



Tortuga

Cycle in the highlands of San Cristobal Island • Snorkel or dive with manta rays at Kicker Rock • Snorkel with reef sharks at Floreana and Santa Fe Islands • Hike Sierra Negra Volcano and Santa Cruz Island • Charles Darwin Research Station • Galapagos Giant Tortoises

10 days: Quito - Quito
Fare: US\$2499

The Tortuga is a fantastic way to see the Galapagos Islands. In typical ACTIVE style, we'll snorkel, dive, hike and cycle 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.

Wednesday Arrive Quito

Your trip begins in Ecuador's capital city – Quito. If you arrive in the morning you'll have time to explore this amazing city with its beautiful town squares, quaint cafés and lively street performers dotting the sidewalks. With a mild spring-like climate year round, Quito sits in a beautiful valley surrounded by towering volcanoes just 14 miles from the Equator. In the evening you'll meet your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA group for a full briefing before our first dinner together.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Reina Isabel, 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. After lunch we'll take to our bikes for a ride through the lush highland cloud forest that blankets the top of San Cristobal Island. With stunning views of the coastline, we'll ride all the way down to the coast below where we'll stop at Mann Beach - one of the most beautiful white sand beaches in the Galapagos. Later, we'll stop at 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 - it's quite a show! We'll also check out La Loberia - a nearby beach littered with hundreds of sea lions. You're not likely to see this many sea lions in one place anywhere else in the world.

ACCOMMODATION: *San Cristobal accommodations, San Cristobal* (B,L,D)

Friday Snorkel or dive with seals and manta rays at Kicker Rock

Today we'll make our way to Isla Lobos, where we'll don our wetsuits, snorkels and masks (and tanks for the divers) and explore the underwater world for a close up view of the sea lions as they fish for their dinner! (safety dive – diving option add US\$160).

After a swim with the sea lions we'll be back on our boat, headed for Kicker Rock where we'll either dive or snorkel around the remains of an underwater volcano with a rock face rising 500 feet above the surface of the water (dives one and two). Our guides will give us 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!

ACCOMMODATION: *San Cristobal accommodations* (B,L)

Saturday

Snorkel Floreana Island, visit pink flamingos

Our first stop today is the magnificent Floreana Island. After an early breakfast, our comfortable boat will take us to Enderby Islet. This journey is often accompanied 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, Galapagos sharks and thousands of tropical fish species. This is one of the most amazing snorkeling excursions you're likely to do anywhere in the world.

We'll spend the night on Isabela Island after a visit to the local pink flamingos.

ACCOMMODATION: *Local hotel, Isabela Island*

(B,L,D)

Sunday

Hike Sierra Negra Volcano

A morning hike will take us to the summit of Volcano Sierra Negra, rising nearly a mile above the ocean. We'll see the lowland vegetation change before our 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 caldera and surrounding coastline are worth the climb! If you prefer you can simply enjoy the morning sun at the beach. Later we'll sit at a beach side bar to toast the setting sun over the Pacific.

ACCOMMODATION: *Local hotel*

(B,L)

Phil says: "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."

Monday

Isabela Island sea life and coastal hike

This morning we'll hike a section of the pristine coastline of Isabela Island 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 under 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 check out the crystal-clear waters off Isabela Island, inhabited by Galapagos Penguins, reef sharks and manta rays. Often we're befriended by curious sea lions!

ACCOMMODATION: *Local hotel*

(B,L,D)

Tuesday

Hike Santa Cruz highlands and Tortuga Bay, visit Giant Tortoises

We'll depart 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 have the chance to take a look inside the lava tunnels scattered throughout the highlands. The tunnels were formed by petrified lava flows that flowed 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 body boarding, swimming, or just lounging around on incredibly fine white 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 center 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 to Santa Fe Island for our final snorkel of the trip. From the surface you'll have clear views of the most beautiful tropical fish species' in the world. Our guides know these

spots like the backs of their hands and will point out the subtleties of this amazing reef eco-system as we observe from the surface. Later we'll return to San Cristobal Island for our final dinner out at the Islands.

ACCOMMODATION: *San Cristobal accommodations* (B,L,D)

Thursday **Optional hike and return to Quito**

Your guide will fill you in on hiking options around San Cristobal, before we take our flight back to Quito today, where we'll share our final dinner this evening.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Reina Isabel, 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, and 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)

Important Information

ACCOMMODATIONS: The *Tortuga* is an active adventure-oriented trip around the Galapagos Islands. As with all ACTIVE trips, we've chosen interesting, clean and comfortable accommodation throughout. Most of the places we stay are off-the-beaten-track and truly spectacular. For instance, Isabela Island isn't known for its glamorous lodgings, but it is known for its stunning beaches, abundance of wildlife, off-the-beaten-track flavour and rustic charm! We've chosen accommodations for their comfort and cleanliness – not the number of channels available on the television!

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: You can fly into Quito anytime on the first day of the trip and leave anytime on the last day. If you want to arrive earlier or leave later, we're happy to help out with accommodation bookings.

PICK-UP INFORMATION: Regardless of when you arrive, an ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA representative will meet you off your flight and take you to your accommodation. You'll meet the rest of your group at the trip briefing and dinner at 6pm on day one.

DROP OFF INFORMATION: 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.

FITNESS: You only need a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself on the *Tortuga*. You don't have to be young and extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some exercise. Age and experience are not important. We've designed our trips to be as challenging as you want them to be. It's all about having fun!

EXPERIENCE: You don't have to have any outdoor experience to do one of our trips. We offer trips that enable you to make the most of South America's awesome outdoor environment, culture and history. Our staff are highly trained and very experienced outdoor guides, and we'll look after you! You don't need any experience in snorkelling or biking on the *Tortuga*. All you need is to be energetic and in reasonable shape – and we guarantee you'll have a wonderful time. On the other hand, if you like a challenge we will certainly give you one! We can offer activities to suit both people who only do a little exercise, as well as those who have a very high level of fitness and experience in all our activities. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and we have an impeccable safety record.

DIVING IN THE GALAPAGOS: Our 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, including all the necessary safety gear. PLEASE NOTE: Due to its fairly strong currents, Galapagos is not a destination for novice divers. We recommend you have logged at least 10-20 dives before diving here. You must bring your PADI or SSI certification to dive. Kicker

Rock is one of the most interesting dive spots in the world, depending on conditions. We generally have all diving on day three, with a dive check at Isla Lobos and two dives at Kicker Rock, but reserve the right to change dive location to give you the safest and most rewarding dive experience possible.

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 reserve the right to make itinerary changes in response to this.

The Galapagos Islands are in a developing part of the world, and we can't tell you that everything runs like clockwork in South America. What we can tell you is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders, and our Galapagos operator is a local specialist who knows how to keep things operating as smoothly as possible, even when conditions are challenging! Often, because of changing sea conditions, we may have to make small changes to our itinerary for safety reasons.

If you bring flexibility and a sense of humour you'll find your trip goes even smoother!

INCLUDED: The trip fare is US\$2499. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We always have an experienced trip leader with every trip and will usually have a local guide on many of our excursions for extra local knowledge.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire trip. We can also organize pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- All your breakfasts, lunches and dinners except Tuesday on San Cristobal and Thursday on Isabela Island. Alcohol is not included.
- All snorkelling, hiking and biking as described in the itinerary, excluding optional activities, such as scuba diving. No activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip be less awesome if you chose to sit out any of the activities.
- Tips for local activity guides, drivers and boat captains are taken care of by ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA.

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 a \$10 Transit Control Fee which is paid via the airline as you check in at Quito airport. Everything else is included in your trip fare.

This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip!

We'll see you soon!

Itinerary valid through April 2008