

Wildlife Galapagos Alta Galapagos Cruise



deluxe class sail boat – sixteen passengers - lots of space
comprehensive itinerary – clear bottomed sea kayaks – outdoor and indoor
dining – good sized cabins – delicious food - sustainably run – beautiful boat

Explore the unique Galapagos Islands aboard the most elegant of sail boats.

A superb cruise route taking you to outer islands including Genovesa, Espanola and Fernandina.

Lots of opportunity to walk, snorkel and sea kayak on each day of your trip.

Travel with an expert naturalist guide.

This is a Pura *handpicked* holiday with an activity level of *low* and a comfort rating of *premium*.



The luxurious sail boat, Alta.



"Alta is a great boat. I liked the fact that there is enough room for everyone to eat outside or inside and all to fit into one Panga for transfer to the islands so no waiting around." David P.

Holiday Itinerary

Saturday | San Cristobal | **sea lions**

Fly to the Galapagos early this morning, a flight of around three hours since the islands are some 600 miles offshore.

When you arrive in the islands, you pay the national park entrance fee before heading to the dock to board.

Please note: the following route is subject to change by the Galapagos National Park.

Guides meet you at the airport, collect your luggage and escort you on the short bus ride to the harbour.

Small motorized rafts, called 'Pangas' take you out to your boat where the crew welcome you onboard.

After a briefing and a light lunch set off towards your first island visit – Playa Ochoa.



A double cabin on board Alta

Test out your snorkelling gear with a swim off the beach. Just so you know that you have arrived in the Galapagos, swim with a small colony of sea lions.

Continue for sunset at nearby Kicker Rock, a magnificent rock rising 200m from the sea.

It has a split with towering vertical walls on either side. The cliffs are home to frigate birds, blue footed and masked boobies.

Settle in to your cabin before dinner on board.

Cabins are on one of three decks, all are of a good size with private bathroom and air conditioning. (b,l,d)

Sunday | Genovesa | **bird island**

Tower Island is basically formed by what remains of a submerged volcanic crater.

Being so remote, it is one of the less visited islands and therefore has some of the most abundant wildlife, particularly birds.

This morning starts at Prince Philip's Steps where you climb to a plateau passing red-footed boobies, and possibly short-eared owls.

After the walk you can paddle a kayak along the craggy shore if you like. This afternoon you move around to Darwin Bay, a coral sand beach which is home to many frigate birds.

This evening's navigation is the longest of the week as you head across the northern edge of the Galapagos towards the westernmost islands. (b,l,d)

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Santa Cruz Island: a giant tortoise hiding.



A flightless cormorant



Playing underwater with sea lions.



Fernandina Island: a marine iguana pile-up.

Monday | *Fernandina* | **marine iguanas**

Start today at Tagus Cove, a favourite site for early pirates and whalers.

You can read the names of hundreds of ships which were first carved and then painted on the high cliffs that enclose the protected cove.

More important, however, is the inland trail around a saltwater crater lake, called Darwin Lake.

Ride along the cliffs to see brown pelicans, marine iguanas, Galapagos Penguins, flightless cormorants and migratory birds.

This afternoon cross the narrow strait to the youngest of the Galapagos Islands, Fernandina.

Here you walk to the jagged lava of Punta Espinosa to see marine iguanas warming themselves on the lava.

You may well need to watch where you are treading as there are lots and lots of them piled up against each other for warmth. (b,l,d)

Tuesday | *Isabela* | **turtles and tortoises**

Visit the shores of one of the world's most active volcanoes to walk amongst the flightless cormorants, sea lions and marine iguanas.

Start today with a walk on Isabela to see if you can see giant tortoises in the wild. You will almost certainly see land iguanas along the way.

Return to the beach to swim or snorkel directly offshore possibly with rays, sea turtles and sharks.

For those of you less inclined to swim, you can take time to simply relax and read a book on the beach.

Stop off on the northern end of Isabela and the great snorkelling site of Punta Vicente Roca.

Here you will usually see turtles as well as all kinds of fish. After the snorkeling go on a panga ride along the shore to see some of the Galapagos' spectacular geological rock formations up close.

You also often see Nazca boobies, pelicans, swallow-tailed gulls, marine iguanas, flightless cormorants and penguins. (b,l,d)

Wednesday | *Bartolome* | **walk and snorkel**

Land this morning on the small, barren outcrop of Isla Bartolomé.

Walk up to the top of the island on a wooden walkway for beautiful views across the eastern Galapagos Islands.

Head back down the hill to snorkel around the base of the emblematic Pinnacle Rock.

The visibility here is amongst the best of the week and you might be lucky enough to swim with penguins and sharks.

Certainly the channels and rock formations underwater make for a beautiful snorkeling environment.

This afternoon, as the sun goes down, you weigh anchor at Black Turtle Cove on the northern side of Santa Cruz.

Paddle through mangroves in the dusk light to observe the delicate marine life in the sheltered cove as well as the rich birdlife. (b,l,d)

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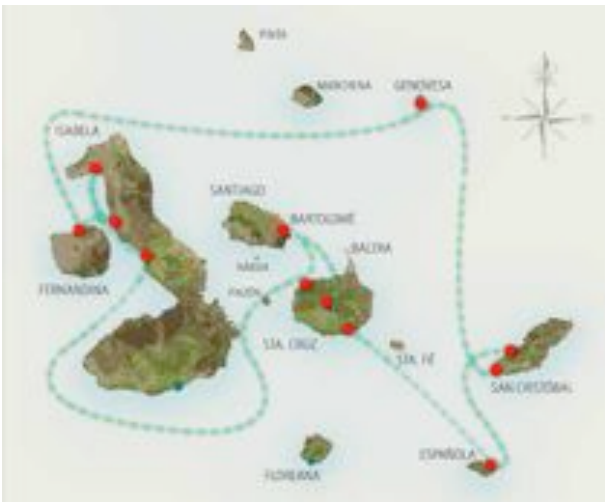
Alta under full sail.



Al fresco dining on Alta.



Cabins can be either twin or double.



Alta's route around the Galapagos.

Thursday | Santa Cruz | **giant tortoises**

Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station first thing today to learn about their breeding, conservation and education programs.

Walk amongst giant land tortoises in the extensive enclosures of the centre.

Meet 'Not-So-Lonesome George', long thought to be the last of the Santa Cruz Island giant tortoise sub-species but now apparently joined by a new species mate, called Eva. See how George & Eva are getting on.

After lunch, drive up to the Santa Cruz highlands to see giant tortoises in the 'wild'.

Really this is a farmer who has created a network of trails on his land where you will find giant tortoises.

Interesting but probably the most crowded part of your time in the Galapagos and the most stage-managed.

Visit some pretty rock formations and walk through the mature vegetation of the highlands – this is likely to be the most greenery you will see all week. (b,l,d)

Friday | Espanola | **seabirds and sea lions**

Start today with a landing on 'sea lion beach'. This is your first chance to get into the water – you can snorkel if you like but really it's just a lovely swimming beach.

All along the sand are sea lions basking in the sun.

Wander along the beach and enjoy watching them play in the surf.

Return for lunch on board and an hour or so navigation to the next landing site on the west of the island.

Mid-afternoon snorkeling excursion to the nearby bay where you might get to swim with sea lions.

Walk to the rugged cliffs of Punta Suarez to see a spectacular blow-hole.

Along the way you should see a broad spectrum of birdlife, including blue-footed boobies, Galapagos hawks and albatrosses. (b,l,d)

Saturday | travel | **leave the islands**

Visit the interpretation centre on San Cristobal this morning before heading to the airport for your flight back to the mainland. (b)

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Holiday Information

Pura's opinion

Alta is a very beautiful deluxe sail boat. When the weather is right they do cut off the engines and travel entirely under sail which is a magnificent sight.

Don't expect them to always run up the sails though, mostly she will travel under power.

She was recently refitted to provide more spacious cabins and more contemporary interiors.

She was very comfortable before the refit so is now quite luxurious.

From the same stable as Evolution, the crew and level of service aboard are hard to beat, certainly on a small ship experience.

All meals are buffet with a uniformly high standard of service and food.

This is a luxury experience but on a very intimate scale with just 16 passengers.

Not great for anyone who is travelling alone they do not generally offer a 'willing to share' option and the single supplement is 75% on top of the normal cabin price.

But then again, it's not really a budget option.

Star rating

This is a deluxe class motor sail boat.

Accommodation

All eight cabins are a fair size.

All have lower beds which can be converted to either twin or double beds although there is one fixed double cabin and one fixed twin. All have wardrobes.

Cabins one and two are very slightly larger and therefore a little bit more expensive.

The communal interiors are very comfortable and pleasantly roomy. The decks are very large with different seating areas as well as the top sun deck.

Stability

Being a larger ship Alta is really quite stable in the water though with a rounded hull you will get lateral movement as well as forward/aft rocking.

Movement in the water will be most noticeable between July and October in the more exposed waters around Genovesa and the southern tip of Isabela.

Cabins three through six are marginally the most stable.

Noise

You should be aware that on any sail boat you will have some noise from generators and from the engine when travelling.

Cabins seven and eight are the noisiest since engines and generators are in the rear of the boat.

Alta boat specification

Length on deck: 46m/140ft

Boat width (beam): 7m/21ft

Average speed: 10 knots

Crew: 8 plus 1 guide.

How active?

In the Galapagos, wildlife viewing is the main activity. There is some gentle walking and snorkeling.

Conditions underfoot in the Galapagos can sometimes be rough as the islands are volcanic.

You should therefore be prepared for some walking over uneven terrain. You can always opt out of excursions.

How responsible?

The owners of Alta are the second oldest boat operators in the islands so have 23 years experience working with the islands and are well integrated into efforts to maintain and preserve them.

They have three boats, of which Alta is the most intimate. They are the main operator of deluxe class small boats in the Galapagos.

Alta's engines have been fitted with special oil filters which mean that oil is only changed when in dry dock on the mainland. This is not the case for most boats and the cause of some environmental damage.

Waste on board is taken either to the recycling plant on Santa Cruz or back to the mainland to minimize the effects of the ship's presence.

The ship's owners are permanent supporter and member of the Charles Darwin Foundation.

On the islands they support the local scout movement with monthly allowances.

In the wider world they donate trips to support causes such as the genocide prevention network.

Pura Aventura pays for you to become a benefactor of the Galapagos Conservation Trust (www.savegalapagos.org).

When should I go?

In the Galapagos, wildlife viewing is excellent year round. Weather and sea conditions do vary somewhat through the year: September is the coolest and choppiest-sea month. From October onwards the weather warms up and the waters calm down until the hottest, calmest-sea month of February.

Not based in the UK?

We are very happy to discuss your requirements if you are not travelling to and from the UK.

Please call us on **+44 1273 676712** between 9am and 7pm weekdays.

Prices & departures

2010	Saturdays us\$4,695 – us\$4,895
Price includes	8 day Galapagos cruise with all meals, excursions and guiding while on board. Snorkel equipment, wet suit hire and kayaking are included.
Not included	Galapagos park entrance fee of us\$110; environmental fuel tax of us\$306 (2009 ONLY); flights to the Galapagos; personal expenses; tips. Entrance fees and fuel tax subject to change.

Prices per person based on two sharing. Prices quoted in US dollars but payment is made in pounds sterling at a rate set at time of payment.

Single supplement is 75% of the twin cabin rate.

WGCO10

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A year in the Galapagos

January

Beginning of the rainy season. Land birds start nesting, generally after the first rain. On Hood (Española) Island adult marine iguanas become brightly colored (green/red/black). The green sea turtles arrive at beaches to lay eggs. Land iguanas mate on Isabela Island. Both water and air temperatures rise and stay warm until June. Ideal time for snorkeling.

February

On Floreana Island flamingos start nesting in greater numbers. Marine iguanas nest on Santa Cruz Island. Peak nesting season for the Galapagos dove. Breeding season begins for black-tailed pintail ducks. End of nesting season for Nazca (masked) boobies on Hood islands. The highest water temperature reaches 25C (77F) temperatures remain high until April. Penguins move from Bartolomé Island to follow the cool waters back to the west.

March

Height of the rainy season (this does not mean it rains everyday). Sporadic tropical rains, intense sun and hot climate. Air temperature can reach up to 30C (86F) high humidity. Warm waters excellent for snorkelers. Penguins still active in the water next to tropical fish! Deep surge from the northern currents on some shores, wet landings at places like Puerto Egas, Gardner Bay, Bartolomé can sometimes be a challenge. Marine iguanas nest on Fernandina. March 21st, the beginning of the summer equinox signals the arrival of the waved albatross to Española. Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) can be an amazing site.

April

Massive arrival of waved albatrosses at Española, amazing courtship starts. Eggs of green sea turtles begin to hatch. Eggs of land iguanas hatch on Isabela. End of hatching season for the giant tortoises. While the rains have ended, the islands continue to be quite green. Good visibility in the water for snorkelers.

May

North Seymour's blue-footed boobies begin their courtship. Sea turtles are still hatching on Gardner Bay, Punta Cormorant and Puerto Egas. Most of marine iguanas' eggs hatch from nests on Santa Cruz. Palo santo trees begin to shed their foliage. Waved albatross on Española start laying their eggs. Ban-rumped storm petrels begin their first nesting period.

June

Beginning of the cold (garúa) season. Giant tortoises migrate to the lowlands on Santa Cruz island for the nesting season. South east trade winds return. Currents become a bit stronger. Seas pick up in surge and wave action. Male frigatebirds show off their red pouches on North Seymour. Southern migrating birds stop in the Galapagos on their journey north. Some groups of Humpback whales migrate up to equatorial latitudes along the coast of Ecuador reach Galapagos.

July

Sea bird communities are very active (breeding), specially the Blue footed boobies on Española. Flightless cormorants perform beautiful courtship rituals and nesting activities on Fernandina. American oystercatchers nest along the shores of Puerto Egas

(Santiago Island). Lava lizards initiate mating rituals until November. Cetaceans (whales & dolphins) are more likely to be observed, specially off the western coast of Isabela. Great month to see the four stages of nesting in Blue footed boobies: eggs, chicks, juveniles and sub-adults. Water temperature around 21C (68F).

August

Galapagos hawks court on Española and Santiago. Nazca (masked) boobies and Swallow-tailed gulls nest on Genovesa Island. The temperature of the ocean drops to 18C (64F), this varies according to the geographic zones among the islands. Migrant shore birds start to arrive. Giant tortoises return to the highlands of Santa Cruz. Oceans are quite choppy, currents at the strongest levels, surge can be expected along the shores that face west or south. Popping season of sea lions has started. Western and central islands are common places for such sightings.

September

The air temperature reaches its lowest levels (19C-66F). Galapagos Penguins active around Bartolomé. Snorkelers can swim with penguins active at the surface or torpedo-like while underwater. Sea lions are very active. Females have reached estrus stage, and so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting. Shore fighting is common. Most intense sea lion activity on western and central islands. Most species of sea birds remain quite active at their nesting sites.

October

Lava herons start nesting until March. The Galapagos Fur Sea lions begin their mating period. Blue footed boobies raise chicks all over Española and Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela). Giant tortoises are still laying eggs. Days are not always sunny. Garúa can be expected in most locations, except the western islands where most days have a misty start but after few hours of daylight it burns off. Sunrises in the west can be quite beautiful as the garúa covers only certain locations of the western volcanoes. Summits are clear, but low-lying fog covers the shoreline.

November

Popping of sea lions continues. Sea lions are sexually active on the eastern part of the archipelago. Breeding season for the brown noddies. Some species of jellyfish can be seen around the islands. The Genus Physalia is commonly seen floating around Gardner and Tortuga Islets. Some can also be seen stranded on the shores of Flour Beach (Floreana). Band-rumped storm petrels begin their second nesting period. Seas are calm. South east trade winds decrease, generally great weather. Water temperatures rising and good visibility for snorkelers. Sea lion pups (specially at Champion Islet) play aqua-aerobics next to snorkelers. Most pups here are curious enough to nibble at fins of snorkelers.

December

Giant tortoise eggs begin to hatch. Green sea turtles display their mating behavior. The rainy season begins, all of the plants of the dry zone produce leaves. Galapagos becomes "green". The first young waved albatrosses fledge. Great weather.

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