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WanderTours
P.O. Box 16102
Seattle WA 98116

Galapagos Land-Based Tour
Dates: October 3 – 11, 2025
Trip Leader: Beth Whitman

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Overnighting on three islands** where we'll meet the locals and view wildlife when we explore the area during **short hikes and walks**
- **Kayaking, snorkeling and swimming** during our daily boat excursions
- **Walk amongst iguanas**, fearless amongst people because they've never experienced harm from humans
- Getting up close and personal with **giant tortoises** as they plod along in their natural environment
- Seeing a wide range of fauna, including **blue-footed boobies, sea lions, pelicans, giant tortoises, whitetip reef sharks, rays** and much more
- Learning about the islands from our **English-speaking local naturalist guide(s)**
- **Swimming with sea lions** in clear blue water
- Taking a day trip to the equator and the **predominately Kichwa town of Otavalo**

The adventure starts on **October 3, 2025, upon arrival into Quito, Ecuador. Consider arriving a day or two early in case of flight delays and to shake off jet lag. If you like, we can book additional nights at our hotel for you.**

ITINERARY

Day 1

Friday, October 3, 2025 – Quito
Meals: Dinner

Upon arrival at the airport in Quito, you'll be met by our driver and taken to our hotel.

We'll have a **welcome dinner** and then overnight in Quito at [Hotel Patio Andaluz](#) or similar.

Day 2

Saturday, October 4, 2025 – Quito – Baltra Island – Santa Cruz Island
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, the group will transfer to the airport in Quito for our flight to **Baltra Island**, the gateway to the Galapagos Islands.

Before departing the airport, we'll visit a **private VIP lounge** to change into swimwear and/or warm-weather clothes, put on sunscreen and grab a cool drink before heading to the Itabaca Channel. Here, we'll **explore the turquoise waters** that teem with wildlife.



There will be a number of options to enjoy the area—we can **swim, kayak or snorkel**. If you prefer, you can stay on board the boat and enjoy the wildlife from there. No matter your mode of viewing, we'll have the chance to see **blue-footed boobies, sea lions, brown pelicans, herons** and (non-aggressive) **whitetip reef sharks**.

The **stunningly clear** water flows beside **red mangrove forests** along lava rock cliffs. We may spend 1.5 – 2 hours on the water depending on how much wildlife we see.

From the Itabaca Channel, we'll head by boat to the island of **Santa Cruz** to a secluded private reserve where the famous **giant tortoises** are found in the wild. We'll have lunch here before driving on to our accommodations.

We'll be staying for two nights at a **safari camp** that includes glamping tents and tree houses! Both have private bathrooms, but the tree houses have shared showers. The area is surrounded by forest and roaming **giant tortoises**. On a clear night, we'll be able to see a **star-filled sky**.

We'll have a delicious dinner outside that's prepared in an open-air kitchen. And, before or after our meal, we may even have a chance to walk to the nearby **lava tubes** for a drink at the Lava Lounge!

Overnight on Santa Cruz Island at [Galapagos Magic](#) or similar.



Day 3
Sunday, October 5, 2025 – Santa Cruz Island
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today after breakfast, we'll head off via boat from Santa Cruz to some of the more **remote uninhabited islands** that are home to a variety of wildlife.

Our destination(s) will be determined by the captain and will include one or more of the following: **North Seymour**

Island and Bachas Beach, South Plaza Island and Santa Fe Island, Bartolomé Island and Sullivan Bay.

During today's outings, we'll be able to **snorkel in the calm waters** to see a wide variety of **tropical fish** and possibly **whitetip reef sharks** that rest on the sandy bottom. Also, expect to see plenty of **sea lions!**

For onshore excursions, expect to see nesting **swallow-tailed gulls** and several types of **tropical birds**, including Nazca and blue-footed boobies.

We'll have lunch at a local restaurant to break up the day's activities.

Dinner and overnight on Santa Cruz Island at [Galapagos Magic](#) or similar.

Day 4
Monday, October 6, 2025 – Santa Cruz Island – Floreana Island
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll depart for **Floreana Island** on a two-hour speedboat trip. Floreana is home to the smallest population (just 150 people!) of the four inhabited islands in the Galapagos. It is therefore the **least developed** and most natural of them all.

Upon arrival, we'll take an **open-air chiva bus** to our lodge, which overlooks one of the **most beautiful and secluded bays in the Galapagos**. Here we'll meet a descendant of the original residents of the island, **Claudio Cruz**. Claudio will have lots of stories to share about the island's history!



Amongst other wildlife, the island is home to **giant tortoises, frigate birds, sea lions, Darwin's finches, petrels** and **marine iguanas**.



Once settled in, we can walk to nearby **Black Beach** for **exquisite snorkeling**. Here we may find **sea turtles, sea lions** and a **wide range of fish**.

In the afternoon, we'll set out again across the bay to explore **La Loberia**, a **sea lion breeding ground**. We'll be able to snorkel and/or swim with **sea turtles, sea lions, rays (there are several kinds)** and **many tropical fish**.

We'll return to the lodge in the late afternoon to wash up before enjoying a spectacular sunset from our accommodations.

We'll have dinner nearby in the small village and then overnight at the [Lava Lodge](#) or similar on Floreana Island

Day 5

Tuesday, October 7, 2025 – Floreana Island

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll leave the lodge in our chiva to **explore the highlands**. Once we reach **Asilo de la Paz** (Peace Haven), we'll begin an **easy morning hike**.

During the hike, we'll visit **pirate caves** and walk through land that the locals still cultivate today. We might even see **giant tortoises** and **frigate birds** along the way.

On our way back, we'll stop at **Claudio's farm**, La Primavera, where we'll see how the local produce, served at the lodge, is grown.

We'll take the chiva back to the lodge, stopping at Las Palmas, where the island's first permanent resident lived after arriving in 1926.

We'll then have a **barbecue lunch** featuring **traditional recipes** (including vegetarian fare) from the Cruz family.

The afternoon will be free for **snorkeling, kayaking** or **relaxing**.

We'll have dinner at a local restaurant and then overnight at the [Lava Lodge](#) or similar on Floreana Island.



Day 6

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 – Floreana Island – Isabela Island

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today after breakfast, we'll take an early morning speedboat ride to Isabela Island.

Our day begins with a tour of the local **giant tortoise breeding center**. Along the way, we may see some **pink flamingos** feeding in the nearby lake. We'll learn all about the breeding and releasing of the tortoise and also find out how the region got its name (hint: it has something to do with these creatures!).

After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll head to **Tintoreras**, a small group of islands near Puerto Villamil.



We'll see nearly all the iconic wildlife the Galapagos islands are known for, including **blue-footed boobies, penguins, whitetip sharks, turtles, sea lions, rays, and pelicans**. Here, we can snorkel in the bay where sea lions and penguins are known to play alongside snorkelers.

Dinner will be at a local restaurant and we'll overnight at [Hotel La Casa de Marita](#) or similar on Isabela Island.

Day 7

Thursday, October 9, 2025 – Isabela Island

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today includes a full day of hiking on Isabela, one of the youngest and **most volcanically active of the islands**.

We'll start by hiking up the **crater of the Sierra Negra volcano** and then on the rim of the **Volcan Chico**. We may have fog and light rain in the morning, but we'll still see a wide range of birds, including **hawks, finches, flycatchers and short-eared owls**.

The Sierra Negra crater is one of **five active craters** on Isabela Island and the only one that visitors are allowed to hike. It's also the **second largest crater** in the world after the Ngorongoro in Tanzania!

The walk to Volcan Chico feels like you're walking on the moon with its **alien and dry landscape**, but we'll be rewarded with views as well as lava tubes and fumaroles.

We'll enjoy a packed lunch on the rim before heading back down to **relax on the beach** after a full day of hiking.



Dinner and overnight at [Hotel La Casa de Marita](#) or similar on Isabela Island.

Day 8

Friday, October 10, 2025 – Isabela – Baltra Island – Quito

Meals: Breakfast, Snacks/Lunch

This morning after breakfast, we'll take the speedboat back to Santa Cruz and then transfer to Baltra for our **return flight to Quito** (currently scheduled to arrive around 4:45 PM but schedule changes could affect this). There will be snacks and/or a light lunch available on this day of mostly travel.

Dinner will be on your own this evening. This will give you some flexibility to choose between having a light meal (or even room service) after a day of travel or something more substantial. This will also give you a chance to unwind from our adventure in the Galapagos and to get ready for our **day trip to Otavalo tomorrow**.

Overnight in Quito at [Hotel Patio Andaluz](#) or similar.

Day 9

Saturday, October 11, 2025 – Quito – Otavalo – Quito

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today after breakfast, we'll first make our way about an hour and a half north to the **Quitsato Sundial**. This 52-meter mosaic **marks the equator** and, not only can it be used as a calendar, it is so large it can be seen from space. Visiting here will give us a better understanding of how **pre-Hispanic cultures read the stars**.

We will then head further north to one of the most interesting towns in Ecuador – **Otavalo, home to the local Kichwa people**. They have used this region as an economic and social center for more than 4,000 years and, thankfully, their numbers are on the rise.

We'll have time to meander and shop at the area's **famous market**. Although the town is small, the market is the largest in South America and brimming with **colorful textiles, handicrafts and jewelry**.



We'll have lunch at a local restaurant and then head to the nearby town of Agato where we'll visit the workshop of **master weaver, Miguel Andrango**. His art has taken him to exhibitions and fairs abroad, including the United States, where the quality of his work is widely recognized.

We'll then drive to the **Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve**. Depending on our timing, we'll take a short (or long) hike around this area, where the **Cuicocha lagoon** is located. This deep-blue crater lake is at the foot of **Cotacachi Volcano**. After our hike, we will stop at the picturesque colonial town of **Cotacachi**, famous for its leatherwork.



We'll return to the hotel in Quito in the late afternoon.

Because many international flights leave late at night, you might choose to depart this evening for the airport. If your flight isn't until the next day (or later), we can book additional nights for you at the hotel.

An alternative is stay to join us for our [Ecuador Amazon Rainforest Adventure](#) which immediately follows this tour.

**** Itinerary subject to change without notice.**