
GEEO ITINERARY

University of Arkansas Galapagos Program

Day 1: Quito Arrive in Quito together with your group. You will be picked up at the airport and transferred to the hotel.

Fly to Quito as a group and be transferred together from the airport to the hotel. Located 2,850 m (9,348 ft) above sea level, the Ecuadorian capital of Quito enjoys a wonderful spring-like climate even though it is only a few miles south of the Equator. The old city is full of historic buildings. **Accommodations:** Hotel Mercure (*or similar*)

Day 2: Quito/Puerto Ayora Fly to the Galápagos Islands, starting with Isla Santa Cruz.

We begin our day with an early morning transfer to the airport in Quito and a flight to Santa Cruz Island in the Galápagos, where we meet our local guide and check into the hotel in the town of Puerto Ayora. We will visit the highlands of Santa Cruz and see the Galápagos giant tortoise in its natural surroundings, and then explore the area and its incredible wildlife. From this elevation, the panoramic views of the other islands are stunning. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by private vehicle and plane

Accommodations: Hotel Coloma (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 3: Puerto Ayora Walk from Puerto Ayora to Tortuga Bay for a kayak excursion, with time for snorkeling and swimming. In the afternoon, visit the Fausto Llerena Breeding Center.

Walk from Puerto Ayora along a 2.5 km raised causeway to the stunning white sand beach of Tortuga Bay for snorkeling and kayaking. Dive in and see schools of yellowtail surgeonfish, king angelfish, and parrotfish swimming in the gentle waves. Spot turtles, friendly sea lion pups, and small, docile, whitetip reef sharks. While kayaking, keep an eye out for nearby pelicans, blue-footed boobies, and other seabirds. After lunch, we will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, a science organization initiated in 1964, which works to preserve the Galápagos' ecosystem through the conservation efforts of scientists, researchers, and volunteers. While the offices themselves are not open to visitors, the research station provides a study location for international scientists and environmental education for the local community. We will observe many species of tortoises at the station's Fausto Llerena Breeding Center. Brought back from the brink of extinction, see the famous Galápagos tortoise up close - a corral houses adult tortoises, and a nursery cares for the young until around age three when their shells have hardened. **Accommodations:** Hotel Coloma (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 4: Puerto Ayora/Floreana Island Enjoy a free morning in Santa Cruz, then take a speedboat to nearby Floreana Island, where you can swim or snorkel at Black Beach.

After a free morning, depart Santa Cruz and head to Floreana Island. Keep an eye out for dolphins and the magnificent albatross along the way. Please note: Seas can be rough during this voyage, so please bring sea sickness medication to use as necessary. The history of Floreana Island (also called "Charles") has gradually evolved to reach near mythic proportions. Many of its residents have been living there for the past three generations since the islands were first colonized. Its 150 residents have tried to benefit from the tourism boom, but since most tourism is marine-based and the boats don't stop in the village, they have struggled to capitalize on any opportunities. Our partner tour operator, G Adventures, is investing in community training and infrastructure to develop the first ecological, community tourism program in the Galápagos Islands that sees both the island's small entrepreneurs and its unique wildlife as the primary beneficiaries of this project. To further benefit the community on Floreana Island, G Adventures has provided training to residents in all aspects of tourism, including food preparation and service. The community will provide our meals while we stay on this small island. The meals are rotated

between different community members to spread the proceeds among the residents. While eating at the community restaurants, you will be contributing to the self-sufficiency of the first community tourism operator in the Galápagos. You'll have time this afternoon free to go swimming or snorkeling at the black sand beaches of Floreana. **Approximate travel time:** 2 hrs by speed boat **Accommodations:** Floreana Community Guesthouse **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 5: Floreana Island Walk to Loberia for snorkeling or swimming. Visit the highlands of Floreana and enjoy guided educational walks.

Today, we start by walking along a black sand beach to Loberia, where we enjoy snorkeling at the beach and get up close to the diverse wildlife in the waters around the Galápagos. We then head up to the seldom-visited highlands of Floreana, where we will hear about the pirates, whalers, seal hunters, and buccaneers who once lived in this isolated and unique landscape. We will also learn about the birds, plants, and animals found on this small island. **Accommodations:** Floreana Community Guesthouse **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

Day 6: Floreana Island/Isabela Island Travel to Isabela Island. Hike up Sierra Negra Volcano, walk around its rim, and enjoy a downhill bike excursion.

We will depart Floreana Island today by speed boat to Isabela Island, where we will check into our hotel. Please note: Seas can be rough during this voyage, so please bring sea sickness medication to use as necessary. Shaped like a seahorse, Isabela is the largest island in the Galápagos archipelago, though it is extremely narrow. It has six volcanoes: Alcedo, Cerro Azul, Darwin, Ecuador, Sierra Negra, and Wolf. All of these volcanoes, except Ecuador, are still active. In the afternoon, we will lace up our hiking boots and explore the Sierra Negra Volcano. As we reach the summit, we will circle the rim of the volcano, looking down into the largest basaltic caldera in the Galápagos. We will see smoking fumaroles and the "sulfur volcano" (large amounts of sulfur deposited around the fumaroles) along the way. The volcano last erupted in June 2018, the most recent eruption in the islands. This hike can be muddy and difficult, so if you aren't in good shape, ask the tour leader whether they think you should go on the hike. After the hike, we will hop on bicycles and travel downhill for about 7.5 miles as a group. This ride will be entirely downhill along a semi-paved road, with beautiful views of the ocean and surrounding countryside. Please note that it is not a physically-demanding ride. **Approximate travel time:** 2-2.5 hrs by speed boat **Accommodations:** Hotel Iguana (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 7: Isabela Island Have free time in the morning, and then enjoy a kayak and snorkel excursion near Tintoreras.

This morning, you can spend your free time as you wish. In the afternoon, we will visit Tintoreras to kayak, snorkel, and observe the whitetip reef sharks found swimming in the channels between the rocks. Get a close-up view of pelicans, frigatebirds, and diving blue-footed boobies. Watch for manta rays and rare Galápagos penguins, of which only about 800 pairs remain. **Accommodations:** Hotel Iguana (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 8: Isabela Island/Puerto Ayora Stop by the Giant Tortoise Breeding Centre before traveling back to the island of Santa Cruz. Enjoy a free afternoon and evening in Santa Cruz.

This morning, we will walk through the town's wetlands to visit the Giant Tortoise Breeding Center. When the giant tortoise was headed toward extinction in the late 1950s, this program was established to protect these magnificent creatures. Around noon, we will travel by boat to Santa Cruz Island and return to Puerto Ayora. Please note: Seas can be rough during today's voyage, so please bring sea sickness medication to use as necessary. After a late hotel check-in, enjoy free time to explore this bustling little town and sample some of the local restaurants and bars, or do some souvenir shopping. Head to the lively fish market where sea lions, pelicans, and other birds drop by to try to sneak some of the daily catch. **Approximate travel time:** 2-3 hrs by speed boat **Accommodations:** Hotel Coloma (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 9: Puerto Ayora/Quito Fly to Quito. Enjoy a free evening.

This morning, we will drive to the ferry terminal on Santa Cruz Island before taking a short ferry to Baltra. After flying back to Quito, we will transfer to the hotel and have free time to relax in Quito.

Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by plane **Accommodations:** Hotel Mercure (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 10: Quito Travel to the Otavalo Market and then enjoy lunch at a Hacienda Pinsaqi. Return to Quito.

We will have a full-day excursion today, beginning around 7:30 a.m., to Otavalo Market. Surrounded by the Imbabura, Cotacachi, and Mojanda volcanoes, the vibrant and beautiful city of Otavalo is home to a large indigenous population and is known for its handicrafts. We will stop in Cayambe along the way to visit the market there and try local bizcochos cookies. We will spend some time in Otavalo's market before heading to the Peguche waterfalls. We'll also enjoy an included lunch at Hacienda Pinsaqi before returning to Quito for the evening. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle

Accommodations: Hotel Mercure (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 11: Quito Go on a tour of Quito and visit the Equator Line. Later, transfer to the airport for our return flight.

Today, we will go on a city tour of Quito, beginning around 8:00 a.m. and ending around 4:00 p.m. We will visit the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with stops at the Basilica del Voto Nacional, La Compañía Church, San Francisco Square, Plaza Grande, and the Panecillo, a towering statue of the Virgin of Quito looking out over the city. We will then drive a few miles north of Quito to the Middle of the World at latitude 0°, the Equator. Stand with one foot in each hemisphere. Later in the day, our group will be transferred to the airport for the return flight home. **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 12: Travel Day Arrive back in the U.S. after an overnight flight from Quito.

Your journey will end today after an overnight flight from Ecuador.

***Itinerary Disclaimer:** While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.