

ECUADOR & GALAPAGOS

11 - 24 MAY 2025

FROM
£8,780
PER PERSON

Tour Leaders: Tom and Libby Owen Edmunds


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY



The 'enchanted isles' of the Galapagos need little introduction. Located some 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific, this archipelago of hauntingly beautiful volcanic islands first came to the world's attention with the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and remains a treasure trove of natural history, wildlife and ecology.

Aboard the Monserrat, a comfortable 10-berth vessel with the relaxed intimacy of a private yacht, we will have six nights to explore the islands in the company of experienced naturalist guides. Sturdy, inflatable zodiacs will be used to ferry us to shore for land excursions, but there will be plenty of time as well for snorkelling, kayaking and stand-up paddle-boarding.

May is the perfect time to visit the islands. Seas should be calm, skies clear and the heat of the equatorial sun tempered by light Pacific breezes. Massed ranks of waved albatross will also just have landed on the southern island of Espanola.

Galapagos fauna have little or no fear of man, so we will get within touching distance, literally, of all the most iconic species – albatross, boobies, flamingo, frigate birds, penguin, land and marine iguana, fur seal and giant tortoise.

After disembarking the Montserrat, we will spend a few days at a remote eco-lodge on edge of the Napo River in the Yasuni National Park. Located in 53,500 acres of prime Amazonian rainforest, there are more species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians on the doorstep than can be found in the entire United States of America. There are over 550 known types of birds alone in this neck of the woods – and so many different plants that many remain unclassified and undiscovered.



Marine Iguanas



Giant Tortoise



Punta Cormorant

14-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 11 MAY 2025

11 May London / Madrid / Quito

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) with Iberia via Madrid departing London Heathrow at 06.20 hrs. Arrive Quito at 17.10 hrs. Group transfer to the Casona de la Ronda Hotel, a charming heritage boutique hotel located on the edge of the UNESCO-listed historic old town, where one night is spent. Welcome drinks and dinner at the hotel.

12 May Quito / San Cristóbal

Morning transfer to Quito Airport for a domestic flight to San Cristobal Island.

Lunch on board the boat. Afternoon visit to Tijeretas hill whose name is thanks to the frigate birds referred to locally as 'Tijeretas'. Here, enjoy a great view of beautiful landscapes at the foot of a frigate bird nesting colony. Continue to the Galapagos Interpretation Centre to learn about the history of the Galapagos Islands from the very beginning of their volcanic origins through to today's conservation efforts. Tour the Human History exhibit to learn about the islands' discovery and colonisation and discover the natural history and variety of flora and fauna that make the Galapagos so fascinating. Return to the boat for dinner on board.

13 May Española Island

Enjoy the day on Española Island, one of the oldest in the archipelago. Morning visit to the white sandy

beach of Gardner Bay. Spend the morning exploring on shore and snorkelling in the beautiful turquoise water at Gardner Bay. Spot young sea lions and large schools of surprisingly big tropical fish, including yellow-tailed surgeonfish, king angelfish, and bump-head parrot fish. Look for white-tipped reef sharks napping on the bottom.

After lunch on board, sail to the western side of the islands to Punta Suárez, one of the richest wildlife landing sites in the Galapagos, known for its amazing bird colonies and home to the waved albatross. Dinner on board.

14 May Floreana Island

Land at Punta Cormorant on Floreana Island and discover two amazingly different beaches: one with green sand, coloured by olivine crystals, and another with white sand particles known as 'Flour Beach'. Observe flamingos and other shore birds feeding in the lagoon. Spot penguins and marine iguanas at the water's edge and explore the lava tubes. End the morning snorkelling at Champion Islet where you can get up close and personal with the playful sea lion colony that reside in the waters off this tiny island. Keep an eye out for sea turtles, rays and colourful fish swimming by.

After lunch on board, visit Post Office Bay and learn about its

unique history. In the late 18th century, English whaling vessels placed a barrel here to be used as a post office. Today, the box is used mainly by tourists, who may drop off and pick up unstamped letters to be carried to far destinations. Dinner on board.

15 May Santa Cruz Island

Disembark in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island to visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, a scientific organisation initiated in 1964 to preserve the ecosystem of the Galapagos, and the Fausto Llerena Breeding Centre to see the iconic giant Galapagos tortoises which were brought back from the brink of extinction. A corral houses adult tortoises and a nursery cares for the young until around age three when their shells have hardened.

Lunch on board. In the afternoon, enjoy a walk in the highlands where you might be lucky to see the Galapagos giant tortoise in its natural surroundings. See some of the amazing volcanic formations and keep an eye out for the mainly nocturnal barn owls that sometimes roost here. Dinner on board.

16 May Dragon Hill / Chinese Hat

This morning visit Dragon Hill on the west coast of Santa Cruz. Take a short walk from the beach to a hypersaline (saltier than the ocean) lagoon frequented by pink flamingos,



Sea Lions



Napo Wildlife Centre



Blue Footed Booby

common stilts, pintail ducks, and other species of birds. Pass through a Scalesia tree forest; endemic to the area, as there are only 400 specimens of Scalesia trees left in the world.

Lunch on board. In the afternoon, the boat arrives at a small uniquely shaped island off the southern tip of Santiago called Chinese Hat. Here, it is often possible to see Galapagos penguins, and the marine life is fantastic for snorkelling. There is also a large sea lion colony as well as many marine iguanas that can be seen while walking amongst the volcanic scenery. Dinner on board.

17 May Genovesa Island

Today we will be visiting the beautiful and remote Genovesa Island. This northern island, famous for its red-footed booby colony, is a paradise for bird lovers. It is estimated that about 200,00 red-footed boobies live on this island. Morning visit to El Barranco or Prince Philips's Steps after a visit by the British Monarch in 1964. El Barranco's steep 81-foot stairway leads up to a high cliff-face that opens out onto the plateau surrounding Darwin Bay. At the top of the steps, we will meet Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, mockingbirds, and finches along the way of a palo santo trail. It will also be possible to see wedge-rumped storm petrels swarm and short-eared owls.

Lunch on board. Afternoon visit to Darwin Bay which was formed by the collapse of the flooded caldera

of Tower Island, another name used for Genovesa. After landing at a small sand and coral beach, it is easy to realise why this island is a bird lover paradise. Among the bird species found here, the most common are swallow-tailed and lava gulls, mockingbirds, yellow-crowned night herons, lava herons, Galapagos doves and yellow warblers. Continue on a short and flat trail to encounter red-footed booby and great frigatebird nests. Visit a tidal lagoon where sea lions swim playfully ending our path on a cliff with magnificent views of this remote part of the Galapagos. Dinner on board.

18 May Baltra Island/ Quito

Enjoy a morning panga ride around the mangroves at Black Turtle Cove to find rich marine wildlife between the fresh and salt waters. Keep any eye out for manta rays and sea turtles in this tranquil ecosystem. Whitetip reef sharks can also be seen gliding by. Disembark on Baltra Island and transfer to the airport for a late morning flight to Quito.

Lunch under own arrangements. On arrival in Quito, transfer to the Casona de la Ronda Hotel where a further one night is spent. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

19 May Quito / El Coca / Yasuni National Park

Morning transfer to Quito Airport for a domestic flight to El Coca flying over the eastern Andes mountain range. On arrival, transfer to the

port and board a boat for your river transfer to Napo Wildlife Centre, a stunning eco-lodge located in a tributary of the Napo River in the Amazon rainforest, where three nights are spent.

Picnic lunch on the boat. After arriving at Napo Wildlife Centre, entry dock, disembark for a majestic and peaceful paddle canoe ride surrounded by trees and wildlife, paddling along a narrow creek that connects to the lake where the lodge is located. Look out for various species of monkeys as well as large birds like toucans, parrots, or even macaws. Late afternoon arrival at the lodge. Enjoy a welcome drink with an overwhelming view of the Añangu Lake. Dinner at the lodge.

20 May Yasuni National Park

An early start to reach the most accessible parrot clay licks in Ecuador. Guests reach this destination just before parrot activity kicks off at the clay lick to ensure the best viewing experience. A total of 11 species of parrots, parakeets, and macaws can be seen on a daily basis. Later, hike along a forest trail to visit the Kichwa Community of Añangu and share time with a family on one of their many activities.

Lunch at Napo Cultural Centre with people of the Kichwa community. Return to the creek and enjoy a short hike through a Terra Firme Forest until we arrive at the second parrot clay lick. Return to the lodge for dinner.



21 May Yasuni National Park

Leave the lodge to experience an amazing view of the rainforest from a 36-metre-tall canopy tower, a great way to see the hustle and bustle of life above ground-level deep within the Terra Firme forest. As you ascend the 12-floor tower, you pass through different levels of the forest and emerge at the top of a huge Ceiba tree. Flocks of colourful tanagers pass right through the canopy of the tree. Blue-and-yellow macaws fly past while, in nearby trees, adorable spider monkeys search for fruit. Two species of large toucans call in the early mornings and afternoons, and the life of the forest canopy is laid out before you. Birds that are virtually impossible to see from the forest floor far below are suddenly right beside you, usually oblivious to your presence.

Lunch at the lodge. Afternoon walk to discover another Terra Firme trail along primary forest where you might find lizards, colourful manakins, or the unique and endemic golden-mantled tamarin monkey. After the hike, explore the lake and creeks in a dugout canoe and enjoy a likely chance meeting with our local giant otter family on the way. Dinner at the lodge.

22 May Yasuni National Park / El Coca / Quito

Early departure from the lodge by canoe back to the Napo River. The creek may reveal new sights of giant otters, monk saki monkeys, and rare birds along the way. Once we have reached the river, you will transfer

to the motorized boat to return to El Coca. On arrival in El Coca, transfer to the airport for a domestic flight to Quito.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Casona de la Ronda Hotel where a final one night is spent. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

23 May Quito/ Madrid

Morning walking tour of Quito's colonial quarter, the largest and best preserved of South America and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The stroll starts at the Independence Plaza, flanked by the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace, the Municipal Building and the Archbishop's Palace. Visit the temple of La Compañía de Jesús and its awe-inspiring gilded interior. Continue to the Monastery of San Francisco, one of the great religious buildings of the New World with its impressive façade and Baroque interior influenced by Moorish style, and with the winged Virgin of Quito at its main altar.

Lunch in a local restaurant. Group transfer to Quito Airport for suggested Iberia flights to London Heathrow via Madrid departing at 18.05 hrs.

24 May Madrid / London

Arrive at London Heathrow at 14.55 hrs.

N.B. Please note that this trip does involve a substantial amount of walking and a certain level of fitness is required.

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

LOWER DECK CABIN	£8,780
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT LOWER DECK	£2,980
UPPER DECK CABIN	£9,080

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Domestic flights in Economy Class
- Galapagos entrance fees
- Breakfast daily; 10 lunches; 11 dinners
- Mineral water at meals included in the itinerary
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions
- Group transportation as per the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals
- Gratuities to guide/s; gratuities to driver/s and boat staff
- Porterage
- Use of stand-up paddle boards and kayaks on the Monserrat
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- The services of your tour leaders throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Visas
- Alcoholic drinks at meals
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 23/02/24





Monserrat



MONSERRAT FACT SHEET

Refurbished in 2021, the Monserrat was specially built to cruise in the Galapagos islands in the most comfortable way while providing the highest levels of safety and care for the environment.

The yacht has many social exterior and interior areas for passengers to enjoy while they relax after a day of excitement in the Galapagos. Exterior areas include a sun-bathing area in the Upper Deck as well as a partially covered area on the Sun Deck all with reclining chairs. Additionally, the Monserrat has an elegant interior dining room, bar and lounge on Main Deck.

Monserrat has the highest naturalist guide/guest ratio with 1 naturalist for every 10 guests.

Accommodation

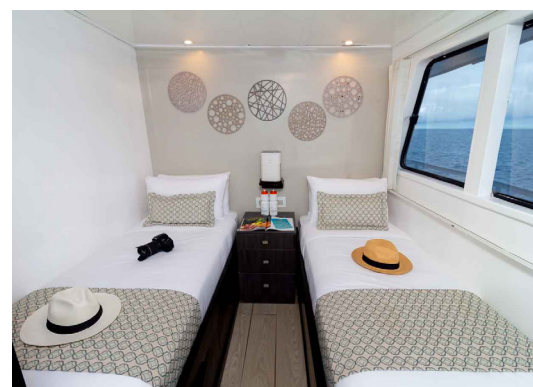
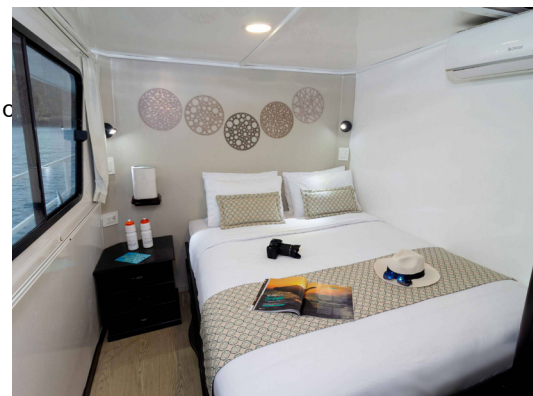
The Monserrat has 7 twin cabins and 3 double bed cabins located in the lower and upper decks of the yacht. All cabins have a private bathroom and air conditioning. Our 6 upper deck cabins all have windows while our 4 lower deck cabins have portholes with great interior natural light. All our rooms include en-suite bathrooms with hairdryers and toiletries.

Lower Deck Cabins

There are 4 cabins on the lower deck (2 double-bedded and 2 twin-bedded) with portholes.

Upper Deck Cabins

There are 6 cabins on the upper deck (1 double-bedded and 5 twin-bedded) with large windows





YOUR TOUR LEADERS

TOM AND LIBBY OWEN EDMUNDS



Tom Owen Edmunds is a Senior Adviser on rainforest and conservation with the World Resources Institute (WRI), a Washington-based think tank specialising in climate and environment issues.

Tom started his working life as a photographer specialising in wildlife and travel, including numerous assignments in Latin America. In 1994 he was described by the British Journal of Photography as 'one of the world's leading travel photographers'. He has shot assignments in over 100 countries, published books on Bhutan and Mexico, and photographed the books that accompanied the BBC *Great Journeys* series, taking him round the world 14 times, over 24 episodes.

From 1997-2019 Tom moved between aid and diplomatic posts with the UK Foreign Office, his last post as Head of the UK Climate Change Unit in the British Embassy in Jakarta. Previously, he held posts in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and London, and was Private Secretary to the Minister for Film, Broadcasting and Tourism.

Tom sat on the Council of the Royal Geographical Society from 2003-6, and was elected one of the youngest ever Fellows of the Royal Photographic Society aged 24. He read Geography at Oxford University specialising in ecology and sustainable development. Tom has a life-long passion for wildlife and wild places.

Libby Owen Edmunds is a sustainable tourism expert advising governments and multilaterals including The World Bank, USAID, and UK's FCDO. Over the last twenty years she has worked in more than 15 countries, particularly focussing on issues around climate and poverty.



020 7386 4620 | ENQUIRY@THEULTIMATETRAVELCOMPANY.CO.UK | THEULTIMATETRAVELCOMPANY.CO.UK
25-27 VANSTON PLACE LONDON SW6 1AZ

