

Galapagos Wildlife Cruise

Isabela II Galapagos Cruise



Deluxe class small ship – lots of space – 40 passengers – comprehensive itinerary – clear bottomed excursion boat – good sized cabins – sustainably run – stargazing program – well managed excursions

Explore the Galapagos Islands aboard the most luxurious of small ships.

A great cruise route taking you to outer islands including Fernandina & Espanola

Lots of opportunity to walk, snorkel and sea kayak on each day of your trip or ride in the glass-bottomed boat.

Travel with three naturalist guides for a fantastic small group experience.

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



The luxurious and cozy M/N Isabela II.



Isabela, cruise options

Isabela's start date is a Tuesday. However, like all boats in the Galapagos, she now operates on a 14-night circuit.

She offers excellent flexibility within this so can join her between:

Days 01 – 07 (six nights, northern route)

Days 07 – 11 (four nights, central route)

Days 11 – 15 (four nights, southern route)

Days 07 – 15 (eight nights, central + southern)

Days 11 – 07 (10 nights, southern + northern)

Days 01 – 11 (10 nights, northern + central)

Days 01 – 15 (14 nights, full itinerary) though please note that you can choose to start the full 14-night itinerary on any of the following days: 01, 07 or 11.



The ship sailing through magnificent landscapes.

Holiday Itinerary

Day 01 | San Cristobal | **giant tortoises**

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 your premium small ship, Isabela II.

After your introductory briefing and safety drill, you will enjoy your first lunch on board as you set sail.

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

After lunch, dry landing and a 40-minute bus ride to Cerro Colorado, a breeding centre for the endangered giant tortoises, also home to the endemic lava lizard.

Back on board, join us at the bar saloon for a cocktail offered by the captain, and view the expedition plan for the next day followed by dinner. (l,d)

Day 02 | Genovesa | **sea birds & sea lions**

The morning starts with a panga ride along the cliffs to disembark at Prince Philip's Steps (dry landing) for a steep climb (90 feet) and then a flat walk to the other side of this small island.

Here you will see large colonies of masked boobies, frigate birds and storm petrels. Anchor at Darwin Bay in Tower Island.

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Discover the Galapagos' diversity.



A double cabin on board Isabela II.



Passengers exploring an island.



Marine iguanas digesting their food on Fernandina.

After lunch (wet landing), take an easy stroll observing thousands of bird life, mainly frigate birds, red footed and masked boobies, gulls, herons, finches and mockingbirds.

If you wish you can continue walking over sharp lava and uneven terrain, or just go back to the beach to enjoy swimming and snorkeling at this beautiful natural harbor.

Those most adventurous can snorkel along the cliffs or ride sea kayaks. (b,l,d)

Day 03 | Santiago | fur seals

Coastal exploration at Buccaneer Cove, once a refuge for British buccaneers, who anchored in the protected bay to make repairs and stock up on tortoise meat.

The hundreds of seabirds perched on the steep cliffs are an impressive sight, and the water here thrives with sharks, rays and barracudas.

This afternoon it's a wet landing for a walk around Puerto Egas.

This is a great location to enjoy birdlife and a colony of endemic Galápagos fur seals. At low tide, marine iguanas graze upon emerald green algae beds.

Enjoy outstanding snorkelling and swimming from the beach before the walk.

Most of the landscape is tuff-stone layers and lava flows. (b,l,d)

Day 04 | Fernandina | marine iguanas

The morning brings us to the jewel of the Galapagos National Park, and youngest island, Fernandina. Disembark (dry landing) for a one-mile walk.

Punta Espinoza has an amazing combination of barrenness with much wildlife. Having no introduced mammals, Fernandina has a unique environment with the highest density of marine iguanas, sharing their space with sea lions, sally-light foot crabs, hawks, penguins and the flightless cormorant.

This afternoon we land at Isabela Island. 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 05 | Isabela | sea birds & sea lions

Land in Urbina Bay this morning, where four miles of coastal seabed is exposed due to a dramatic uplift in 1954 when the volcano erupted.

The marine remnants of coral skeletons, some of them waist-high, are visited after a wet landing on the beach.

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 to Punta Vicente Roca, an amazing geological site on Isabela Island which lies almost on the equator.

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Enjoy the comfort of the cruise.



Enjoy plenty of time in the company of marine animals



Get as close as possible to wildlife.



Enjoy exiting panoramas on board.

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 snorkelling is great as the walls of the tuff cones are full of colourful invertebrates and rich algae which sea turtles love to eat. (b,l,d)

Day 06 | Rabida | **mangroves & pelicans**

Visit the island of Rabida, where the unusually 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.

This afternoon visit Dragon Hill (Cerro Dragon), 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 and the chance to see an iguana nesting site. (b,l,d)

Day 07 | Santa Cruz | **Darwin Centre**

A morning bus ride will take us to the highlands of Santa Cruz Island for a special opportunity to view the islands' most famous reptile: the giant tortoises.

It will be the opportunity to see the Scalesia Forest (an endemic giant daisy tree) and birds such as the vermilion flycatcher.

Today is a changeover day so there may be clients leaving and joining the boat now.

After taking lunch at the Finch Bay Eco Hotel in Puerto Ayora we'll visit the Charles Darwin Research Station and the breeding program for the giant tortoises.

A stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora is an amazing experience as you see how people live alongside animals in this magical place.

Browse the many handicraft shops. (b,l,d)

Day 08 | Santa Fé | **lava lizards**

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.

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 snorkelling and swimming with manta rays, sea turtles, sea lions.

This afternoon, visit South Plaza, a small island off the east coast of Santa Cruz. Despite its size it is home to a great diversity of species and is famous for its extraordinary flora.

Walk an easy trail to the cliff tops to watch the waves crashing below as birds fly in front of you.

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A Nazca Booby stares out to sea on Espanola



Sea lions and marine iguanas living together on North Seymour



View of Pinnacle Rock from Bartolome



A sea lion streaks past upside down off Floreana Island

The island is also home to land iguanas and a sea lion colony, which always seems to include some playful pups. The prickly pear cactus trees complete the picture on this lovely, compact visitor site. (b,l,d)

Day 09 | North Seymour | frigates

This morning disembark (dry landing) at North Seymour Island for a walk along the coast and the interior of the island, observing wildlife.

The island is home to bird colonies of blue footed boobies, frigate birds, swallow tailed gulls as well as sea lions and marine iguanas.

A shorter walk is also available.

This afternoon we will land at Bachas Beach on Santa Cruz Island.

This very pretty coral sand beach is a nesting site for green turtles between November and March.

It is also a great place to spot birdlife and to swim and to snorkel. (b,l,d)

Day 10 | Bartolome | penguins & views

In the morning visit Bartolomé Island, a small island neighbouring Santiago Island.

Hike to the summit up a sweeping wooden staircase, the views from the top are worth the effort.

There will be time for a panga ride around Pinnacle Rock to observe penguins before or after the walk.

Afternoon wet landing at Sullivan Bay on Santiago Island. 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 11 | Santa Cruz | Chato Reserve

Today is a changeover day so there may be clients leaving and joining the boat now.

Clients joining the boat today will arrive and go straight to the first excursion, El Chato Reserve, another great spot to see wild tortoises.

You may also spot some highland birds, like cattle egrets, mockingbirds, finches or flycatchers. There are several lava tunnels in the reserve, which give a good chance of spotting the barn owl.

In the afternoon, there will be the chance to visit the Charles Darwin Research Station again, or simply relax on the boat or explore Puerto Ayora. (b,l,d)

Day 12 | Floreana | human history

Land at Post Office Bay to hear tales about this, the first inhabited island. The old sailors' postal system still functions here. You leave your letter in a barrel and take out mail for your home port.

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

Walk down into a deep lava tunnel for a close look at the geology of these young islands.

In the afternoon disembark at Punta Cormorant (wet landing) for an easy walk to see the flamingos that inhabit a brackish-water lagoon, and other birds like stilts and sandpipers.

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Lots of opportunity to explore the underwater world.



A young sea lion relaxes on the white sand

There is the possibility to snorkel from the zodiacs around Champion Islet or take a ride on the glass-bottom boat. (b,l,d)

Day 13 | *Espanola* | **giant tortoises**

Land on 'sea lion beach'. 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.

Walk to the rugged cliffs of Punta Suarez this afternoon 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 14 | *San Cristobal* | **birdlife & snorkel**

Punta Pitt is a colourful place with its different types of lava and diverse vegetation. Arguably the most spectacular visitor site on San Cristobal, it is home to a diverse range of species such as sea lions, lava lizards, marine iguanas, frigate birds, pelicans and boobies. In fact, Punta Pitt is the only place where you can see 3 species of boobies nesting in the same area.

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 nearby Kicker Rock; Cerro Brujo is a striking, eroded tuff cone. (b,l,d)

Day 15 | *San Cristobal* | **leave the islands**

After breakfast, departure to the port and transfer to the airport to take the flight back to the mainland. (b)

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Holiday Information

Pura's opinion

Isabela II is very much one of the most comfortable of the Galapagos small cruise ships.

Isabela II is very comfortable with lots of space, great service and crew. There is even a doctor on board.

She has a glass bottomed boat as well as sea kayaks for anyone who doesn't want to snorkel.

Shortie wetsuits are included from June through December to keep out the chill.

This is a premium Galapagos wildlife cruise experience on a 40 passenger small ship.

Accommodation

All cabins are a fair size, the standard cabins are 12.5 square metres, all are outside with lower beds, some twin, some double. All have wardrobes.

There are 21 cabins in total.

16 classic cabins with lower beds which are set up as twins. There are also two classic double cabins which have a sofa bed. Two double standard cabins have one full size bed so can be used as a single. They both are around 13sqm.

Isabela II has one 18,90sqm master suite situated on the main deck.

All cabins have private facilities, hot and cold water, closets, fully carpeted and air-conditioned throughout. The communal areas are large and very comfortable it included a lounge-bar, reading room, and dining room with capacity for all guests in one seating, office and boutique, ample sun deck with a jacuzzi, exercise equipment and observation deck.

Stability

As a larger ship she is really quite stable in the water.

The boat's routes are also relatively protected from the prevailing winds (coming from the south west).

However, there is bound to be some movement and this will be most noticeable between July and October.

Isabela II boat specification

Length on deck: 54m/166ft

Boat width (beam): 11,6/38ft

Average speed: 10 knots

Crew: 24 plus 3 guides & 1 doctor

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 Isabela II set up the Fundacion Galapagos Ecuador in 1998 which is aimed at preserving the ecosystems of the Galapagos.

This has four main objectives, as follows:

- 1) Environmental education programmes for the island communities.
- 2) Solid waste recycling centre on Santa Cruz which sorts, compacts and sends back waste to the mainland for processing and manufacturing.

- 3) Coastal clean ups to collect any floating debris around the Galapagos to bring them back onto Santa Cruz for processing.
- 4) Community projects to engage locals in the sustainable use of resources. This ranges from handicraft production to a bakery supplying Galapagos boats with their provisions.

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 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).

Prices & departures

2012	04 nights from us\$2,649pp 06 nights from us\$3,974pp 08 nights from us\$5,033pp 10 nights from us\$6,358pp 14 nights from us\$7,948pp
Price includes	Deluxe class Galapagos cruise in twin/double cabin with all meals, excursions and guiding while on board.
Not included	Galapagos park entrance fee of us\$110; flights to the Galapagos; personal expenses; tips. Snorkel equipment is available to hire on board for around us\$30 per week.
Upgrades	There are seven different grades of cabin. The above prices reflect a standard twin on the main deck which are the lowest priced. Upgrades are available please ask for full details. A peak season surcharge of us\$200 is payable at Easter and Christmas.

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.

A year in the

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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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