



GALAPAGOS TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



*We'll search for a number of special seabirds on the Galápagos Islands, such as this **Red-footed Booby**.*

**PLEASE CLICK HERE FOR GENERAL INFORMATION PERTAINING TO ALL
OUR ECUADOR TOURS**

Since their documentation by Charles Darwin, the Galápagos Islands are perhaps the ultimate destination for every naturalist, birder, and nature lover around the world and they offer one of the best wildlife-watching experiences on the planet. Fortunately, the times of overfishing and whaling are now passed and The Encantadas (the Enchanted Isles) are managed with great care by the Ecuadorian government, to provide all visitors a unique and magical experience.

During our Galápagos tour we will explore San Cristóbal, Floreana, Española Baltra, Santa Fe, Santiago, Bartolomé, Isabela, and Santa Cruz islands targeting the wonders of this archipelago, including the likes of **Blue-footed Booby, Red-billed Tropicbird, Galapagos Penguin, Flightless Cormorant, Galapagos Hawk, Lava Heron, Magnificent Frigatebird**, and large colonies of **Waved Albatrosses**. In addition, we will of course target as many of “Darwin’s finches” as possible. We will also enjoy amazing creatures such as **Marine Iguanas, Galapagos Tortoises, and Galapagos Sea Lions**.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Our tour will start and finish in the city of Quito, Ecuador’s capital. You can reach Quito’s Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) with non-stop flights from the USA, Spain, the Netherlands, and Panama. *Please e-mail us before you book any flights, as the information shown here is just an initial guide.* You might wish to consult your travel agent to book your most convenient flight, and please feel free to contact us if you need any further assistance. You will be met by our representatives at the airport who will welcome you and transfer you to your hotel. Please remember to keep your luggage tags, as they are normally required to exit the terminal building at Quito Airport. Please note that if you choose to arrive on an early flight, you will be transferred to the hotel but may have to wait until check-in is available (usually in the early afternoon). For an early check-in, you might be charged extra directly by the hotel; this cost is not included in the Birding Ecotours tour price. If you know in advance that you might require an early check-in (or if you just would like to spend some extra time in Quito/Ecuador prior to the tour) we will be happy to make extra bookings for you.

When filling out the customs declaration form on arrival into Ecuador, please use the following address for the hotel:

Hotel José de Puenbo, Manuel Burbano S7-150 y San Fernando Puenbo, Quito, Ecuador

DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Our tour will end in Quito after a wonderful twelve days and eleven nights exploring the Galápagos Islands. On the last morning, your tour leader, or one of our tour representatives, will arrange your transfer to Quito Airport, from where you can catch your flight home. If you would like to extend your birding in Ecuador or another South American destination please let us know.

DOMESTIC FLIGHT INFORMATION

This trip includes a two-hour domestic flight from Quito to Seymour Airport (GPS) on Baltra Island. The flight tickets are included in the tour price.

MONEY AND PAYMENTS

We recommend bringing US\$ cash for your own payments and gratuities, other currencies are not accepted. There are no ATMs on Baltra Island (or anywhere else during the tour), and credit cards are not accepted. You can withdraw cash while in Quito from ATMs or from the Quito Mariscal Sucre International Airport.

VISITING THE ISLANDS

The Ecuadorian government, through the Galápagos Conservation department, usually closes off access to one island each year to give the wildlife of that island a break from the pressure of visiting tourists. It is then not possible to visit the island that is closed during that year. The island to be closed is usually announced approximately twelve months in advance of closure, to allow people to prepare for, and to take account of the closure. If you are interested in seeing a particular species (or particular island) on this tour, rather than the whole general “Galápagos experience”, we advise that you contact us prior to booking to find out which island will be closed during the year of your tour. During 2021, all islands should be open because the Galápagos Islands have been closed for a year, and the wildlife is considered ‘rested’ from tourist disturbance.

CUSTOM CONTROL

The custom control on arrival in the Galápagos Islands is extremely strict. All luggage will be scanned by X-ray machines and hand luggage will be checked by the custom crews. Bringing organic products (animal or vegetable), food, seeds, dried fruit, tea bags, coffee beans or instant coffee, stevia bags (or other sweetener/sugar packets), liquids, plastic, glass bottles, and cans is prohibited. You will be required to fill out a declaration form on arrival stating you do not have any forbidden items. Failure to observe the rules will result in loss of the item(s) and an expensive fine. Any fines will be your responsibility. We strongly advise you to follow the rules and if you need further information, please [contact us](#).

SHOPPING

After arriving in the Galápagos Islands (at Baltra), we will have about 30 minutes to visit a nearby grocery store prior to boarding our boat, the *Samba*, to pick up any essentials that might be required (noting the items that you might usually have with you on a tour but are prohibited to bring to the archipelago, such as tea bags, sweetener, coffee, etc.). This will be the only opportunity to purchase such goods during the tour, until Day 10, when we are scheduled to arrive at Puerto Avora. Payments here need to be in US\$ cash.

BOAT DESCRIPTION

We will be aboard the M/V *Samba*, a graceful 78-foot motor yacht of European vintage. To experience the mystical isolation that shaped the life of the Galápagos, this sturdy, stately and very comfortable motor-vessel is the best choice.

The *Samba* is a true European Dutch classic and the best in her class. A great ocean-going vessel with her specially designed high bow, she provides safe crossings and boasts a special stabilizing sail. Her main salon and aft dining facilities make her socially versatile while top-side settees and a flush and ample forward deck provide great getaways or extra space for group

ACCOMMODATION

Guest accommodation on board the *Samba* consists of six air-conditioned double cabins and one exterior double bed cabin, all with private bathrooms and hot water.

EQUIPMENT

Very efficient Twin DAV diesel engines (280 hp, Cummins) that use just six gallons of diesel every hour. Two generators each of 21 and 12.5 kilowatts (kW) for 110 volts (V) and 220 V alternative current and 12 V and 24 V direct current, Furuno Navnet Radar, Plotter and Sonar, Global Positioning System (GPS), VHF and SSB radios, two tenders (small boats) with outboard motors, 32" High-Definition (HD) LCD TV, and DVD video equipment.

BOAT SPECIFICATIONS

- Overall length: 78 feet (23 meters)
- Beam: 18 feet (5.4 meters)
- Tonnage: 134 tons
- Speed: 8.5 knots
- Range: 2,500 miles
- Sails: Genoa, main, mizzen
- Water capacity: 1,500 gallons and water maker
- Electric Power Supply: 110 V and 220 V (A/C)

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

One self-contained, 20-passenger life raft, EPIRB (Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon), two bi-directional VHF emergency radios, one VHF (Motorola) wide-range radio, VHF and HF radios, one cell-phone, a satellite phone communication system, life jackets, fire extinguishers, safety smoke and fire detectors with overhead sprinkler systems, A.B.C fire-control system, and CO² bank for the engine room.

GALAPAGOS NATIONAL PARK RULES

The Galápagos Islands is by far the most pristine archipelago in the tropics. The natural beauty of the islands has been maintained thanks to the conservation status declared by the government of Ecuador who decided, in 1968, to make the conservation and restoration of the Galápagos Islands a national priority. The national park area constitutes more than 95% of the total landmass of the islands!

To help preserve this unique paradise, please follow these simple rules:

1. Stay with your group and naturalist guide at all times. Always follow the directions given by your naturalist guide.
2. Walk only on the marked trails and be careful and quiet as you move through the island.
3. Be careful not to transport any live material (animals or plants) to the islands or from island to island (insects, seeds, and soil etc.). To reduce the risk of moving living

organisms between islands, we are not allowed to take any food on our visits to the islands.

4. No plants, rocks, animals (or their remains, such as bones), pieces of wood, feathers, sand, corals, shells, or other natural objects should be collected, moved, or disturbed. Removing or disturbing any of the above may damage the integrity of the national park. Take back home great memories and photos only.
5. Animals should not be touched or handled. Do not disturb or pursue any animal from its resting or nesting spot. Best practice is to always be passive with wildlife, if you blend in as much as you can you will have a better experience and generate less impact on the animals.
6. Keep a distance of at least seven feet (two meters) from all animals and remember that they are not pets and we must respect their space.
7. Clean your shoes and snorkel equipment before and after you visit each island.
8. When photographing animals turn off your flash.
9. Do not litter, anywhere. Please do not hesitate to show your conservation attitude and pick up any litter you encounter. Litter left on the islands or in the sea can be a death trap for a wide range of creatures.
10. Building fires or smoking within the park is not allowed.

DAILY INFORMATION

Each day we (the local naturalist guide and the Birding Ecotours tour leader) will brief you on the plans for the day ahead. We usually do this in the evening to allow you time to better plan for the following day. The briefing will prepare you for the island visits, times of disembarking, guidelines of what to bring, information on the terrain and expected weather conditions. We will of course also brief you on the birds, animals, and plants we will be looking for. In the evening we will run through all of the sightings from the day during our bird and animal listing session.

DO NOT FORGET

In preparation for our daily excursions, please make sure you carry the following items:

- Comfortable and informal clothing such as shorts, light pants, cotton t-shirts, sweaters, and windbreakers, according to the season of the year of your visit
- Cap or hat
- Sunglasses (polarized always better)
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle (note prohibited items)
- Appropriate walking gear (good walking shoes/walking sandals)
- Binoculars, cameras, batteries, and memory cards

When you return to the *Samba*, please make sure to leave your excursion shoes at the stern. Use other sandals or comfortable shoes for walking in all outside areas of the yacht. This will help prevent carrying alien microorganisms from island to island. **Shoes are not allowed inside the boat.**

SAFETY

To have a pleasant journey, we have made your safety our number one priority. The boat has been approved by strong national and international regulations to prevent and respond to any emergency scenario. All crewmembers are trained to assist you in case of any emergency. As a mandatory regulation, you will be part of a safety drill exercise in order to know what to do in case an emergency occurs. The safety drill will happen within the first 24 hours of boarding the *Samba*. Your naturalist guide will instruct you with safety procedures.

Please make yourself familiar with the location of the life vests and fire extinguisher in your cabin, as well as the quickest way to get to safety. Should you have any questions, please approach our onboard naturalist or captain.

SNORKELING SESSIONS (OPTIONAL)

The water in the Galápagos is quite cool, considering the archipelago straddles the Equator. The cold Humboldt Current, flowing north from Antarctica and northwest from South America, accounts for both the cold water and the high productivity of the water around the archipelago.

Snorkeling is highly recommended to get an unparalleled view of the underwater world. There will be opportunities to snorkel on most days before or after landings. This is an optional activity and if you are not keen there will be plenty of other activities to keep you occupied.

The snorkeling equipment on board is included in the price of your trip. The equipment is of excellent quality and the masks, snorkel, wet suits, and fins are in excellent condition. We ask you kindly to take good care of all the gadgets provided on the *Samba*. We supply three-millimeter, full-length suits which are considered essential for all but the most warm-blooded of us, giving better protection from cold, sunburn, rocks, and the occasional jellyfish.

SMOKING ON BOARD

Smoking is not allowed inside the boat. Smoking is only permitted on the deck away from other people (the crew will provide you with an ashtray). Smoking is not permitted on the islands near wildlife or while we are birding. Smoking is not permitted during group meals or while doing the checklists when the group are together. Please be considerate to other people on the boat if you are a smoker.

AIR CONDITIONING

An individual air-conditioning unit works in each of our cabins. Please ask the naturalist guide or one of the crewmembers about its use, should you need help.

WATER

We have a freshwater tank, with enough for our entire trip but we would like to ask you to save as much as possible, because there is little additional water on the islands. A simple effort from you might make a meaningful contribution. Please take short showers, in this way you will be helping to save energy used in the production of clean water.

DRINKABLE WATER

Potable and drinking water is provided on board and is produced through a reverse osmosis plant. To limit the amount of waste produced while in the Galápagos, we ask you kindly to reuse the bottle given to you on the first day. This bottle can be refilled with fresh water from the dispenser placed in the lounge. If you can bring your own refillable bottles that is best (but please note the list of prohibited items).

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The *Samba* has electricity outlets of 110 V and 220 V in every cabin. Extra electricity outlets are found in the dining room.

MEALS AND DINING SERVICES

Our chef offers fine cuisine ranging from international to local specialties, served in our dining room with a perfect environment. Please let our chef know if you have any dietary restrictions. The regular schedule for meal service is as follows:

- **Breakfast:** usually served between 06:00 and 07:00
- **Lunch:** normally served between 11:30 and 13:00
- **Dinner:** usually served between 18:30 and 20:00
- **Snacks:** served twice a day.

BAR SERVICE

In the fridge, you will find a variety of, beers, soft drinks, wines, cocktails, and liquors on board the *Samba*. The barman will open a consumption card with your name, without which no liquor or soft drinks can be purchased.

Prices on board are competitive and you do not need to bring your own liquor onto the boat.

PAYMENTS

Your purchases will be kept on record on your bar card and tallied at the end of your voyage. Your account must be settled prior to disembarkation. **Payment must be in cash (US\$).**

COMMUNICATION

The yacht is equipped with two UHF/VHF/Motorola radios, satellite, and a cellular phone. The satellite phone on board can be contacted by dialing (008) 7077 318 0983. Guests can use the SAT phone on board at US\$4 per minute to call out. Internationally enabled cell phones should get reception at some places in the Galápagos Islands. Communication with the coast guard and office in Puerto Ayora is possible at any time. There is no Wi-Fi on the *Samba*.

HEALTH

No immunizations are required for the Galápagos Islands and malaria pills are not needed on this tour as there is no malaria on the islands.

The water on board our boat is desalinated and perfectly safe to drink. Please bring a water bottle that is comfortable to carry to refill on board. The meals will be very carefully prepared, so you need not worry about hygiene standards during the tour.

On mainland Ecuador, prior to and after our time in the islands, we recommend drinking bottled water. If you are extending your stay on the mainland, a small water filter, such as Steripen, is great to bring along to help save plastic and money when buying bottled water. In the Galápagos, use plenty of sunscreen, wear a hat, polarized sunglasses (to have a better filter to see through water) and bring good hiking shoes for walking on uneven surfaces such as dry lava. Bring an adequate supply of any medications you take regularly or might need; nothing will be available in the Galápagos.

Seasickness is not a large problem in the Galápagos as we are near the islands most of the time and the seas tend to be calm. Nearly all of the open sea passages, when the boat could rock a bit more, will be at night. If you do experience motion sickness, you should bring medication or other preventative measures (electronic “Relief bands” seem to work well also). Please feel free to contact us for recommendations. Eating well, avoiding excessive amounts of alcohol, and getting a good night of sleep are also key in preventing an over-active stomach. **Please be sure you have listed any medical problems, special dietary requests, food allergies, or food preferences on your tour booking form and update us if there are any changes before the trip.**

WEATHER

From May until October, the weather is typically very pleasant in the Galápagos Islands, with an average daytime temperature of 75–85°F (24–30°C) (usually on the warmer side in May). It is pleasantly cool at night out on the deck and on early morning landings; you may want a sweatshirt or fleece for these times. Rain is a possibility, more so in early May, while late May and June there is a chance of heavy mist (called “garúa”), particularly in the highlands.

From November to April, the weather is typically very hot in the Galápagos Islands, with an average daytime temperature of 85–95°F (30–35°C) (usually on the warmer side in January). It is pleasantly cool at night out on the deck and on early morning landings; you may want a sweatshirt or fleece for these times. Rain is a possibility, more so in early January, because we start the transition between “cold-dry” and the “warm-wet” season. It can be particularly wet in the highlands.

INSECTS

Insects are not usually a problem in the Galápagos Islands, though there are wasps at a few landing sites. Please let us know if you are allergic to wasp stings. In general, use insect repellent if you use it at home on field outings in the summer. Mosquitoes are not generally a problem even on the mainland and there are almost no mosquitoes in the Galápagos Islands. Long, lightweight cotton or nylon pants are the most practical for protection from the sun,

scratchy bushes along the trails, and insects.

HIKING

Galápagos walks vary from short to a couple of miles long over broken and uneven terrain. If you are not accustomed to walking these distances, especially over rocky and uneven terrain, you will still be able to join in most activities as we travel at a pace that allows us to see, appreciate, and photograph the unique nature of the islands. There are some basic walking sticks on board that you can borrow, or you may prefer to pack your own for stability on rocky terrain (e.g., for walking over rocky landscapes). San Bartolome Island requires negotiating a 100-step stairway for access. If you anticipate struggling with the walks, we strongly urge you to get out and do some good forest walking and hiking beforehand to get yourself in good condition for the trip. The fitter you are when the trip begins, the more you will enjoy your time in the field!

LAUNDRY

There is no laundry service on board the *Samba*.

