

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

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Do something extraordinary.....

Multi-active adventure • Galapagos 7 Days • 6 Nights • Various Dates • £1,995

A premium active program that offers plentiful opportunities for incredibly close encounters with Galapagos wildlife. You will kayak through clear tropical waters with sea turtles, sharks, and sea lions; hike active volcanoes; snorkel waters alive with colour and movement; and lay on sandy beaches near to sea lions and marine iguanas. Your 3 island journey will be led by a team of certified naturalist and adventure guides and supported by the highest quality adventure gear. Combined with the unequalled hospitality of the Opuntia eco-lodges, this tour adds up to the finest Galapagos adventure tour!

A fantastic premium multi-activity holiday in the Galapagos. A full week of sea kayaking, trekking, mountain biking, and snorkeling in the incomparable beauty of the islands awaits, and you can easily combine this with mainland Ecuador to provide a holiday of great contrast. Focusing on the Central and Southern islands of San Cristobal, Santa Cruz and Isabela, you will be able to discover these enchanted islands in a way you never thought possible.

The program comes alive in a unique way as you sea kayak and snorkel in the marine reserve, or hike and even mountain bike on the highlands. Diving in the world-class marine reserve is optional, but highly recommended. The main highlights will be hiking to the Sierra Negra Volcano on Isabela; paddling sea-kayaks in gin-clear waters past penguins or sea lion pups; mountain biking to the top of Santa Cruz in search of giant tortoises; and snorkelling or scuba-diving through huge shoals of tropical fish.

Based in high quality hotels with daily activities suitable for all levels, this weeklong program combines the best of the Galapagos - nature, wildlife, history and landscapes along with adventure and sports. You visit areas that other cruise-based groups cannot reach, and in so doing are able to share experiences with the local people and learn more about the challenges they face living on these islands and support local people through this sustainable program. There are also plenty of options for extending your trip in Ecuador afterwards, or including this programme within a longer South American adventure.

Itinerary

Day 1 (L,D)

After a morning flight to San Cristobal Island, we will meet you at the airport and you'll be given a briefing over lunch at Casa Opuntia Hotel. We will begin our journey at the Interpretation Center to learn about the Galapagos' unique wildlife, geology, history, and social dynamics before hiking to Tijeretas along lava rock trails.

Along the way, our naturalist guide will explain all about the Galapagos cotton, palo santo, acacia, and cacti you encounter. You will also spot blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, pelicans, herons, gulls, warblers, mockingbirds, and



finches amongst the vegetation and sea cliffs. In addition to unique species, the hike provides marvelous views of the rugged coastline and the tranquil town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno.

On the way back, we stop for a refreshing snorkel or swim at post-card worthy Carola Beach. Here, you will find sea turtles, sea lions, and marine iguanas. After a gorgeous sunset and dinner, we explore the friendly and laid-back town. We recommend you take a 5-minute walk from the hotel down the boardwalk to view the immense colony of endemic Galapagos sea lions. Overnight at Casa Opuntia Hotel.

Day 2 – SEA KAYAK AND SNORKEL THE COAST, ISLA LOBOS AND KICKER ROCK (B,L,D)

The morning is spent kayaking coastal bays and coves full of wildlife. You will see blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, sea lions, and sea turtles. Upon reaching Playa Ochoa, we head away from the coast and on to nearby Isla Lobos. Here we will snorkel with marine iguanas, sea lions, and countless reef fish. This site consistently proves to be the best sea lion encounter in the Galapagos.

We then head out towards the open sea to reach Kicker Rock, two breathtaking rock massifs (tuff cones) that jut out from the ocean. Above the waters, thousands of sea birds cling to its walls, and below millions of fish call the rock home. In the channel between the two rock walls, you will find some of the best snorkeling in the islands. You will likely see spotted eagle rays, golden rays, Galapagos sharks, starfish, clams, and fish of every shape, size, and color. If you are lucky, you may even see hammerhead sharks! After a full day exploring the seas, head back to Casa Opuntia for a gourmet dinner and a well-earned rest.

Day 3 MOUNTAIN BIKE THE COASTLINE / EXPLORE TINTORERAS ISLETS (B,L,D)

After breakfast, we take a short plane ride over to Isabela Island. This is the largest island in the Galapagos and is still being formed by 6 shield volcanoes. Hence, Isabela is one of the most volcanically active spots on the planet.

This morning, we embark on the most scenically-varied bike ride in the Galapagos. Along our ride, we will visit El Muro de las Lagrimas (Wall of Tears). When Isabela was used as a penal colony, prisoners constructed a towering wall of lava rocks for no other purpose than to keep them distracted from the madness of isolation. We continue along white sand beaches, mangroves, brackish lagoons, and a lava tube. The area is filled with giant tortoises and birdlife including flamingos.

After lunch, we explore Tintoreras, a set of small islets filled with hidden coves and beaches. Here, we will find the endemic Galapagos penguin as well as reef sharks, sea turtles, and sea lions. At the end of the day, retire to the gorgeous Hotel Iguana Crossing. Relax in its infinity pool, hot tub, or neighbouring white sand beach. After a gourmet dinner, feel free to take a stroll down the seemingly endless beach or down the sand streets of this idyllic beach town. Overnight Hotel Iguana Crossing

Day 4 VOLCANO HIKING IN ISABELA'S HIGHLANDS (B,L,D)

This morning, we drive up to the highlands until the road ends. Here, we do our daypacks and hike into a world of recent geological history. On the hike up, admire the incredible views of the surrounding volcanoes and sea. However, when you arrive at the rim of Volcan Sierra Negra, your jaw will drop. This is the second largest active caldera on the planet. You will walk along the rim of this enormous 30 square mile crater, and if feeling energetic, continue your hike into the caldera of Volcan Chico. Volcan Chico is an otherworldly landscape with endless hues of oranges, reds, blacks, and yellows. Here, you can explore puffing fumaroles and spectacular lava formations. Spend your last afternoon in this lazy beach town relaxing on its stunning beaches and soaking up the island-life atmosphere.

Overnight Hotel Iguana Crossing

Day 5 TORTOISES, PIRATES, LAVA TUNNELS, AND VOLCANIC SINKHOLES (B,L,D)

After breakfast, we take a speedboat to Santa Cruz Island. Along the way we may see whales and dolphins. Upon arrival, we head to El Chato in the Santa Cruz highlands to find the giant tortoise in its natural habitat. It is truly an honor to hike amongst these fascinating giants, who can live to be over 175 years old. You will also see pintail ducks, finches, frigate birds, egrets, and hopefully the vermilion flycatcher - a red jewel of a bird.

We will then explore some incredible lava tunnels in which pirates frequented and perhaps hid Inca gold. We then carry on to Los Gemelos, two deep volcanic sinkholes at the top of the island. We will hike through a forest of endemic



scalesia trees, where we will be on the lookout for the short-eared owl. The trees are covered with ferns and epiphytes and exude an almost eerie feel.

In the late afternoon, we retire to the Angermeyer Waterfront Inn. Expect fine pampering at this first-class guesthouse privately nestled on the outskirts of town. The beautiful waterfront property offers magnificent views of the bay, coastline, and town.

Overnight Angermeyer Waterfront Inn

Day 6 KAYAK IN LAVA WALL CHANNELS / HIKE TO TORTUGA BAY (B,L,D)

This morning, we take to sea kayaks again to explore a different landscape, Punta Estrada and Divine Bay. We paddle through serene turquoise waters that meander through towering lava channel walls. Below the clear waters, you should be able to see rays and white-tipped reef sharks. You can also paddle right up to the fearless blue-footed boobies, lava gulls, herons, sally light-footed crabs, and marine iguanas perched along the cliffs.

After lunch, we take a 40 minute hike to Tortuga Bay through a unique dry forest. Along the hike, you will find many birds and interesting plants. When you reach the beach, you will hardly believe your eyes, as this is one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galapagos. Take time to relax on its fine sands or in its turquoise waters. Return to Puerto Ayora to enjoy your last evening on the Galapagos.

Day 7 CHARLES DARWIN RESEARCH STATION / RETURN FLIGHT (B)

After breakfast, we visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. Here, we learn about the ongoing conservation efforts on these enchanted islands. The Research Station rears endemic Galapagos plants, land iguanas, and giant Galapagos tortoises for educational, scientific, and conservation purposes. Here, we can compare the diverse evolutionary paths of the various giant tortoise subspecies from different islands. We will also meet Lonesome George, the only remaining member of the Pinta Island subspecies.

After our visit, we transfer to Baltra Island for our return flight to the mainland. End of expedition

This expedition is subject to change due to weather or national park policies

Expedition Grade

Moderate

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations in the premium Pountia Lodges (twin/double share basis)
- Meals (B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, S = Snacks/light lunch; D= Dinner) as specified on the itinerary
- Adventure & Safety Equipment
- Professional bilingual Galapagos naturalist guide
- Professional English speaking adventure guide
- All sea, land and inter-island air transportation

EXCLUSIONS

- Flights to and from Galapagos;
- Entrance fee to Galapagos National Park USD 100 p/p (subject to change);
- Galapagos transit card USD 10 p/p (subject to change);
- tips;
- hotel & restaurant
- beverages;
- personal expenses.



Additional Information

BOAT TRAVEL TIME 2 - 3 hrs

SMALL AIRCRAFT FLIGHT TIME 50 min

PADDLE, HIKING, OR ACTIVITY DURATION 2 to 4 hours per activity

SEASON All year

ALTITUDE 0 - 3,700 ft (1,124 meters) above sea level

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES December to May: 80°F to 90°F / 25°C to 30°C. June to September: 60°F to 70°F / 15°C to 20°C. October to December: 70°F to 80°F / 15°C to 25°C.

WATER TEMPERATURE The waters of the Galapagos Islands are a unique mixture of warm and cold water, ranging between 65°F and 85°F.

SUGGESTED ITEMS TO PACK Hiking shoes, water sandals, rain jacket, flashlight, water bottle, non-cotton trekking gear, sun block, hat, and mosquito repellent.

Expedition Schedule

We have the following scheduled trips, if these don't fit in with your dates, let us know and we will try and accommodate you :

8th – 14th September 2011

15th – 21st October 2011

9th – 15th November 2011

15th – 21st December 2011

15th – 21st January 2012

4th – 12th February 2012

3rd – 9th March 2012

10th – 16th April 2012

20th – 26th April 2012

9th – 15th June 2012

7th – 27th July 2012

13th - 19th August 2012

28th Aug – 3rd Sept 2012

11th – 17th September 2012

12th - 18th October 2012

12th – 18th November 2012

12 – 18th December 2012