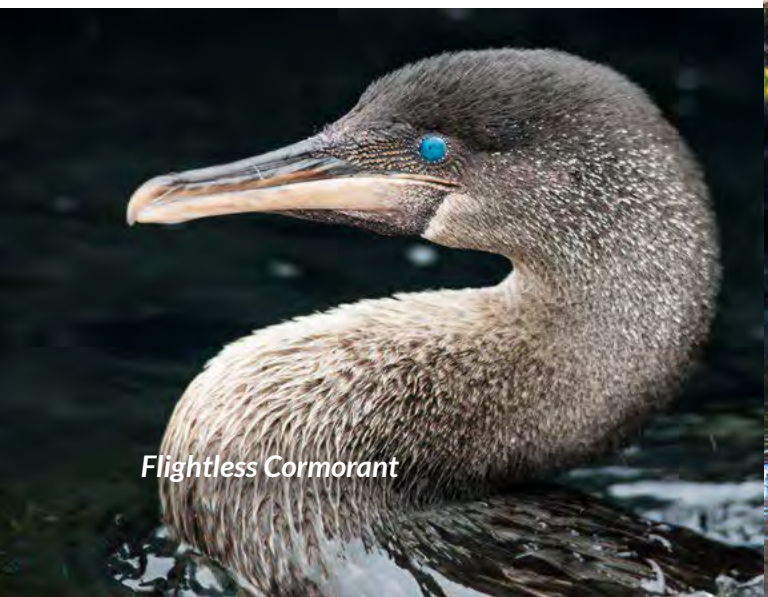
To make things easier for you when it comes to figuring out what to see, we've prepared a list of the **15 most iconic, must-see species in the Galapagos.** If you take a **cruise-based** tour of the Galapagos Islands, we **guarantee** you'll have a much better chance of seeing the majority of these and, in order to **properly experience the islands,** you won't want to miss them!

Learn more about our Galapagos BIG15 list of iconic species here!

Scan this code with your smartphone and find out more!

Nazca Booby

Red-Footed Booby



Flightless Cormorant

American Flamingo

Galapagos Giant Tortoise

Marine Iguana

Santa Fe Land Iguana

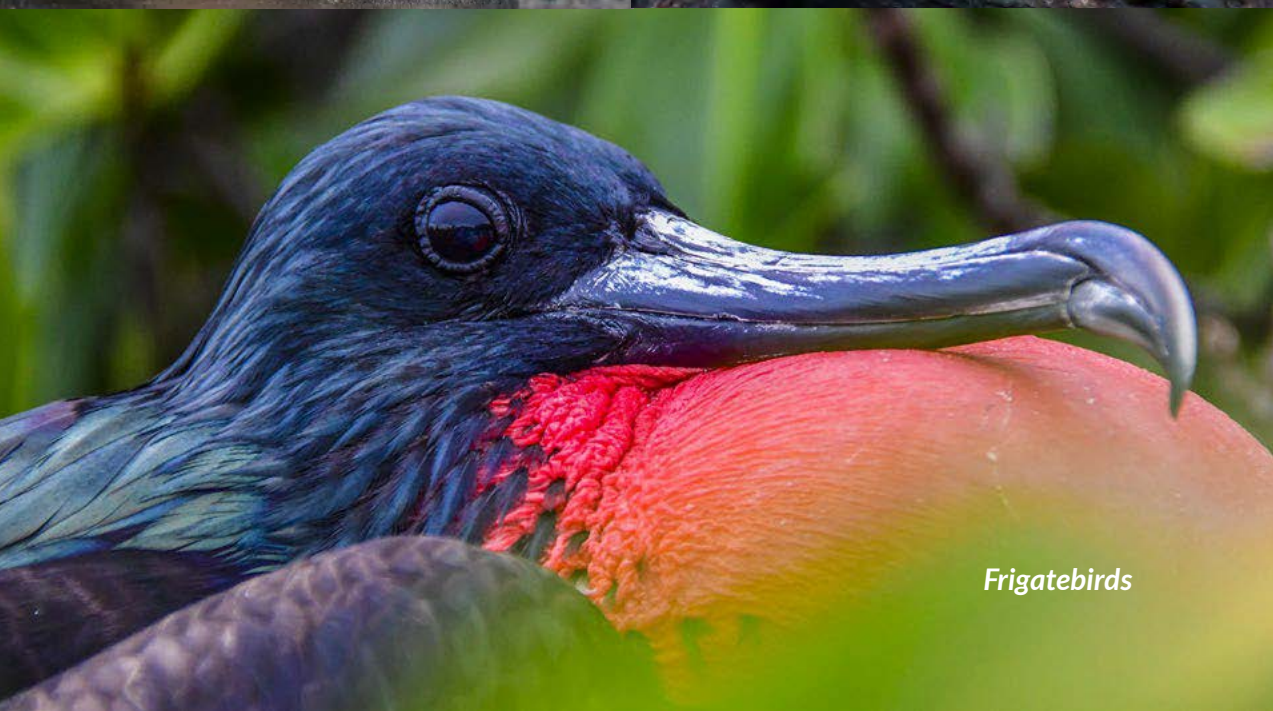
Land Iguana

Galapagos Penguin

Galapagos Albatross

Galapagos Sea Lion

Galapagos Fur Seal

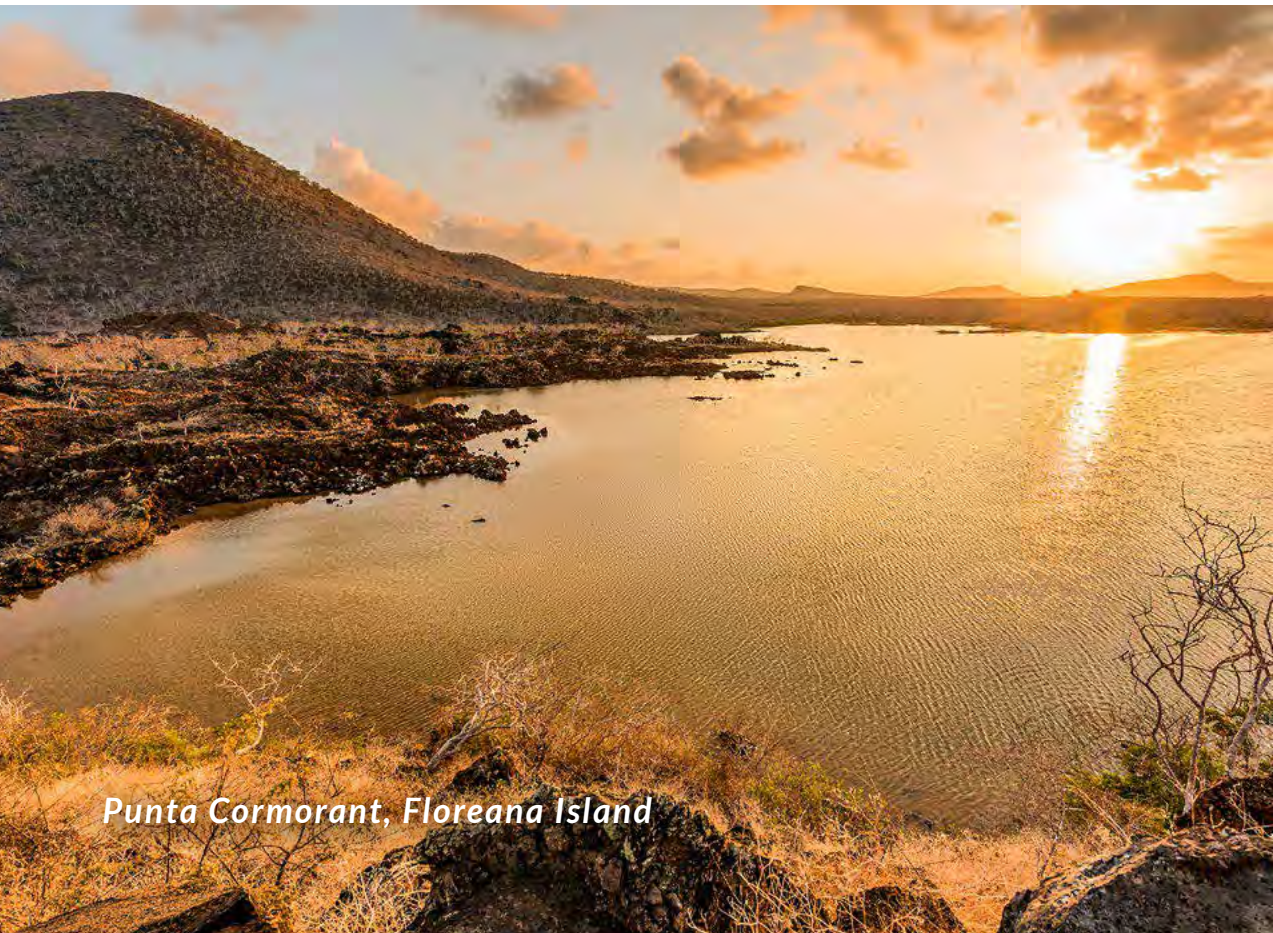

Frigatebirds

Galapagos Terrain

Have you ever wondered what the surface of other planets might be like? The Galapagos Islands may very well be the closest you'll come to experiencing them!

Instead of lush, tropical vegetation, the archipelago is primarily dominated by **vast, volcanic,** and **sublimely barren** landscapes. In many ways, a voyage through the archipelago is **an all-in-one tour of otherworldly landscapes:**

> A plethora of multi-colored beaches, abstract lava flows, surreal geological formations, and unforgettable vistas await!



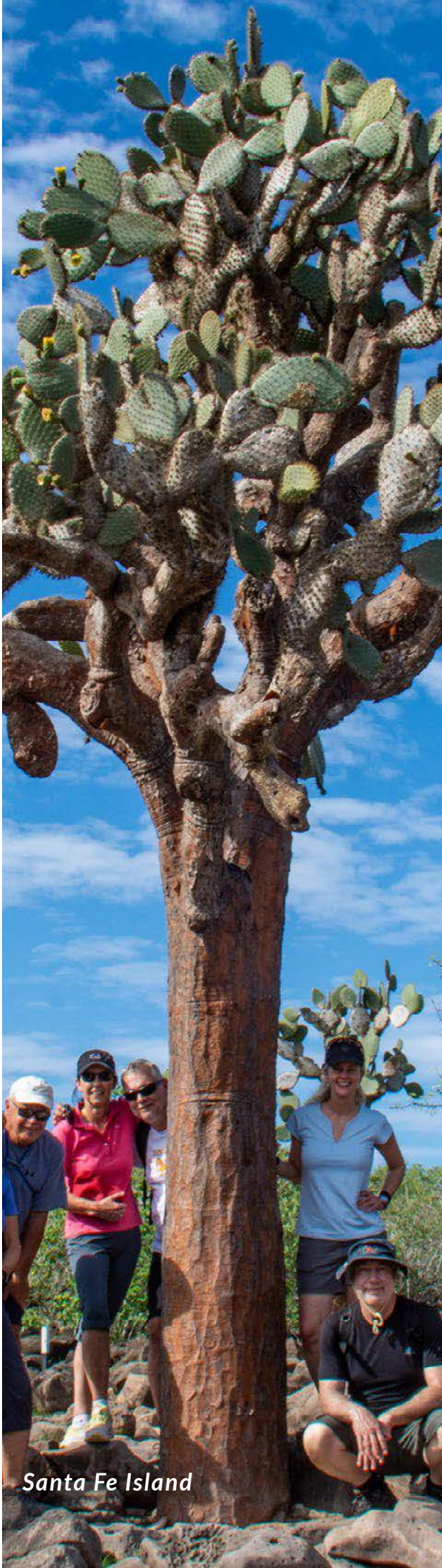
Punta Cormorant, Floreana Island

Did you know?
The Galapagos Islands are the only place in the world where you can hug a cactus–the **giant prickly pear**, believe it or not!

Galapagos Flora

The plants that coat the terrain of the Galapagos archipelago are as **intriguing** and as **rare** as the wildlife that inhabits the islands. As such, the islands invite you to experience plants that **you probably have never seen before!**

There are around 600 species of **endemic vascular plants** and approximately 825 introduced species of vegetation.



Santa Fe Island

How did plant life get to the Galapagos?

Plant seeds had to travel across approximately **620 mi (1,000 km)** of ocean. Scientists theorize that it was **along strong wind currents** and inside the intestines of birds that these plants originally arrived and established themselves on the islands.

Galapagos vegetation has adapted itself to **three habitat zones** on the islands: **coastal, arid, and highlands.**

Highlands, Santa Cruz Island

How do you get to the Islands?

Due to the archipelago's considerable distance from the mainland, visitors **can ONLY access** the Galapagos Islands **by plane** from **Quito (airport code UIO)** or **Guayaquil (airport code GYE)** in Ecuador. Have a look at the approximate flight time between these destinations and Galapagos.

Flights to Ecuador are available via the following airlines: American Airlines (AA), Aeromexico (AM), Avianca (AV), JetBlue Airways (B6), LATAM Airlines Group SA (LA), Copa Airlines (CM), Delta Air Lines (DL), United Airlines (UA), KLM (KL), Iberia (IB).

How much does it cost to fly to the Galapagos?

Round-trip airfare from Quito to Galapagos runs around **$500.** The route is similar in length and duration to a flight between New York City and Atlanta, clocking in at just over 2 hours .

> The Galapagos' airports welcome only about 20,000 people per month (compared to the 3.5 million monthly visitors received by Los Angeles' LAX). Less demandfor air travel is part of the reason whyairfare to the Galapagos is relatively high.

Ready to book your flight there?
CONTACT **OUR DESTINATION EXPERTS TODAY!**

Who can travel to the Galapagos?

Ecuador (and, by extension, the Galapagos Islands) welcomes nationalities from all over the world. For the majority of visitors, **no visa is required!**

It is recommended that travelers be **at least 6 years old** since bathrooms are scarce during tours and daycare services are almost non-existent.

Red Sand Beach, Rabida Island

People with serious mobility issues will find that the Galapagos Islands have incredibly rugged terrain and virtually none, if any, access ramps at visitor sites. This is because the Galapagos National Park aims to preserve as much of the environment as possible and keeps human-made structures to a bare minimum.

Health & Safety

The Galapagos Islands are a very safe place. The archipelago is completely free from the threat of pirates, terrorism, and organized crime. Additionally, they experience virtually zero extreme weather patterns (storms, hurricanes, etc.).

The Galapagos Islands are a remote expedition destination, so it is extremely important to: a.) choose a **reputable tour operator,** and b.) make sure there is access to a **Medical Officer** in the event of injury or sickness

Infirmary, Santa Cruz II vessel

There are **two main hospitals** (on Santa Cruz and San Cristobal) that can **treat common illnesses** and **handle some outpatient procedures.** Smaller health centers on Santa Cruz Island offer more limited treatment options. For medical attention **beyond what is offered** in the Galapagos, patients will need to be **transferred to** the mainland cities of **Guayaquil** or **Quito.**

Look for reputable tour operators that guarantee air evacuation service in the event that it is needed.

> **Important:** Acquiring an **international medical insurance** policy before traveling is **strongly recommended.**

Hospital Locations

Puerto Baquerizo Moreno is located approximately 50 mi from Puerto Ayora -a distance that takes about 2 hours to travel by motorboat.

Visiting the Galapagos National Park

The Galapagos National Park was **established in 1959,** coinciding with the **100th anniversary of** the publishing of **Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.** 97% of the archipelago is protected area, 3% is inhabited, and the surrounding seas are an officially-recognized **marine reserve.** The Galapagos Islands are Ecuador's oldest National Park and one of the first-ever places on our planet to receive the title of **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

South Plaza Island

Choosing a tour operator that takes conservation very seriously is really important and when it comes to the **sustainability and the preservation** of the **Enchanted Isles,** observing rules and regulations is **paramount.**

The Galapagos National Park maintains **strict guidelines** for visitors that come to experience the islands.

The **Golden Rule** to always remember is that you need ***to be with a guide at all times*** when visiting the national park.

South Plaza Island

Galapagos National Park and Marine Reserve

Rules for Visiting

1. Drone and flash photography are not allowed.

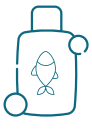
2. Use only authorized tour operators and/or boats.

3. Do not vandalize and/or introduce any foreign elements into the ecosystem.

4. Visitors must explore the national park with an authorized naturalist guide.

5. Do not feed the wildlife.

6. Dispose of all trash and/or recyclable waste in designated containers.



7. Do not purchase products or souvenirs made from banned flora and/or fauna.

8. Sport fishing is prohibited in the Galapagos; artesenal fishing is offered via local, permitted, fishermen.

9. Do not remove any elements of the ecosystem.

10. Camping is only allowed in designated areas with prior authorization.

11. Smoking, alcoholic beverages, and campfires are strictly prohibited.

12. Keep a distance of at least 6.5 ft (2 m) from wildlife.

13. Motorized, aquatic recreational vehicles are not permitted.

14. Stay within the marked trails at all times.

Should I stay at a hotel or hop aboard a Galapagos cruise?

The Galapagos Islands will undoubtedly prove to be a fascinating experience for all kinds of travelers.

> It is important to recognize that both options allow you to experience the beauty of the Galapagos Islands; they just provide you with different ways to go about it.

Santa Fe Island

A Land-based Option

If you're looking for a more **laid-back, restful, and relaxing vacation,** you might consider staying on land for the majority of your Galapagos trip.

Benefits of a **land-based tour:**

Freedom: More time to interact with local people and culture on the islands

Flexibility: A number of scheduling options for day tours

Independence: Exploration of the towns on your own

"Please note: **Interisland travel by boat** may carry a **risk of motion sickness.**"

Finch Bay Galapagos Hotel - Santa Cruz

A Cruise-based Option

In the Galapagos, the largest ships hold 100 passengers at most and are perfect for exploring the islands. These are also referred to as **expedition vessels.** They offer greater exposure to the national park and save you a lot of time because, while you sleep, they continue sailing to your next destination.

Benefits of a **cruise-based tour:**

Itineraries: Cruises offer guided exploration of several remote islands.

Coverage: Expedition vessels offer the opportunity to witness iconic wildlife not otherwise seen on the inhabited islands.

All-inclusive: All meals, a selection of beverages, activities, snorkeling gear, etc. are included.

Comfort: Aboard each vessel, you'll find excellent accommodations, amenities, spaces, and services.

Adventure: A wide variety of water and land activities like: kayaking, snorkeling, paddleboarding, glass-bottom boat exploring, hiking, and more are available via expedition cruises.

What can you do in the Galapagos Islands?

There is a wide array of Galapagos National Park-approved activities to enjoy in the archipelago.

> Whether you're an athlete, a history buff, a nature lover, or all three, you will be able to design a fantastic schedule full of interesting things to see and do.

Bartolome Island

Sea-based Activities

The most exciting way to live the Galapagos adventure is arguably from the water. Make sure you reserve time for these incredible experiences at sea.

All cruises

Select hotels

Snorkeling

Maybe you're not a scuba diver yet, but you'll still be in awe of the shallower waters, which are home to beautiful shorelines that offer snorkelers the chance to swim in the company of curious and fantastic animals.

Yellow-tail Surgeon Fish, Champion Islet

Select cruises

Expedition hotels

Kayaking

Enjoy the sound of the waves breaking, the wind whistling abng the rocks, and the **up-close view** of wildlife while sea kayaking!

Buccaneer Cove - Santiago Island

Select Cruises

Expedition hotels

Paddleboarding

As you soak in the views, paddleboard **peacefully** across the Galapagos waters and admire the magical species just below the surface.

Buccaneer Cove - Santiago Island

Select hotels

Surfing

Tortuga Bay is an **internationally recognized** surf hotspot, featuring a spectacular white, sandy beach and some great surf, with breaks that offer both lefts and rights.

Tortuga Bay, Santa Cruz Island

Select hotels

Scuba-diving

With an incredible amount of variedand endemic aquatic life on display, it isno wonder experts consider the Galapagos to be one of the wold's **top scuba destinations**.

Marine Iguana, Santa Cruz Island

All cruises

Panga rides

Also referred to as **coastal exploration,** this activity aboard an inflatable dinghy offers a casual and guided ride along island coastlines and surrounding waters.

Coastal Exploration – Floreana Island

Select cruises

Glass-bottom Boat

If you prefer to **not get wet,** you can opt to **comfortably look down** at the coral reefs and sea life through our glass-bottom boat while simultaneously keeping an eye out for Galapagos birds and other creatures that hang out along the coastlines.

Glass Bottom boat

Land-based Activities

There are also manyactivities you can do while staying dry!

All cruises

Expedition hotels

Wildlife Observation

This is the prime reason why so many people choose to visit the archipelago. Nowhere else in the world can we so closely observe animals that show no hint of fear.

Galapagos Sea Lion, Punta Espinoza

All cruises

Expedition hotels

Hiking

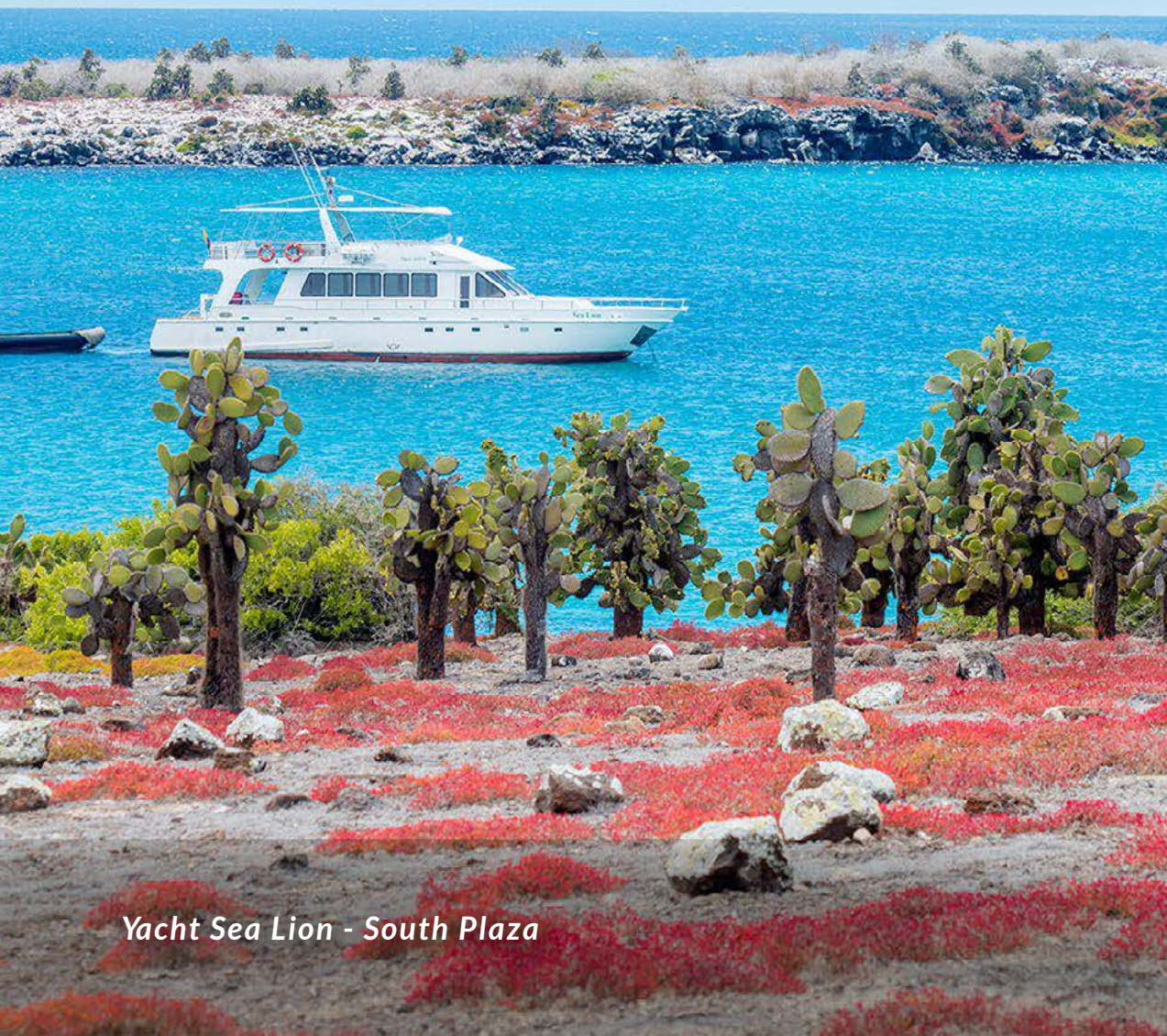
Trails in the Galapagos cover various types of beautiful, otherworldly terrain: gravel, sand, volcanic boulders, and lava rock. A few have even been **sustainably modified** with wooden stairs and walkways.

Sullivan Bay - Santiago Island

Expedition hotels

Day Tours

Planning on experiencing the Galapagos via a land-based accommodation option? Some high-end properties offer their guests day excursions to nearby islands aboard modern anddelightful yachts.



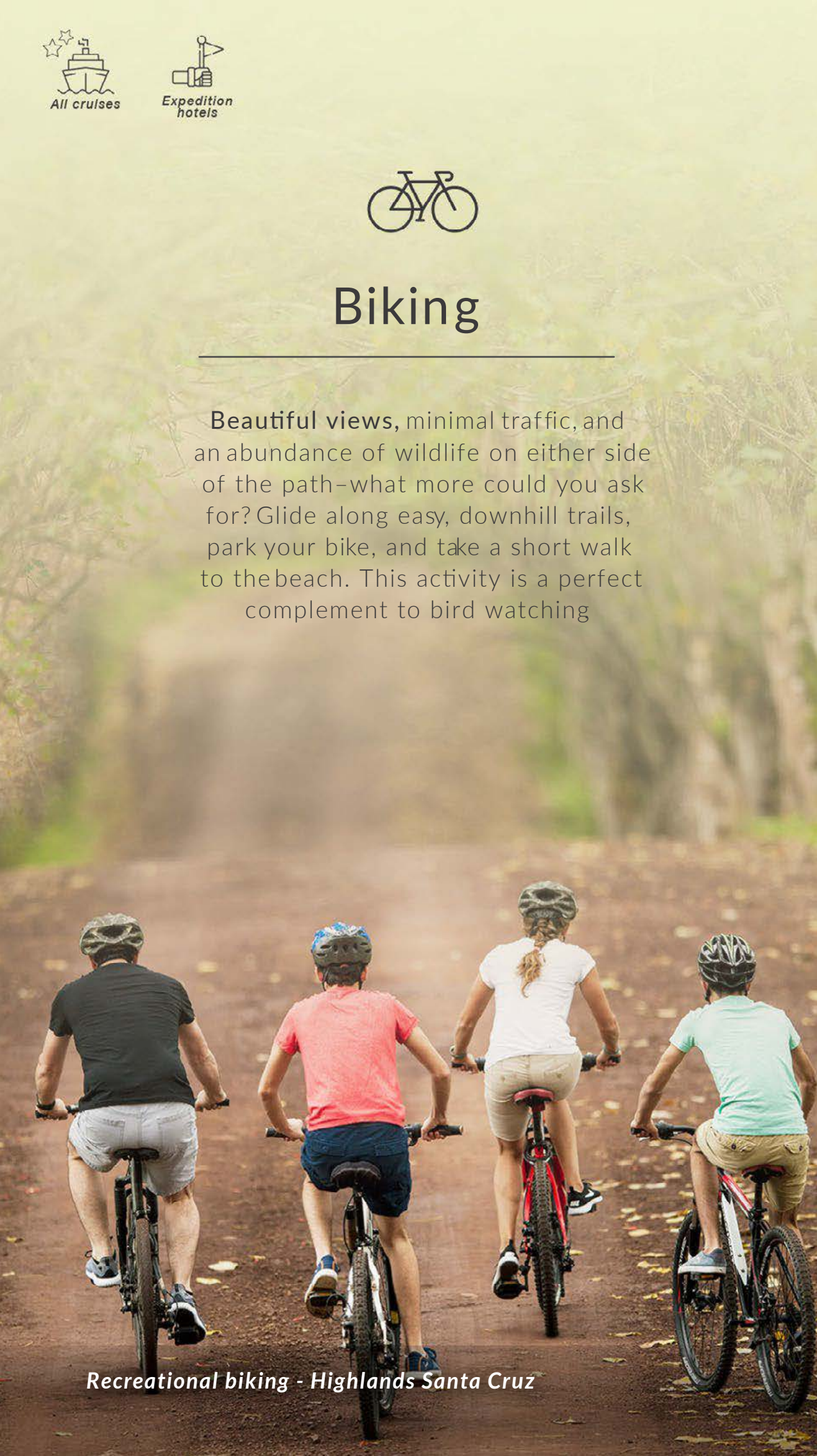
Yacht Sea Lion - South Plaza

All cruises

Expedition hotels

Biking

Beautiful views, minimal traffic, and an abundance of wildlife on either side of the path–what more could you ask for? Glide along easy, downhill trails, park your bike, and take a short walk to the beach. This activity is a perfect complement to bird watching



Recreational biking - Highlands Santa Cruz

All cruises

Expedition hotels

Tortoise Breeding Centers

See the **famous Galapagos giant tortoise** in various stages of development, from unhatched egg to fully-grown giant, with an average length of 4 ft (1.3 m and an average weight of 475 lbs (215 kg).

Giant Tortoise - Highlands Santa Cruz

All cruises All hotels

Beach Exploration

Bask in the tropical sun, wade along the crystal clear waters, and admire unique wildlife at the different beaches located throughout the archipelago.

Santa Fe Island

All cruises All hotels

A Taste of the Island Life

Interested in seeing what life is like for the people who call Galapagos home? While your expedition vessel docks in a few different ports, you'll get the chance to spend a little time exploring and interacting with local communities.

Puerto Ayora - Santa Cruz Island

All cruises All hotels

Sunsets & Stargazing

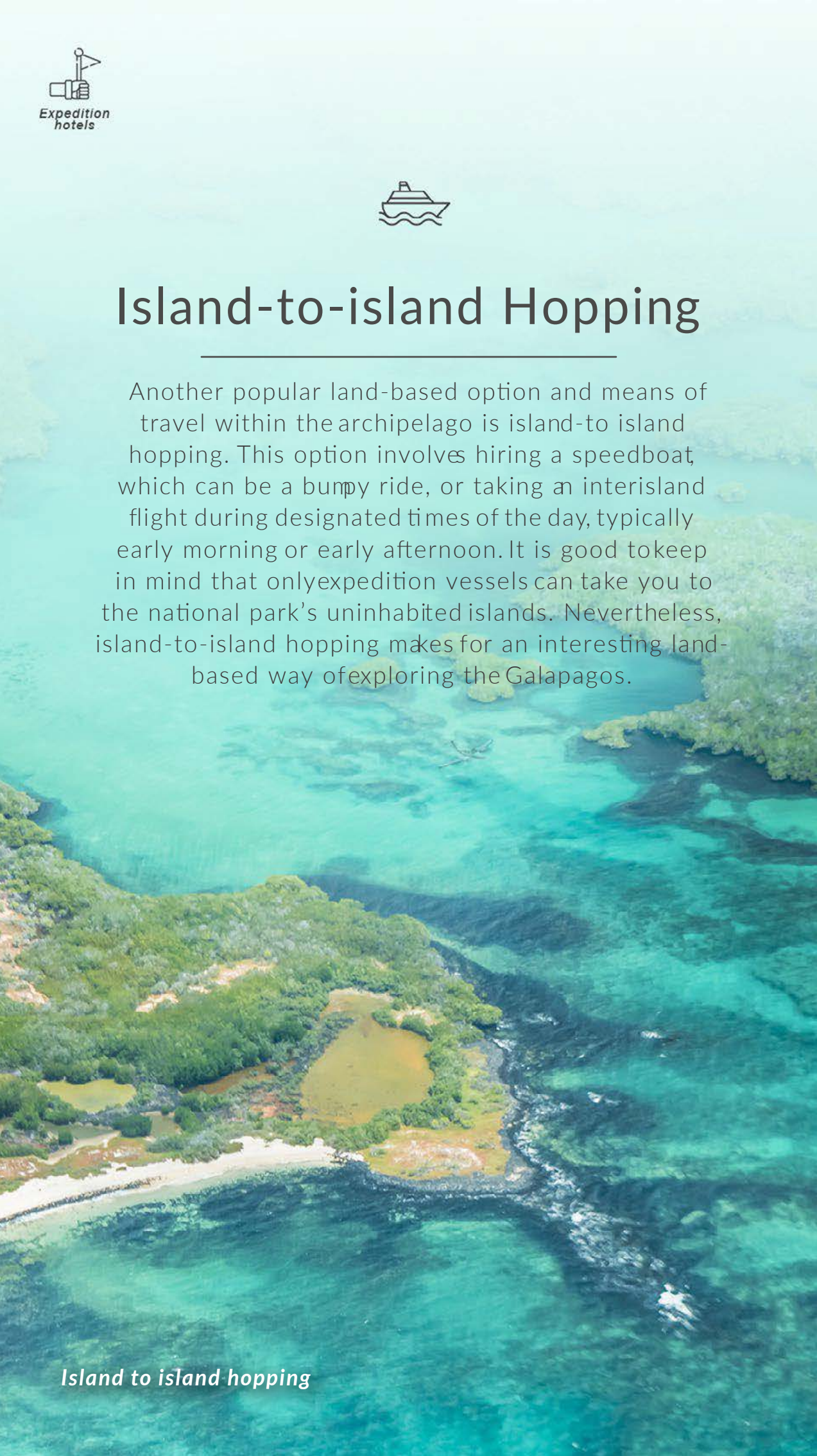
Don't miss out on this spectacle! With fiery sunsets, intense blue skies, and brilliant, starry nights, your senses won't get enough of looking up and admiring the skies of Galapagos.

Daphne Minor Islet

Expedition hotels

Island-to-island Hopping

Another popular land-based option and means of travel within the archipelago is island-to island hopping. This option involves hiring a speedboat, which can be a bumpy ride, or taking an interisland flight during designated times of the day, typically early morning or early afternoon. It is good to keep in mind that only expedition vessels can take you to the national park's uninhabited islands. Nevertheless, island-to-island hopping makes for an interesting land-based way of exploring the Galapagos.



Island to island hopping

When is the best time to go?

Rest assured that **whatever time of year you visit,** there is always plenty of wildlife activity to see and enjoy. While changes in sea currents and vegetation frame important moments in the lives of marine and land animals, the vast majority of species in Galapagos are opportunistic breeders. So, if the conditions are right, courting and breeding takes place.

One thing to keep in mind is that **there are essentially two seasons**: a **hot** (sultry) season from December through May**and** a **dry** (breezy) season from June to November.

Hot Season

Avg. Air Temperature **78.1° F** 25.6° C

Avg. Water Temperature **76.3° F** 24.6° C

Dry Season

Avg. Air Temperature **72.9° F** 22.7° C

Avg. Water Temperature **72.1° F** 22.2° C

How long should I stay?

Most itineraries are optimized to give visitors the most exposure to the islands and wildlife of the Galapagos. Of course, the longer you stay, the more you'll be able to experience.

Based on travelers' feedback, folks who stay a minimum of 5 days are much more satisfied with their visit. Also, it is important to consider that traveling to the Galapagos can take up a good part of the day.

North Seymour Island

Food and Dining in the Galapagos

On islands like San Cristobal, Santa Cruz, and Isabela, you'll find a number of local, home-style restaurants. Don´t be surprised by the higher prices; most produce, meats, and chicken are shipped to the archipelago from the mainland.

Many properties have their own restaurants. Day excursions to neighboring islands tend to supply lunch for everyone onboard; sometimes a simple sandwich, other times a more traditional lunch plate.

If you are following a particular diet, communicate this to your tour operator. There are options, you just need to seek them out.

Mushroom stew

What should you pack?

Flights to Galapagos restrict checked luggage to one piece that does not exceed 50 lbs (23 kg). Carry-on luggage cannot exceed 17 lbs (8 kg). So, pack smart!

What to Bring

Essentials:

- Passport and travel documents
- Cash (US dollars), credit and debit cards
- Personal medications (and a list of these)

Personal Care:

- Eco-friendly waterproof sunscreen (SPF 50+ or higher)
- Lip balm
- Insect repellent
- Standard toiletries

Gear:

- Small backpack/daypack (preferably waterproof)
- Binoculars
- Photo and videocameras, accessories
- Extra memory cards and batteries
- Appliance chargers and adaptors (US type, 110 V / 60 Hz)
- Prescription snorkeling mask or specialized snorkeling equipment (as applicable)
- Journal

IMPORTANT: Upon entering the Galapagos, youwill need to show ether an invitation letter from a Galapagos resident or an official confirmation or voucher from your hotel or expedition vessel.

What Not to Bring

- Formal attire
- High heels
- Expensive jewelry
- Anything that can distract you from relaxing and having fun!

What to Wear

Shoes

- Lightweight hiking shoes
- Water-resistant, closed-toe sport sandals
- Anti-slip sandals for use while aboard expedition vessels

Specialty Clothing Items

- Hiking shorts
- Lightweight hiking pants
- Long-sleeve shirts or rash guards for sun protection
- Bathing suits (minimum 2)

Accessories and Gear

- Sunglasses (optional: neck strap)
- Wide-brimmed hat or cap
- Bandana
- Windbreaker jacket
- Warm sweater or fleece

Budget

Your budget will depend on how you want to experience the islands. Here are some estimated costs:

Expedition Vessels	Average $700+ per guest, per night
Expedition Hotels	Average $500+ night
Hotels	Average $150+ night
Hostels & Airbnb	Average $40+ night
Food (without an all-inclusive itinerary)	Average $50+ day
National Park and transit control fees (upon entry, and subject to change)	$120 for adults $70 for visitors under 12

If you feel tempted by the least expensive options, keep in mind that you pay for what you get. One important thing is to prioritize quality and safety over what might look like a great deal, as prices that are "too good to be true" are often exactly that!

5 Red Flags to Avoid When Considering the Galapagos

The **cheapest Galapagos** deal can easily transform into the biggest nightmare. Here are 5 red flags to look out for when planning **your Galapagos experience.**

Blue Footed Boobies, North Seymour Island

#1
An Unbelievably Low Price

Remember, the price you pay for your accommodations is a direct indicator of the service you'll receive, the quality of the food you'll eat, the activities you'll be offered, and the level of comfort you'll experience. Always be sure to check reviews and details about what is included in your stay!

#2
Not Being Told Everything

Whether traveling by land or by sea, always ask your tour operator these important questions:

- Do they provide you with all the gear you need to enjoy each of the park-approved water activities, at no extra cost?
- How does the vessel or hotel handle its waste?
- Are their meals adaptable to your dietary needs?
- How many different types of guided activities can a ship or hotel offer simultaneously?

#3

The Argument:

"A smaller vessel offers a more intimate experience."

The Galapagos National Park limits tourist impact on the islands by setting the number of people allowed at each visitor site, not the number of vessels; meaning smaller vessels will actually find themselves surrounded by, and combining their numbers with, various other boats to meet the set figure. Larger expedition vessels offer more exclusive access to these visitor sites by virtue of their size. Also, excursion groups on larger vessels tend to be smaller with around 11 guests per guide. The park standard is 16 guests per guide. [Tip: Ask if your vessel has an onboard expedition leader.]

#4

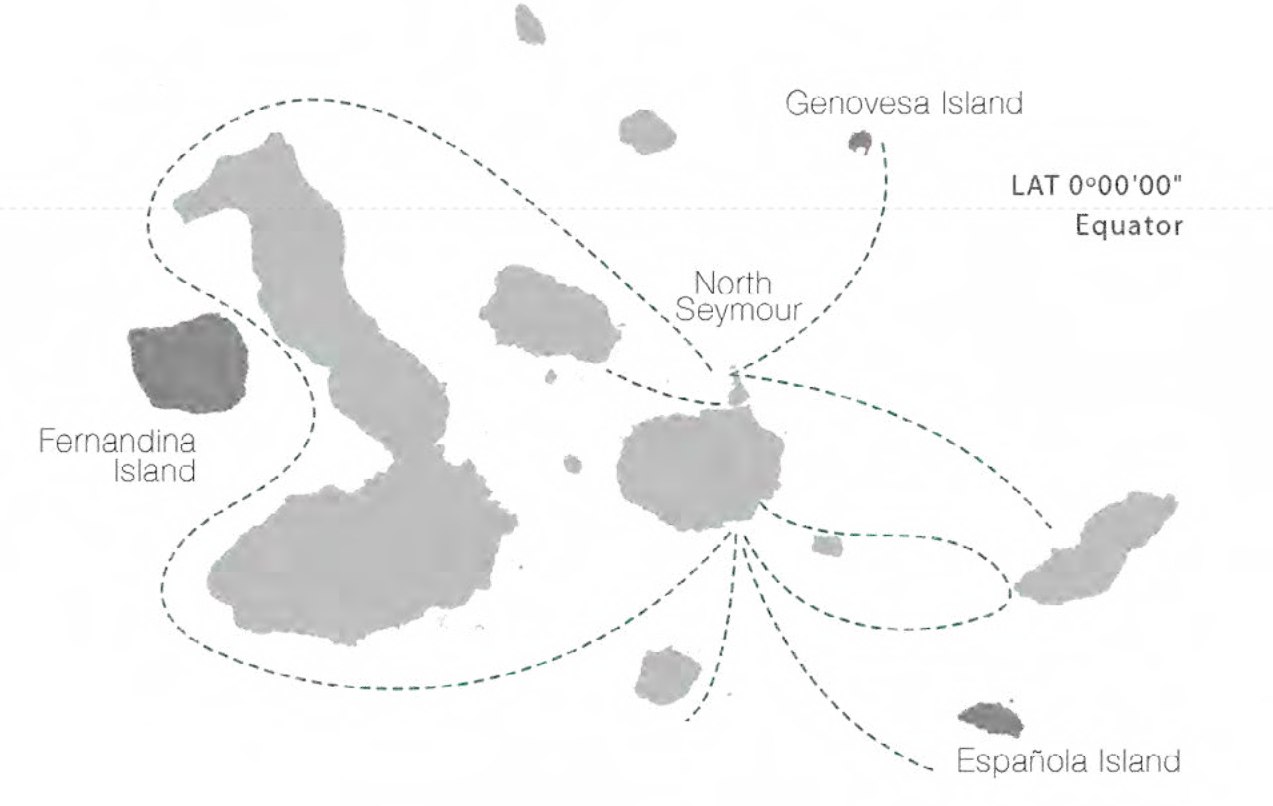
Missing Details About What "All-inclusive" Really Means

Cheap Galapagos deals often fall short on delivering what they promise and when you figure it out, it could be too late! It is really important to confirm that your cruise has the following services:

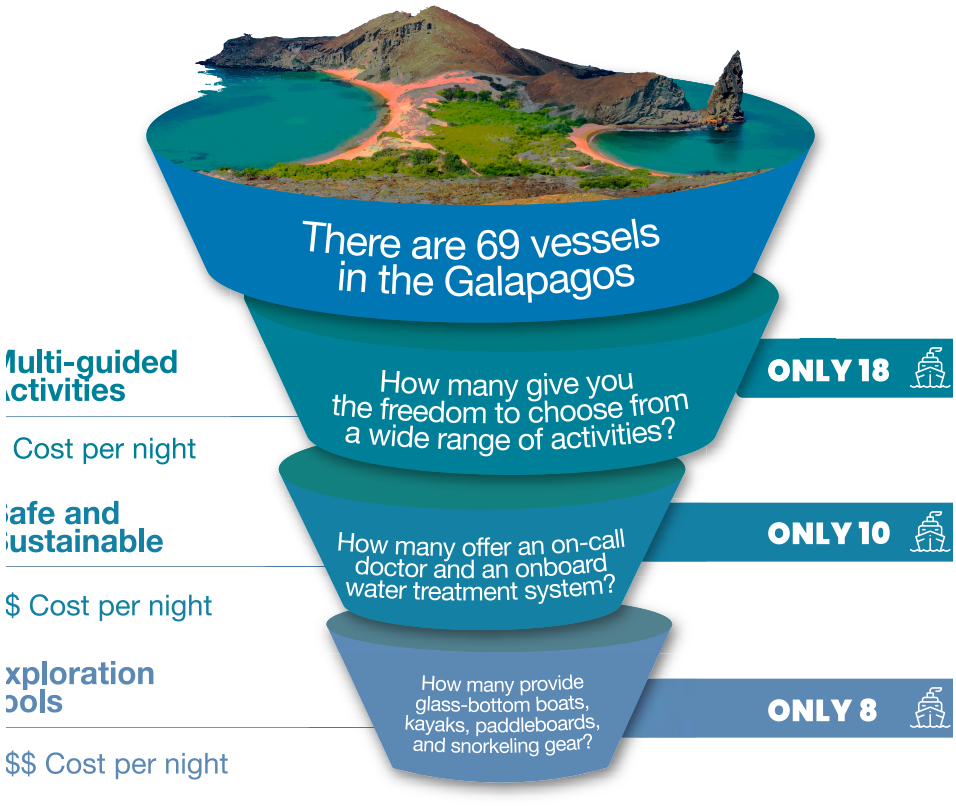
- 24/7 medical assistance from a certified doctor
- Exploration tools and gear (snorkels, masks, fins, paddleboards, kayaks, paddles, etc.)

#5
Missing Information from Your Itinerary

Not all tour operators are 100% honest about what you can see on their land-based or cruise-based tours. Therefore, it is always a good idea to make sure that your cruise or hotel offers worthwhile itineraries and excursions, and complete details. The best way to guarantee this is by booking your visit through a reputable tour operator with thorough and intimate knowledge of the Galapagos from **years of experience** in the region.



Choosing the Best Galapagos Cruise



Now that you have filtered out all of the above in accordance with your preferences, would you choose.

1

A luxury cruise expedition offering guided excursions, science lectures, and exploratory activities?

or

A vessel that spends more time focusing on leisure activities in addition to guided excursions?

2

An itinerary with more extensive coverage of the islands and wildlife, meriting a minimum of 5 days?

or

A shorter option offering fewer opportunities to see the iconic wildlife with a standard 3-night itinerary?

3

A local company trusted by major international travel agents that contributes to the conservation of the destination itself?

or

An international company that may not have any direct stake in the destination itself?

Why Metrojourneys?

Metrojourneys is about making a difference. Your visit to the Galapagos is not just a trip, it is a full, enlightening, and transformative experience. It all begins the moment you get in touch with us. At the core of everything we are, you'll find a commitment to these 3 pillars:

- **Our Team:** Our destination experts accompany you every step of the way, from helping you choose the package that is just right for you to providing you with recommendations, activities, expert guides, unique experiences, and so much more!

- **Our Products** are top-of-the-line. We spare no expense when it comes to your comfort, safety, well-being, and overall experience, interacting with the destination and its local community. We work hard to protect and participate in the conservation of our destinations. That's why we're carbon neutral in Ecuador.

- **Our Fair Price:** Our guarantee is that you will receive preferential treatment in every detail possible. It is not every day you make this sort of investment in an experience like no other. We understand and want to honor this.

Our Products in the Galapagos

SANTA CRUZ II

GALAPAGOS CRUISE

La Pinta

YACHT

GALAPAGOS

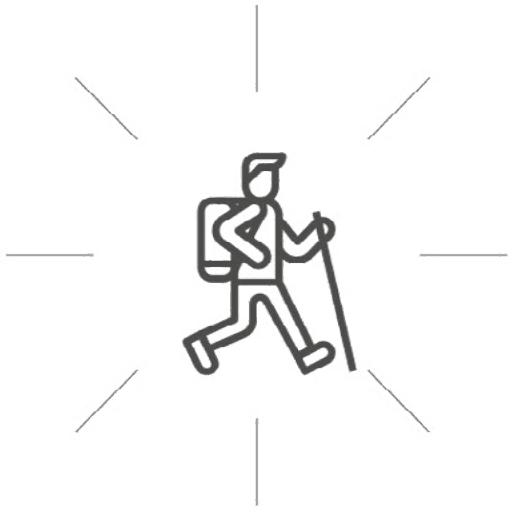
YACHT

ISABELA II

GALAPAGOS ECUADOR

FINCH BAY

GALAPAGOS HOTEL



And now that you're
equipped with all
you need to know...

you're more than ready to book your Galapagos Trip!

Get in touch with the Experts:

US Toll- Free:	Rest of the world:
+ 1 855 435 2093	**(+593) 99 738 3883**

If you'd prefer for us to reach out to you, you can submit your contact information **here.**

METROJOURNEYS.COM

- 2022 -

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