

Galápagos Islands: Sailing the Western Route

Embark on an unforgettable expedition into the captivating world of playful sea lions, dancing Blue-footed Boobies, and diving marine iguanas! This 11-day adventure introduces you to the geologically younger western islands, where the archipelago's volcanic origins are on full display while sailing aboard the comfortable, first-class [M/Y Grand Daphne](#). Amid the misty cloud forest highlands and the arid desert vegetation, look for wildlife like the endemic Flightless Cormorant, giant tortoises, land and marine iguanas, and numerous species of Darwin's finches. Opportunities to hike, snorkel, and navigate by panga take you up close to the flora, fauna, and volcanic terrain that have fascinated visitors for centuries.

Dates: 14 – 24 August 2023 (11 days)

Cost: \$7,870 (10 participants)

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- ✿ Explore historical Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- ✿ Encounter iconic wildlife including Blue-footed Boobies, Darwin's finches, Galápagos Penguins, and Flightless Cormorants.
- ✿ See giant tortoises up close and learn about the important conservation work taking place at the Charles Darwin Research Center.
- ✿ Snorkel in the beautiful Pacific waters to spot endemic marine species like sea lions, penguins and an abundance of fish and marine invertebrates



This program will involve sailing in choppy water and daily trips to islands by inflatable dinghy with some rough terrain.

Day 1: Monday 8/14/2023 Arrival in Quito

Upon arrival in Quito you will be met and escorted to your hotel. This evening the group will meet for a trip briefing and then enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel's restaurant. Room type - Classic

Overnight: Sheraton Hotel (check-in 3pm)

Day 2: Tuesday 8/15/2023 Quito

After breakfast take a city tour of Quito, including a visit to the Middle of the World Monument. Surrounded by volcanoes, Quito is a unique city that boasts one of the largest and best-preserved colonial centers in the Americas, earning it recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Please note you may substitute the city tour and visit to the monument with a full-day excursion to Otavalo market, Cotopaxi National Park, Antisana Reserve, or Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve for an additional cost. Before dinner, attend a lecture, "Introduction to Geology of the Galápagos Islands."

Overnight: Sheraton Hotel



Presidential Palace, Quito © Toby Ross

Day 3: Wednesday 8/16/2023 Galápagos – Santa Cruz Island

Return to the airport for the flight to Baltra Island. On arrival in the Galápagos, collect your luggage and meet your naturalist guide at the arrivals hall. From there, travel together to board the M/Y Grand Daphne, which will be moored close to Baltra Island. Once on board, meet the crew, be assigned a cabin, and enjoy a delicious lunch with your fellow travelers. Try on the snorkeling gear to ensure it fits before your first snorkeling session. Wetsuits can also be rented at an additional cost. Sail from Baltra to Las Bachas, on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island, which is a nesting site for the Pacific green turtle. You may also see some marine iguanas. The sand here, made of decomposed coral, is particularly white and soft, and the nearby rocks make for an excellent snorkeling spot, where you might see some of the many sally lightfoot crabs on the island. A saltwater lagoon just near the beach is home to **American Flamingos, Whimbrel and Great Blue Herons.**

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 4: Thursday 8/17/2023 Galápagos – Rabida & Isabela Islands

Today, sail from Las Bachas to Rábida Island. Rábida is famously known for its gorgeous red-sand beach, colored by the rusting of iron-rich volcanic material; it is one of the most striking islands in the entire archipelago. From the shore, a trail leads through to what is one of the best lagoons in the Galápagos for viewing **American Flamingos**. Rábida is also a wonderful place to spot nesting **Brown Pelicans**. Elsewhere, **White-cheeked Pintail**, marine iguanas, and sea lions are all present. There is also a great opuntia cactus forest here, which suggests land iguanas and possibly **Galápagos Hawks, Galápagos Mockingbirds, doves, Darwin's finches**, and lava lizards previously inhabited this area. There is also an opportunity to snorkel in a spot where sea stars, damsels, gobies, and surgeon fish abound. In the afternoon, head to Albemarle Point on the northeast side of Isabela Island. Covered in mangroves, the bay is home to sea turtles, sea lions, **Galápagos Penguins and Flightless Cormorants** who feed on the algae and fish here. Take a walk inland and discover the remains of an old radar base from World War II and pass by Pahoehoe and A'a lava formations. There is another fantastic spot for snorkeling here. Have a look beneath the water's surface in search of sea turtles and **Flightless Cormorants**. Room type – Cabin

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne



Large Ground-Finch © Toby Ross

tortoises can be spotted in their natural habitat amongst the bushes. Land iguanas nest in the middle of the trail, where their distinctly textured and yellowish skin can be observed from up close. **Flycatchers, Darwin's finches,** and **Galápagos Mockingbirds** are commonly seen in the area. Room type – Cabin

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 6: Saturday 8/19/2023 **Galápagos – Fernandina Island**

Today, visit Punta Espinoza, a narrow ledge of lava and sand extending from the base of La Cumbre Volcano. Take a walk around the beautiful peninsula, which boasts flora and fauna such as lava cacti, marine iguanas, barking sea lions, tiny penguins and sally lightfoot crabs. Keep a lookout for the impressive Galápagos predator hunting from the treetops: the **Galápagos Hawk**. Superb snorkeling opportunities await in these clear waters, where turtles and sea lions can be seen swimming around and feeding on the shore. This is also a great spot to see **Flightless Cormorants** drying their stunted wings on the rocks. In the afternoon, head to Punta Vicente Roca. This site allows for panga rides to observe the abundant wildlife and offers one of the best snorkeling spots of the archipelago. This snorkeling route takes you along the cliffs and gives you the rare chance of exploring two shallow underwater caves. The primitive and unaggressive bullhead shark, known locally as the Port Jackson shark, is often seen here sharing its space with red-lipped batfish, frogfishes, Pacific seahorses, the endemic Camotillo, schools of barracuda, and brown-striped snappers. Sponges, corals, and other marine invertebrates are also abundant in the area. Room type – Cabin

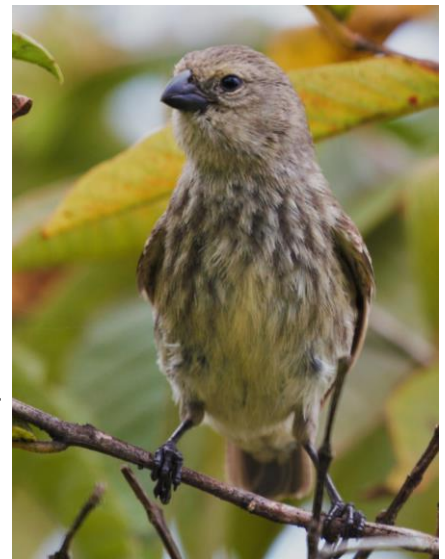
Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 7: Sunday 8/20/2023 **Galápagos – Santiago Island**

Head to Puerto Egas, a black-sand beach on the west side of James Bay, northwest of Santiago Island. It is home to amazing volcanic tuff formations. Take a stroll along the beach with the native marine iguanas, **Brown Pelicans, Darwin's Finches, Galápagos Mockingbirds, American Oystercatchers,** Galápagos sea lions, and Galápagos fur seals. Witness the incredible tidal pools, formed from ancient lava flow, providing a home for sponges, snails, hermit crabs, barnacles, and fish. You may also end up snorkeling with a Galápagos fur seal in this area. In the afternoon, travel to Caleta Bucanero, also located on the northwest side of Santiago. It is a shelter bay where pirates and buccaneers used to rest and repair their ships while part of the crew raided the land for giant tortoises to take on board for food. Enjoy another snorkeling adventure and panga ride looking for **Blue-footed Boobies, Brown Pelicans,** and the nocturnal **Swallow-tailed Gull** nesting on the cliffs. Room type – Cabin

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 5: Friday 8/18/2023 **Galápagos – Isabela Is.**
Wake up near Tagus Cove, where pirates and whalers used to collect tortoises for their travels. Enjoy a short 2-hour visit here, perhaps snorkeling or checking out the graffiti on the walls, the oldest of which is from 1836. Observe **Flightless Cormorants, Blue-footed Boobies,** a variety of waterfowl, and the world's northernmost penguin, the **Galápagos Penguin**. Walk to a lookout point for a stunning view of the north of Isabela Island and Wolf Volcano. Then, visit Bahía Urbina, located west of Isabela Island. Urbina Bay has a wide variety of plant life, which changes depending on the season. The site also features a short trek inland, where giant



Small Tree-Finch © Toby Ross

Day 8: Monday 8/21/2023 Galápagos – Bartolome Island

This morning, explore Bartolomé Island, a spectacular volcanic landscape full of spatter cones and lava flows, and home to **Galápagos Penguins** and lava lizards. Bartolomé is a relatively new island in the archipelago. Put on your walking shoes and climb up 360 wooden steps to the summit, where a breathtaking view of Pinnacle Rock awaits. This is one of the most photographed sights in the Galápagos - an abrupt jag of rock protruding from the earth like a tooth, providing a focal point for two nearby bays. Hike to the top of a once-active volcano and enjoy superb views all the way to Sullivan Bay on nearby Santiago Island, where you might catch a glimpse of the **Galápagos Hawk**. There is also the chance to go snorkeling here. In the afternoon, travel to Sombrero Chino, or Chinese Hat, an island situated on the southeast side of Santiago. This small island has nice white-sand beaches and stunning volcanic landscapes, where sea lions and **Galápagos Penguins** like to rest and nest on the rocks. Enjoy an easy hike on the island, and then snorkel searching for reef sharks, sea turtles, **Galápagos Penguins**, and sea lions. Room type – Cabin

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 9: Tuesday 8/22/2023 Galápagos – North Seymour Is.

Wake up this morning and visit North Seymour, one of the most visited islands of the Galápagos. Begin with a walk around the island to spot some **Blue-footed Boobies** and **Swallow-tailed Gulls**. Boobies and **Magnificent Frigatebirds** have an interesting relationship, sharing the same nesting area in North Seymour. **Blue-footed Boobies** nest on the ground, while the **Frigatebirds** nest just above them in the saltbushes. As you walk, look out for land iguanas, marine iguanas, Galápagos sea lions, and the endemic incense tree, Palo Santo. After the walk, cool off and go snorkeling to encounter a great variety of fish and perhaps some white-tipped reef sharks, rays, and sea lions. In the afternoon, visit Santa Cruz Island, the second largest island in the Galápagos. The small town of Puerto Ayora is the economic center of the archipelago and home to the Charles Darwin Research Station. As well as undertaking vital conservation work, the station also makes for interesting exploration and offers the best opportunities for close encounters with giant tortoises. You may also see baby tortoises and land iguanas. Room type – Cabin

Overnight: M/Y Grand Daphne

Day 10: Wednesday 8/23/2023 Quito

After breakfast, take an early morning walk along the coast and interior of North Seymour Island, a low, flat island that was uplifted from the sea by underground seismic activity. Observe **Blue-footed Boobies**, which nest from May to November, as well as marine iguanas, **Brown Pelicans**, **Magnificent Frigatebirds**, shore birds, sea lions, and the endemic Palo Santo trees. Return to the boat and cruise to the pier, where you will disembark at around 9 am. Your guide will accompany you on the bus ride directly to the airport. Lunch at the airport is on own today. Enjoy the afternoon back in Quito at leisure before gathering for a farewell dinner at the hotel in the evening. For those departing this evening, you will be taken to the Quito International Airport for your flight(s) home. Room type – Premium

Overnight: Rincon de Puenbo

Day 11: Thursday 8/24/2023 Quito

Today, travel to the airport for your flight home. Check out is at 12 pm.



Magnificent Frigatebirds © Toby Ross

Note: Included in this itinerary are numerous snorkeling opportunities. It is understood that this activity is not of interest for everyone. Please know that alternative activities can be arranged - this is our itinerary and we can make certain adjustments as we wish.

LAND & SAILING PRICE

\$7,250 per person, 12 people travelling
 \$7,870 per person, 10 people travelling

REGISTER

To reserve your place on this trip, please contact:
 Toby Ross
tobeross@gmail.com or (206) 552-3834

Price includes full-time guide, accommodation onboard M/Y Grand Daphne and standard hotel rooms, internal flights, meals and non-alcoholic drinks, entrance fees and activities as outlined in this itinerary, private transportation (with A/C), arrival and departure transfers, fees and Galápagos National Park entrance fees, carbon offset (optional), and a Galápagos Islands Bird & Wildlife Checklist. The price does not include international flight, travel insurance, alcoholic drinks and gratuities.

FURTHER DETAILS

Price is based on double occupancy. Single occupancy arrangements are offered at an additional cost of \$1,800 per person. Single supplement for land only is \$200 per person. A \$1,000 per person deposit is required to reserve your space on this trip. This deposit is refundable less \$200 administration fee until February 15, 2023, final balance is due May 11, 2023.

FLIGHTS

Our travel partner has a flight specialist on staff who will be happy to arrange your flights at no additional cost. They are able to negotiate a lower fare using a group rate and when en route can be contacted 24/7 in case flights are cancelled or need to be rescheduled. Occasionally, you may be able to find airfares online that are listed at a lower price. Keep in mind that those rates are based on individual passengers and not your entire group. In general, individual fares lack the flexibility of group airfare and often require immediate purchase.

Please note reservations are not being held at this time. A suggested flight schedule is provided below (all times listed are local).

Date	Departure City	Arrival City	Departure	Arrival
08/14/2023	Seattle	Houston	7:00 am	1:15 pm
08/14/2023	Houston	Quito	6:15 pm	11:35 pm
08/24/2023	Quito	Houston	12:40 am	5:55 am
08/24/2023	Houston	Seattle	2:53 pm	5:48 pm

Estimated airfare: \$1,100

CARBON OFFSETTING

Carbon offsetting is included in the trip price. Our travel partner works with ClimateSafe to offset the carbon emissions created from land and air travel. If you choose to opt out of carbon offsetting, your per person land cost will be reduced by \$45.

More details on entry requirements, visas, and other travel information will be forthcoming once the trip is confirmed.