

GALAPAGOS - 2010

Dates: Sept. 8-17, 2010

Price: \$5,745 - \$5,945/pp

(See below for details)

OVERVIEW

This small Ecuadorian archipelago is a magical place above and below the surface, and is considered by many to be the world's premiere diving destination. A trip of a lifetime for naturalists and big marine life aficionados, travelers will delight in topside and underwater encounters with unique and spectacular creatures, some found nowhere else on earth.

Your adventure begins on Wednesday, September 8th, when you depart for Guayacil, Ecuador. On Thursday, the group takes a chartered flight to San Cristobal and boards the 100' luxury vessel, Aggressor, for a 7-day live-aboard diving adventure. Spend the next six days diving the volcanic islands, including visits to such coveted sites as Darwin and Wolf Islands where hammerheads and whale sharks abound. Listen to the onboard guides as they share their knowledge of these spectacular islands. You'll have the opportunity to explore three islands on foot, with added snorkeling and bird watching excursions. The following Thursday, you'll return to Guayacil before catching your international flight home on Friday, September 17th.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrival in Ecuador

Fly from US to Guayacil, Ecuador. The afternoon and evening is at your leisure.

Day 2 Aggressor Boarding (Thursday, Sept. 9th)

AM: We will depart Quito/Guayacil early for San Cristobal aboard an Aggressor-chartered plane. Upon arrival, the crew will assist you in getting settled before lunch and the safety briefing.

PM: We'll do a checkout dive at Playa Ochoa followed by welcome cocktails in the evening.

Day 3 Mosquera Island and North Seymour (Friday)

AM: 2 dives as Mosquera Island

Located between North Seymour and Baltra, Mosquera is a small island consisting of a narrow stretch of white sand, rocks, and tide pools. Off limits to visitors, Mosquera is home to Brown Pelicans and Blue-footed Boobies. There are two dive sites, West Beach and East Mosquera, offering garden eels, mantas, sea turtles, white tip sharks and occasionally schools of hammerheads and eagle rays. West Beach is also known for its large colony of sea lions.

PM: Hiking at North Seymour

North of Baltra (South Seymour) is the small, arid islet of North Seymour. The visitor trail on North Seymour is approximately 2 km in length, crossing



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the interior of the island and paralleling the rocky coast. In addition to native vegetation including prickly pear cacti, Palo Santos trees and salt bushes you're likely to pass Blue-footed Boobies, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Marine Iguanas, and Sally Lightfoot crabs.

Day 4 Wolf Island (Saturday)

AM & PM: 4 dives on Wolf Island

Named in honor of Theodore Wolf and alternatively known as Wenman Island, some of this island's best sights are underwater. With three distinct dive sites- the pinnacle, the reef, and the south islet channel- Wolf is home to schools of hammerhead sharks, large aggregations of Galapagos sharks, and whale sharks. Dolphin, schooling tuna, spotted eagle rays, barracudas, sea lions, and sea turtles are common and the ocean floor is covered with moray eels, many of them swimming freely. Several degrees warmer than the central islands, you'll also see a wide array of Indo-Pacific underwater fauna. Among the fish found here are Galapagos grunts, amberjacks, trumpet fish, hogfish, butterfly fish, coronet fish and marbled rays. Topside, the island is also the native habitat of the Vampire Finch, a bird that got its name from jumping on the back of its prey, pecking its flesh, and feeding on its blood.



Day 5 Darwin Island (Sunday)

AM & PM

4 dives on Darwin Island

Perhaps the most famous and coveted dive site in the Galapagos Park, Darwin is renowned for its large marine life encounters. Eagle rays, mantas, hammerhead sharks, Galapagos sharks, hawksbill turtles, green turtles, pilot whales, melon-headed whales and whale sharks are all common sightings. There is also a plethora of smaller creatures including among others creole fish, blue-spotted jacks, flounder, amberjacks, scorpion fish, rainbow runners, sailfish, hogfish, big-eye jacks, trumpet fish, and parrotfish. Topside attractions include the iconic Darwin's Arch and the endemic Darwin Mockingbird as well as Swallow-tailed Gulls, sea lions, Red-footed and Masked Boobies.



Day 6 Darwin and Wolf Islands (Monday)

AM

2 dives on Darwin Island

PM

1 dive on Wolf Island

Day 7 Cousins Rock and Bartolome Island (Tuesday)

AM

2 dives at Cousins Rock

An islet with a wall descending from the surface into the abyss, Cousins Rock is full of spectacular endemic young black corals and large areas of sloping rock plates. Cousins is a true wall dive and while visibility is often only mediocre, reef fish are plentiful and sightings of white tipped reef sharks, hammerhead sharks, sea lions, fur seals, rays, pelagics and sleeping sea turtles are common. An added highlight is a resident school of up to 30 spotted eagle rays.



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PM

Hiking and swimming at Bartolome Island

Bartolome, located east of Santiago off Sullivan bay is a small, desolate island comprised of scenic red, orange, green and black volcanic formations. This unique geological landscape explains why Bartolome's Pinnacle Rock is one of the best-recognized and most photographed sights in the islands. The northern beach is a popular snorkeling site where you will have the opportunity to swim with sea lions and Galapagos Penguins. Bartolome is also the seasonal mating and nesting site for green sea turtles.



Day 8 Gordon's Rock, South Plaza Island and Puerto Ayora (Wednesday)

AM

1 dive at Gordon's Rock

The Gordon's Rock dive sites are mostly walls with deep bottoms. Reef fish, large pelagics, golden rays, sting rays, eagle rays, turtles, sea lions, endemic Galapagos fur seals, morays, invertebrates, white tip sharks, and Galapagos sharks are all seen here, though schooling hammerhead sharks remain the highlight.

Hiking at South Plaza Island

The Plazas Islands are twin islands located off the east coast of Santa Cruz and feature dramatic cliffs with spectacular views. South Plaza has one of the largest populations of Land Iguanas in the Galapagos. These larger than average yellow-brown Land Iguanas feed on the fruit and pads of the prickly-pear cactus. Marine and Hybrid Iguanas live along the coast as do Swallow-tailed Gulls, Frigatebirds, Audubon Shearwaters, Red-billed Tropicbirds, Brown Pelicans, Blue-footed and Masked Boobies



PM

Puerto Ayora: Charles Darwin Research Station

Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station on the Island of Santa Cruz. Scientists from all over the globe work at the station and conduct biological research from anatomy to zoology. Here you will observe 100 year-old tortoises and learn about the captive-breeding program. A stroll through the town of Puerto Ayora (population: 15,000), the largest town in the Galapagos, not only gives you the opportunity to do a little shopping, but also provides a subtle glimpse into the local culture and social spirit of the Islands.



Day 9 Depart Galapagos (Thursday)

We'll depart San Cristobal in the morning for Quito and be transferred to the hotel upon arrival. The rest of the day is yours for exploring and last minute shopping.

Overnight in Café' Cultura

Day 10: Depart Ecuador for the US (Friday, Sept. 17th)

Transfer to the airport and depart for the US.



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DIVE BRIEFING

General

Number of dives per day: 2-4

Night diving: Prohibited in the Galapagos Marine Park

Nitrox: Available (\$100/diver for the week)

Rebreathers allowed: No

Conditions

Galapagos diving is advanced and not suitable for new divers.

Average maximum depth: 60-100ft.

Water temperature: 60-75 degrees F

Thermoclines: Yes

Visibility: Varies considerably from 30-100ft.

Current: Potentially strong

Surface conditions: Moderate to rough

Dive Procedures

Divers are transported to and from the dive sites aboard small inflatable boats called Zodiacs. Most dives are drift dives and occasionally require divers to anchor themselves on the rocky bottom. In the event of separation from their dive group, divers are equipped with a surface marker buoy and whistle to assist the Zodiac team in retrieval, as well as a personal EPIRB. (A full briefing and check out dive occurs onboard before diving commences.)

Dive Gear

Certification cards

Mask (incl. back up), fins, snorkel

Regulator, BC, Computer (back up timing device)

7mm wetsuit

Hood or hooded vest

Booties

Gloves

Small dive light

Surface marker buoy and finger spool or reel

Whistle or other auditory signaling device

Save-a-Dive kit including extra fin straps, mask strap, computer batteries, and o-rings

PRICING

In recent years, the Galapagos has increased significantly in price. This increase is in response to the surge in tourism that is threatening the islands' unique and fragile ecosystem. The additional monies generated are being channeled into increased conservation efforts.

Lodging

Galapagos Aggressor: \$4,495/\$4,695 (Deluxe/Master)



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Deluxe staterooms have two single berths
Master staterooms have either two singles or one double berth
2 nights in Guayacil: \$150

Airfare *(Estimated: not confirmed until purchased)*

Roundtrip US/Ecuador: \$700
Ecuador mainland to/from Galapagos: \$400

Food & Drink

All food and drink is included while onboard the Aggressor. Not included are meals on the mainland and the final dinner in Puerto Ayora on Wednesday night.

Total: \$5,745/\$5,945

Additional Fees *(not included)*

Galapagos Marine Park Fee: \$100
Galapagos Visitors Pass: \$10
Departure Tax: \$30
Unlimited Nitrox: \$100

