

Tortuga Galapagos Islands



Meet giant tortoises and iguanas • Swim with manta rays at Kicker Rock • Snorkel with reef sharks at Floreana Island • Cycle down San Cristobal Island • Explore Sierra Negra volcano and Santa Cruz Island on foot • Explore lava tunnels • Hiking Floreana Island • Sea kayaking San Cristobal Island

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 hike around Floreana Island.

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

FRIDAY

Arrive Quito

Your trip begins in Ecuador's capital city, Quito. If you're flying in on day one of the trip, your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip leader 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: Sierra Madre Hotel, Quito (D)

SATURDAY

Fly to the Galapagos, 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

"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

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: San Cristobal lodging, San Cristobal (B,L,D)

SUNDAY

Snorkel with seals and manta rays at Kicker Rock, Sea kayaking San Cristobal

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 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'll sea kayak along the shoreline of San Cristobal Island – we like to see this incredible island from all angle! Later we'll 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: San Cristobal lodging, San Cristobal (B,L)

MONDAY

Snorkel and hike Floreana Island

After an early breakfast, our little boat will take us away from San Cristobal Island towards 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 120, this place has a pretty relaxed atmosphere. On the way, we're often visited by friendly dolphins so keep an eye out! Later, we'll hike into the highlands of Floreana, exploring its wide open volcanic terrain. Afterwards we'll head to our accommodation in the tiny port of Puerto Velasco Ibarra – a fantastic hideaway lodge with incredible sea views.

ACCOMMODATION: *Hotel Wittmer, Floreana Island (B,L,D)*

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."

TUESDAY

Journey to Isabela, Visit pink flamingos, coastal hike

This morning we'll make the journey east to Isabela Island, the largest of all the islands in the Galapagos archipelago. After we arrive on land, we'll visit a flock of graceful Pink Flamingos in a nearby wetland. 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.

ACCOMMODATION: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island (B,L,D)*

WEDNESDAY

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 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: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island (B,L,D)*

THURSDAY

Giant tortoise breeding centre, snorkel Concha Perla & Tintoreras

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. Later, we'll head out on a zodiac to check out the crystal-clear waters of the Tintoreras rock outcrop. Keep an eye out for manta rays, marine iguanas, dolphins, reef sharks, herons and the Galapagos

Penguin – the only penguin found close to the equator. Later, we'll don out snorkels and masks again to explore the crystal clear waters of the Concha Perla. This calm and shallow body of water is home to sea turtles, and a multitude of colourful fish species.

ACCOMMODATION: *Isabela accommodations, Isabela Island (B,L)*

FRIDAY

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 one of the islands highest peaks, 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)*

SATURDAY

Optional hike, return to Quito

You'll have the morning free to explore Santa Cruz. 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 have time to explore Quito in the afternoon. This evening we'll share our final dinner together in Ecuador.

ACCOMMODATION: *Sierra Madre Hotel, Quito (B,L,D)*

SUNDAY

Quito, depart for home

Today is the last day of your trip around Ecuador and 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 Ecuador and the Galapagos. (B)

"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

ACCOMMODATION: The Tortuga is an active, adventure-oriented trip around the Galapagos Islands, not a tour of the fanciest hotels! We stay in clean, comfortable and interesting accommodation and, unlike many other operators, we prefer to stay on the mainland rather than on live-aboard boats. This means we're closer to the local communities and have more opportunities to hike and cycle as well as snorkel and dive. Many 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 has stunning beaches, an 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 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 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. 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, an open mind and a sense of humour you'll find your trip is every adventure it's designed to be.

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 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 \$10 Transit Control Fee, which is paid through the airline as you check in at Quito airport.

For more information on accommodation, fitness and experience requirements and what's included in the trip fare, see 'General Information' overleaf

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 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 *Tapir* 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 2012).

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