

GALÁPAGOS

SELLING GUIDE



www.expeditioncruisenetwork.com

Prepared for:
Travel trade
professionals

Presented by:
Expedition Cruise
Network

WELCOME TO THE ECN'S GALÁPAGOS SELLING GUIDE



Welcome to the Expedition Cruise Selling Guide for the Galápagos Islands.

We created this guide to support you in selling one of the world's most exceptional expedition cruise destinations: the Galápagos Archipelago. Situated 600 miles off Ecuador's coast, the Galápagos stands as a true "living laboratory of evolution," renowned for its rich biodiversity, striking landscapes, and delicately preserved ecosystem. As an advisor specialising in expedition cruising, understanding what makes the Galápagos unique is essential to offering your clients an unparalleled travel experience.

Within these pages, you will find tools to effectively sell Galápagos expedition cruises. This guide will provide insights into the islands' diverse geography and ecosystems, its flora and fauna, and explain how the Galápagos National Park regulations shape itineraries to preserve this fragile environment. We will also introduce the key expedition cruise operators in the region and outline what sets each apart, helping you match the right expedition cruise operator and the experience with your clients' needs and preferences.

Thanks to its equatorial location, the Galápagos offers a year-round expedition experience. While some seasonal highlights may appeal more than others, our experts will share how travelling in off-peak months can deliver equally rewarding experiences.

We hope this guide becomes a valuable resource in enhancing your expertise in selling Galápagos expeditions and inspiring your clients to discover this extraordinary destination.

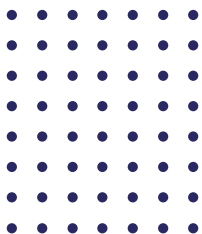
A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Akvile Marozaitė".

Akvile Marozaitė
CEO and Co-Founder

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GALÁPAGOS ONBOARD AN EXPEDITION SHIP: HIGHLIGHTS

Wildlife - The Galápagos Islands are home to a remarkable array of wildlife, shaped by their isolated location and unique environment. With few natural predators on land, animals show little fear of humans, allowing visitors to observe them closely. On land, Galápagos giant tortoises can be seen in the highlands, while in the water, visitors might swim with sea lions, marine iguanas, or a variety of fish and rays. Birdlife is equally distinctive, featuring blue-footed boobies performing their courtship dance, frigatebirds with their striking red throat pouches, and the Galápagos penguin, the only penguin species found in the tropics. This combination of terrestrial and marine species showcases the archipelago's unique ecosystems and evolutionary significance.



Fearless Creatures

With no natural predators on land, the animals have little instinct to flee, allowing travellers to experience close-up interactions. Visitors can walk alongside curious marine iguanas sunning themselves on lava rocks, observe giant tortoises up close in their natural habitat, and swim with the sea lions. **Note:** all visitors must follow Galápagos National Park Regulations when visiting the islands and keep the distance from the wildlife as advised by guides.

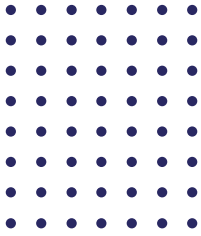


Water-based Activities

Travellers in the Galápagos can enjoy various water-based activities, including kayaking and paddleboarding. Snorkelling offers opportunities to swim alongside tropical fish, rays, sea lions, and even penguins. Some operators offer guided scuba diving excursions.

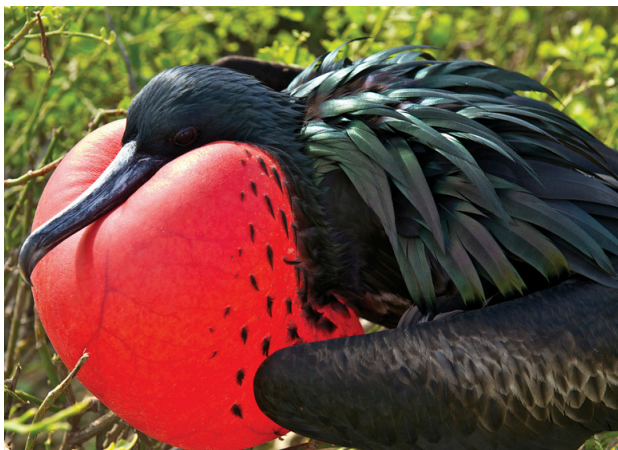
Discuss the options available to your clients with the expedition cruise operator.





Geology – The geology of the Galápagos Islands is another highlight of an expedition cruise. Formed by intense volcanic activity millions of years ago, the archipelago is located at the convergence of several tectonic plates, creating a unique setting where geological forces are constantly at play. Each island tells a different story of its volcanic origins, from the towering shield volcanoes of Isabela Island to the stark, lunar-like landscapes of Bartolomé. The islands continue to evolve as active volcanoes reshape their terrain, spewing molten lava and giving rise to new landforms. This dynamic geological history has not only shaped the islands’ scenery but also provided the varied habitats that support the Galápagos’ extraordinary biodiversity. Understanding this geological context adds a deeper dimension to any expedition, highlighting how the very foundation of the archipelago continues to influence its unique ecosystems.

Darwin and The Theory of Evolution– The Galápagos Islands hold a special place in the history of science as the catalyst of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. It was here, during his voyage on the HMS Beagle in 1835, that Darwin observed the unique adaptations of species such as the finches and tortoises across different islands. These observations led to his ground-breaking realization that species evolve over time to adapt to their environments—a concept that became the foundation of modern evolutionary biology. Today, visiting the Galápagos allows travellers to walk in Darwin’s footsteps, witnessing first-hand the islands’ rich biodiversity and understanding the natural forces that shaped life on these remote shores.



Birder’s Paradise

Galápagos boasts an incredible diversity of bird species, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. The varied ecosystems, the availability of both endemic and migratory birds provide perfect settings for birdwatching.



Family Friendly Destination

Many expedition cruise operators provide children-friendly programmes and activities, ensuring that even the youngest explorers are engaged and inspired by the incredible biodiversity and natural wonders of this UNESCO World Heritage site.



GALÁPAGOS: YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION



WHEN TO TRAVEL

The Galápagos Islands are a **year-round** destination, thanks to their location near the equator and the influence of ocean currents. The climate is shaped by two main seasons: the warm, wet season from December to May, with average temperatures ranging from 24°C to 30°C, and the cool, dry season from June to November, when temperatures range between 18°C and 26°C. The Humboldt and Cromwell currents bring cooler waters during the dry season, while warmer seas prevail during the wet months. These consistent yet varied conditions ensure that wildlife thrives throughout the year, offering visitors diverse and rewarding experiences no matter when they visit.

Here is what to expect in the archipelago month by month:

January

Climate: Warm and wet, with occasional rain showers. Sea temperatures are rising.

Wildlife Highlights: Green sea turtles begin nesting on beaches, and land iguanas are also mating. Young marine iguanas start hatching.

February

Climate: Warm, humid, and rainy. Calm seas make it perfect for snorkelling.

Wildlife Highlights: Flamingos begin nesting. Penguins can still be seen around Bartolomé Island. Sea lions are highly active in the water.

March

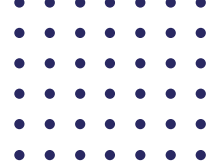
Climate: Wettest month, but warm, with rain showers that taper off. Clearer waters.

Wildlife Highlights: Marine iguana eggs start hatching. Waved albatrosses start arriving on Española to mate. Sea turtles continue nesting.

GALÁPAGOS:

YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION

CONTINUED



WHEN TO TRAVEL

April

Climate: End of the wet season; temperatures and humidity remain high.

Wildlife Highlights: Best time for marine life visibility. Sea turtles' eggs are hatching. Waved albatrosses begin their courtship dance.

May

Climate: Warm, with the rains tapering off. Water temperatures remain warm.

Wildlife Highlights: Blue-footed boobies begin their mating rituals. Albatrosses are in full courtship mode. The end of the sea turtle hatching season.

June

Climate: Transition to the cool, dry season; cooler waters and air temperatures. Stronger winds start.

Wildlife Highlights: Whale sharks begin appearing in the northern islands. Giant tortoises start migrating to lower grounds for nesting. Frigatebirds are nesting, with males displaying their red pouches.

July

Climate: Cool and dry. Coastal waters are colder due to the Humboldt Current.

Wildlife Highlights: Blue-footed boobies are nesting, and marine life is more abundant as nutrient-rich waters support feeding. Whale sharks are spotted near Darwin and Wolf Islands.

August

Climate: Cool, dry, and often cloudy, with colder waters.

Wildlife Highlights: Sea lions give birth, and pups can be seen along the shores. Migratory species like Galápagos hawks are more active. Marine iguanas are more visible basking on lava rocks.

September

Climate: Coolest month, with rougher seas and cold waters.

Wildlife Highlights: Penguins are very active, and pups are playing on the beaches. Dolphins and whales are often seen offshore. It's a peak time for whale sharks in the far northern islands.

October

Climate: Dry, with cool temperatures. Seas are rough, but marine life remains vibrant.

Wildlife Highlights: Sea lion pups are actively playing and learning to swim. Great visibility underwater means excellent diving and snorkelling with schools of fish, rays, and turtles.

November

Climate: Transition back to warmer, wetter conditions. Waters begin to warm up.

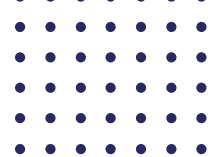
Wildlife Highlights: Breeding season for sea lions continues. Galápagos fur seals can be seen along rocky shores. Green sea turtles begin mating, leading into the nesting season.

December

Climate: Warm, wet season begins, bringing clearer skies and occasional rain showers.

Wildlife Highlights: The start of the green sea turtle nesting season. Giant tortoise eggs begin hatching. Waved albatrosses begin their departure from Española, while many other birds start nesting.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TO EXPECT



In the Galápagos, clients can enjoy a wide range of activities, though specific offerings may vary between expedition cruise operators. To tailor the experience, always ask your clients if there are particular activities they're eager to try.

All operators provide core experiences such as guided nature walks, snorkelling excursions, and Zodiac cruises, offering multiple opportunities to explore the islands' unique ecosystems. Many also include kayaking as part of their activity line-up. For those seeking more specialised adventures, some operators offer paddleboarding, scuba diving, or even niche experiences like wildlife photography workshops or guided hikes to volcanic craters.

It's worth noting that certain activities may incur additional costs and are always subject to weather and sea conditions, regardless of whether they're prebooked or arranged onboard.



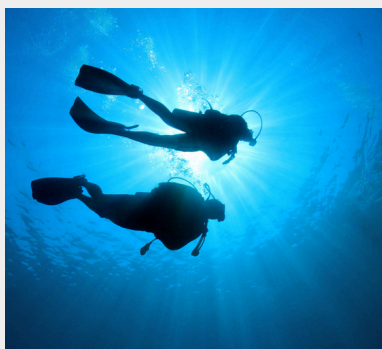
Hiking



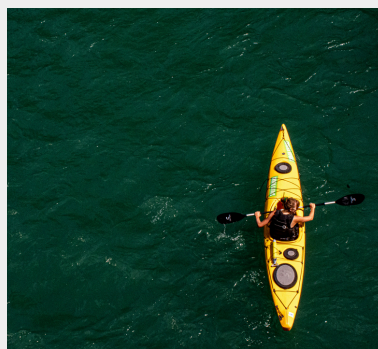
Zodiac Cruises



Snorkelling



Diving



Kayaking



SUP'ing

GALÁPAGOS ARCHIPELAGO-ISLANDS



The Galápagos Archipelago is a collection of 13 main islands, 6 smaller islands, and over 100 islets and rocks scattered across the equator in the Pacific Ocean. Each island has its own distinct landscapes, ranging from lush highlands and volcanic craters to pristine beaches and lava fields. Some of the most well-known islands include Santa Cruz, home to the Charles Darwin Research Station; Isabela, the largest island, with active volcanoes and diverse wildlife; and Española, famous for its marine iguanas and waved albatross colonies.

Isabela Island, the largest in the Galápagos, is formed by five active volcanoes. It boasts diverse landscapes that support an array of species, including giant tortoises in the lush highlands year-round. The coastal regions are home to sea lions, penguins, and marine iguanas. The island is also known for sightings of the Galápagos flightless cormorant and blue-footed boobies. Between June and September, humpback whales and dolphins can often be seen off the coast.

Santiago Island, or James Island, is a highlight on many Galápagos expedition cruises. Wildlife sightings include Galápagos fur seals, marine iguanas, and Sally lightfoot crabs along the rocky shores, with the chance to see Galápagos hawks and a variety of Darwin's finches inland. Bird enthusiasts can also spot herons, Galápagos doves, and American oystercatchers. Snorkelling around Santiago is excellent year-round, with sea turtles, rays, and tropical fish commonly seen. Unlike some other islands, Santiago has no permanent human settlements, making it an unspoiled natural sanctuary.

GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS- CONTINUED



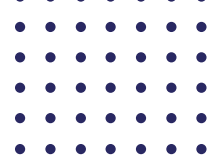
ISLANDS

Santa Cruz Island is a central hub in the Galápagos. Expedition cruises often stop here to see giant tortoises in their natural habitat at the island's lush highlands year-round. The coastline is home to marine iguanas, sea lions, and Sally Lightfoot crabs. Bird enthusiasts can spot Darwin's finches, Galápagos doves, and lava herons. Puerto Ayora, the largest human settlement in the archipelago, is also located on Santa Cruz, providing access to the Charles Darwin Research Station and a range of local shops and restaurants.

San Cristobal Island is the easternmost island in the Galápagos. Visitors can see colonies of sea lions lounging on the beaches, especially around the town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. The island is also home to blue-footed boobies, frigatebirds, and marine iguanas, which can be seen year-round. The highlands are a great place to spot giant tortoises, while snorkelling excursions around nearby islets, like Kicker Rock, offer encounters with reef sharks, rays, and sea turtles. The dry season (June to November) is ideal for marine life sightings, as cooler waters attract a wider range of species.

Fernandina Island is the youngest and most pristine of the Galápagos Islands. Visitors can see one of the largest colonies of marine iguanas basking on the rocky shores, along with playful sea lions, Galápagos penguins, and flightless cormorants. The island's volcanic terrain is also home to Sally lightfoot crabs and occasional sightings of Galápagos hawks. Snorkelling around Fernandina offers encounters with sea turtles, rays, and vibrant fish. There are no human settlements on Fernandina.

REACHING GALÁPAGOS- GATEWAYS



The Galápagos Islands are accessible via Ecuador's mainland airports in Quito and Guayaquil, with regular daily flights operated primarily by LATAM and Avianca. Many expedition cruise operators offer packages that include domestic flights and the Galápagos National Park entrance fee for added convenience. Some go further by bundling international flights, hotel stays, and optional land-based activities in both the Galápagos and mainland Ecuador, providing a range of tailored options to suit your clients' needs.

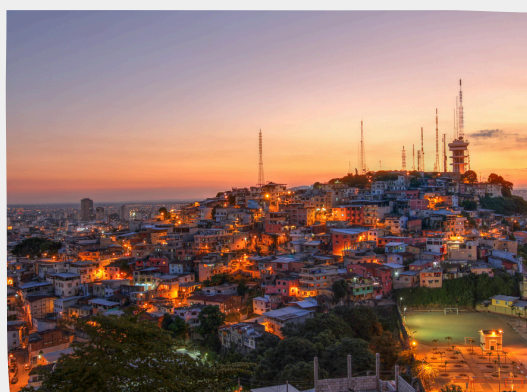
All of them will be able to recommend specialist tour operators or local DMCs you could book their trips with if your clients are after a very specific experience - always ask.

Gateways - mainland



Quito, Ecuador

The capital of Ecuador is well connected with international flights from Europe and US and offers domestic flights to Baltra or San Cristobal via Guayaquil.



Guayaquil, Ecuador

2nd largest city in Ecuador, Guayaquil is well connected to US and offers direct scheduled flights to Baltra or San Cristobal daily.

Gateways - in Galapagos



Seymour Airport, Baltra

Situated in Baltra island, Seymour airport is one of the two airports available in Galápagos.



San Cristobal Airport, San Cristobal

Is the second airport located in the Galápagos islands in San Cristobal island.

Ship: *National Geographic Islander II*
Location: Española Island, Galápagos
Date: 14/10/2024

A DAY IN GALÁPAGOS

This daily log was taken from National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions' National Geographic Islander II 'Wild Galápagos Escape' voyage that took place in October, 2024.

Española Island, Galápagos

Today we are visiting Española Island, one of the oldest islands of the archipelago. We started the day kayaking along the cliffside where we found blue-footed boobies and many sea turtles. Later, we went snorkelling at nearby Garner Islet, a place full of life and colour.

In the afternoon, we hiked on one of the most spectacular trails of the Galápagos at Punta Suarez where we walked through a nesting colony of Nazca boobies and waved albatross. These beautiful creatures are still displaying and courting. We admired the beauty of their dance with the light of the sunset.

SELLING TIP: Companies such as National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions have daily log posts available on the website. These can be used as a great resource to familiarise yourself with the destination, different seasons, as well as share with the client for them to know what to expect.



National Geographic Islander II in Galápagos @National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions

SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



David Horwell, Select Latin America, Co-Author of 'Galápagos Wildlife' guidebook

How many times have you been to Galápagos?

I lived there for over a year whilst working as a naturalist guide in the 1970's. Tourism was just taking-off and in those days most of the guides were foreign graduates. In the 1980's – 2000 I must have led roughly over 50 trips for my own and other companies.

What is your favourite time to visit Galápagos and why?

There is something to see all the year round, there is never a dull moment! The breeding seasons vary from island to island. The hot season December – March is great to be in the water, and reptiles like iguanas and turtles lay and hatch their eggs. The cooler season April to November is when seabirds start to breed, and there is also more activity on land. I suppose my overall favourite is in between the two seasons: i.e. May-June when the Albatross start their courtship and the islands are still green. Our Autumn September – November, is also a good time for whales, and there are lots of sea lion pups to swim with.

What is your favourite island/landing/activity in Galápagos?

The more remote the better, far from the inhabited islands, Fernandina is my all time favourite. The main visitor site, Punta Espinosa, is a peninsula with tidepools draped with thousands of marine iguanas and a stunning view of six volcanoes, magical realism embodied. I once saw a pod of orcas in the bay. I also had the privilege of climbing the volcano and descending the crater, more people have been to outer space than have done that.



SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



The most memorable moment you worked/travelled to Galápagos.

I volunteered to help scientists observe the finches on Daphne Major Island. There were only two of us on the island for a fortnight. Every finch had been ringed and we had to see what they were eating and doing. It was a steep-sided volcano that plunged almost vertically into the ocean with some very big sharks patrolling the waters. The only way to freshen up was to dive in with them.

Your top tip for travel advisor selling expedition cruising to Galápagos.

Going on a cruise rather than staying in a hotel is already the best tip. The size of boat varies from small 16-20 passengers, mid-size luxury for 50 passengers and large for a 100 or so. Personally I prefer the small boats, where you spend more time on the islands and snorkelling in the water, but some may appreciate the creature comforts and stability of a large ship. The main thing is to discuss the options with your clients before booking. There is also a choice of East and West itineraries - again it depends what animals are a priority, but both have their attractions. Some animals like sea lions and marine iguanas and turtles can be seen everywhere, others like cormorants and albatross are confined to a specific area. Do your research.

David's Galápagos guidebook is available at all major bookshops and online on Amazon.



SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



Emma Ridley, Expedition Leader at National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions

How many times have you been to Galápagos?

Although temporarily based in London, I have called Galápagos home for close to 30 years now. I arrived in this magical archipelago almost by accident: I was studying Marine Biology in Edinburgh when I came across a job advertised as naturalist guide in the Galápagos Islands, which sounded too exciting for words! I ended up getting the position and, upon graduation in 1995, departed on what was supposed to be a two-year adventure. I never left. I built my home on Santa Cruz Island and have been around the islands countless times working as Expedition Leader, Naturalist and Divemaster.

What is your favourite time of the year to visit Galápagos and why?

The Galápagos Archipelago is a wonderful place to visit year-round, since the great majority of iconic species live here permanently. In fact, one of the greatest pleasures of living and working here full-time is witnessing the yearly cycles of life run their course. Having said that, the islands can change quite dramatically depending on the season, with a large variation in both water and land temperatures over the year. Thus, I recommend choosing a time of the year to visit based on one's climatic preferences – if snorkelling and water activities are important motivators, then the hot season might be best. If hot, tropical conditions on land are not well tolerated, then the cooler season is a lot more pleasant. Personally, I love the transition seasons of May/June and November/December since the waters are quite warm and the weather is sunny but not too hot and humid.



SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



What is your favourite island/landing/activity in Galápagos?

This is an almost impossible question to answer since there are so many beautiful islands to visit, each with its own, special highlights! Española and Genovesa islands with their abundant seabird colonies; Floreana and Sombrero Chino with their incredible snorkelling; Santa Cruz with its cloud forests and giant tortoises – I could go on!

However, if I really had to choose, I would probably have to go for the westernmost island of Fernandina. This is a volcanically new island, with a towering shield volcano and covered in black lava flows. Its inhospitable shores are home to thousands of marine iguanas and other strange creatures such as flightless cormorants and equatorial penguins – a very other-worldly place!

As for my favourite activity, it has to be the incredible snorkelling. The islands are at the confluence of important ocean currents that bring nutrient-rich waters and are the basis of an important web of life. When in the water, one can observe hundreds of fish species, including small sharks and rays, and can also come across the unexpected – sea lions, sea turtles, penguins and iguanas!

The most memorable moment you worked/travelled to Galápagos.

Again, there are so many. The first time I spent an hour in the water snorkelling with playful young sea lions, diving down and twisting around with them in an aquatic ballet – what an unforgettable experience, to actually interact with a creature in the wild. And the first time I experienced the ecological innocence of the land creatures in the Galápagos, whilst sitting on a lava rock and watching the fascinating courtship of the waved albatrosses or the blue-footed boobies. Or the first time I came across a school of hammerhead sharks peacefully swimming by while SCUBA diving. Or the time I witnessed the majestic eruption of one of the volcanoes in western Galápagos. Is it any wonder I could not leave?

Your top tip for travel advisor selling expedition cruising to Galápagos.

Any time is a good time to visit Galápagos – as mentioned above, the greatest variable is the temperature both on land and in the water. I would recommend, however, taking a liveaboard to explore the archipelago rather than land-based explorations from the inhabited areas. This is the only way to get to the more remote islands such as Fernandina and Genovesa, and to experience the true wilderness of the islands. Maybe spend some time in the local communities before or after a cruise, since they do have a lot to offer! Also, come prepared for lots of snorkelling as well as hiking – maybe some practice in a pool beforehand, and a mask one is comfortable with, to make the most of the experience. In the cold season, a full wetsuit would help.

SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



Hannah Finch, Product Executive at Latin Routes

How many times have you been to Galápagos?

I've sailed on a five-day cruise of the central and eastern Galapagos Islands. But I'd like to go back and visit the western islands next time, I'd love to see the large marine iguanas that can be found on Isabela and Fernandina Island.

What is your favourite time of the year to visit Galápagos and why?

January to March is a popular time to travel as the water is calmer, meaning visibility is better, and it's breeding season for many birds so mating rituals can be witnessed. June and July see the arrival of whales and dolphins. I travelled in August and we saw so many babies - sea lion pups, red and blue-footed booby chicks and flamingo chicks. The temperatures were very pleasant for land-based activities at this time of year too.

What is your favourite island/landing/activity in Galápagos?

My favourite activity would have to be snorkelling. There's a whole wealth of life under the sea and swimming with sea lions, turtles, sharks, rays and penguins is an unforgettable experience. We also saw mobula rays jumping out of the water, which is quite rare to see so we were super lucky.

SELLING TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



The most memorable moment you worked/travelled to Galápagos.

My first evening on the cruise just as we were finishing dinner, the captain called us all to the stern of the boat where there were around six Galápagos sharks circling the water chasing a pipe fish, meanwhile pelicans were bobbing around and a sea lion was trying to avoid the sharks. We'd already seen frigatebirds, boobies and iguanas in the day, but this was the first close-up experience we had and it was so exciting!

Your top tip for travel advisor selling expedition cruising to Galápagos.

Weigh up the customers' priorities. If they have a particular species they want to see this will decide the islands, route and time of year to travel, or are they more concerned about the type, size and style of boat? Once you've determined these points, the rest will fall into place.



Giant Tortoise @National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions

GALÁPAGOS NATIONAL PARK



Parque Nacional
GALÁPAGOS
Ecuador

REGULATIONS

The Galápagos National Park, established in 1959, was Ecuador's first national park and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It plays a crucial role in preserving the unique ecosystems of the Galápagos Islands, safeguarding its biodiversity, and regulating tourism to ensure that visitors have minimal impact on the environment. The park's strict guidelines are designed to protect the delicate habitats and rare species that make the islands so special.

Key rules for all Galápagos visitors include:

1. Always be accompanied by a **certified naturalist guide** who ensures that visitors follow responsible practices.
2. **Stay on designated trails** to protect wildlife and vegetation.
3. **Maintain a distance of at least 2 meters** (6 feet) from wildlife to avoid disturbing animals.
4. **Do not feed, touch, or interact with animals**, as this can alter their natural behaviour.
5. **No food, plants, or animals may be brought onto the islands**, to prevent the introduction of invasive species.
6. **Do not take anything from the islands**, including shells, rocks, or plants.
7. **Dispose of waste** properly and carry out all rubbish to help keep the islands clean.
8. **Drone use is prohibited without special permission**, to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

These rules help ensure that tourism remains sustainable, allowing visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the Galápagos without compromising its future.

IMPORTANT: Upon arrival in the Galápagos, all guests flying in from the mainland will undergo biosecurity checks to prevent the introduction of non-native species that could disrupt the islands' delicate ecosystem. Travellers should expect to have their luggage inspected, and they will need to pay a \$200 entry fee to the Galápagos National Park. Many expedition cruise operators include this fee in the cost of the cruise package or inform guests of it in advance, ensuring a smoother arrival process.

UNDERSTANDING SHIP BASED TOURISM IN GALÁPAGOS



OPERATORS

Expedition cruise operations in the Galápagos are highly regulated to protect the unique and fragile ecosystem of the archipelago. The Galápagos National Park (GNP) and the Ecuadorian government have implemented strict guidelines to ensure sustainable tourism that minimizes environmental impact. Here is an overview of the key regulations and operational framework:

1. Cap on the Number of Vessels

The total number of yachts, ships, and boats permitted to operate in the Galápagos is capped. This limit was established in the early 1990s when the Galápagos National Park initiated measures to control tourism and mitigate its effects on the islands' delicate environment. Today, approximately 70 vessels hold permits for tourism activities in the archipelago. These vessels include a mix of smaller yachts, mid-sized expedition ships, and larger cruise ships, all of which are subject to the regulations set by the GNP.

2. Passenger Limits per Vessel

To further protect the environment, there is a maximum capacity limit of 100 passengers per vessel. This regulation ensures that even on the larger ships, passenger numbers remain manageable, allowing for a lower ecological footprint. Smaller yachts and expedition vessels generally carry fewer than 50 guests, offering more intimate and eco-friendly experiences.

CONTINUED:



OPERATORS

3. Operator Licensing and Local Presence

Only operators based in the Galápagos or mainland Ecuador are allowed to run expedition cruises within the islands. This regulation is designed to prioritize local businesses, fostering economic benefits for the region and encouraging local stewardship of the ecosystem. It also ensures that companies have a better understanding of the local environment, culture, and regulatory framework, which is essential for promoting responsible and sustainable tourism.

4. Environmental Regulations and Guidelines

The GNP enforces stringent regulations concerning waste management, wildlife interaction, and visitor conduct. All vessels must adhere to strict waste disposal guidelines to prevent pollution, and there are designated visitor sites with specific rules on where and how tourists can explore. Furthermore, licensed naturalist guides are required on all excursions, helping ensure that visitors respect wildlife and ecosystems during their tours.

5. Limited Number of Visitor Sites and Rotational System

To avoid over-tourism in any single area, the GNP manages a rotational system of visitor sites. This system controls the flow of tourists and allows ecosystems to recover between visits, further preserving the islands' natural environment. Each vessel is assigned specific sites to visit on set days, ensuring that no more than a few vessels are present at each site at the same time.

CONSERVATION AND CITIZEN SCIENCE GALÁPAGOS



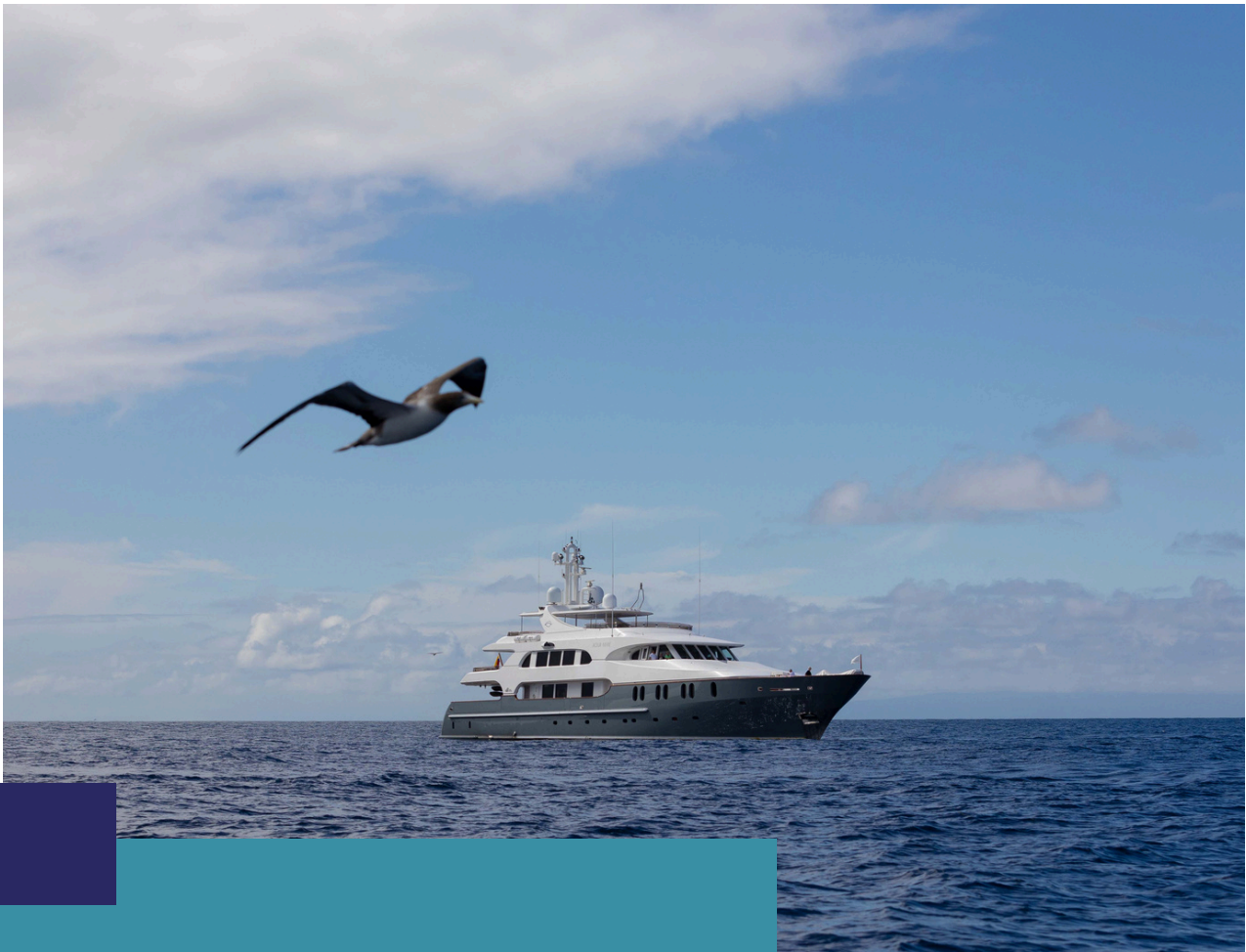
Guest article: author Tom O'Hara, Galapagos Conservation Trust

Visiting the Galápagos Islands is an incredible privilege, and leaves a lasting impression: the incredibly tame sea lions and mockingbirds, the oceans teeming with life, the unique species found nowhere else on Earth. But this privilege comes with responsibilities. Despite the best efforts of local authorities and conservationists, Galápagos is suffering from the same problems that threaten island ecosystems the world over. It's vital that visitors adhere to the rules set out by the Galápagos National Park: keep your distance from the wildlife, stay on marked paths, and avoid souvenirs made from native flora and fauna.

Your clients can also help in the fight to free the Islands from single-use plastics: bring reusable alternatives, refuse single-use items such as straws while on the Islands, and take as much rubbish home as possible. This is important even when travelling by ship, as most cruise lines still send their waste to the Islands' overstretched recycling facilities and landfills (with the notable exception of Silversea, who now divert inorganic waste to the mainland).

Citizen science opportunities are more limited than other destinations, due to the strict protections in place, but divers and snorkellers can report shark sightings using the [Sharkbook.ai](#) platform, which is helping researchers to build a global database of endangered marine species. You can also help the [Iguanas from Above](#) team to count marine iguanas as part of their efforts to map the entire coastline of Galápagos. And if you become a GCT travel partner, you can offer complimentary membership to your clients, helping us grow our amazing community of travellers who have been touched by this very special place.

Tom O'Hara worked in the travel industry for 15 years before joining Galapagos Conservation Trust, a UK-based charity that focuses on the conservation and sustainable development of the Galápagos Archipelago. Find out more by visiting galapagosconservation.org.uk



ECN MEMBERS IN GALÁPAGOS

The Expedition Cruise Network's members in the Galápagos represent a diverse range of expedition cruise operators. These include **Golden Galapagos**, specialising in small luxury catamaran experiences; **Metropolitan Touring**, one of the longest-standing tour operators in the region; and **National Geographic Lindblad Expeditions**, the largest fleet in the Galápagos with four vessels.

The network also includes ultra-luxury provider **Silversea** with its purpose built 100 passenger vessel Silver Origin, **Aqua Expeditions** with its focus on luxury small-yacht cruising onboard Aqua Mare, **HX Hurtigruten Expeditions**, one of the largest players in expedition cruising, and **UnCruise Adventures**, known for its immersive approach.

AQUA EXPEDITIONS



LUXURY OPERATOR

Headquarters:
Singapore

Ships in Galápagos:

Aqua Mare, up to 16 passengers

What is included:

All onboard meals, non-alcoholic beverages, house wines, and beer; expedition equipment; laundry service; complimentary internet; entrance fee to the Galápagos National Park, small group guided excursions. Group transfers from/to the airport if guests arrive and depart on Aqua Expeditions' recommended flights.

Price point: ££££

Aqua Expeditions in Galápagos

Aqua Expeditions is a recognized global leader in luxury small-ship expeditions exploring the world's most biodiverse and culturally significant destinations. In 2022, Aqua launched Aqua Mare, the first true superyacht in the Galápagos Islands, which takes an iconic once-in-a-lifetime adventure to the next level. Designed and built by renowned Italian CRN yard with custom Zuretti interiors, seven elegant design suites serve as the perfect respite after active days for 16 guests exploring the remote wildlife and dynamic nature of the Archipelago. Combining its expansive social spaces, cuisine by award-winning Peruvian chef Schiaffino with the rich history of its destination, Aqua Mare's 16 crew including two naturalist guides ensure an exceptional one-on-one bespoke service to experience the wild and magnificent Enchanted Islands.

Key itineraries:

- 7N East Galápagos | Expedition Cruise
- 7N West Galápagos | Expedition Cruise
- 14N East and West Galápagos | Expedition Cruise
- 14N West and East Galápagos | Expedition Cruise

Activities available:

Kayaking, Paddle boarding, Guided hiking, Up-close wildlife encounters, Snorkelling, Diving*, Tender explorations

*Additional charges apply

GOLDEN GALÁPAGOS



LUXURY OPERATOR

Headquarters:
Quito, Ecuador

Catamarans:
M/C Endemic: 16
passengers
M/C Elite: 16
passengers
M/C Ocean Spray: 16
passengers
M/C Petrel: 16
passengers

What is Included:

Airport/yacht transfers
in Galápagos,
accommodation,
Guided expeditions per
itinerary,
Bilingual National Park
guide
(English/Spanish), All
meals and snacks, soft
drinks, Supplied
expedition gear, Wi Fi

Price point:
£££

Golden Galápagos in Galápagos:

Golden Galápagos, part of Golden Experiences & Travel, sets the bar for luxury travel in the Galápagos with its carbon-neutral fleet of four modern catamarans. Guests enjoy panoramic views, private balconies, and gourmet Ecuadorian cuisine aboard spacious, comfortable vessels. As part of Golden Experiences & Travel, guests can extend their adventure to La Selva Eco-Lodge & Retreat in the Amazon Rainforest, creating an extraordinary opportunity to explore two of Ecuador's most iconic destinations in one trip.

Key itineraries:

Varies by catamaran, please check the website. Duration 5-7 nights.

Activities available:

Guided hiking excursions, snorkelling, kayaking, Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), dinghy (panga) rides, wildlife observation, beach visits.

Extras:

International Flights and Domestic Flights, Galápagos National Park Entrance Fee (USD 200), Transit Control Card (USD 20 – subject to change), Alcoholic and bottled beverages, gratuities, insurance.



GLOBAL OPERATOR

Headquarters:
London, UK

Ships in Galápagos:
MS Santa Cruz II (90 passengers)

What is included:

Daily activities and excursions, charter flights from mainland; transfers to/from airport, Galápagos national park fee and transit card, all-inclusive onboard, Wi Fi, gratuities, complimentary HX backpack.

Extras:
international flights, additional hotel nights, insurance.

Price point: ££

HX Hurtigruten Expeditions in Galápagos

As one of the world's first operators of Galápagos expeditions, HX has been taking curious travellers on once-in-a-lifetime adventures here since 1969. With its almost mythic giant tortoises, endemic marine iguanas and over 150 species of bird, wildlife is one of the most compelling reasons to travel to Galápagos. Here you'll observe animals and birds that are impossible to see elsewhere, both in carefully maintained environments and beautiful natural habitats. Rest assured, HX keep a respectful distance from them, honouring conservation efforts and protecting the area's biodiversity. It's all part of HX's mission to be the world's most sustainable expedition cruise company

Key Itineraries:

- In Darwin's Footsteps, 9 days
- In Darwin's Footsteps plus Machu Picchu – 13 Days
- Nine of the Best Isles – 11 Days
- Nine of the Best Isles plus Machu Picchu – 15 Days

Activities available:

Kayaking, zodiac cruising, snorkelling, glass bottom boat, hiking, Stand Up Paddle boards, additional pre and post packages

METROPOLITAN TOURING



DESTINATION SPECIALIST

Headquarters:
Quito, Ecuador

Ships in Galápagos:

Yacht Isabela II
(40 passengers)
Yacht La Pinta
(48 passengers)

What is included:
inclusions vary by yacht, both include accommodation, meals, guides, snorkelling gear, lectures, internet, transfers in the islands, taxes

Extras? Vary by ship, both exclude National park fee, migration control card, domestic flights, gratuities, laundry

Price point: ££-£££

Metropolitan Touring in Galápagos

Metropolitan Touring Ecuador, founded in 1953, is Ecuador's leading Travel Corporation: pioneer of responsible tourism and expedition voyages to the Galápagos Islands. In many ways, our company's origins as the pioneers of travel in the Galápagos Islands have set our course over the last decades.

The fragility, the specialness, the singularity of the islands and their wildlife have formed our belief in a travel experience that is founded on respectful contact with the natural world, filled with interpretation, understanding and a long-term vision – and, of course, fun! Here, in our home country of Ecuador, we constantly innovate and invest to make sure your experience is top-notch from start to finish.

Key itineraries:

- 4N/5D Northern Islands (Isabella II, La Pinta)
- 4N/5D Western Islands (Isabella II)
- 6N/7D South-Eastern Islands (Isabella II)
- 4N/5D Eastern Islands (La Pinta)
- 6N/7D Western Islands (La Pinta)

Activities available:

Hiking, snorkelling, zodiac exploration, Stand Up Paddle Boards, kayaks, glass-bottom boat, swimming, beach.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LINDBLAD EXPEDITIONS



GLOBAL OPERATOR

Headquarters:
New York, US

Ships in Galápagos:

National Geographic Endeavor II (96 guests)
National Geographic Gemini (48 guests)
National Geographic Islander II (48 guests)
National Geographic Delfina (16 guests)

What is included:

accommodation, meals, excursions, soft drinks, wine, cocktails, spirits and beer (except some premium brands that are extra), park fees, hotels, transfers, and excursions as per itinerary, basic Wi Fi

Extras:

flights, insurance, visas

Price point: £££

Lindblad Expeditions in Galápagos

Few destinations are more iconic than the Galápagos Islands, where Lindblad Expeditions brought the very first group of citizen explorers more than 50 years ago. Sail among the varied landscapes of this magical archipelago to encounter giant tortoises, blue-footed boobies, playful penguins, and charismatic sea lions, all unfazed by your presence.

Discover the islands and their wildlife with National Geographic – Lindblad Expeditions on purpose-built ships that sail this storied region year-round. With multiple ways to explore on land and at sea, including hikes, kayaking, and snorkelling, every day reveals new discoveries interpreted by a team of expert local guides.

“Lindblad Expeditions knows the Galápagos Islands well. In fact, Lindblad literally created the first modern expedition cruise to these islands in the late 1960's.” Cruise Critic

Key Itineraries:

check the website for more details for individual ships

Activities available:

Hiking, kayaking, Zodiac cruising, SUPs, snorkelling, glass bottom boats (where available), scuba diving on select departures (extra cost)



ULTRA-LUXURY

Headquarters:

Monaco

Ships in Galápagos:

Silver Origin (100 guests)

What is Included:

all-inclusive, **Door-to-Door** option includes private transfers from home, international flights, hotel accommodation, domestic flights, National park fees, all-inclusive cruise.

Port-to-Port option includes domestic flights, National Park fees, all-inclusive cruise

Price point: ££££

Silversea Expeditions in Galápagos

Embark on a Galápagos expedition and discover the species that inhabit this famous archipelago. Experience this living museum and its creatures that are as engaging as they are unique. Our Door-to-Door All-Inclusive package offers a new level of comfort, convenience, and value where every facet of your travel is included, and every detail handled by our staff. Revel in the Galápagos' incomparable biodiversity aboard Silver Origin, our purpose-built expedition ship for this other-worldly destination.

Key itineraries:

7 Night itineraries – two variations

Activities available:

hiking, Zodiac cruising, snorkelling, swimming, kayaking, beachcombing

UNCRUISE ADVENTURES



DESTINATION SPECIALIST

Headquarters:
Seattle, USA

Ships in Galápagos:

La Pinta, 48
passengers

What is Included:

Transfers between
airport and vessel on
embarkation/disembarkation days,
National park fees, All
meals and beverages
(including premium
alcohol), Adventure
activities and
equipment, Wellness
amenities, Expert
guides and onboard
lectures

Price point: ££-£££

UnCruise Adventures in Galápagos

UnCruise Adventures is renowned for its immersive small-ship expeditions, offering unforgettable experiences in nature-rich destinations. Our 7-night Galápagos program aboard the luxurious 48-guest La Pinta showcases the region's unique biodiversity, blending intimate wildlife encounters with exceptional service and expert guidance.

Key itineraries:

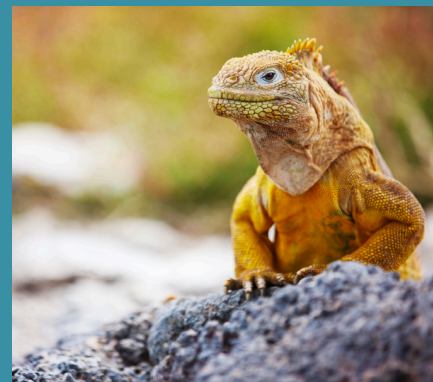
6 Nights/7 Days Galápagos Expedition, 1 night pre-cruise hotel included in Guayaquil.

Included Activities available:

Snorkelling, kayaking, paddleboarding, hiking, glass-bottom boat excursions, beachcombing, wildlife observation, guided shore visits.



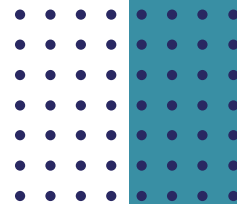
GALÁPAGOS WILDLIFE





THANK YOU!

FURTHER INFORMATION



Website www.expeditioncruisenetwork.com

Email info@expeditioncruisenetwork.com