

A large Galapagos tortoise is the central focus of the image, shown from a low angle. Its head is raised, and its mouth is slightly open, revealing small green leaves. The tortoise's shell is dark brown with prominent scutes. Its thick, wrinkled skin and large, scaly legs are also visible. The background consists of a lush green landscape with trees and foliage, suggesting a natural habitat.

**WILD WOMEN**  
*expeditions*

**GALAPAGOS ISLANDS ACTIVE ADVENTURE 2024**

**11 DAYS**



# EXPERIENCE THE GALÁPAGOS

Experience the Galápagos from a front row seat—in the cockpit of a kayak! This itinerary allows for a very intimate discovery of the islands. Whether you are paddling or dog-paddling in the company of green sea turtles and playful sea lions, the sights above and below the water are unmatched.

We'll camp for two nights on Manglecito Beach underneath the constellations—the Southern Cross is rarely visible from the Northern Hemisphere. On the equator, on a clear night, we'll be able to see the Dipper and the Cross glitter above.

On this multisport adventure, we'll stretch our legs on challenging hikes up Frigatebird Hill and the massive rim of calderas like Volcan Sierra. We'll snorkel in the shadows of the 'sleeping lion' (León Dormido—also known as the iconic Kicker Rock) and sneak through lava tunnels in hopes of spotting an elusive barn owl.

Of course we'll check off all the endemics and Island faves: the blue-footed and masked boobies, frigatebirds, prehistoric marine iguanas, lava herons, giant tortoises and curious penguins.

We'll poke around biodiverse tidal pools, paddle deep into the mangroves and walk along powder-white beaches. A visit to Isabela's Tortoise Breeding Center and a wild tortoise sanctuary on Santa Cruz is always a giant-sized highlight.

If you want to deep-dive into the marvels of the Galápagos, this trip offers all the feels: underwater caves, active volcanoes, countless boobies, eagle rays, sun rays, sea stars and the pin-prick of stars in the canopy overhead. There have been rumours about prickly pear margaritas too!



This adventure includes a convenient one night pre-trip stay at the Wyndham Quito Airport hotel. As most North American-based flights arrive late in the evening, this will allow you time to reset and refresh for the next day's early departure to the Islands.

Meals Included: None

Accommodations: Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel



Meet in the domestic terminal within the Quito Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) for domestic flight(s) to the capital of the province of Galápagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (SCY) on San Cristobal Island, Galápagos. Your Wild Women guide will be waiting for you at the airport in San Cristobal.

On arrival, we will take a shuttle to a local restaurant for lunch and get into the Galápagos groove! We'll have an orientation

about what to expect for the coming days before taking a boat to Manglecito Beach. We'll be spending two nights here immersed in nature with the constellations above and a lapping wave soundtrack to lull us to sleep. Before that, we'll have a thorough introduction to kayaking in the sheltered indigo bay by our campsite. Get familiarized with the kayaks in this fun and interactive session that will cover correct techniques and essential safety procedures. Expect to paddle 6 nautical miles!

Meals Included: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Manglecito Beach Camping Island: San Cristobal

Distance Paddled: 6 nautical miles (nm)



Our day will begin with a 3 to 4-hour tandem kayaking session (around 6 nautical miles) as we paddle along the dramatic coast towards Puerto Grande camp.

Once we arrive and have had some time to poke around the shoreline of Puerto Grande's porcelain-white sand beach, we'll take a boat ride towards Kicker Rock—it's also known as León Dormido for its sleeping lion resemblance.

This iconic rock formation is actually the eroded remnants of a volcanic tuff cone and is a popular perch for blue-footed and masked boobies and frigate birds. On the shore, barking or basking sea lions can often be observed.

We'll take full advantage of the biodiversity here and check out the underwater world with a snorkeling excursion. Galápagos and white-tipped reef sharks are found in this area—sometimes hammerheads too! Be on high alert for the elegant swim-by of eagle rays, curious green sea turtles, the colourful blur of reef fish and sea stars too!

In the afternoon, we'll return to our campsite at Manglecito to take five and swap snorkeling encounters as we absorb the buttery glow of the sunset. If clear skies permit, we might be able to see the Southern Cross. The constellation "Crux" (Cross) is composed of five shimmery stars that are rarely visible in the Northern Hemisphere. On the equator, it's possible to see both the Big Dipper and the Cross at the exact same time!

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Manglecito Beach Camping

Island: San Cristobal

Distance Paddled: 6 nautical miles (nm)



This morning we will climb into our kayaks and paddle out to capture the antics of blue-footed boobies and brown pelicans. The vertical plunge of the boobies when they're fishing is torpedo-like. Watching the pelicans feed is often comical as terns and gulls land on top of the pelican's heads, waiting to poach their catch of the day.

We'll look for sea turtles as they surreptitiously poke their heads out of the sea like periscopes to take in a breath of air.

If we're lucky, we might even witness them mating in the water. We'll log another six nautical miles on the water before lunch!

In the afternoon, we'll climb Cerro de las Tijeretas (Frigatebird Hill) to take in the coastal panoramas and watch the namesake seabirds—"the pirates of the seas"—as they brazenly steal food from distracted boobies. The deeply forked tails, hooked beaks and fleshy crimson red balloon sacs of the male frigatebirds give them a foreboding, otherworldly appearance.

If the group is interested in hiking further, we can make a descent into Darwin's Bay, a coveted spot to snorkel and swim with sea turtles and playful sea lions.

The hiking trail will loop us back to the 300m-long (984 feet) horseshoe-shaped Punta Carola beach. A huge colony of sea lions and marine iguanas can be found here.

We'll pause to take in another gorgeous Galápagos sunset as the equatorial sky fades to black behind the candy red and white lighthouse of Punta Carola.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Blue Marlin Hotel

Island: San Cristobal

Distance Paddled: 6 nautical miles (nm)



This morning we'll board a motorboat for a 2 to 3-hour ride towards the 'big city' of Puerto Ayora on buzzing Santa Cruz Island. Here, we'll visit the highlands of Santa Cruz to get up close and personal with the Galápagos giant tortoise. Several sanctuaries conserve native and endemic vegetation for the roaming centenarians.

En route, we'll cut through an ever-changing forest of banana, mango, guava and Spanish

cedar. Look for egrets—often seen perched on the rumps of cattle! Wild tortoises can be seen along the roadway too—they sometimes create traffic jams with their slo-mo crossings. Have your camera at the ready to snap a pic of the tortoise crossing caution signs!

At the sanctuary we'll have an intimate encounter with the tortoises—especially if they are having a 'spa day.' They can be found submerged in muddy ponds to help combat skin parasites and to help regulate their body temperature on blistering hot days. White-cheeked pintails, herons, egrets and moorhens also like to hang around the fringes of these ponds!

After our time with the tortoises, we'll continue to explore the incredible volcanic origins of the island by taking a short walk through a lava tunnel. If you have a phone with a flashlight, it will be helpful in navigating this passage through the hardened lava tube. Instead of a light at the end of the tunnel, we may be rewarded with a barn owl spotting!

In recent years the tunnel has been home to a pair and a female who likes to purr in the inky darkness for visitors.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Ikala or similar

Island: Santa Cruz



In the morning we will have a short ride to the entrance of one of the Earth's most captivating beaches, Tortuga Bay Beach on Santa Cruz Island. We'll walk along the shoreline in the company of sunning iguanas and possibly, flamingoes. The landscape here is a startling contrast of dunes, cacti, salt bushes, Palo Santo trees, salt flats and tangles of mangroves full of Darwin's finches

We'll have time to take five, swim or wade

along Tortuga Bay's precious stretch of shoreline. Be on the look out for reef sharks, skittling Sally Lightfoot crabs, brown pelicans and marine iguanas. After our beachy interlude, it's a 2 to 3 hour boat ride (depending on conditions) to Puerto Villamil on Isabela Island. Here, we'll check into our beachside 4-star hotel and have an afternoon of pure leisure. The hotel's location is close to several shops and restaurants in the small port's village—provided you can pull yourself away from the loungers on the hotel's deck with endless views of the sea!

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: IsaMar Hotel, Isabela Island



The one-hour drive from Puerto Villamil to the highlands of Isabela showcases the dramatic difference in vegetation that favours the significant humidity. The weather immediately shifts with the southeast trade winds.

The lowland landscape of prickly pear and the endemic candelabra cactus that dominate the coastal areas gives way to more lush and diverse flora, including bright bursts of bromeliads and epiphytes (air plants).

The path will snake us along to the rim of the Sierra Negra volcano at 1,490m (4,888 feet). It's most recent eruption was in 2005 and a dramatic new layer of volcanic lava lies like a black duvet over the area. Sierra Negra is still an active volcano and is the second largest caldera in the world (spanning approximately 10km or 6.5 miles). Birdlife is abundant here—finches, flycatchers and the sleek Galápagos hawk dominate cruising altitudes while agile lava lizards skittle for cover below.

Following the path from the caldera's rim, we will encounter Volcano Chico. Its fumaroles (gas and steam vents in the earth's crust) and some odd-looking lava formations make for an arresting visual record of the Galápagos Islands' dynamic geological history. The numerous volcanoes and islands nearby can be marvelled at from the uppermost vantage points. We'll learn about Aa and braid-like Pahoehoe lava, feel the volatile steam and vapour beneath our feet and witness evolution in one of the world's most inhospitable environments.

After the Sierra Negra walk, you will have the opportunity to explore the area around our accommodations and enjoy dinner at a restaurant of your choosing.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Isamar Hotel

Island: Isabela



From Puerto Villamil, we'll take a boat ride (1 hour) to a place traditionally accessed by fishermen (and lately tourists) known as Los Tuneles. The unusual and remarkable lava formation consists of underwater arches and caves that were produced by the drastic change in temperature when lava met the ocean water about one million years ago.

Upon entrance to the site, we'll navigate the labyrinth of rocks and tunnels at a very slow

and careful pace (by boat) in search of seabirds, eagle rays and whitetip reef sharks. Maybe seahorses! We will disembark and take a short walk along the shore to observe boobies resting on the rocks and marvel at the giant opuntia and candelabra cacti as well as red mangroves. We'll then board the boat for a 5-minute ride to a superb snorkelling spot with water as clear as club soda for an unobstructed experience in the remarkable underwater world.

From Los Tuneles, we'll take a 10-minute boat ride towards another snorkeling site known as El Finado. This calm, shallow inlet is surrounded by lava rocks and the knotty root system of red mangroves. We'll swim with rays, rainbow wrasse fish and snorkel into underwater caves where whitetip reef sharks like to rest.

An al fresco lunch will be served on board before we return to town. The remainder of the afternoon is free for you to spend as you wish! Hot tip: There is a nearby microbrewery owned by a local husband and wife called Zaroa Cerveza Artesanal that previous Wild Women have had a wild time at! You are also free range for dinner tonight.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Isamar Hotel

Island: Isabela

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Today we'll go for a smooth-as-pudding paddle around Isabela's beachfront and bay in search of penguins. The 30cm (12-inch) endemic species are a genuine thrill to see in the wild, whether waddling on land or swimming like Olympians beside the boat.

In the afternoon, we will visit the Tortoise Breeding Center, an initiative of the National Park for the conservation of Isabela's tortoises.

We'll walk through the marshlands (known as humedales) and along the beautiful talcum sand beach of Puerto Villamil back to our hotel.

Tonight, we will swap stories, reflections and share laughs during our farewell dinner with our Wild Women and naturalist guide.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Isamar Hotel

Island: Isabela



It will be a full day of travel—boats, ferries, shuttle buses and planes! Be sure to have a second cup of coffee to charge you up! First, we'll have a 2-hour boat ride back to Puerto Ayora to catch a 40-minute transfer to the Itabaca Canal. From here, we will board a 10-minute public ferry to Baltra Island and then take a shuttle to the airport. We will fly back to Quito and transfer to our hotel (dinner at the hotel is included—so are the catnaps on the plane!).

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: San Jose Puembo Airport Hotel

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Today, we will take a 20-minute shuttle from the hotel to the airport for flights back home. Or, if you're eager to keep your adrenaline and visuals at the max level, join us on Wild Women's 4-day Amazon Rainforest Extension!

Meals Included: Breakfast

Other Notes: Optional 4-days extension

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Types of Kayaks:

#### Sea Kayaks

Within the itinerary, San Cristobal island has the longest kayaking distances, therefore sea kayaks are used. On the Galapagos Islands these are the only kayaks imported from the United States with such sea kayaking characteristics.

#### Sit-On-Top Kayaks

On the other islands, sit-on-top kayaks are used because the routes are not more than 2 hours.

## IS THIS TRIP RIGHT FOR ME?

Ready to adventure? We would like you to be comfortable with the following:

- Paddling up to 7 nautical miles, up to 4 hours with breaks
- Being in a kayak for extended periods of time
- Entering and exiting motorboats
- Hike on uneven terrain for up to 6 km, 2 - 3 hours
- Not comfortable swimming in water? Please let us know! (PFDs are provided)
- Physical Rating: 3 of 5. Moderate > Good level of fitness required

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return domestic flights from Quito (UIO) – San Cristobal (SCY) and Baltra (GPS) – Quito (UIO) (\$600USD value)
- One night pre-trip hotel stay at Wyndham Quito Airport (considered Day 1 of trip)
- Park permit (\$100 USD)
- TCT – Transit Control Card (\$20USD)
- Isabela arrival tax (\$12USD)
- AWESOME female guide and sea kayak expert
- Expert Galápagos naturalist guide
- 4 days sea kayaking and wildlife viewing
- 1 day hiking Volcan Sierra
- Snorkeling excursions and equipment
- 2 nights camping on Galápagos islands + all gear
- 7 nights double occupancy in hotels
- Ground transportation (private group transfer by boat between islands)
- 9 decadent breakfasts, 8 lunches, 8 dinners, snacks (alcoholic beverages are NOT included)
- Single room upgrade, subject to availability
- *Optional Upgrade (Amazon Rainforest Extension) includes the following:*
  - Return airfare from Quito-Coca-Quito
  - River transportation to Coca – Napo Wildlife Center
  - Entrance to Yasuni National Park and parrot clay licks
  - Engaging bilingual community and naturalist guide
  - Poncho and rubber boots
  - All excursions and activities, as described in program
  - All applicable taxes are included in trip price

## ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

Wild Women Expeditions and our local partners intend to adhere to the described itinerary. This is only a general guide to follow on your tour of the region. Our itineraries are subject to change, as we cannot predict the weather or other environmental conditions. We are continually striving to make improvements to all our trips based on feedback from Wild Women members, guides, partners, and other research. We reserve the right to alter itineraries based on the above at any time.

\*Itinerary version as of April 24, 2023.