

Tortuga Galapagos Islands



Meet giant tortoises and iguanas • Swim with manta rays at Kicker Rock • Sea kayak stunning bays
Snorkel with reef sharks at Floreana and Santa Fe Islands • Cycle down San Cristobal Island • Explore Sierra Negra volcano and Santa Cruz Island on foot • Explore lava tunnels • Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station

10 days: Quito–Quito

Fare: US\$3399

Season: Year Round

The Tortuga is a fantastic way to discover the Galapagos Islands. In typical ACTIVE style, you'll snorkel, dive, hike and cycle the Galapagos, cruising between the multitude of stunning islands in our boat 'Christine'. We start with a short flight to San Cristobal Island to snorkel with seals and tame reef sharks in crystal clear water, snorkel through beautiful ocean channels and hike up an island volcano with the second largest crater in the world. We get up close to some of the most intriguing and fearless wildlife on the planet, with visits to tortoise breeding grounds and sea lion colonies, and share our beach time with friendly iguanas. We explore amazing lava tunnels, cycle to the local townships and visit the fascinating Charles Darwin Research Station.

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

WEDNESDAY

Arrive Quito

Your trip begins in Ecuador's capital city, Quito. If you're flying in on day one of the trip, someone from ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA will meet you at the airport at 2pm and take you to your accommodation. You'll have the rest of the afternoon to explore this amazing city with its beautiful town squares, quaint cafés and colonial architecture. Quito sits in a beautiful valley surrounded by towering volcanoes just 14 miles from the Equator, giving it a mild, spring-like climate year round. In the evening you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group for a full briefing before our first dinner together.

ACCOMMODATION: Character Hotel, Quito (D)

THURSDAY

Cycle San Cristobal highlands

This morning we'll take a short flight to San Cristobal, the easternmost island of the Galapagos Islands chain and home of the provincial capital, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. After lunch we'll head to the town of La Soledad and bike down through the lush highland cloud forest that blankets the top of the island. With stunning views of the coast, we'll ride all the way to Mann Beach – one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galapagos. We'll also check out La Lobería – a nearby beach that is home to a large sea lion colony and nursery. You're not likely to see this many sea lions in one place anywhere else in the world! This evening, we'll dine on local produce and fresh fish for our first evening meal in the Galapagos Islands.

ACCOMMODATION: Casablanca Hotel, San Cristobal (B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Snorkel or dive with seals and manta rays at Kicker Rock

Today we'll take our boat out to Isla Lobos off the coast of San Cristobal, where we'll don wetsuits, snorkels and masks (and tanks for the divers – diving option add US\$160) and explore the

"This trip is awesome! Worth every minute. I was travelling alone so meeting up with a group was just right for me. I met people I really liked and even though we were from very varied backgrounds, we had so much to talk about as we travelled from place to place. I will never forget this trip and would highly recommend it to anyone!"

Lelah Ngeruka (Watson Lake, Canada)
November 2008

underwater world for a close up view of sea lions as they fish for their dinner! Isla Lobos is the main sea lion and blue-footed booby colony in the area, as well as being home to the endemic lava lizard. After a swim with the sea lions, we'll get back on our boat and head for Kicker Rock where we'll either snorkel or dive around the remains of an underwater volcano with a rock face rising 500 feet above the surface of the water (dives one and two). Your trip leader will give you a full briefing and then we'll take to the water to explore the walls of the volcano. We'll see sea lions and manta rays as they skirt the edges of Kicker Rock – they're everywhere! Later on today we can hike to Frigate Hill Lookout to see the acrobatics of the local frigate birds as they dart around the cliff tops stealing the catch from other birds. Or you can check out the interpretation centre to learn more about the history and biology of the area.

ACCOMMODATION: Casablanca Hotel, San Cristobal (B,L)

SATURDAY

Snorkel Floreana Island, visit pink flamingos

After an early breakfast, our little boat will take us away from San Cristobal Island to Champions Islet near the magnificent Floreana Island. Floreana is the sixth biggest island in the Galapagos chain and one of the least inhabited (by humans at least!). With a population of around 70 and only one phone on the whole island, this place has a pretty relaxed atmosphere. On the way, we're often visited by

friendly dolphins so keep an eye out! Here we'll be doing some more amazing snorkelling in an area that's home to eagle rays, moray eels, harmless Galapagos sharks and thousands of tropical fish species. This is one of the most amazing snorkelling excursions you're likely to do anywhere in the world, it's brilliant! From here, we'll travel to Isabela Island where we'll take a short walk to a local pink flamingo colony before relaxing at our accommodation and enjoying an evening drink on the beach.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel La Laguna, Isabela Island (B,L,D)*

SUNDAY

Hike Sierra Negra Volcano

Our hike today will take us to the summit of Sierra Negra Volcano, rising nearly a mile above the ocean. See the lowland vegetation change before your eyes as we ascend into a lunar landscape on our way to the top. It's quite a hike to the top of the volcano, but the views across the seven mile wide crater and surrounding coastline

Phil: "Beto's bar on the beach at Puerto Villamil is one of the best places in the world to chill out! Relax in a hammock and watch water lapping on the beach as the sun goes down."

are worth the climb! This is the world's second largest volcanic crater, so it's an incredible sight. As we hike, we might be lucky enough to see Galapagos hawks, short-eared owls, finches and fly-catchers that inhabit this region. When we get back from our hike, we'll head to Beto's beachside bar to toast the setting sun over the Pacific.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel La Laguna, Isabela Island (B,L,D)*

MONDAY

Giant tortoise breeding centre, coastal hike, visit sea life

This morning we'll head to a Galapagos giant tortoise breeding centre where we can meet these majestic prehistoric creatures. Then we'll hike a section of Isabela's pristine coastline to the 'Wall of Tears' – a fascinating remnant of the Galapagos Islands' convict past. On the way, we'll have the chance to see some of the Islands' most amazing wildlife up close. Marine iguanas bask in the sun at our feet, blue-footed boobies sit in pairs on the rock tops, and Sally Lightfoot crabs scurry out of our way along the beach. Later, we'll head out on a zodiac to check out the crystal-clear waters off Isabela Island, inhabited by Galapagos penguins, reef sharks and manta rays. Hopefully we'll be able to slip into the water with our snorkels and wetsuits to swim with marine turtles if they're around. We're often befriended by curious sea lions too!

ACCOMMODATION: *Local hotel, Isabela Island (B,L)*

TUESDAY

Hike Santa Cruz highlands and Tortuga Bay, visit giant tortoises

We'll depart Isabela Island early this morning bound for Santa Cruz Island, where we'll hike into the amazing cloud forest highlands. On the way to the summit of Cerro Crocker we'll have another chance to see giant tortoises in their natural environment, along with intriguing birdlife like the vermilion flycatcher. We'll take a look inside the lava tunnels scattered throughout the highlands. These tunnels were formed by petrified lava flowing underneath the

Earth's surface, carving out large cylindrical caves. Some are almost a mile long! This afternoon we'll hike to Tortuga Bay, one of the most stunning beaches in the Galapagos, where we'll have the option of trying our hand at bodyboarding or surfing, or just lounging around on incredibly fine sand. Tortuga Bay is accessible only by foot and is home to hundreds of prehistoric-looking marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies and pelicans.

ACCOMMODATION: *Puerto Ayora lodgings, Santa Cruz Island (B,L,D)*

WEDNESDAY

Visit Charles Darwin Research Station, snorkel Santa Fe Island

This morning we'll take a short walk to the Charles Darwin Research Station. Founded in 1959, this fascinating centre is dedicated to the conservation of the Galapagos and its ecosystems. The station has a team of more than two hundred scientists, research students and support staff from all over the world. We'll learn the full life cycle of the giant tortoise from the experts, walk through their enclosures, and meet the Galapagos giants face to face! Our island-hopping continues this afternoon as we make our way past Santa Fe Island for our final snorkel of the trip in Las Tijeretas, one of Charles Darwin's first stops in the Galapagos. From the surface you'll have clear views of the most beautiful tropical fish species in the world. Our trip leaders know these spots like the backs of their hands and will point out the subtleties of this amazing reef ecosystem as we observe from the surface. Later we'll return to San Cristobal Island for dinner together before leaving the islands tomorrow.

ACCOMMODATION: *Casablanca Hotel, San Cristobal (B,L,D)*

THURSDAY

Optional hike, return to Quito

You'll have the morning free to explore San Cristobal. There are beaches, a museum and short hikes in the area, and your trip leader will fill you in on the best activities around the island. Then it's a short flight back to Quito on the mainland where we'll share our final dinner together this evening.

ACCOMMODATION: *Character Hotel, Quito (B,L,D)*

FRIDAY

Quito, depart for home

Today is the last day of your trip around the Galapagos Islands with ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA. If you have a flight today, we'll be sure to get you back to the airport on time. You'll return home relaxed and refreshed from all the great activities, fine food and friendly people you will have met while travelling with us in the Galapagos. (B)

We'll see you soon!

"The best way to see, understand and contribute to the Galapagos is by going on a land-based tour. ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA is an excellent way to do this and they provide the perfect balance between land and water. One day you're up a volcano, the next you're snorkelling with sea lions!"

Gemma Dickinson (Windlesham, UK) April 2009

Specific Information – Tortuga

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: You can fly into Quito any time on the first day of your trip, but we recommend you arrive before noon. On the last day of your trip you can fly out at any time. If you want to arrive earlier or leave later, we're happy to help you out with extra hotel accommodation.

TRIP START: If you arrive on the first day of the trip, an ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA representative will meet you at the airport at 2pm and take you to your accommodation. If you're already in Quito, you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group in the lobby of the Hotel Reina Isabel at 6pm.

TRIP END: You'll wake up in Quito on the last day of your trip, so you can book a flight home departing any time that day – we'll be happy to drop you off at the airport any time before noon.

FLEXIBILITY: Galapagos National Park is a fragile wildlife refuge and as such is sometimes subject to sudden rule changes to control potential damage through tourism. We may occasionally need to make itinerary changes in response to this. Our Galapagos operator is a local specialist who knows how to keep things operating as smoothly as possible, even if conditions become challenging! Because of changing sea conditions, we may have to make small changes to our itinerary for safety reasons. For more information please see our General Information page at the back of this booklet.

DIVING IN THE GALAPAGOS: Kicker Rock is one of the most interesting dive spots in the world. Our dive guides are all highly qualified with years of dive experience. If you're a diver and would like to dive on the trip, there is an additional fee of US\$160 for two dives and a safety dive, including all the necessary gear. PLEASE NOTE: Due to fairly strong currents, the Galapagos is not a destination for novice divers. We recommend you have logged at least 10–20 dives before diving here and you must bring your PADI or SSI certification to dive.

KAYAKING IN THE GALAPAGOS: The sea conditions in the Galapagos can be pretty varied, so we haven't named a specific time for kayaking. We usually go on Wednesday, unless the conditions say otherwise. If you're keen to kayak, rest assured you will at some stage if the conditions are right.

INCLUDED: Details of what's included in your trip fare are available on the General Information page at the back of this booklet. In addition, on our *Tortuga* trip your fare includes all ground transportation (including boat transfers and domestic flights Quito–Galapagos return).

NOT INCLUDED: The Ecuadorian Government charges every person who enters the Galapagos Islands a US\$100 park entrance fee. You'll be asked to pay this when you arrive to the airport in Galapagos. INGALA, the coordinating body of Galapagos, also charges a US\$10 Transit Control Fee which is paid through the airline as you check in at Quito airport.

General Information

We've included trip-specific details in the Specific Information section at the end of each itinerary. This is also where you can find details on recommended flights for the start and the end of your trip.

ACCOMMODATION: Our trips focus on getting you outside for the best adventure activities in the most stunning parts of South America. The accommodation we choose is clean and comfortable, but it's not a tour of the fanciest hotels in South America! Some of the places we stay – such as Hotel Celaje in Costa Rica – are quite luxurious and other places – like the mountain lodges in Patagonia – are very basic, but truly spectacular.

From time to time, we might stay in places other than those specified in the itinerary - but we'll let you know before you go.

FITNESS: We've designed our trips to be challenging, fun and outdoor oriented – none of our trips are passive scenic tours – so you'll need a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself. Age and experience are not important; you don't have to be young or extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some regular exercise. Getting in a few short hikes with a day pack or a gym class before your trip is always a good idea.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need lots of outdoor experience to take our trips. Our trips allow you to make the most of South America's outdoor environment, culture and history regardless of your experience. Our trip leaders are highly trained and experienced outdoor guides and they'll look after you. Experience is not as important as having a 'can do' attitude and being willing to give things a go. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and have an impeccable safety record.

FLEXIBILITY: South America is a developing part of the world and we won't tell you that everything runs like clockwork. What we can say is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders and we know how to keep things operating smoothly, even when conditions are challenging. That's why we're here! You'll find your trip even more enjoyable if you remember to bring flexibility, an open mind and a sense of humour with you.

INCLUDED: Our trip fares are all shown in US dollars so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can join us for shorter periods of time for most trips. The fares quoted on each itinerary include taxes. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have an experienced trip leader with every trip and have a specialist local guide on many of our excursions for extra local knowledge.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire trip. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- Breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D), except on our *Tortuga* trip where some dinners are not included, and during your free days on our *Jaguar* and *Tucan* trips when most people like to check out the local restaurants on their own.
- All drinking water. (Alcohol and other drinks are not included.)
- All hiking, snorkelling, rafting, canoeing, sea kayaking, hiking, biking and jungle activities as described in the itinerary, excluding optional activities as noted. No activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip be less awesome if you choose to sit out any of the activities.
- Tips for local activity guides, drivers and boat captains are taken care of by ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA, except for Inca Trail guides and porters on our *Jaguar* trip.
- Transport including buses, boats, trains and some flights.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you. On a couple of the trips you'll have one or two meals to cover, drinks and the cost of extra activities if you choose them. In some destinations you may have to cover your departure tax when you leave the airport. You'll probably feel like tipping your guide at the end of a fabulous time too. Other than that, everything's taken care of – you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip!

ITINERARY UPDATES: We update our printed itineraries each year. Please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing (this one is valid to April 2011).

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