

Galapagos Express 7 days

Experience the natural wonder of the Galapagos Islands, a living paradise – wildlife sanctuary made famous by Charles Darwin and home to unique flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth.

Swimming

Wildlife

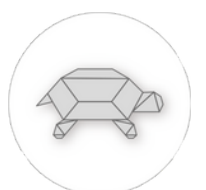
Hiking

Snorkeling

activexpedition
ADVENTURE IN NATURE



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Galapagos Express

The Galapagos Islands are a global model for conservation, with their fragile ecosystems carefully protected through sustainable practices and efforts to minimize human impact. As you explore, you'll witness conservation in action.

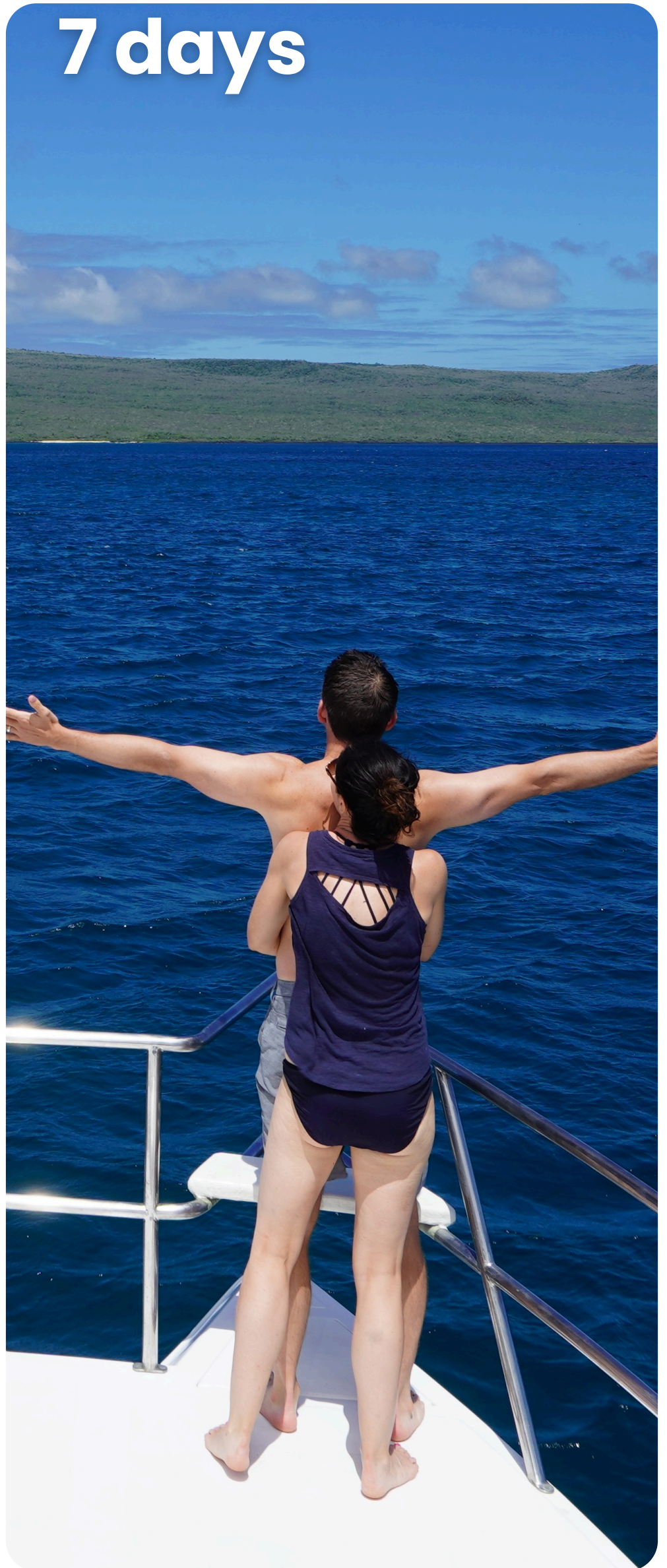
Explore the remarkable volcanic landscapes and marine environments of San Cristobal and Santa Cruz islands, where you'll snorkel alongside sea lions, sea turtles, and, if lucky, hammerhead sharks at iconic Kicker Rock. Trek through lava tunnels, observe giant tortoises in their natural habitat, and stroll picturesque beaches teeming with marine iguanas.

Activity level : Easy to Moderated

Season: Year Around

Minumum age: 8 years old

7 days

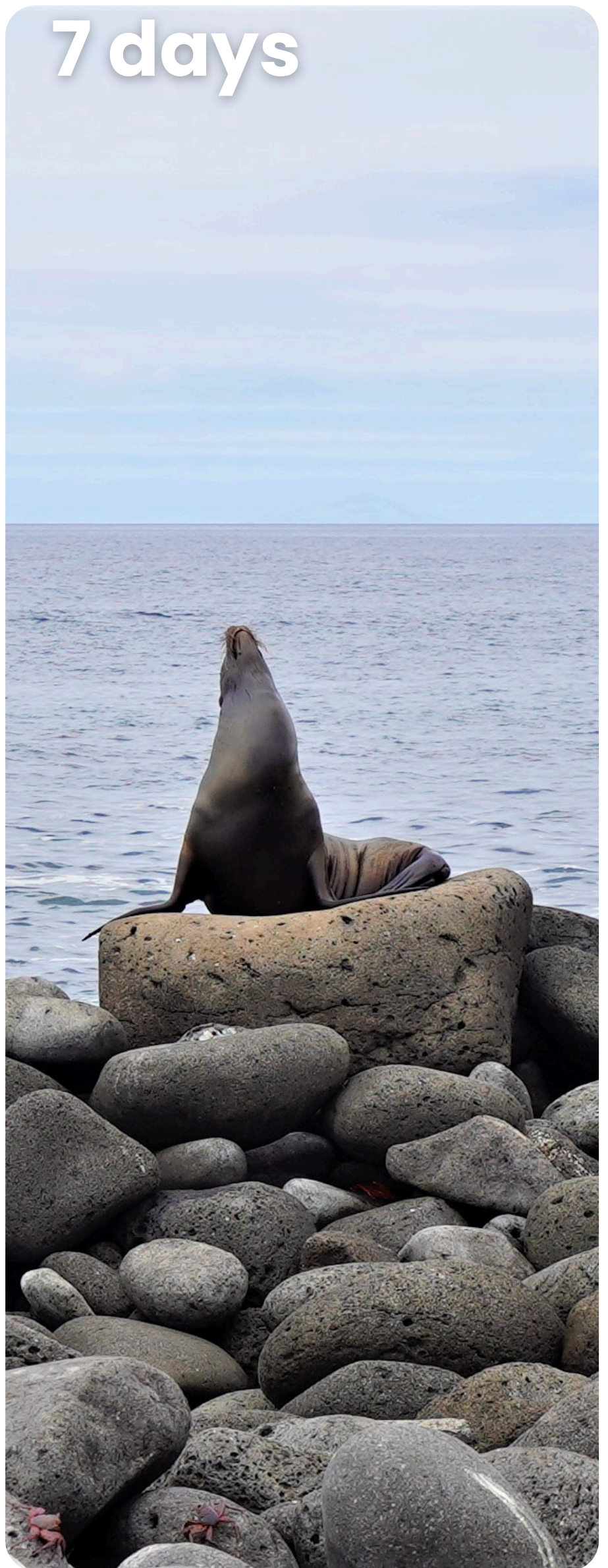


Galapagos Express

Experience local culture by learning to cook traditional dishes with a fisherman's family and savor artisanal beer crafted sustainably in the highlands. At the Charles Darwin Research Station, witness conservation efforts firsthand and learn about the legacy of Lonesome George, a symbol of wildlife preservation.

From hiking and snorkeling to sharing time with locals, every moment celebrates Ecuador's diverse beauty while supporting the sustainable preservation of its unique environments.

7 days



Highlights

Wildlife

- Snorkel alongside sea lions, sea turtles, and vibrant fish at Kicker Rock.
- Spot marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies, and Sally Lightfoot crabs at Santa Cruz Bay.
- Observe giant tortoises roaming freely in the highlands of Santa Cruz.
- Encounter Darwin's finches, frigatebirds, and other endemic bird species.

Conservation

- Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station to learn about giant tortoise breeding programs and conservation efforts.
- Explore the story of Lonesome George, a symbol of global conservation awareness.
- Experience eco-conscious travel with sustainably operated tours and locally guided excursions.

Cultural Interaction

- Participate in a traditional Ecuadorian cooking class with a local fisherman's family.
- Taste artisanal beer brewed with local ingredients in the highlands of Santa Cruz.
- Stroll the vibrant streets of Puerto Ayora, mingling with locals and discovering island life.

Accommodation, guides and sustainability

- Stay in charming hotels, each chosen for its character and connection to the unique surroundings of each island.
- Be accompanied by experienced and knowledgeable naturalist guides from the park who will ensure a safe, informative, and immersive adventure at every step.
- Your journey directly benefits local families and contributes to preserving the culture, nature, and biodiversity of the Galapagos Islands for generations to come.

Arrival Day

Day 1

Today, we will warmly welcome you upon your arrival at Quito Airport and assist you with your transfer to the hotel. This day is dedicated to your acclimatization and personal exploration of the city. Feel free to wander at your own pace, soaking in the rich culture, stunning architecture, and local cuisine that Quito has to offer.

In the evening, at 6 PM, we invite you to join us for an important briefing session. This will be an opportunity to meet your guide and fellow adventurers, as well as to gather essential information and tips for the exciting days ahead.

Overnight: Swissotel or similar

Meals: None



Galapagos Welcome: Island History, Tijeretas Hill, and introductory snorkeling with sea lions

Day 2

This morning, a representative will meet you in the hotel lobby to assist with your airport transfer and ensure a smooth departure process. We'll set out for our flight to the captivating San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos. Upon arrival, we'll check in at our hotel and have time to enjoy a leisurely lunch, soaking in the fresh Pacific breeze and beginning to settle into the island's tranquil atmosphere.

In the afternoon, we'll visit the Galapagos National Park Interpretation Center, where our seasoned Naturalist guide will introduce us to the incredible history and biodiversity of the islands. Here, we'll gain insight into the archipelago's unique ecosystem, its pioneering role in environmental research and conservation, and the fascinating wildlife that calls these islands home.

Afterward, we'll set out on a scenic hike along the trails to Frigate Hill, a beautiful viewpoint that offers panoramic views of the coastline and surrounding islands. As we ascend, keep an eye out for the magnificent frigatebirds soaring above, with their striking red throat pouches. The hike will take us through lush, coastal brush forest, where we may spot endemic birds, including Darwin's finches, mockingbirds, and possibly the rare Chatham mockingbird.

Our adventure continues with our first snorkeling experience along the shores. Here, we'll dive into the clear, refreshing waters in search of playful sea lions and gentle sea turtles gliding gracefully below. This first immersion into Galapagos' underwater world offers a taste of the island's rich marine life. In the late afternoon, we'll return to the hotel to relax and enjoy some downtime, preparing for the exciting days ahead.

Overnight: Hotel Blue Marlin or similar

Meals included: Breakfast



Kicker Rock

Exploration: Snorkeling

Adventures and Local

Culture Unveiled

Day 3

We begin our day with an exciting boat journey across sapphire-blue waters, taking us on a 50-minute ride to one of the most breathtaking locations in the Galapagos—Kicker Rock. This iconic volcanic formation rises dramatically 500 feet above the ocean, forming a natural gateway that offers some of the best wildlife sightings in the archipelago.

Upon arrival, we'll prepare for our first snorkeling session in the channel that cuts through Kicker Rock. As we dive beneath the surface, we'll be surrounded by an impressive variety of marine life, from white-tip reef sharks and rays to playful sea lions, graceful sea turtles, and schools of vibrant fish. If we're lucky, we may even spot elusive hammerhead sharks gliding through the deep. With two opportunities to explore this underwater paradise, we'll experience the rich biodiversity that makes the Galapagos a world-renowned snorkeling destination.

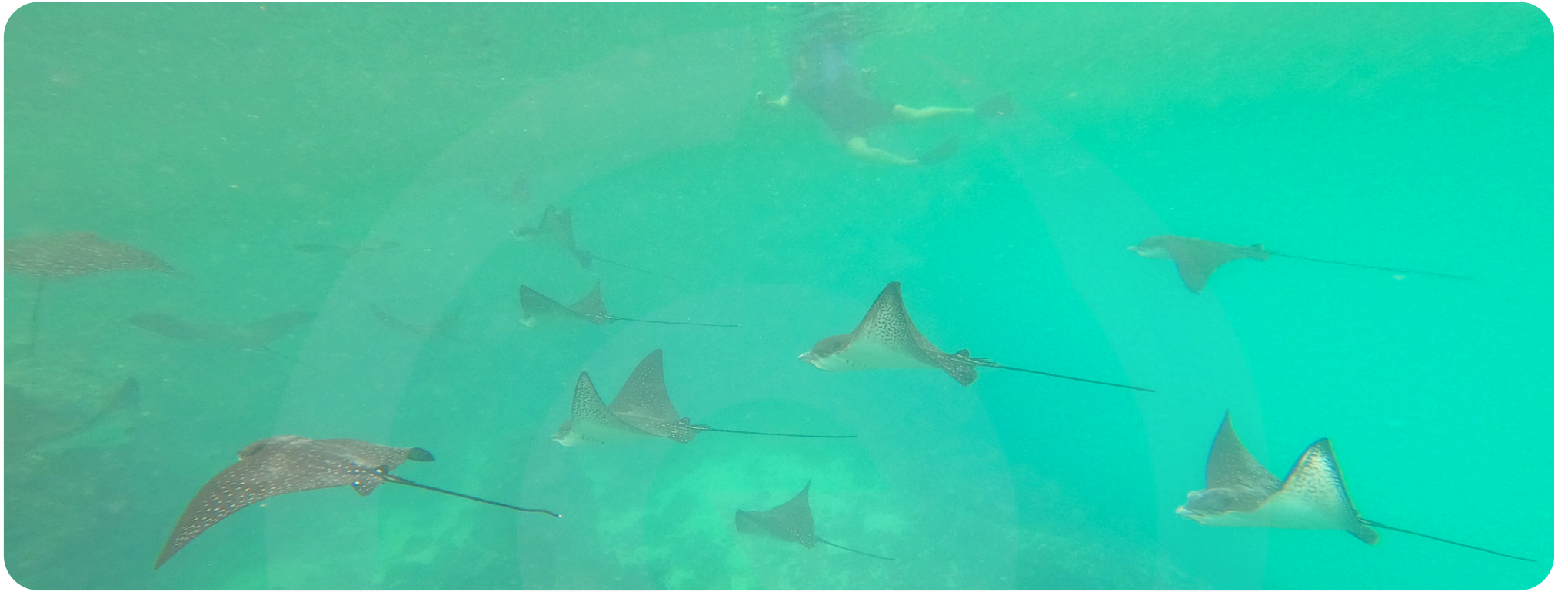
After our snorkeling adventures, we'll stop at one of the pristine, white-sand beaches that form part of the reserve. Here, we'll relax on the soft sands, enjoy the views, and soak in the tranquil beauty of this isolated shoreline. A freshly prepared lunch will be served on board, allowing us to refuel while still immersed in the stunning seascape.

In the afternoon, we'll return to town for a special cultural experience. We'll visit the home of the family of a local fisherman, where we'll take part in a traditional Ecuadorian cooking class. Under the guidance of our hosts, we'll learn to prepare authentic dishes using local ingredients, discovering the culinary traditions that have been passed down through generations. As we cook, our hosts will share stories about life on the islands—the challenges and rewards of living in this unique ecosystem. This enriching experience will allow us to connect with the local culture on a personal level and gain insight into the daily life and traditions of the Galapagos community.

In the evening, you'll have time to explore the town on foot, unwind, and enjoy the calm atmosphere of a night in the Galapagos.

Overnight: Hotel Blue Marlin or similar

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Learning conservation at Charles Darwin Research Station and mingling with the Giants of Santa Cruz

Day 4

We'll embark on a two-hour boat ride to Santa Cruz Island, the bustling hub of the Galapagos. Upon arrival in Puerto Ayora, a Naturalist Guide from the Galapagos National Park will greet us, assist with luggage, and accompany us to our first stop of the day.

Our visit begins at the renowned Charles Darwin Research Station, where conservation efforts to protect and preserve the unique biodiversity of the Galapagos are on full display. Here, you'll:

- Learn about the Station's vital role in repopulating the islands with endangered giant tortoise species through a highly successful breeding program.
- Explore exhibits showcasing research on the unique wildlife and habitats of the archipelago.
- Witness the legacy of Lonesome George, the famous last tortoise of his species, whose story has become a symbol of conservation worldwide.
- See baby tortoises at different stages of development, raised in protected environments before being released into the wild.

The station provides a fascinating glimpse into the efforts required to maintain the ecological balance of these extraordinary islands.

In the afternoon, we'll journey to the highlands of Santa Cruz, a lush and cooler contrast to the arid coastal regions. Our destination is El Chato Reserve, a haven for giant tortoises in their natural habitat. Here, you'll have the unique opportunity to observe these gentle giants as they roam freely, graze, or wallow in mud pools, which help protect them from parasites and keep them cool.

During our exploration, your guide will share insights about the tortoises' behavior, diet, and incredible adaptations that allow them to thrive in such a unique environment.

In addition to the tortoises, the highlands are teeming with other wildlife, including vibrant bird species like Galapagos flycatchers, Darwin's finches, and vermillion flycatchers. A highlight of the highlands is a walk through one of the island's lava tunnels, formed by ancient volcanic activity. These subterranean passages are a geological wonder, providing an up-close look at the volcanic origins of the Galapagos. Your guide will explain how these tunnels were created and the role they play in the island's history and ecosystem. Later-on we'll visit a local craft brewery nestled in the highlands. Here, you'll taste a selection of beers brewed with local ingredients, capturing the unique flavors of the Galapagos. You'll learn about the brewing process and how the brewery integrates sustainable practices to operate within the delicate ecosystem of the islands. Returning to Puerto Ayora, you'll have time to unwind and explore the town at your leisure. We recommend taking a stroll along the vibrant streets, where you'll find charming cafes, artisan shops, and inviting waterfront restaurants.

For a magical experience, head down to the boat docks after dark to spot blacktip sharks, rays, and other marine creatures attracted by the lights of the harbor. It's the perfect way to end your day in Santa Cruz, blending the town's lively charm with the island's captivating natural wonders.

Overnight: Hotel Pelican Bay or similar

Meals included: Breakfast



Santa Cruz Bay Tour

Day 5

Today's adventure begins at the Puerto Ayora dock, where we set off on a half-day exploration of the scenic Santa Cruz Bay. Our first stop is Canal de Tiburones, a unique viewpoint offering a chance to observe sleek blue sharks gliding beneath the surface. Along the way, keep an eye out for the elusive lava herons that inhabit this area.

Next, we visit the enchanting Canal del Amor, named for its romantic atmosphere and striking turquoise waters. This narrow channel is alive with vibrant Sally Lightfoot crabs, sunbathing marine iguanas, and graceful blue-footed boobies perched along the rocky ledges.

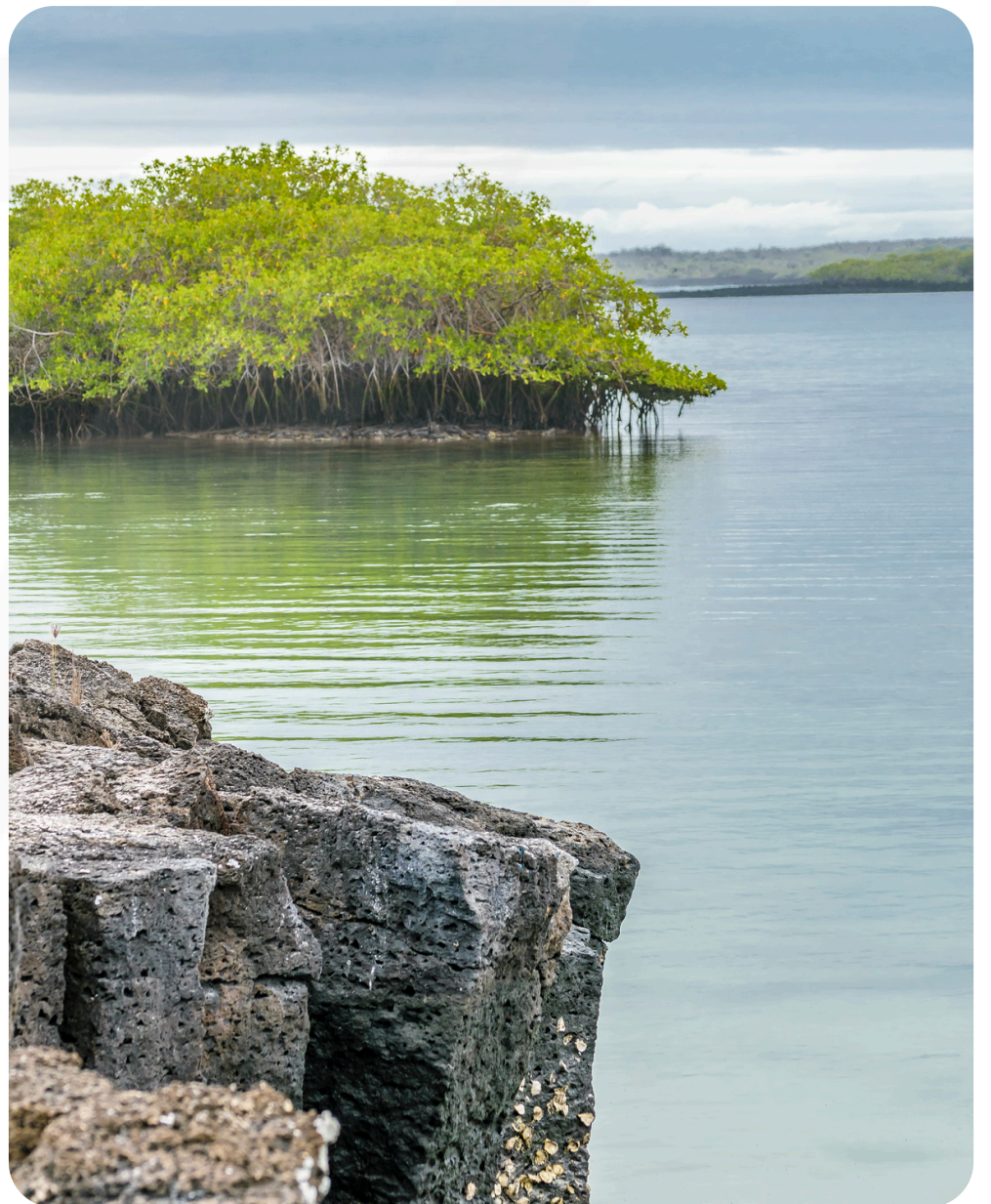
Snorkeling at Punta Estrada promises an up-close encounter with the fascinating underwater world, where tropical fish and curious sea creatures surround you. Continuing our journey, we arrive at Playa de los Perros, home to the island's largest population of marine iguanas. This rocky beach offers dramatic landscapes and unique photographic opportunities of these prehistoric-looking reptiles.

The final highlight of our bay tour is Las Grietas, a natural wonder formed by towering lava fissures. Here, a serene pool of crystal-clear brackish water provides an unforgettable snorkeling experience. Marvel at the vibrant marine life and colorful fish as freshwater from the highlands mixes with the sea, creating a captivating ecosystem between the volcanic walls.

We return to Puerto Ayora's dock in time for a relaxed afternoon. For those seeking more exploration, a self-guided walk to Tortuga Bay is highly recommended. A scenic 45-minute trek through a serene scalesia forest leads to one of the archipelago's most stunning beaches. Here, you can unwind on soft white sand, paddle through calm waters, or observe marine iguanas basking in the sun—a perfect way to conclude an adventurous day on Santa Cruz Island.

Overnight: Pelican Bay or similar

Meals included: Breakfast



Return to mainland

Day 6

In the morning pickup from your hotel, ensuring ample time for the transfer to Baltra Island Airport. As we cross the island, take a moment to savor the final views of the unique landscapes that make the Galapagos such an extraordinary destination. Depending on your flight schedule, you may also get a glimpse of the arid vegetation and volcanic formations that define this part of the archipelago.

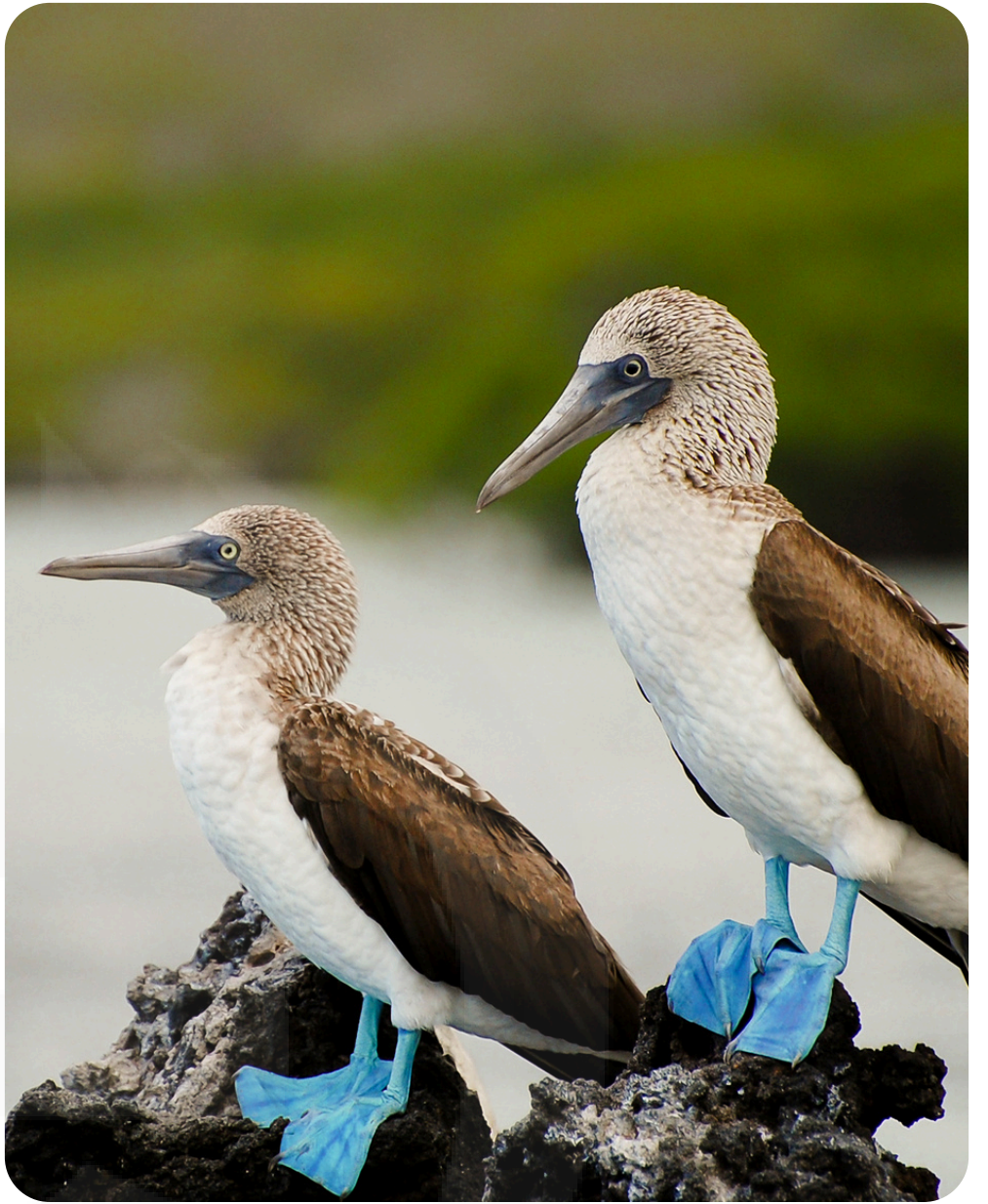
Upon arrival at the airport, you'll board your flight back to mainland Ecuador. The journey typically takes 2-3 hours, depending on whether your flight includes a brief stop in Guayaquil.

Once you land in Quito, our team will be ready to welcome you and assist with your transfer to your hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Wyndham Garden or similar

Meals included: Breakfast





Departure Day

Day 7

As our incredible journey comes to an end, we will prepare for your departure. Transfers to the airport will be arranged based on your individual flight schedule. To ensure a smooth departure process, we recommend scheduling your pick-up at least three hours prior to your flight.

Meals included: Breakfast



Included

- Airport transfers
- Top experienced Certified English-Speaking Guides
- Land and water transportation
- Accommodation for six nights. Hotel upgrade available
- Meals according to the Itinerary
- Snorkeling gear: Mask and fins



Exclusions

- International flights
- Domestic flights Quito – San Cristobal (day 2) / Baltra – Quito (day 6)
- Galapagos transit control card INGALA
- Galapagos National Park fee
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips for guides and drivers
- Travel insurance (mandatory)
- Optional activities. Scuba Diving on day 3 or day 5

Packing list

General Strategy for Light Travel

The weather in both Ecuador and The Galápagos can change drastically. You'll transition from mountain cool to equatorial sunshine. Pack light, focusing on versatility and quick-drying fabrics.

Versatile Clothing & Layers

Layers are essential for adapting to changes in altitude and climate (Andes to Coastal/Islands). Quick-drying, non-cotton shirts are your best friend.

- Mid-Layer: 1 fleece (perfect for cool nights in the Highlands or on a boat).
- Waterproof: 1 rain jacket (crucial for unexpected showers on the mainland or the islands).
- Quick-Dry Tops: 4 non-cotton T-shirts (ideal for activities and humid days).
- Casual: 1 cotton T-shirt (for ultimate comfort in the evenings).
- Bottoms: 2 pairs of lightweight hiking pants and 2 pairs of shorts.
- Waterwear: 2 bathing suits and 1 water T-shirt (rash guard recommended for sun protection).
- Nights: 1 or 2 outfits for evenings and travel days.

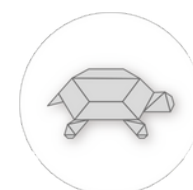
Protection & Accessories

Protection from the sun is non-negotiable in the Galápagos (the Equatorial sun is extremely strong).

Footwear for Land & Sea

You need three types of footwear to be comfortable and safe during hikes and water activities.

- Walking/Hiking: 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/sneakers (tennis shoes).
- Water Activities: 1 pair of water sandals (e.g., Chacos or Keens) for boat landings, kayaking, and wet terrain.
- Relaxation: 1 pair of flip-flops (for the hotel or glamping tent).



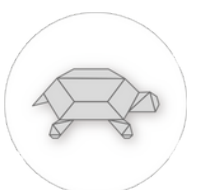
Packing list

Documents & Gear

- Mandatory: Passport and Credit Card.
- Lighting: Headlamp (flashlight).
- Photography: Camera (GoPro recommended) and waterproof bags or cases to protect your electronics from water/sand.
- Wildlife: Binoculars (optional, but highly recommended for spotting unique Galápagos wildlife and birds).

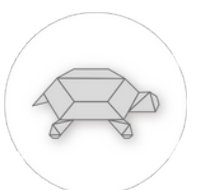
Travel Tip: By simplifying your gear, you maximize your time enjoying the extraordinary wildlife and landscapes!

NOTE: Laundry is available almost at every location, this helps traveling light too.



Important Information

- **Itinerary Disclaimer:** Even though we have a detailed itinerary, changes can be made by your guides, due to weather or safety reasons. Please also note that none of the wildlife sightings mentioned on the itinerary are guaranteed.
- **Visas and Passports:** Make sure you check your visa and passport validity and requirements per country. It is important your passport is valid for at least 6 months before your travel.
- **Accommodation:** We strive to use charming places that are unique and provide stellar service. Available at all properties single, double twin or matrimonial rooms.
- **Single Supplement Costs:** Generally, apply to solo travelers who do not have a roommate to share accommodations with.
- **Transportation:** While in the Galapagos the speed boat from San Cristobal to Santa Cruz can be a bit challenging if you are not use to travel by boat, so we highly recommend to carry some seasickness medicine with you.
- **Level of Activity:** This trip is considered as 2 out of 5. No prior experience is required and your guides will always brief you about safety and proper use of gear on every leg of the trip. The hiking is quite easy on mostly flat terrain along the coastline, for snorkeling there will be lifejackets available if needed.



Important Information

- **Weather and Elevation:** Weather and Elevation: Although the islands are located on the equator, the Humboldt Current brings cold water to them, causing frequent drizzles during most of the year. The weather is periodically influenced by the El Niño events, which occur about every 3 to 7 years and are characterized by warm sea surface temperatures, a rise in sea level, greater wave action, and a depletion of nutrients in the water. During the season known as the garúa (June to November), the temperature by the sea is 22 °C (72 °F), a steady and cold wind blows from south and southeast, frequent drizzles (garúas) last most of the day, and dense fog conceals the islands. During the warm season (December to May), the average sea and air temperature rises to 25 °C (77 °F), there is no wind at all, there are sporadic, though strong, rains and the sun shines. Weather changes as altitude increases in the large islands. Temperature decreases gradually with altitude, while precipitation increases due to the condensation of moisture in clouds on the slopes. There is a large range in precipitation from one place to another, not only with altitude, but also depending on the location of the islands, and also with the seasons. The precipitation also depends on the geographical location. During March 1969, the precipitation over Charles Darwin Station, on the southern coast of Santa Cruz was 249.0 mm (9.80 in), while on Baltra Island, the precipitation during the same month was only 137.6 mm (5.42 in). This is because Baltra is located behind Santa Cruz with respect to the prevailing southerly winds, so most of the moisture gets precipitated in the Santa Cruz highlands. There are significant changes in precipitation from one year to another, too. At Charles Darwin Station, the precipitation during March 1969 was 249.0 mm (9.80 in), but during March 1970, it was only 1.2 mm (0.047 in). On the larger islands, the pattern of generally wet highlands and drier lowlands impacts the flora. The vegetation in the highlands tends to be green and lush, with tropical woodland in places. The lowland areas tend to have arid and semi-arid vegetation, with many thorny shrubs and cacti, and almost bare volcanic rock elsewhere.



Important Information

- **Sustainability:** We do our best to not produce any trash; we believe that recycling is not enough so we try to avoid using any plastic or materials that pollute our environment. Every day we work towards being a zero-waste tour operator and our staff is well trained to leave the least impact possible in our service areas. We also work with local indigenous communities in the different regions. By doing so we are able to teach our guests about the rich culture Ecuador, all the while helping the people preserve their traditions and lands. By working directly with local peoples, we are able to create a sustainable touristic income for the community.
- **Guides:** All our guides have a professional background from the Tourism University; this means they have a degree in guiding, so their knowledge and skills when leading a group are top-notch. Each guide has many years of experience and they all have taken additional courses for other outdoor activities as well as have International First-Aid certifications. On top of all of this, they are all extremely personable and strive to deliver travel experiences of a lifetime.
- **Heath advices:** No vaccinations needed for this trip

