

Galapagos Wildlife Cruise

Santa Cruz Galapagos Cruise



First class ship – 90 passengers - comprehensive itinerary
clear bottomed excursion boat – good sized cabins – outdoor hot tub –
sustainably run - stargazing program – well managed excursions

Explore the Galapagos Islands aboard the charming mid-size Santa Cruz.

Enjoy a great cruise route taking you to outer islands including Espanola and Fernandina.

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

Travel with six naturalist guides to maintain the small group experience.

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



The comfortable Santa Cruz ship moored up by Bartolomé.



"The way they managed our landings meant that we never felt like we were on a bigger boat. I loved the food, the space and the comfort though of course it's the Galapagos Islands themselves who were the real star of our holiday!" Katie E.

Santa Cruz, cruise options

Santa Cruz's main start date is a Friday. However, like all boats in the Galapagos, she now operates on a 14-night circuit.

She offers almost unrivalled flexibility within this so can join her between:

Days 01 – 06 (five nights, eastern route)

Days 06 - 11 (five nights, western route)

Days 11 - 15 (four nights, northern route)

Days 06 – 15 (nine nights, western + northern)

Days 11 – 06 (nine nights, northern + eastern)

Days 01 – 11 (10 nights, eastern + western)

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, 06 or 11.



Exploring sea life.

Holiday Itinerary

Day 01 | San Cristobal | **fly to the islands**

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.

Morning arrival at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the small and rather sleepy capital of Galapagos.

On arrival you have an introductory briefing where the boat drill and activities will be explained by the staff.

After lunch you'll have your first shore landing to visit the Interpretation Centre, giving you a great overview of the islands' history and the species you'll come across on your cruise.

Climb the staircase of Cerro Tijeretas for superb views over the northern part of the island and impressive Kicker Rock.

Back on board this evening enjoy cocktails with the captain, followed by the expedition plan for tomorrow and dinner. (l,d)

Day 02 | San Cristobal | **birds & reptiles**

After breakfast take a dinghy ride along the shore to land at the white coral sands of Cerro Brujo.

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Time and space to enjoy the panoramas all trip long.



Sea lion beach on Espanola.



A suite on board Santa Cruz.



Marine iguanas warming each other.

The island is home to Galapagos sea lions, brown pelicans, blue-footed boobies, and marine iguanas.

This is a wet landing, i.e. you hop out of the dinghy into the water and wade ashore, on a sandy beach. It is your first opportunity to swim or snorkel.

Highlights ashore include the Chatham (San Cristobal) Mockingbird and Chatham Lava Lizard, both of which are endemic to this island and seen nowhere else in Galapagos.

You are walking the same beach that Charles Darwin first landed on back in September 1835, as San Cristobal was the first island where he set foot in the Galapagos.

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 and boobies.

In fact, Punta Pitt is the only place where you can see three species of boobies nesting in the same area.

There is a beautiful golden sand beach here. (b,l,d)

Day 03 | South Plaza | sea lions & 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.

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.

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 04 | Santa Cruz | the highlands

After breakfast, visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station and the giant tortoise pens, including tortoise celebrities like "Lonesome George" within an impressive giant prickly-pear cactus forest home to many land birds.

These are the headquarters of scientific investigation, conservation and the National Park administration. Time for a stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora before lunch at the Finch Bay Eco Hotel.

In the afternoon, disembark (dry landing) to visit the highlands of Santa Cruz Island, a Scalesia forest and the twin pit craters geology formation, Los Gemelos.

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Enjoy the hot tub during your stay.



A sea lion streaks past upside down off Floreana Island



Nesting Waved Albatross on Espanola Island



A marine iguana pile-up

In the afternoon, disembark (dry landing) to visit the highlands of Santa Cruz Island, a Scalesia forest and the twin pit craters, Los Gemelos.

From December to mid-April a visit to see the giant tortoises in the wild may be included, if weather conditions are good. (b,l,d)

Day 05 | Espanola | sea birds

After breakfast land on Espanola island for a lovely walk across rugged lava to visit sea bird colonies.

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.

Land on 'sea lion beach' after lunch. 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. (b,l,d)

Day 06 | North Seymour | coastal walk

This morning the ship will stop at Baltra Island. You'll have the opportunity to get out and enjoy the island spirit and discover a beautiful coralline beach.

This is a great place for swimming and snorkelling (from December to March: plenty of sea turtles).

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

This afternoon 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. (b,l,d)

Day 07 | Isabela | marine iguanas

Visit to Punta Vicente Roca, an amazing geological site on Isabela Island 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 snorkelling is great as the walls of the tuff cones are full of rich algae and colourful invertebrates which sea turtles love to eat.

The afternoon 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. (b,l,d)

Day 08 | Isabela | coral skeletons

Visit the cliff-side gallery of Tagus Cove for a clear view of some 19th century pirate graffiti.

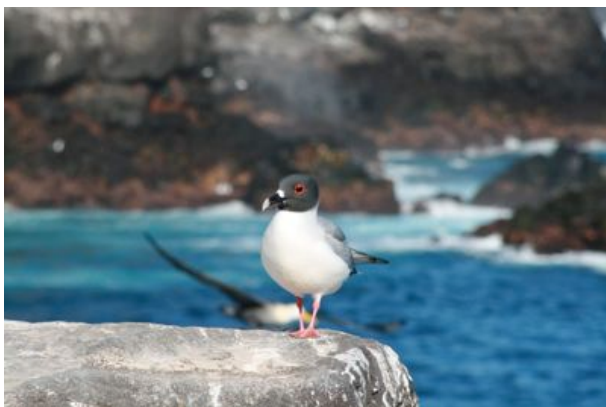
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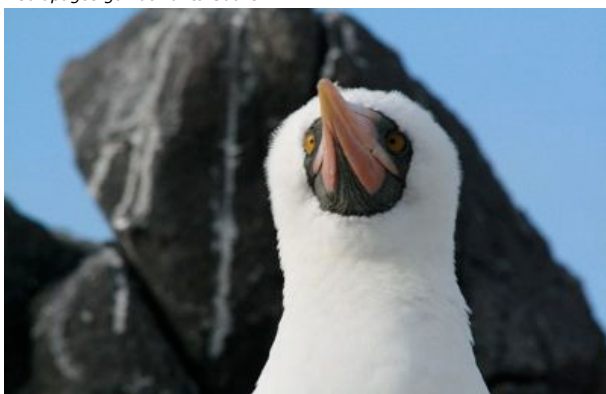


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A Galapagos gull at Punta Suarez



A Nazca Booby stares out to sea on Espanola



Exploring Isabela Island.



Golden rays swimming

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.

Land in Urbina Bay this afternoon, 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. (b,l,d)

Day 09 | Santa Cruz | **giant tortoises**

This morning the boat will dock once more at Puerto Ayora for a visit to the Darwin Research Centre.

You can revisit the centre, or just relax on the boat.

This afternoon it's into the highlands to 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. (b,l,d)

Day 10 | 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.

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 11 | Baltra | **snorkel & walk**

This morning our ship will stop at Baltra Island. You'll have the opportunity to get out and enjoy the island spirit and discover a beautiful coralline beach.

This is a great place for swimming and snorkeling (from December to March: plenty of sea turtles).

Today is a changeover day so anyone doing a shorter cruise will either leave or join the boat.

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)

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Santa Cruz Island: a giant tortoise having lunch



A young sea lion relaxes on the white sand



Guides lead groups of no more than 16 on shore excursions.

Day 12 | Santiago | fur seals

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

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

After lunch anchor at Puerto Egas (wet landing).

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

Weather permitting you might be able to enjoy stargazing from the outer deck at night. (b,l,d)

Day 13 | Bartolomé | penguins & sharks

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.

A small satellite island of Santiago Island, Bartolomé is a landmark of Galápagos.

Broken volcanic material reveals some of the most striking volcanic landscapes: the Pinnacle rock.

After a dry landing, the short, yet somewhat steep trail will unfold virtually every volcanic feature found in Galápagos. Lava flows, tuff, cinder and spatter cones.

To reach the summit a wooden staircase was built to minimize erosion on the islands' slopes.

The view is the prize: Pinnacle Rock next to golden beaches and turquoise waters. This is your introduction to the next activity: swimming and snorkelling with Galápagos Penguins.

There is also the possibility to ride on the glass bottom boat for great views of the underwater world.

After lunch anchor at Puerto Egas (wet landing).

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

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Day 14 | Genovesa | giant tortoises

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.

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

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Santa Cruz ship sailing alongside Bartolomé Island.

The site is populated by red-footed boobies, Darwin's finches, doves, mockingbirds and Nazca boobies. The coral sand beach is home to many frigate birds. (b,l,d)

Day 15 | San Cristobal | *leave the islands*

Disembark at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno and return to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno and transfer to the airport to take the flight back to the mainland. (b)

Santa Cruz Deckplan

Boat Deck



Upper Deck



Main Deck



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Holiday Information

Pura's opinion

Santa Cruz is arguably one of the most accessible of the larger cruise ships in the Galapagos.

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

Santa Cruz 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 first class Galapagos wildlife cruise experience but on one of the larger, 90 passenger, boats.

Accommodation

All cabins are a fair size, the standard cabins are 11.5 square metres. All are outside with lower beds, some twin, some double. All have wardrobes.

There are 43 cabins in total.

You'll find two junior suites situated on the upper deck and two master suites situated on the boat deck. All are around 22sqm in size.

The master suite provides double beds (plus a sofa bed for a child) and a private balcony.

The junior suite has twin beds (plus a small sofa bed).

There are six superior cabins of 15sqm which have twin or double beds.

The remaining cabins are standard of 11.5sqm spread over the Upper and Main decks.

Family guests have the choice of single, double and triple accommodations.

The communal areas are large and very comfortable including a spacious lounge-bar, a library, and a dining room with capacity for all guests in one seating, office and boutique, ample sun deck with a jacuzzi, exercise equipment and observation deck.

Santa Cruz boat specification

Length on deck: 72m/237ft

Boat width (beam): 12m/40ft

Average speed: 13 knots

Crew: 52 plus 6 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.

How responsible?

The owners of Santa Cruz 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\$2,312pp 05 nights from us\$2,890pp 09 nights from us\$4,971pp 10 nights from us\$5,633pp 14 nights from us\$6,936pp
Price includes	First class Galapagos cruise in standard twin/double cabin with all meals, excursions and guiding while on board. Snorkel equipment and kayaking are included. Fuel surcharge included.
Not included	Galapagos park entrance fees of us\$110; flights to the Galapagos; personal expenses; tips.
Upgrades	There are seven different grades of cabin. The above prices reflect a standard twin on the Main Deck. We do recommend that you consider upgrading to the more airy cabins of the Upper and Boat Decks. Expect to pay in the order of 5% more for the Upper, 10% more for the Boat Deck. Please contact us for full details. A peak season surcharge of us\$130 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.

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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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