



SANCTUARY
RETREATS

CRUISES • GALAPAGOS ISLANDS • M.V. Eclipse





THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



CHARLES DARWIN'S INSPIRATION

Perhaps our first association with the word “Galapagos” is the name “Darwin” - and for good reason. He sailed into the Galapagos Islands in 1835 on board the Beagle and was amazed by the extraordinary life he found on the islands. Having collected important samples and facts, in 1859 Darwin consolidated his observations to develop and sustain his theory of evolution and natural selection, drastically and controversially altering Western thought on the very nature of nature.

“As far as I can judge of myself I worked to the utmost during the voyage from the mere pleasure of investigation, and from my strong desire to add a few facts to the great mass of facts in natural science.”

Charles Darwin

There is simply nowhere like the Galapagos, and the barren landscapes of these remote islands have not lost any of their haunting beauty since Darwin’s days. This is one of the last wildernesses on Earth, where you can merrily swim with turtles and bob around in the water with penguins.

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

ECUADOR

SOUTH AMERICA



The Enchanted Islands

Each island forms a unique ecosystem, a series of specialized relationships that have adapted to the volcanic and isolated nature of the islands. As a result, the Galapagos Islands are home to a wide variety of endemic species. From albatrosses to tortoises, pelicans to iguanas, cormorants, sea lions, turtles, flamingos, sharks and whales, there is jaw-dropping wildlife in action everywhere you turn.

The islands were discovered in 1535 by Tomás de Berlanga, who sent the first known description of the Galapagos to the King of Spain: “...nothing but seals, and turtles, and such big tortoises that each could carry a man on top of itself, and many iguanas that are like serpents”. He also remarked on the tameness of the creatures: “...so silly that they do not know to flee, and many were caught in the hand”.

It has been more than 450 years since their discovery, yet the islands remain largely intact thanks to the conservation efforts of the Galapagos National Park and the Charles Darwin Research Station. A further boost to the protection of the islands was given in 1978, when UNESCO declared them a World Heritage Site. The waters around the Galapagos, which are the lifeblood of the archipelago, are also legally protected within the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

The Galapagos Islands are a year-round destination due to the remarkable natural events that occur on a daily basis throughout the seasons.





M.V. Eclipse

The M.V. Eclipse is a 64m (210ft) expedition vessel that accommodates 48 passengers – just half the number of passengers usually found on a ship this size. It offers the generous accommodation and space of a larger vessel, while preserving the atmosphere and exclusivity of a smaller yacht.

The M.V. Eclipse boasts features such as a library, a boutique, a lounge and an infirmary with a fully qualified doctor on board at all times. In addition to the elegant indoor dining room, there is an extensive al fresco dining area where you can enjoy the islands' spectacular scenery over a delicious lunch.

One of the most popular areas on board the M.V. Eclipse is the observation / sun deck, ideal for stargazing, whale watching, or simply lazing in the jacuzzi. For more active passengers, the sun deck is also equipped with two elliptical workout machines.

Whether guests are snorkeling with sea lions, watching a blue-footed booby feed its young or following a giant tortoise through the forest, the Galapagos Islands surpass all expectations. And there is no better way to enjoy the wonders of the islands than on board the M.V. Eclipse.





COMFORTABLE EXPEDITION

The M.V. Eclipse has 24 spacious double staterooms with either a queen or twin bed arrangement, plus two additional single cabins. Every cabin boasts either picture windows or large portholes, providing a view of the surrounding waters – a real-life natural science laboratory waiting to be explored. All the ship’s twin beds can be converted to king-size beds upon request.



PROFESSIONAL NATURALIST GUIDES

Only the most experienced naturalist guides are selected by the M.V. Eclipse to open up the islands’ mysteries to visitors. These on-board experts also offer nightly briefings on the day’s discoveries and the following day’s activities. The guides’ expertise is matched by a contagious enthusiasm, whether discussing birds, geology, marine life or evolution.



UNRIVALLED ITINERARY

The M.V. Eclipse’s itinerary is designed to show the very best of the islands. It includes the most iconic sites and only one stop is made at a populated settlement. This ensures that the majority of the trip is spent within the protected areas of the Galapagos National Park and the Galapagos Marine Reserve, allowing guests maximum interaction with the extraordinary flora and fauna that have made this archipelago such a magnet for wildlife and nature enthusiasts from around the world.





AL FRESCO DINING

While the M.V. Eclipse has an elegant indoor dining area, when weather conditions permit guests can take advantage of the spectacular al fresco dining area at the stern of the vessel for lunch – and occasionally for breakfast and dinner. Lunching on deck allows guests to enjoy the sunshine and sea breezes – and the view – while cruising from one island to the next. Few vessels in this category offer the opportunity for outdoor dining, accommodating all guests in one sitting.



PERSONALIZED SERVICE

The M.V. Eclipse is equipped with all the amenities and comforts guests may need, but it is the service that makes the trip truly memorable. The vessel has an unusually high crew-to-passenger ratio: 31 crew for 48 passengers, plus four naturalist guides. The friendly crew attends to every need in an efficient and attentive manner.



COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

Taking children to the Galapagos Islands is an immensely rewarding experience. For this reason the M.V. Eclipse runs special family departures during the months of March, April, July, August and December. Specialist guides are assigned to educate and entertain children throughout the day, while adults enjoy the cruise at their own pace, making their own fascinating discoveries about the history of evolution and the natural wonders of the islands.





Responsible travel

Respect for the environment is a priority aboard the M.V. Eclipse, which conforms to SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) and ISM (International Safety Management) regulations, as well as to the strict environmental standards set by the Galapagos National Park authorities.

Having been successfully certified within the Rainforest Alliance “Smart Voyager” program, the M.V. Eclipse is dedicated to protecting the fragile ecosystems of the Galapagos Islands. In addition, we make an annual contribution to a variety of worthy causes in the islands. In the past these have included sponsorship for the printing of a children’s educational board game for free distribution among schools on Santa Cruz Island, the purchase of equipment for the Chef’s School in Puerto Ayora, the donation of audio visual equipment and educational materials for the library of the local guides’ association (AGIPA) and the part-funding of the MICRONET micro-finance initiative promoted by INGALA, which assists local Galapagos residents in the creation of small businesses in the islands.

The M.V. Eclipse’s commitment is to preserve the Galapagos Islands for generations to come. All itineraries are agreed upon with the Galapagos National Park Service in order to ensure that impact on visitor sites and wildlife is kept to a minimum. The vessel and its crew tread lightly and use resources efficiently, through ecological waste management, the use of biodegradable materials and ongoing staff training in environmentally responsible operating practices.



Highlights en route

SANTIAGO ISLAND

All of the Galapagos' vegetation zones are represented here. Santiago Island is one of the best places to see the playful Galapagos fur seal and the majestic Galapagos hawk.

BARTOLOMÉ ISLAND

Bartolomé is a tiny island of just 1.2 square kilometers. The climb to its peak offers the visitor one of the most spectacular views of the archipelago.

RÁBIDA ISLAND

After landing on Rábida's beautiful red sand beach, a trail leads guests to a salt water lagoon - a haven for shorebirds. Rábida is one of the best snorkeling and kayaking sites in the Galapagos Islands.

ISABELA ISLAND

Isabela was formed by five independent volcanoes that came together to form what is now the largest of the islands. The north-western coast of the island is a sanctuary for whales, while blue-footed boobies perch on the cliffs and the rare Galapagos penguin cavorts in the waves.

FERNANDINA ISLAND

Fernandina, one of the most pristine islands, is home to the unique flightless cormorant and the prehistoric marine iguana which thrives in the harsh landscape of lava fields. The colossal shield of Fernandina volcano reaches 1,494m in height and is still gently active.

ESPAÑOLA ISLAND

Sea lions frolicking on a white sandy beach are a common sight here. Thanks to its isolation from the other islands, Española has a high proportion of unique endemic fauna. The magnificent waved albatross nests here from April to December. The comical blue-footed booby, and its cousin the Nazca booby, are also prolific on the island.

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Colonized since the 1920s, Santa Cruz is the only populated site visited by the M.V. Eclipse. A visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station enlightens guests regarding the efforts being made by scientists, guides, rangers and park managers to preserve this UNESCO World Heritage Site. The lush highlands of Santa Cruz are inhabited by the giant tortoises that are the islands' namesake.



Exploring the visitor sites

The M.V. Eclipse anchors off-shore at two visitor sites each day. For land visits, guests are divided into groups of a maximum of twelve people, each with its own naturalist guide.

Guests are ferried to the landing points in motorized dinghies, known locally as 'pangas'. The landings are either 'dry' or 'wet'. On dry landings, guests step from the panga directly onto the volcanic island rocks. On wet landings they step into anything from ankle-deep to knee-deep water and wade to shore, with guides and panga drivers assisting with a steady hand.

On the islands, walking routes follow marked trails at a leisurely pace, with the guides explaining the incredible sights and wildlife en route. Guests generally spend around three to four hours at each site, allowing plenty of time to explore and photograph the abundant wildlife. Afterwards, there is often an opportunity to swim, snorkel or kayak before returning to the M.V. Eclipse.





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