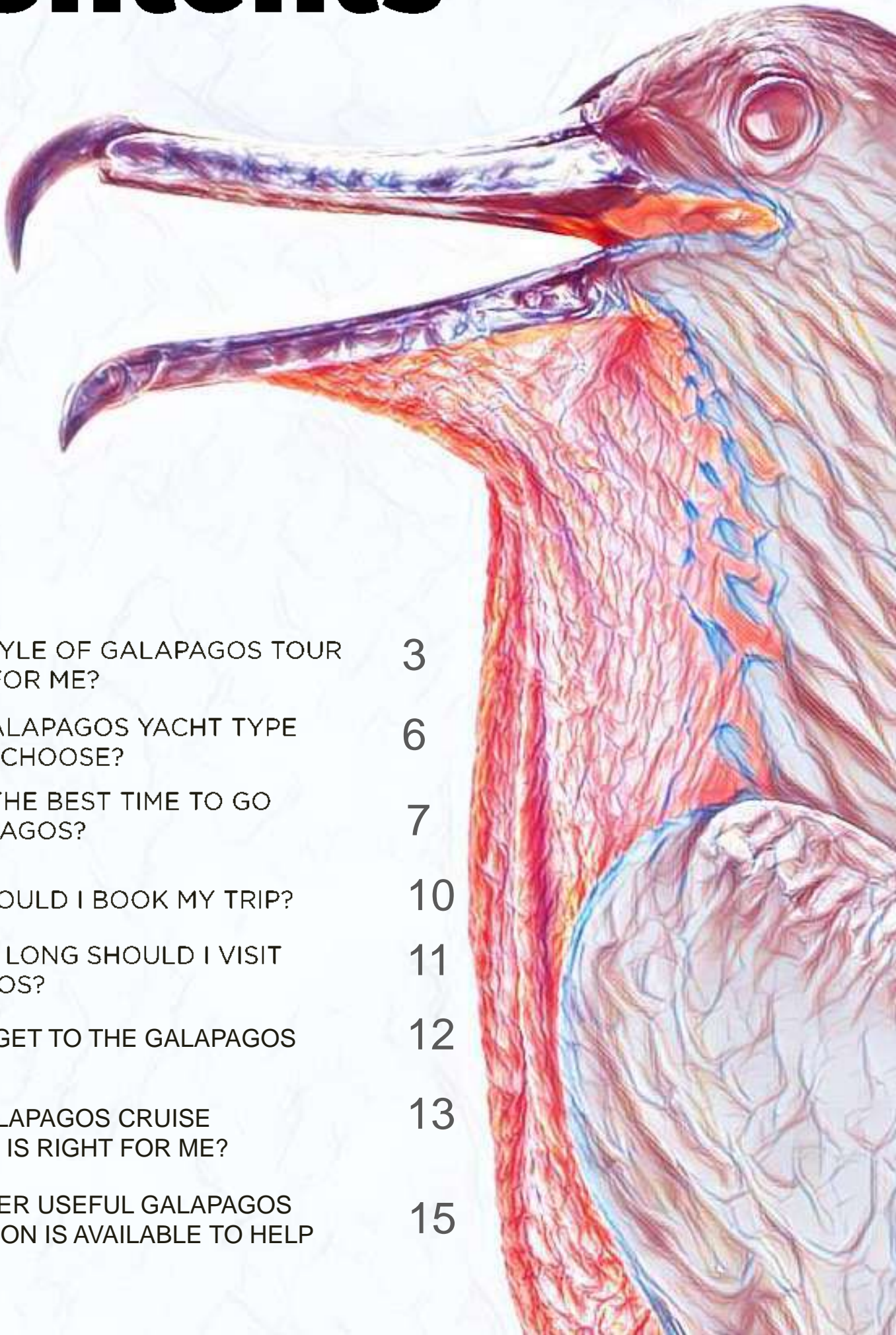




DUMMIES GUIDE TO GALAPAGOS TRIP PLANNING



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WHICH STYLE OF GALAPAGOS TOUR IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There are four different trip styles, this table explains the pros and cons of each one:



GALAPAGOS CRUISE: live-aboard a yacht that cruises between different islands each day.

Reach: gets you to the further away islands.

Diversity: visit more islands to see a greater range of wildlife.

Choice: large selection of yachts available.

Experience: fun of living aboard a yacht.

Popularity: most clients choose to cruise.



Sea-sickness: you will be aboard a yacht from start to finish so choppy seas can sometimes cause unpleasant moments.

Disruption: although uncommon cruises can be susceptible to mechanical issues.



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WHICH STYLE OF GALAPAGOS TOUR IS RIGHT FOR ME?



HOTEL-PACKAGE: base yourself in a Santa Cruz hotel with day tours to close-by islands.

Ease: a gentle tour for families or land-lovers.

Enjoyment: although much more limited than cruises you will of course still visit some incredible places!

Limits: you will only visit sites on or close to Santa Cruz thus missing out on far-away islands.

Sea-sickness: can still be an issue on the island hops, but at least you sleep on solid ground each night.



GALAPAGOS LAND TOURS: hop between a combination of the inhabited islands (Santa Cruz, Isabela, San Cristobal, Floreana) with hotel stay and day tours included at each site.

Ease: a happy medium, gentler than a cruise, more adventurous than a straight hotel-package.

Diversity: visit more islands than the hotel-package (but less than a cruise).

Enjoyment: although much more limited than cruises you will of course still visit some incredible places!

Limits: you will only visit sites on or close to inhabited islands.



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WHICH STYLE OF GALAPAGOS TOUR IS RIGHT FOR ME?



GALAPAGOS DIVE PACKAGE: for PADI divers there are specialist tour options which can be hotel or cruise based.

Specialty: focused solely on diving – Galapagos is one of the world's premier dive areas!

Flexibility: various options / choices available.

Limits: great for underwater life but limited for land visits.



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WHICH GALAPAGOS YACHT TYPE SHOULD I CHOOSE?



YACHT TYPE: you can choose between motor-yacht (regular style yacht), motor-sailor (designed like a sailing yacht but motor-operated, romantic design), catamaran (stable sailing and sleek, modern design), and cruise ship (larger vessel for traditional and stable cruising).



SIZE: standard small yachts carry 16 passengers, mid-sized vessels between 20 and 40, and cruise ships up to 120. Generally, the smaller the yacht the more intimate and adventurous the experience, while the larger ships offer greater stability in potentially rough seas and more space, so it is a trade-off.



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WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO TO GALAPAGOS?

The Galapagos islands are a year-round destination so there is no best or worst time to visit. Here are some points that might influence your decision before booking:



TOURIST HIGH SEASON

Runs through July and August, Christmas and New Year, and Easter week; during these periods prices are generally higher and there is a higher volume of tourists at the islands. If you wish to avoid tourist crowds, then travel outside of these dates will be best.

WEATHER - HAS 2 DISTINCT SEASONS:

- 1) Warm & Wet season (Jan to Apr/May) with calmer seas, average air temp 23-30C, average sea temp 25C.
- 2) Cool and Dry season (May/Jun to Dec) with slightly rougher seas between August and October, average air temp 20-26C, average sea temp 22C.



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WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO TO GALAPAGOS?



ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

does change each month but wildlife viewing is wonderful throughout the year and there is always something interesting going on! Different animals are active at different times of year and mating / birth habits vary between Galapagos species, the following table provides a summary of some of the main highlights:

January: Land birds nesting, Green Sea turtles lay eggs, Giant tortoise hatchlings.

February: Flamingo nesting (Floreana), Marine Iguana nesting (Santa Cruz), Nazca booby nesting Española, Giant tortoise hatchlings.

March: Marine Iguana nesting (Fernandina, North Seymour), waved albatross returns to Española (towards end of month), Giant tortoise hatchlings, Frigates inflate pouches on San Cristobal & Genovesa.

April: Waved albatross courtship (Española), Green sea turtle hatchlings, Land Iguana hatchlings (Isabela), blue-footed booby mating dance (North Seymour), Frigates continue mating on San Cristobal and Genovesa.

May: Blue-footed booby mating dance (North Seymour), Waved albatross lay eggs (Española), Green sea turtle hatchlings (Española & Santiago), Marine Iguana hatchlings (Santa Cruz).

June: Hump-backed whales pass through Galapagos, Whale sharks arrive to Darwin & Wolf islands, Short-eared owl mating on Genovesa.



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WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO TO GALAPAGOS?



July: Hump-backed whales pass through Galapagos, Whale sharks arrive to Darwin & Wolf islands, Flightless cormorants nesting on Fernandina, breeding of sea bird colonies, Blue-footed booby & Frigate chicks, Greater Flamingo courtship dance

August: Hump-backed whales pass through Galapagos, Whale sharks at Darwin & Wolf islands, Sea-lion birthing, Frigate chicks, Greater Flamingo courtship dance, Galapagos Hawk courting on Española & Santiago, Nazca booby nesting on Genovesa.

September: Hump-backed whales pass through Galapagos, Whale sharks at Darwin & Wolf islands, Penguins courting on Bartolome, Male sea lions fight to control harems, Seabird nesting.

October: Whale sharks at Darwin & Wolf islands, Fur seal mating season, Blue-footed booby chicks on Española & Isabela.

November: Whale sharks at Darwin & Wolf islands, playful Sea lion pups, Green sea turtle mating season.

December: Giant tortoise hatchlings, Waved albatross leave Galapagos, Green sea turtle mating season.



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WHEN SHOULD I BOOK MY TRIP?



Is it best to book my Galapagos trip in advance to avoid missing out? Or to wait it out for a cheaper last minute deal? The answer all depends on how flexible you are...



If there is a specific yacht / cruise date that you know is your dream trip then we highly recommend booking as far ahead as possible – lots of people are often chasing the same spots and the best yachts frequently sell-out, so why risk losing out?

If your aim is to save money and you are not really fussed about which Galapagos yacht you travel on then shopping for last minute deals in the weeks before you travel can save pennies and still give you a memorable Galapagos holiday, but the logistics of organizing the trip and making payment can be more stressful.



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FOR HOW LONG SHOULD I VISIT GALAPAGOS?



Galapagos Trips range from 4 to 15 days so how long you visit will depend on your budget and how much free time you have.

We consider 8 days to be the perfect visit to enjoy much of the biodiversity at Galapagos, or 5 or 6 days for a shorter visit. For a really in-depth experience at the islands then many yachts now also run 10-15 day cruises.



Before deciding on a Galapagos Cruise it is also important to remember that the first and last days of your trip are really only ½ days due to the flight schedules - on the first day your flight arrives to Galapagos late morning so the first tour activity is in the afternoon; similarly, on the final day the flights depart mid to late morning so there is only time for an early morning



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HOW DO I GET TO THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS?



The only way to reach Galapagos is to fly from Quito or Guayaquil in mainland Ecuador. Daily flights are operated by Tame, Aerogal and LAN airlines.

The flight time from Quito is 3 hours with a stop in Guayaquil on route, there is a time difference of 1 hour between Galapagos and Ecuador.



In most cases passengers choose to book the flights for their tour through Happy Gringo, but it is also usually possible to book your own flights directly with the airlines if you prefer – please consult with our sales staff first, they can advise you which flight you will need to book.



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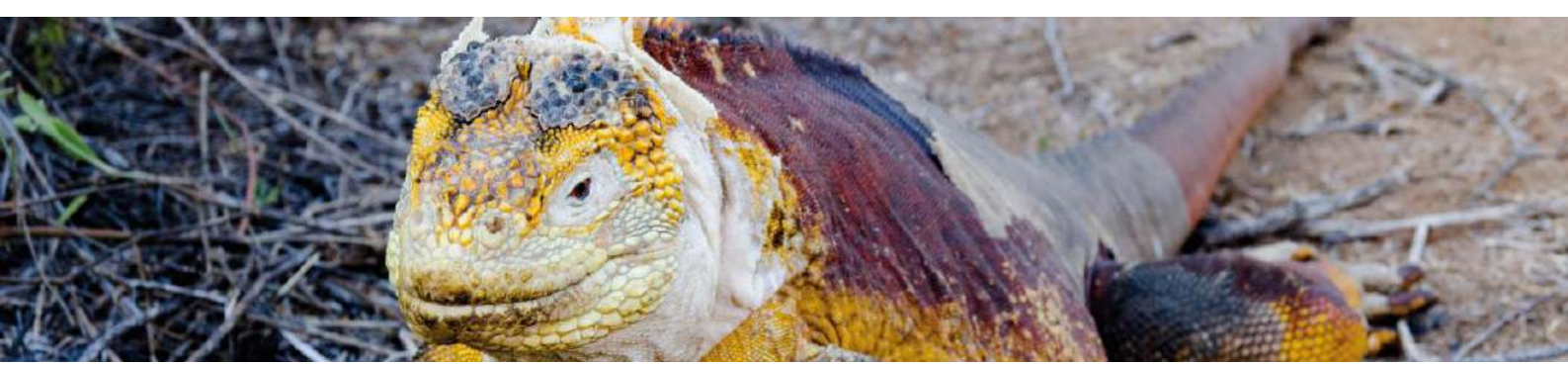
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WHICH GALAPAGOS CRUISE ITINERARY IS RIGHT FOR ME?



In truth there is no such thing as a “bad” itinerary at Galapagos – each island is unique, and there is incredible wildlife everywhere so any trip to Galapagos will be an unforgettable experience. That said of course some itineraries have advantages over others, so how best to compare them? To start you off consider that there are 3 main groups of islands that are commonly grouped together in yacht itineraries

SOUTHERN ISLANDS

(San Cristobal, Santa Fe, Plazas, Española, Floreana) – recommended for diversity of wildlife, especially Española which is the only place to see the waved-Albatross, and evidence of the human history of the islands.



NORTHERN ISLANDS

(Santiago, Bartolome, Rabida, North Seymour, Genovesa) – recommended for volcanic landscapes such as the classic pinnacle rock of Bartolome and the vast lava fields on Santiago. Wildlife is also interesting such as the red-footed booby colony on Genovesa and penguins at Bartolome.



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WHICH GALAPAGOS CRUISE ITINERARY IS RIGHT FOR ME?



WESTERN ISLANDS

(Isabela, Fernandina) – Fernandina and the western side of Isabela are the youngest and most volcanically-active islands, they offer a great combination of interesting wildlife (such as the flightless cormorant, **Galapagos penguin, and possible whale spotting**) as well as **breath-taking volcanic landscapes**.
Galapagos Islands

Much of the popular wildlife such as blue-footed boobies, sea lions, Frigate birds, giant tortoises, and marine iguanas can be seen on many different islands so you will see them on almost any itinerary. Other species such as the waved albatross (Española), Flightless Cormorant (Fernandina), Red-footed booby (Genovesa), and Galapagos penguin (Isabela and Bartolome) can only be found in specific visitor sites. So **if you have any specific “must-see” wildlife then some research is required before you book your Galapagos tour.**



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WHAT OTHER USEFUL GALAPAGOS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO HELP ME??

Check out our [Galapagos Map](#) for a complete list of visitor sites and wildlife that you can expect to see on each island, also our [Galapagos FAQ](#) page has a wealth of typical questions answered for you.



**CONGRATULATIONS!!! YOU ARE NOW
READY TO BOOK YOUR PERFECT
GALAPAGOS HOLIDAY**



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