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Galapagos Expedition Cruise Guide

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Located in the Pacific Ocean 1,000 km off the coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands are a volcanic archipelago known for their iconic wildlife and landscapes.



It was these very islands that inspired Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Giving you an insight into prehistoric landscapes, this is one of the most fascinating places on Earth. Owing to its unique ecosystem, it was listed as the first ever UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978.



Flora and Fauna

Wildlife lovers will be in their element on a Galapagos expedition cruise as the archipelago is home to the most spectacular creatures, many of which are endemic to the islands. An array of animals roam among the rugged peaks, and the biodiversity is simply mind-blowing. You'll come face to face with almost mythical looking creatures such as land iguanas, giant tortoises and blue-footed boobies. Huge sea lions loll along the shoreline and seem almost nonchalant to the islands' human visitors. Although Fernandina is home to 90% of Galapagos penguins, you can also see them tottering across the rocks on Bartolomé, Santiago, northern Santa Cruz and Floreana.

Galapagos Adventures



Cruises to the Galapagos Islands are among the most exciting expeditions. Not only will you discover the wonderful wildlife and intriguing history of the national park, you'll have the opportunity to embark on thrilling adventures and excursions

Many of the expedition ships have a number of Zodiacs that take you to the most remote and harder to reach places that the ships themselves can't reach. They steer you right into the heart of the action to get up close and personal to the islands' wildlife.

Other excursions include kayaking, hiking along lava tunnels and snorkelling. We highly recommend snorkelling as you will quite literally come face to face with kaleidoscopic fish, marine iguanas, seals and penguins.

The Best Time to Cruise the Galapagos Islands

Although Galapagos is a year-round destination, each season has its own advantages. Between June and November, the weather is cooler and drier, while January to May is the hot season. It's during the hot season that you're more likely to see land wildlife such as iguanas and you may even be lucky enough to watch the giant tortoise eggs hatching. However, the ocean comes alive with marine activity during the dry season.



Other Places to Visit

If you want to pack the most into your Galapagos expedition cruise, you'll find many itineraries that offer pre and post cruise extensions. We've selected some of our favourite must-visit places...

Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley

Prior to visiting Machu Picchu, you'll explore the fortress of Ollantaytambo, a former complex of temples, baths and military barracks. From the local train station, the Hiram Bingham train takes you on a scenic rail journey to the Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu, where you'll delve into the ancient past of this sacred Citadel. It's believed

that a small community of priests, servants and craftsmen once lived at the archaeological site. You can also take a city tour of Cusco to discover Coricancha, also known as the Temple of the Sun, one of the most sacred temples of the Inca empire.



Quito

Quito's heady concoction of bustling markets and old and new buildings rub shoulders with the immensely beautiful peaks of the Andes. Ecuador's extraordinary capital city has plenty to brag about with its UNESCO status old town and architectural wonders. During your time here, make sure you take in the most impressive sights such as the Middle of the World Monument, the Plaza Grande and the Basilica of the National Vow.

The Andean Region and the Devil's Nose

Take an unforgettable journey to Cotopaxi, the world's greatest active stratovolcano. En route you'll pass through beautiful Andean landscapes of rugged peaks and pretty villages. Enjoy one of the most picturesque and exhilarating train rides to the Devil's Nose as you venture along the mountain pass and through the Palmira Desert.



Recommended Ships



Silversea Expeditions

Silversea's Silver Origin is one of the few vessels designed solely for exploring the Galapagos Islands. Taking every aspect of a Galapagos expedition cruise into consideration, it not only brings you closer to the action, it also provides an unparalleled onboard experience.

Basecamp is a unique knowledge lounge filled with artefacts and information that aim to give you a much greater understanding of the islands that you visit. From here you can step onto the ship's marina to access the Zodiacs. Certified Galapagos guides lead the expeditions and impart their exceptional knowledge.

Sustainable travel has also impacted the vessel's design with its high-efficiency features that minimise its footprint. Floor-to-ceiling windows, private verandas and The Observation and Stargazing Platform provide guests with unobstructed views throughout the journey, giving you a real sense of the archipelago's awe and majesty.

Celebrity Xploration

The Celebrity Xploration Galapagos fleet includes three world-class vessels, each with their own distinctive design. Celebrity Flora was one of the first ships custom built for exploring Galapagos.



This is the latest addition to the fleet and is designed to make the destination the focal point of your expedition. Certified naturalists accompany your journey to teach you everything there is to know about the islands. This 100-passenger mega yacht uses state-of-the-art technology to allow the vessel to navigate to far-flung shores for an in-depth experience among the national park.

Celebrity Xpedition carries just 48 passengers to bring you one of the most intimate Galapagos cruise experiences. The ship has undergone recent upgrades so that it remains one of the most coveted vessels to sail the islands. As well as boasting a sunrise deck with hot tub, you can go on board the Panorama deck to immerse yourself in the Ecuadorian surroundings.

Celebrity Xploration is even more intimate than Celebrity Xpedition. This private catamaran accommodates just 16 guests and introduces you to remote places that are off the beaten path. Imagine exploring the Galapagos Islands with a small group of friends or family on an adventure of a lifetime.





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