

Active Galapagos - Trip Notes



General Trip info

Map

Trip Code: IGGTF

Trip Length: 10

Trip starts in: Quito

Trip ends in: Quito

Meals: 8 Breakfasts included

4 Lunches included

1 Dinners included

Accommodation: Hotel (9 nights)

Transport: Plane,Speed Boat,Private
Vehicle,Taxi,Public bus

Daily Itinerary

Day 1

Quito

Bienvenidos! Welcome to Quito, Ecuador. Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 2 pm. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask reception where it will take place. If you can't arrange a flight that will arrive in time, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please ensure you have all these details to provide to your leader. Quito is one of the most attractive cities in South America, sitting at an altitude of 2,850 metres with a view of Volcan Pichincha on the horizon. On day 1 there is a city tour to show the beautiful Colonial style buildings and help you explore the nooks and crannies of cosy Old Town. We'll be back in Quito at the end of the trip, giving you a chance to further experience the city. Notes: Due to the high altitude of many of places we visit, the air is thinner and some people can suffer altitude sickness, regardless of age, gender or fitness. Please see the 'Is This Trip Right For You?' and 'Health' sections in the trip notes for more information. Optional Activities in Quito: Quito is an incredible city with loads to see and do. This trip doesn't include much time in Quito, so a few extra days to explore it is recommended. Great activities are available through our local office – just email quitodaytours@peakdmc.com before departing or, once you're in Quito, give our office a call +593 9 94014877 and they will happily assist you. Urban Adventures: If you are interested in any of the Urban Adventures listed you will need to contact Urban Adventures directly. For more information on the activities mentioned below and contact information for Quito please visit: <http://www.urbanadventures.com/contact-us> Otavalo Market, a full day tour of the biggest Indian market in South America in the northern town of Otavalo, full of local handicrafts to take home for your friends, and the Cotacachi leather market. Cotopaxi Volcano, for something more active, head out to the 5,897 metre high Cotopaxi Volcano – drop by the National Park museum, then hike for around 2 hours and visit the picturesque Limpiopungo Lagoon. Quilotoa Lagoon, if you're into lagoons, maybe take a full day trip to the stunning Quilotoa Lagoon. Early in the morning, drive 3 hours south through the local communities and Andes views of the Avenue of Volcanoes. Then hike (2 hours return) to the beautiful Quilotoa volcano crater lagoon, before returning to Quito. Something more chill is a full day at the Papallacta Hot Springs – take a scenic drive, reaching heights of 4,150 metres, and then relax in springs with views to the towering Antisana Volcano. Cloud Forest, maybe get in touch with the region's incredible nature with a shared services trip to the Cloud Forest – take a guided hike through a reserve on the edge of the Choco Bio-region, one of the most bio-diverse places in the world, and get acquainted with the exuberant vegetation, bird life, and the fascinating adaptations to life in this special environment. Papallacta-Something more chill is a full day at the Papallacta Hot Springs – take a scenic drive, reaching heights of 4,150 metres, and then relax in springs with views to the towering Antisana Volcano. Please note, the prices listed below include entrance fees, however these are paid separately by you during the tour. Some tours require a minimum of 2 passengers to operate. (Please note prices listed are subject to change)

Day 2

Isla San Cristobal, Galapagos

Welcome to San Cristobal, Galapagos Islands. As you start this trip on the Galapagos Islands and join other travellers arriving from Quito, you have two options for joining the group. SUNDAY DEPARTURES: You can meet the others at San Cristobal Airport at 11.30 am: The guide will be waiting in the arrivals hall with an Intrepid sign for the arriving passengers from Quito. FRIDAY & WEDNESDAY DEPARTURES: You can meet the others at San Cristobal Airport at 12.30pm: The guide will be waiting in the arrivals hall with an Intrepid sign for the arriving passengers from Quito. Alternatively you can meet them at the hotel (Casa de Nelly) when they arrive at approximately one hour after the airport meeting time. Check in time for the hotel is 12 pm. If you're making your own way to the hotel, we recommend taking a short cab ride which will cost approximately US\$2. Please advise us where you plan to join this trip no later than 15 days prior to departure. If you are going to be late for either of these meeting times, please contact the local emergency number located in the 'Essential Trip Information' After joining up with the group, travel to La Loberia where you'll put on snorkelling gear for the first time and go for a swim with sea lions, and maybe even some sea turtles. Continue back to town. Tonight you may wish to head out with the group and enjoy some of the fresh seafood available.

Day 3

Isla San Cristobal, Galapagos

Today begins with a short boat ride to Leon Dormido (approx 45 mins) or Isla Lobos, observing along the way the abundant marine life that Galapagos is renowned for. On the way we might be able to spot nesting frigates and blue-footed boobies and/or might swim/snorkel with playful young sea lions. Here we can snorkel keeping an eye out below for sea turtles, manta rays and maybe the odd harmless Galapagos shark, to name a few. This snorkeling is in open sea, on occasion the currents can be quite strong so it's particularly important you are a confident swimmer for this activity. If you have any concerns, please ensure you speak with your leader. Included lunch today is a packed box lunch on board the boat! Unfortunately it is against National Park rules to eat on the beach. Later head we will head to the interpretation Center. Learn about the history of the 'Enchanted Islands' and the conservation projects which seek to preserve the unique Galapagos wildlife. Next, make our way to Frigatebird Hill (Cerro Tijeretas), which is located two kilometres from the Interpretation Center, southwest of Isla San Cristobal. It's quite a climb to the top, but well worth the amazing views of the bay. From here you can also see Kicker Rock, an eroded volcanic formation protruding from the sea which has become an emblem of the island. We'll return to town in the late afternoon/early evening.

Day 4

Isla Floreana/Isla Isabela, Galapagos

Take an early morning boat ride today towards Floreana Island, which should take about 2.5 hours. Along the way keep your eyes peeled for wildlife such as dolphins and whales. On arrival to the island, snorkel in the clear blue waters and then break for lunch. Afterwards venture to a black sand beach which belongs to the Witmers, decedents of some of the first settlers on the Galapagos. The town here, Puerto Velasco Ibarra, has about 150 residents and an intriguing history involving deaths, disappearances and murders. Later in the afternoon, wave goodbye to Floreana and continue to Isabela Island (approximately 2 hours) From Isabela Port it's a short transfer to the hotel where we will spend the night (approximately 15 minutes)

Day 5

Isla Isabela, Galapagos

Start your second day on Isla Isabela with a short bus ride (approximately 15 minutes) to the Giant Tortoise Breeding Center where you'll observe giant tortoises in all stages of development. The centre has almost a thousand giant tortoises training for life on their own. Afterwards we make our way to a brackish lagoon where we will be able to observe flamingos. In the afternoon after an informative visit, board a small pangas for Tintoreras or Shark Alley. On our way we will go along the coast line in the hope to spot blue-footed boobies and the famous Galapagos penguin who is home on the western part of the archipelago. On arrival, hop off for a short walk on this isolated islet and popular iguana nesting site that's home to hundreds of marine iguanas. Snorkel in a calm inlet with colourful fish and winding underground lava tubes. This area is frequented by green sea turtles that like to rest on the calm, sandy bottom. Late afternoon, return to town in search of your own sandy resting spot and enjoy your first Isabela sunset, arguably the most beautiful of all the islands.

Day 6

Isla Isabela, Galapagos

Start your last day on Isla Isabela by heading towards the Sierra Negra Volcano (approximately 45 minutes by bus), one of the most active volcanoes in the Galapagos and the second largest crater in the world. Weather permitting, take a challenging hike of around 17 kilometres up the rocky mountain, which takes between five and six hours. After the hike, make your way back to town in the late afternoon for some free time to curl up with a book or venture down to the water for a relaxing swim before dinner. Unfortunately, recycling isn't available on Isabela, so please take your plastic rubbish with you.

Day 7

Isla Isabela / Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos

Today you will start the day with a kayak around Isabela before transferring by private speedboat to Isla Santa Cruz. Once you arrive on Santa Cruz you will head to a restaurant that offers a typical Ecuadorian lunch package, simply referred to as 'Menu'. Usually this consists of a fresh juice, basic entrée (usually a soup) as well as a main meal. These lunch deals are very popular throughout Ecuador so it's a great way to eat like a local. In the afternoon have free time to further explore the town or go on an optional excursion to the Charles Darwin Research Centre.

Day 8

Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos

In the afternoon visit the higher part of the islands to observe the giant tortoise roaming in its natural habitat. Afterwards visit a locally owned Sugar cane farm. Here the farmers will show us the process in which sugar cane is processed and turned into alcohol. Along the way, keep an eye out for eagle rays, sea turtles and blue-footed boobies. Later head back to Puerto Ayora. Tonight, enjoy an included group dinner.

Day 9

Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos/ Quito

We say goodbye to the Galapagos today and take a flight back to Quito (Please note the flight will make a stop in Guayaquil) You'll arrive back to Quito later afternoon. Perhaps head out for a final group dinner.

Day 10

Quito

This morning your adventure comes to an end in Quito. As there are no activities planned for the final day, you can depart the accommodation at any time. Because there is little time spent in Quito on this trip, we recommend staying a few extra days to see more of Ecuador. If you choose to stay on, we'd be happy to assist you with booking accommodation. Ecuador has some of the most beautiful churches in the Americas, including the lavish La Compania de Jesus, which is decorated with seven tonnes of gold. Not far from the capital, there are volcanoes, hot springs and Incan ruins to explore. Consider doing one of our one-day sightseeing tours of Quito, which can include the Old Town, markets and the city's culinary delights (see urbanadventures.com).

Additional Information

Included Activities

Isla San Cristobal- Snorkeling in La Loberia (1.5 Hours)
San Cristobal - Excursion to Leon Dormido or Lobos Islands
Isla San Cristobal - Interpretation Center (45 minutes)
Isla San Cristobal - Cerro Tijeretas View Point (1 Hour)
Floreana - Snorkeling
Isla Isabela -Tintoreras or Shark Alley (2.5 Hours)
Isla Isabela - Flamingo lagoon visit (30 Minutes)
Isla Isabela - Giant Tortoise Breeding Centre (1 Hour)
Isla Isabela- Sierra Negra Volcano Hike (5-6 Hours)
Kayaking - Isla Isabela
Santa Cruz Highlands Visit (3 Hours)
Isla Santa Cruz - Tortuga Bay walk

Optional Activities

Quilotoa - Quilotoa Lagoon (Full day)
Quito - Papallacta Hot Springs (Full day)
Cotopaxi - National Park Hiking Tour
Urban Adventures: Quito Market Discovery
Urban Adventures: Quito Sweet & Culinary Experience
Urban Adventures: Condors and Culture in Otavalo
Urban Adventures: Quito Legends and Culture Tour
Wetsuit (shortsleeve) hire for 5 days

Notes for Ecuador

Ecuador has everything an outdoor enthusiast could wish for - crisp blue skies, cloud-covered peaks, thick green rainforests with an abundance of wildlife, and some of South America's most fascinating colonial cities. Adventure through the Amazon jungle enjoying the sounds of the birds and crickets, and enjoy some exhilarating rafting and trekking near the town of Baños. Explore the stunning architecture and museums of the mountainous city of Quito and discover its delightful Old Town. Trek through the beautiful rolling hills and canyons of Chugchilan. Meet local villagers and barter in the markets of Otavalo, and explore the atmospheric cobbled streets of colonial Cuenca.

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries will not need a visa to visit Ecuador as a tourist for up to 90 days. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it in advance. Only a very small number of nationalities will require a visa. A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Important Notes

The routes, activities and places visited as described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, and information about kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

These notes are updated regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

The planned route and itinerary is the intention, but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It occasionally happens that there must be a change to our planned itinerary - this may be for a variety of reasons, such as climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions. By their very nature, adventure travel needs to be approached flexibly and some regions can be unpredictable. Some Imaginative Traveller journeys go through off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure and less stringent safety standards than we are used to at home.

Our Groups

Our groups are made up of people from around the world and are usually an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that adventure travel should be open to as many people as possible and so although some trips have a minimum age limit, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you. One of the highlights of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

The maximum group size depends on the operator and the style of transport, but will usually be a maximum of 15-16 or up to 21-22 on our overland journeys.

Accommodation

Imaginative Traveller trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether staying in hotels, hostels, homestays or campsites, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip and those that book together will usually be able to share accommodation.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available in the region you are travelling; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be twin-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share.

Many trips will feature a stay in a local homestay or community tourism initiative, allowing us to experience a slice of local life in the areas we travel through. On our overland trips, we will sometimes camp in campsites ranging from rather basic or even wild camps to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your leader at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible.

Health

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip

please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with the style of travel on that trip. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Imaginative Traveller or our partner operators reserve the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. We also advise you to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

Altitude

Imaginative Traveller offers some trips that travel to above 2,800m altitude above sea level - it is imperative at high altitudes to drink lots of water to stay hydrated, be careful not to get burned by the sun, and try not to exert yourself too much. Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor.

Yellow Fever

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate - please see each country's note above for details. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases

Some areas we travel to have the risk of contracting malaria. If this applies to your trip, please get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your GP / travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements and to find the right option for you. If advised by your doctor to take a course of anti-malarial tablets, please complete the course as instructed as malaria can often manifest itself upon your return home if the course is not followed.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever, Chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and becoming a bigger problem around the world. Bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus.

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists, can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, use a mosquito net where possible and use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing.

Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel.

We also recommend you check out any specific health advice for the country you are travelling to either via your GP or the following websites: www.nathnac.org or www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive,

up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

Activities

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip. This can be arranged by Imaginative Traveller through our website or by contacting our team of travel consultants.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should have a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £2,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000. Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones etc. Please note that Imaginative Traveller and our partner operators are not responsible for your personal effects and are not insured for their loss.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should cover you for any activities that you may wish to participate in, such as white-water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc. and the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries if applicable (e.g. they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or trekking in the Andes). If you are travelling to high altitude (such as embarking on a trek to the summit of Kilimanjaro), please make sure that this is also covered.

Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not suitable with adventure travel to remote areas. Many credit card medical insurance policies are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

Please also check the age limits on any policy you wish to take out and make sure that you thoroughly inform the insurance company of any pre-existing conditions.

Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or emergency passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Transfers

At Imaginative Traveller we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? We can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

Responsible Tourism

Imaginative Traveller is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We recognise that we are guests of local communities and strive to make them benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Imaginative Traveller's responsible tourism policy on our website.

Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

customer-relations@imtrav.net

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.