

OUTLET: MarieClaire.com

DATE: April 20, 2022

REACH: 2,466,305

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The Instagram Guide to the Galápagos Islands

For special experiences with beautiful wildlife, skip the safari and hop on a boat to the Galápagos Islands.



From giant tortoises to marine iguanas to penguins, the Galápagos Islands are filled with wildlife. The Galápagos offers incomparable opportunities to swim with turtles and reef sharks, befriend playful sea lions, observe rare mating rituals in the wild, and walk dramatic landscapes ranging from postcard-worthy white sand beaches to harsh volcanic rocks. To visit this bucket list destination, plan ahead—in order to preserve [Galápagos National Park](#), the government limits the number of travelers who can visit at any given time.

To get to the Galápagos archipelago, first fly into either Quito (UIO) or Guayaquil (GYE) on the mainland of Ecuador. From Guayaquil, it's about a two-hour flight to San Cristóbal, the gateway of the Galápagos. Once in the national park, you'll need to be accompanied by a guide, so book ahead of time. Most people opt for a boat tour that allows you to explore the further islands. Below, the must-visit spots to visit in the Galápagos.

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Cruise Consciously

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Best way to see the Galapagos? Set sail on a small boat like the Origin
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Most people opt for an inclusive boat tour so you can further explore the islands that are protected, since the islands don't have hotels, restaurants, or development on land. Choose carefully to find the right fit considering you'll be eating and sleeping, as well as participating in a lot of activities, on the boat.

Most ships in the Galápagos hold less than 100 passengers and the Ecoventura luxury yacht Origin allows a maximum of 20 guests. The Relais & Chateaux ship has state-of-the-art facilities including comfortable staterooms, a decadent sundeck, multicourse dinners, and an open bar. The environmentally conscious company also desalinates their own water on board and employs two naturalist guides on each seven-night cruise.

Start on San Cristóbal Island



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Gaalapagos - San Cristobal - El Ceibo Mas Grande Del Mundo

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Miss these guys already! A momma sea lion nursing her new pup 🥰

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San Cristóbal Island is the first island Charles Darwin visited in the Galápagos and will likely be the first island you see, as well. To get a history lesson on the region, visit the Interpretation Center and take in its incredible architecture while you learn about the islands. Nearby, beaches are filled with sea lions to offer you your first welcome.

Snorkel in the Devil's Crown



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Swimming with sea lions never gets old!

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The Galápagos Marine Reserve offers exceptional snorkeling, especially when the waters are colder. Try a drift snorkel at the sunken volcanic crater Devil's Crown or a shoreside snorkel to spot Galápagos penguins or swim with sea lions.

Spot Giant Tortoises in Santa Cruz



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Hanging with the giant tortoises of the Galapagos 🌿

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On Santa Cruz, you can visit lava tunnels at El Mirador and Los Gemelos—a pair of massive craters. But the most notable attraction on the island is Rancho Primicias, where giant Galápagos tortoises roam.

Kayak With Wildlife



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In the crystal blue ocean waters and in secret coves and bays along the shore, kayaking will give you the opportunity to spot wildlife in the sea.

Discover Wildlife in Española




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The pair bonding ritual of the Albatross should be a cartoon skit -- too funny!!

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On Española, one of the oldest Galápagos Islands, discover blue-footed boobies and the waved albatross, a species that only nests on Española Island with a distinctive (and comical) pair bonding dance. Keep an eye out for marine iguanas on the lava rocks, which are normally black. During the mating season, however, they turn vibrant reds and greens.

Lounge like a Sea Lion at Gardner Bay



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Gardner Bay is one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galápagos (and perhaps, the world!) with white-powder sand and vibrant blue water. The only crowds you'll find are colonies of sea lions lounging in the sun.

Visit an Old School Post Office in Floreana



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A Galápagos tradition, Post Office Bay on the island of Floreana is where English whaling vessels put a barrel in the late 18th century to leave messages while ships were out to sea for years at a time. To this day, visitors can drop a postcard in the barrel (no postage required!) and look through cards left by previous visitors to see if there are any near your hometown you can hand deliver.

If you've fallen in love with the Galápagos Islands, [book a trip.](#)