

Wildlife Galapagos Cachalote Galapagos Cruise



First class sail boat - sixteen passengers - expert guide - comprehensive itinerary - excellent deck space - great crew - locally owned - sustainably run – seven and fourteen night itineraries

Explore the unique Galapagos Islands on board one of the Galapagos islands' most charming small sail boats.

Enjoy a great route taking you clockwise around the outer islands for the greatest diversity of wildlife.

Track evolutionary changes in the wildlife as you travel from the oldest to youngest islands.

Sail with a naturalist guide trained by the Galapagos National Park authority.

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



The first class yacht Cachalote.



"The Galapagos cruise on the Cachalote lived up to all our expectations and we were very well-looked after by the naturalist guide and the crew." Elizabeth S.

Holiday Itinerary

Day 01 | Santa Cruz | **giant tortoises**

Cachalote's start day is a Wednesday. You can join the cruise from:

Day 01 to day 08 (seven nights, Tower route)

Day 08 to day 15 (seven nights, Fernandina route)

Day 01 to day 15 (14 nights, full route)

She also offers slightly curtailed 5 night itineraries, please contact us for details if your time is limited.



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 down to the dock to board your boat. This afternoon visit the Charles Darwin Research Station to learn about their breeding, conservation and education programs.

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

Meet 'Lonesome George', long thought to be the last of the Pinta Island giant tortoise sub-species.

Your boat has eight cabins all with private bathrooms and air conditioning.

Cabins are generally small, you are unlikely to spend much time in them other than to sleep. Cabins tend to have single upper and lower bunks.

You have a crew of five plus a naturalist guide with you at all times.

Please note that the wildlife and activities described below are based on personal experience of a May trip around the islands.

They are an accurate and typical representation of the itinerary but we can't guarantee weather conditions or wildlife.

Precise itineraries are subject to change according to weather conditions and instructions from the National Park. (l,d)

Day 02 | Santa Fé | **land iguanas**

Santa Fé is one of the oldest Galapagos Islands and one of the few that is not volcanically active.

There is no fresh water on the island so it has been relatively undisturbed by human activity.

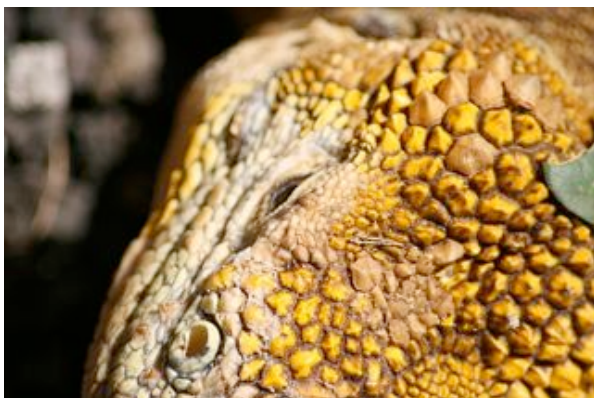
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A land iguana in close up.



Humans and sea lion waiting to be picked up at Bartolomé.



Walking up Bartolomé island

Formed by an uplift in the earth's crust, rather than a volcano, Santa Fé is relatively flat compared to some of its neighbours.

See endemic species of land iguana, lava lizards and sea lions. You may also see frigate birds and Galapagos hawks.

The sheltered cove here is really quite beautiful, and offers some great snorkeling and swimming with manta rays, sea turtles, sea lions. (b,l,d)

Day 03 | San Cristobal | **mocking birds**

Cerro Brujo is a beautiful white sand beach, one of the first places visited by Charles Darwin.

Brown pelicans, blue-footed boobies, sea lions and marine iguanas are all found.

The site is a dry land version of the nearby Kicker Rocks, Cerro Brujo is a very striking, eroded tuff cone.

Later today, land at La Galapaguera beach to walk and explore. This is one of the best places to see giant tortoises in the wild.

You are also likely to see mockingbirds and lava lizards along the way.

At the end of your walk, cool off with a swim or snorkel off the beach. (b,l,d)

Day 04 | 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)

Day 05 | Floreana | **snorkel and walk**

After breakfast, land at Punta Cormorant to walk across Floreana island. Enjoy the somewhat incongruous sight of flamingoes feeding in a lagoon just inland.

Carry on along a good path to a very pretty sandy beach where you can spot rays and sea turtles.

Return to the boat mid-morning to get ready to go snorkeling in the distinctive Devil's Crown crater.

Swim through pretty coral formations and teeming marine life.

You should see some sea lions and lots of fish. With luck you will see sharks – on a good day you might see hammerheads here.

Travel the short distance around the island to land at Post Office Bay. Here the old sailors' postal system still functions. You leave your letter in a barrel but not before taking out mail bound for your home port.

This way, all letters are slowly distributed around the world for free.

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Santa Cruz Island: a giant tortoise having lunch.



Albatross nesting.



Isabela Island: a friendly sea turtle.



Fernandina Island: a marine iguana pile-up.

Walk down into a deep lava tunnel for a close look at the geology of these young islands. (b,l,d)

Day 06 | Dragon Hill | **iguanas**

Visit Dragon Hill (*Cerro Dragon*) is one of the newer visitor sites on Santa Cruz.

Here you walk to a lagoon, home to flamingos, common stilts, pintail ducks and other species of birds. There is a short walk up the hill for great views as well as the chance to see an iguana nesting site.

Continue to Santiago Island where you walk along the coastline to see Galapagos fur seal basking in pools along the shoreline.

The water here is improbably pretty.

Because you are walking on lava, this is one of the places in the islands where you have a great degree of freedom to wander. (b,l,d)

Day 07 | Genovesa | **seabirds and owls**

Land at Darwin Bay which is the largest tropical seabird colony on the planet.

The site is populated by frigate birds, red-footed boobies, Darwin's finches, doves, mocking birds and Nazca boobies.

Genovesa 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 birdlife.

Land at Prince Philip's Steps where you climb a steep path to a plateau passing red-footed boobies, and possibly short-eared owls. (b,l,d)

Day 08 | Santa Cruz | **giant tortoises**

Paddle through the mangroves of Turtle Cove on Santa Cruz Island. Observe the delicate marine life and fantastic birdlife in the sheltered cove.

Today is a changeover day so anyone doing the seven night itinerary will either leave or join the boat now.

The west cove offers splendid snorkelling and swimming as well as a white coral sand beach.

The beach's name is derived from the numerous sea turtles that come here to lay their eggs year after year.

Other species that can be found include pelicans, flamingos and marine iguanas.

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 usually find giant tortoises.

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

Visit some very pretty rock formations and walk through the mature vegetation of the highlands. (b,l,d)

Day 09 | Rabida | **sea lions and penguins**

Visit the island of Rabida, where the unusual coloured sand makes the beach look red from a distance.

Mangroves border a saltwater lagoon here, a popular resting place for flocks of pelicans. Enjoy the opportunity to snorkel from the beach.

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Espanola Island: approaching sea lion beach.



Isabela Island: blue footed boobies on the rocks.



The dining room/salon of Cachalote, stairs down to cabins.



The top deck, a place to relax, read and look for whales.

Land on the tiny island of *Sombrero Chino* (Chinese Hat). This island is only visited by small vessels because the lava is fragile.

Explore the lava tunnels of the interior before dropping into the water to snorkel with sea lions and penguins. (b,l,d)

Day 10 | Isabela | turtles and penguins

Explore the harbour bay by boat as you travel to the small island of Tintoreras.

Apart from the ever-present sea lions and pelicans, you will see a colony of the tiny Galapagos penguin.

Walk across surreal lava landscapes to a huge iguana colony. The mangrove-lined beaches are also home to sea lions.

Land in the small town of Puerto Villamil – the only inhabited part of Isabela Island.

Travel into the highlands of Isabela above the town of Puerto Vilamil to walk on the *Volcan Chico* side of the Sierra Negra volcano which has one of the largest craters in the world.

Up here you should see lots of bird life, including short-eared owls. The views are also wonderful. (b,l,d)

Day 11 | Isabela | turtles and penguins

Land at Punta Moreno, a stretch of land which has existed for only about 50 years.

There is very still little sign of life on these fairly new lava fields although a couple of isolated lagoons are now home to some vegetation and birdlife.

Pass flightless cormorants on your way back to the boat. Make your way directly to a nearby stretch of shore where you snorkel.

Get into the zodiacs (small boats) to explore the coastline around Elizabeth Bay.

First stop is a couple of small rocky outcrops where you should see penguins living alongside marine iguanas and blue-footed boobies.

Carry on in-shore to a series of mangrove rimmed lagoons. Cut off the engines as you drift in the silence of the late afternoon looking for sea turtles, sharks and penguins in this unusual setting. (b,l,d)

Day 12 | Isabela | turtles and penguins

Land in Urbina Bay this morning. Walk to see if you can see giant tortoises in the wild. You will almost certainly see land iguanas.

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 relax and read a book on the beach. Visit the cliff-side gallery of Tagus Cove for a clear view of some 19th century pirate graffiti. It's strange to see vandalism in such a pristine place.

A dry landing leads to a 2km trail through lava formations leads you to Darwin Lake via some wonderful views of the surrounding volcanoes.

The lake itself is a salt-water crater lake, possibly formed by a tidal wave. (b,l,d)

Day 13 | Fernandina | marine iguanas

Visit the youngest of the Galapagos Islands, Fernandina.

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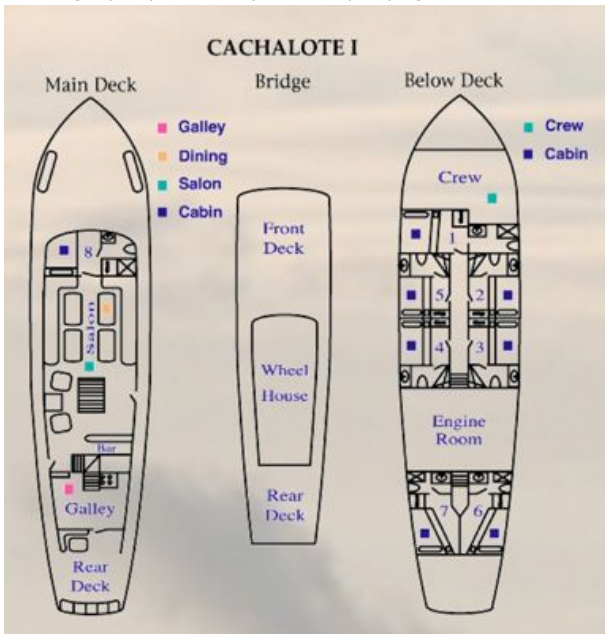
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Cabins on Cachalote are generally small but comfortable.



The sails go up only occasionally but it is a pretty sight.



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.

Carry on north towards Punta Vicente Roca, an amazing geological site which lies almost on the equator.

It is an outstanding example on how the Islands were formed and how the forces of change have transformed the landscape and shaped the wildlife.

Explore the dramatic coastline in zodiacs as you look for wildlife both above and below the water. When the waters are calm enough the snorkeling is great as the walls of the tuff cones are full of colorful invertebrates and rich algae which sea turtles love to eat. (b,l,d)

Day 14 | Santiago | fur seals and views

Return to the beaches of Santiago island for some great snorkeling. Here you might be swimming with white-tipped sharks, sea turtles, sea lions and a colourful variety of fish.

Carry on around the island to the small, barren outcrop of Isla Bartolomé.

Walk 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. You might even swim with penguins or sharks.

Certainly the channels and rock formations underwater make for a beautiful snorkeling environment. (b,l,d)

Day 15 | travel | leave the islands

Get up early this morning to paddle through mangroves in the dawn light. Observe the delicate marine life in the sheltered cove before returning to the boat for breakfast.

Disembark in Baltra at around 8am. (b)

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Holiday Information

Pura's opinion

Cachalote is a first class motor sail boat. You may very occasionally see her described as a superior tourist class. We at Pura think that this is overly harsh, and consider her to be a mid/lower end first class boat.

Cachalote is close to our hearts. She really is a very pleasant boat, brilliant crew and a great itinerary. She sits towards the middle/lower end of the first class sail boats. She offers probably the best value first class small cruise experience in the Galapagos islands.

The great advantage of Cachalote is that she has so much useable deck space. In total there are four or five different deck areas for a really good feeling of space.

Accommodation

Passengers: 16 maximum

Cabins: eight total. One with a double lower bed (cabin 8). Four with single upper and lower bunks (cabins 2,3,4 and 5). Three with single upper, small double lower bunks (cabins 1, 6 and 7).

All cabins have en suite facilities (shower with hot/cold water, toilet and sink). Air conditioned throughout. Prices of cabins do not vary. Cabins are small, comfortable but functional - bed & bathroom.

Inside dining and seating areas, outside seating areas/deck space split over various levels.

Cabin sizes do vary, cabin one being probably the largest with a single upper, double lower bunk and more space generally. It is at the front of the boat so movement is greater when navigating.

Cabin eight is directly above cabin one, off the dining room, so has much more light. The bed is a lower double but curves on one side meaning that one person gets a full length bed, the person on the inside gets a shorter area to stretch out. For most couples it is fine but not good for two tall people.

Cabins six and seven are reached down their own stairs towards the rear of the boat. They are a decent size with single upper, small double lower beds. They are closer to the engine room.

Cabins two, three, four and five are pretty much identical, small with nothing by way of floor space but the beds are a good width (3ft single beds) and full length so sleeping is very comfortable. At a squeeze you could sleep two in the bottom bunk as the hull curves to give you a bit more room.

You should be aware that on any small boat you will have noise from generators and from the engine when travelling. Even sailboats travel under motor.

Stability

Being a sail boat, you will get movement in the water. This will be most noticeable between July and October in the more exposed waters of the south west.

Cachalote boat specification

Length on deck: 27m/90ft

Boat width (beam): 5.5m/18ft

Average speed: 9 knots

Crew: 6 plus one 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?

Pura Aventura is passionate about the places it visits.

To help preserve the integrity of these destinations we:

- Keep groups small to minimise environmental impact.
- Work directly with local businesses and organisations to directly benefit local economies.
- Work with local guides so that our holidays are more interesting for clients and more beneficial locally.
- Make payment to suppliers before our clients arrive.

The boat owners and most of the crew come from the islands which makes the enterprise sustainable.

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 from the UK. Call us on **+44 1273 676712** between 9am and 6.30pm GMT weekdays.

How do I book?

We need to check availability for Galapagos boats before taking your booking. Once you have the proposal and decide you would like to go ahead then please call in with the following:

- Full names
- Address
- Contact telephone numbers & email
- Deposit of 15%

Deposits can be paid by card, cheque or bank transfer, whichever suits you best (the balance of your holiday is due 60 days prior to travel).

We send you a confirmation email detailing all of the services agreed between us. We ask you to check through all of this carefully and sign off on the holiday.

Prices & departures

2012	High us\$2,759 per week Low us\$2,488 per week
Price includes	7 night Galapagos cruise with all meals, excursions and guiding while on board.
Not included	Galapagos park entrance fee (US\$110); flights to the Galapagos; personal expenses; tips.

Low season runs 01 May - 15 June and 01 September - 31 October as well as 01 - 07 December.

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. Please reconfirm prices at time of booking.

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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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