

WILD WOMEN
expeditions

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS YACHT ADVENTURE

9 DAYS



For more information please contact: adventure@wildwomenexpeditions.com or call 1 (888) 993-1222.



EXPERIENCE THE GALÁPAGOS

The Galapagos Islands seem otherworldly for good reason. There are 45 species of birds that are endemic to the isles—you won't find them anywhere else in the world!

The juxtaposition of landscapes seems impossible. Mangrove forests shift to islands peppered with prickly pear cacti or the skeletal Palo Santo (Holy Stick) trees. The beaches move from Oreo-black volcanic sand to porcelain-white coral shores. On Rabida, the sand is as red as paprika. The lava tunnels and spatter cones of Bartolome will make you feel like you've landed on the moon!

Whether you are on a panga scanning for whale spouts or underwater snorkeling synchro with a curious sea lion or penguin, the wildlife surrounds. Frigate birds trail the ship, blue-footed boobies do vertical torpedo dives with the agility of Olympic swimmers. Red-billed tropicbirds delight with their kite-like tail streamers while Darwin's finches, bubblegum pink flamingos, lava herons and barn owls surprise seasoned and newbie birders alike.

You can safely expect to see sea lions and marine iguanas by the dozens. Possibly hundreds. Each island has its own unique pocket of species but through the western navigation, the biodiversity is constant. Crimson Sally lightfoot crabs skitter about on basalt rocks in the company of prehistoric marine iguanas, yellow warblers and gangly pelicans. The startling red carpet weed of Chinese Hat is electric against the indigo sea.

If you want a GIANT fill of incredible birds and intimate encounters with wild tortoises, fur sea lions, sea turtles and penguins, this small-ship expedition delivers ten-fold. Snorkel, hike and tandem kayak under the watchful eye of the Galapagos hawk, nesting brown noddy terns, shearwaters and flightless cormorants.

Aboard the Tip Top II, you'll be well-spoiled by the 360 views on the upper deck and the authentic local menu prepared by Chef Willy in the galley. Pamper yourself and light up your sense of wonder on the islands that captivated Charles Darwin long ago. We'll visit the Darwin Research Centre and a tortoise ranch on Santa Cruz Island too!

This western voyage crosses the equator four times! The syrupy sunsets will stop you in your tracks. Come experience the genuine, unmatched magic of the Galapagos and discover the secrets in the deep fissures and lava folds of the Pacific.

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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. No activities or meals are scheduled on this day though you are free to connect and make independent plans with your fellow Wild Women at the hotel.

Date: Thursday, March 7th, 2024

Meals Included: None

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel



Meet your fellow Wild Women and Tip Top II ship representative at the Quito Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) before proceeding to check-in. We'll board a domestic flight to Baltra Airport (GPS) on Baltra Island, Galápagos. A Wild Women guide will be waiting for our group at the arrivals gate of Baltra Airport. A short 5km shuttle will take us to the pier where we will board the Tip Top yacht by panga. Start looking for land iguanas and Darwin's finches on the barren island studded with prickly pear cacti and

skeletal Palo Santo (Holy Stick) trees. At the pier expect a welcoming committee of cormorants drying their wings, fishing pelicans and dozing sea lions! As the crew weighs anchor, our guide will provide a brief introduction and ship orientation over a light snack and local fruit juice prior to lunch.

After lunch, we will have our first wet landing on Mosquera Islet, just 20 minutes from the pier. This windswept reef of volcanic rock, coral fragments and wide expanse of powder-white sand beach is a fan favourite of sun-lovin' sea lions. They cluster in sleepy colonies or find independent nooks of their own among the bleached driftwood.

Crimson Sally lightfoot crabs appear like scattered Christmas decorations on the black basalt rock. Electric yellow warblers like to hop around the shoreline and fearlessly alight near the prehistoric marine iguanas occupying the prime beach real estate. Keep watch for the red-billed tropicbird and its kite-like white tail streamers as it takes dramatic vertical plunges to feed.

In the evening, after a solid introductory dose of wonder, we'll gather for a deeper discussion about the origin and evolution of the Galapagos Islands. Afterwards, we'll meet the M/C Tip Top II crew and celebrate our expedition with a bubbly cocktail before an impressive three-course dinner.

Meals Included: Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Baltra Island



After navigating for a few hours in the star-studded night, we will awake in the looming volcanic shadows of the isles of Santiago and Rabida. After a sweet and savoury breakfast offering, we will make a wet landing on Sullivan Bay, to learn about the magma-deep origin of the islands. This 30-minute walk is a relaxed and incredible opportunity to walk on a field of 100-year-old hardened lava. It undulates and wrinkles like elephant skin and chocolate macaroons.

The ropy lava or “pahoehoe” underfoot is actually a Hawaiian term meaning ‘braids.’ Walking across such natural history elicits all sorts of comparisons and respect for the earth’s violence and evolution.

The silence here can be unsettling but will be embraced by those who seek meditative moments. Little life exists here beyond the odd locust, tiny coral-like Mullogo plants sprouting in the fissures and resilient lava cactus.

On the panga ride back to the ship, be on high alert for the curious, tiny Galapagos penguins, blue-footed boobies, lava herons and sea turtles below! The silver and gold flashes are probably mullets (fish, not 80s hair!). We will return to the boat for a filling lunch distracted by the views of the cinnamon hills and basalt rock beyond the ship's dining room windows!

In the afternoon we will have the opportunity for a calm kayak (tandem) along the sheltered shoreline where boobies and pelicans pay little attention to the human commotion. Fun fact: You can determine the sex of a booby by their pupil size. Males have pinprick pupils while females have substantially larger pupils.

After kayaking, we'll jump in the pangas for a wet landing on Rabida Island to see the sea lions that have gathered along the paprika-coloured sandy beach to absorb the last rays of the day. Look for sea stars of all sizes, creating an unexpected constellation on the beach.

On this short walk, we'll split from the sandy beach in hopes of finding white-cheeked pintail ducks and bubblegum pink flamingos hanging out in the small saltwater lagoon. There are only 400 flamingos found in the Galapagos—seeing them in their natural habitat is a pure treasure. There are eleven lagoons in the Galapagos where new and old nests have been found by park rangers and their increased presence is encouraging.

We'll walk back along the shore in the glow of the syrupy sunset. On the equator, the sunset is predictable and fast—the silhouettes of Rabida and the sea lions make for an incredible photo opp..

Depending on the day and flamingo activity, we'll have a nightly briefing before or after dinner. Tonight, while we are sleeping, we will cross the equatorial line as our captain navigates us around Isabela Island to our next southern destination.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Santiago Island, Rabida Island



After an early breakfast, we make a dry landing on Espinoza Point to observe the enormous colony of marine iguanas that inhabit the isle. This is where the Planet Earth II episode featuring the harrowing chase scene between dozens of racer snakes and a young iguana was filmed. There are hundreds of iguanas here, camouflaged on the rocks—sometimes only noticed when they snort salt water from their flared nostrils.

We'll also see sea lions, green sea turtles, Great blue herons and lava herons stalking their lunch. This is biodiversity at its best and the aquarium-clear tidal pools illuminate the motley crew of relationships. Sally lightfoots scurry along, sometimes right up and over the iguanas. Smaller lizards use the stock-still iguanas as lounge chairs—sometimes perching right on their heads. The flightless cormorant is found here too—this endemic species is only seen on Fernandina and Espanola! Long ago the species realized it didn't have to fly to seek out a food source. Instead, the cormorant relied on swimming and essentially stopped the exhaustive flights. Much like humans and their evolution pattern of UberEats versus cooking at home. The flightless cormorants are comical to watch as they spread their now-phantom wings to dry, as though they still have their wingspan of the past.

Above the mangroves, keep watch for the effortless glide of the Galapagos hawk. On the water's surface, look for the activity of penguins. Underfoot, marvel at the remains of perfect pencil urchins!

Before lunch, we can snorkel or opt for a panga ride. Snorkelers will be rewarded with toothy parrotfish, chocolate chip starfish and hognose fish. There's always a chance for a penguin or sea lion swim-by too. Those who opt for the panga will be able to see many fish and rays as well due to the gin-clarity of the water!

After lunch, we'll have a 4-hour navigation that will be peppered with whale spouts. Bryde's whales following clouds of krill add to the thrill of being on the upper deck. Once anchored, we'll take a panga ride around the islets of Elizabeth Bay and into the mangrove lagoon. Here, countless sea turtles float in a suspended dance. Keep binoculars at the ready for sightings of the black-billed ani, warblers, lava herons, finches, boobies and whimbrel.

After dinner, we'll gather for a deep-dive into the geology of the Galapagos. If time permits, there might be a slide show of the underwater images captured earlier in the day by the snorkelers. Tonight, there will be a three hour navigation back to Urbina Bay so we can rise, down some punchy coffee and strike off early on a walk tomorrow morning!

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II
GPS Setting: Isabela Island



After breakfast, we will have a wet landing on the surprising surface of Urbina Bay. The shoreline was elevated more than 4 metres from sea level in the 1950s during the eruption of the Alcedo Volcano. We will be walking on what was once the sea floor! Dried corals, mollusks and other sea creatures remain imprinted like geological tattoos. We'll also find the skeletal remains of giant tortoises who died of natural causes. The bones and shell fragments show the incredible anatomy of the

centenarians.

On Urbina we will find pancake-sized sand dollars, Dijon-coloured land iguanas, flightless cormorants, mockingbirds full of song, tree finches and giant tortoises—provided they haven't toddled off to find shade. Our naturalist will point out the poisonous apple trees and translucent berries of the muyoyo and their significance.

Before lunch, we can snorkel or hop on a panga ride to look for marble and spotted eagle rays skating below the surface. Whether you choose to go above or below the surface, penguins, sea turtles, diving boobies and brown noddy terns, tuna and Sally lightfoot crabs will follow.

In the afternoon, we'll kayak around Tagus Cove, situated between the shoulders of two hulking volcanic craters which protect it from the open sea. This cove was a treasured anchoring site for pirates and whalers—and they certainly left their mark. On the cliffs you will see the names of dozens of ships that have been carved and painted onto the surface. This practice is now prohibited of course!

For those who want to check out Darwin Lake, there will be an interpretive hike planned to explore the dry vegetation zone, Darwin volcano's remains and the stellar view from above.

The hike takes less than an hour and begins with a steep incline up natural stone stairs and wooden steps until it flattens out through the perfumed forest of Palo Santo trees.

Tonight, depending on the time of crossing and if the captain gives the A-OK, we might have the opportunity to visit the ship's bridge to watch the GPS roll to 0'0'0' as we cross the equatorial line again!

It will be a full night of navigation (around 11 hours) as we make our way back to Bartolome.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Isabela Island



After an early breakfast, we will make a wet landing on Santiago Island. James Bay (Puerto Egas) is the site of an abandoned salt mine that belonged to the government of Ecuador in 1963. On a relaxed coastal walk, we'll search for yellow-crowned night herons, scorpions, green and pencil urchins and acacia ("Galapagos rosemary"). And hornitos! Though it sounds like something salty and tempting to eat with guacamole, it's actually a unique conical oven-shaped mound of lava.

The beach and its eroded rock formations are a cool place to poke around for sponges, snails, crabs, barnacles and intertidal life like the four-eyed blenny. Researchers are frequently stationed here, observing sea lions and sea turtle populations.

Before lunch, there will be time to go for a dip, snorkel or panga ride. This is a perfect place to look for Franklin's gulls and noddies landing on pelican heads as they fish. Yes, they are cherry-picking freeloaders!

After lunch, there will be another opportunity to snorkel in search of whitetip reef sharks, penguins and mosaic starfish. Or, grab your journal, novel or sketchbook and take advantage of some lazy beach time.

Look for the tell-tale divots of nesting sea turtles! Later, we will have a dry landing on Bartolome Island where we will hike to the super scenic summit. This windswept landscape is dotted with a few tiquila plants (not that kind! Skip the lime and salt!) and is dramatically lunar-like with its spatter cones and lava tubes.

On the summit, we'll take in an unmatched sunset view of the crescent beaches below, surrounding islands, and the iconic eroded tuff cone of Pinnacle Rock (which was once used as target practice by the US Army). The walk is steep but with a secure boardwalk and staircase to the top.

We'll gather after dinner for a chat about the next day and possibly share photos of the day's snorkeling highlights on the big screen.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Santiago Island & Bartolome Island



Before breakfast, we'll make a dry landing on Chinese Hat (Sombrero Chino), a small island with a porcelain white coral beach on the coast of Santiago Island. Spatter cones (hornitos) and small lava tubes provide an irresistible backdrop for photographers honing in on playful sea lions and seemingly morose marine iguanas.

The red carpet weed is a brilliant, nearly neon contrast to the black lava rock.

Lava herons and oystercatchers with carrot-orange bills poke along the shore while bull sea lions patrol, protecting their harem. The tidal pools are crystalline—look for sun stars and urchins! Candelabra cacti and the indigo sea create a knock-out juxtaposition. Just add a spotted eagle ray taking flight over the surface of the water, flipping its angelic body to remove crustaceans with each propelled turn.

We'll navigate for 2 hours (keep looking for Bryde's whales and sea turtles alongside the ship!) and have lunch al fresco on the top deck if conditions permit.

Later in the afternoon, we'll make a dry landing on Dragon Hill where you can opt for an interpretive walk or beach time. On the walk we'll see land iguanas; and a hypersaline lagoon (saltier than the ocean) that is known to attract flamingos. Feral dogs and goats were eradicated from this island in 1990 and massive efforts were made to build a peninsula that would protect iguana populations. Almost all of the iguanas here are repatriated and are successfully reproducing. The Dragon Hill trail cuts through three radically different environments—we'll check out land iguana nests and be followed by mockingbirds.

We'll begin navigating after dinner towards Puerto Ayora, on Santa Cruz Island.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Santa Cruz Island



After breakfast we will take a panga to Puerto Ayora's main pier and transfer to a bus that will take us into the highlands. We'll visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, the Twin Craters (collapsed magma domes) and a lava tunnel that has delighted many with its resident barn owl.

The Darwin Research Station is a wonderful wander through conservation efforts that support the safe release of young tortoises to

the islands (once they reach the age of five or 20cm in length—this size allows them proper defense from introduced predators like rats, dogs and pigs). Since 1970, over 2000 'galapaguitos' (artificially incubated eggs from Pinzon, Santiago and Santa Cruz Islands) have been born, reared and returned to their native areas. The semi-natural pens are divided according to the four different stages of development: eggs, neonates, juveniles and adults.

The Fausto Llerena Tortoise Breeding Center at the Charles Darwin Research Station is dedicated to the 43-year service of tortoise keeper Fausto Llerena, who cared for Lonesome George.

He was the last known Pinta Island tortoise—George died at the Breeding Center on June 24, 2012. His body was shipped to New York to be taxidermied. Spending a few minutes in the climate-controlled environment of Lonesome George is a dynamic moment that won't be forgotten.

Learn more about Darwin's unswervable passion and marvel at the skeletons of Bryde's whale and blue-footed booby in the center. There are also revolving photo exhibits by children and university students.

With Lonesome George's shadow on our shoulders, we'll travel through an ever-changing forest of banana, mango, guava and Spanish cedar to a local ranch that serves as a sanctuary for giant tortoises. Wild tortoises can be seen along the roadway—they often create traffic jams with their slow-mo crossings! Have your camera at the ready for the tortoise crossing caution signs!

We'll have lunch at the ranch and enjoy all the spoils: close encounters with the tortoises, moor hens and signature Boobies beer! The restaurant also provides fiery samples of the local moonshine infused with passionfruit and coffee.

Smiley from our sacred time in the company of tortoises, we will return to Puerto Ayora for some free time in the 'city.' Be sure to check out the local fish market (it attracts buyers AND birds of all species! Pelicans, frigates, gulls!) and Santa Cruz Brewery, the first craft brewery in the Galapagos. Support local shop owners and artisans on your search for the perfect take-home reminder of the enchanted isles.

We'll meet in a few hours at the pier to take a panga back to our ship for a farewell cocktail and dinner. Tonight we will be anchored in the twinkly glow of Puerto Ayora.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: M/C Tip Top II

GPS Setting: Santa Cruz Island



Before breakfast, we'll take advantage of a dry landing for an early walk along the rugged coast and interior of North Seymour Island. It's a gorgeous collection of everything we've seen in the last week: boobies, frigates, sea lions, Sally lightfoots, iguanas...

This entirely flat island that was uplifted from the sea by underground seismic activity and this last look, feel and deep inhale of the Galapagos won't be forgotten.

We'll return to the ship for a nourishing breakfast and one last panga ride to the dock. Our guide will accompany us on the bus ride directly to the airport. Note: one of our Wild Women guides is known for her territorial sea lion call and you will definitely hear it as she departs the airport!

The 3-hour flight back to Quito (UIO) will arrive in the late afternoon. From Quito, you can opt to spend a few days exploring the city's vibe or continue your adventure on the Amazon Extension!

A note about island walks and snorkeling: The ships anchor offshore and passengers are ferried to the landing point in pangas (Zodiac-style inflatable boats). The landings can be a wet or dry exit. Wet exits mean you will be entering ankle or knee-deep water and wading to shore. Dry exits permit you to step directly on to land/volcanic rock or a natural pier. There will be a guide and/or crew member to assist with your entry and exits from the boat to land. On the Islands, the trails are marked by the National Park and must be followed. Your guide will describe the terrain of each island so you are prepared and know what shoes to wear and what to expect. The walks are no longer than 2 hours and allow for ample time to take photos, explore and meditate. In addition to the guided land excursions, there are opportunities to go deep water snorkeling (with wet exits off the panga) or to snorkel from the beach (walk-in entry).

Meals Included: Breakfast

Tonight's Sweet Sleep: Your own bed, at home! (*Provided you're not going on the extension!)

GPS Setting: North Seymour Island & Baltra Island



BERTH SPECIFICS

All cabins offer incredible ocean views and a private bathroom with hot/cold water and air conditioning with independent controls. Cabins on the upper level (four) have private balconies and are available on a first come, first-served basis to those who opt for the single supplement.



Traveling as a couple? We have a limited number of rooms with double beds. For more details on accommodation options, please inquire for adventure@wildwomenexpeditions.com!



Please note that there is no Wi-Fi on the ship for most of the trip's duration. Close to Santa Cruz island, on Day 7, a signal may be picked up but is not guaranteed.

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

IS THIS TRIP RIGHT FOR ME?

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

- Entering and exiting the Zodiacs
- Maneuvering around in tight spaces
- Walking on uneven terrain
- Being on a boat for extended periods of time
- Due to strong currents, there will be moderate movement of the vessel while navigating (most passengers are not affected)
- Physical Rating: 2 of 5. Easy > Some physical activity included

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return domestic flights from Quito (UIO) to Baltra, Galápagos (GPS) (\$600USD value)
- Park permit (\$100 USD value)
- TCT - Transit Control Card (\$20 USD value)
- 8 transformative days and 7 nights aboard the 16 passenger, 104ft catamaran M/C Tip Top II
- Arrival day accommodations (Day 1/ March 7, 2024)
- All decadent meals, local juices and scrumpy snacks from lunch Day 2 to breakfast Day 9
- Snorkeling kit, wetsuits and tandem kayak equipment
- AWESOME female trip leader and naturalist
- All excursions and activities, as described in itinerary
- Transfers between airport and the dock
- Double occupancy berths
- Optional single room upgrade, subject to availability
- NOTE: alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, spirits) and soda pop are available on Tip Top II at an additional fee. A welcome cocktail and farewell drink are included.
- Optional Upgrade (Amazon Rainforest Extension), including the following:
 - - Return airfare from Quito-Coca-Quito
 - - River transportation to Coca - Napo Wildlife Center
 - - Entrance to Yasuni National Park and parrot clay licks
 - - Bilingual female guide
 - - Rubber boots provided at tortoise ranch
 - - On-board library of local fish, bird and wildlife guides
 - All applicable taxes are included in the trip price