



TRIP OVERVIEW

Join us on a once-in-a-lifetime swimming holiday in one of the most breathtaking locations on the planet: the Galapagos Islands! Lying on both sides of the equator in the Pacific Ocean, this vast volcanic archipelago is home to an abundance of plant and animal species not found anywhere else on Earth.

This trip offers you the opportunity to swim with a stunning array of marine life, including sea lions, sea turtles, manta rays, dolphins, marine iguanas and countless rare and exotic fish species. Sharing the water with these beautiful creatures is a truly life-changing experience - something which is only possible in this exact region of our vast planet.

With its incredible level of biodiversity, the Galapagos National Park and Galapagos Marine Reserve form a fascinating treasure trove of flora and fauna. Charles Darwin visited the islands in 1835, and, from his observations, developed and wrote his opus: *On the Origin of Species*.

This trip is a real wildlife exploration both above and below the water, as we swim in crater rims, around isolated islands and across beautiful bays. If you love the idea of getting up close and personal with stunning wildlife then this trip is definitely for you!

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip offers a fantastic combination of exploration, observation and swimming. It is ideal for anyone who is keen to swim along remote volcanic coastlines as they are to tread water and spot exotic wildlife beneath the waves.

Due to strong currents and choppy conditions, we recommended that swimmers are experienced in open water. The swims on this trip can present challenges, but are also extremely rewarding. Swimmers should be capable of completing the average swim distance of 2½ km, prior to the start of the trip. The average daily swim distance is around 4½ km (split over two swims).

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of our Galapagos trips.

Although swim locations and distances are provided, these are subject to change, depending on the weather and any changes issued by the National Park authorities.

TAILOR-MADE SWIMTREK TRIPS

This trip can also be offered as a tailor-made experience. The date of travel and itinerary can be adjusted to suit you. For more information [contact us](#) with the dates you'd like and number of people taking part. We'll be in touch to chat about putting together your dream swimming experience.



LOCATION SUMMARIES

Isabela

The largest island in the archipelago, Isabela was forged by the merger of six volcanoes (five of which are still active), making it one of the most volcanically active places on the planet. With a landscape made up of a mix of lava fields, dense vegetation and red mangroves, Isabela Island is home to a diverse wildlife population that often come right up to and interact with humans. It is an incredibly pretty island - a place you may want to consider extending your stay on.

Santa Fe Island

The dense vegetation of Santa Fe is made up of some of the largest species of cactus, including a prickly pear forest. The island also boasts its own indigenous Santa Fe land iguana, which is one of the largest land iguanas found on the islands.

Santa Cruz

The central island of the Galapagos archipelago is Santa Cruz. This island is a large dormant volcano and it is estimated that the last eruptions occurred around a million and a half years ago. Here we can find marine iguanas, exotic sea birds and Galapagos crabs, and, at a nearby natural mangrove, we can spot white tip sharks and the enormous Galapagos tortoise.

Cuatro Hermanos

Cuatro Hermanos, or the Four Brothers, is an archipelago of four uninhabited islands located near Isabela Island and is a popular area for diving. The islands are of volcanic origin and are cone shaped, as well as being carved by the motion of the waves. The islands are also home to a bird sanctuary and provide a great spot to observe several different seabird species.

TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	Baltra Airport, Baltra Island, Galapagos (Airport code: GPS)
Start Time	12:30 on Day 1
Finish Point	Baltra Airport, Baltra Island, Galapagos (Airport code: GPS)
Finish Time	10:30 on Day 7

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

Upon arrival at Baltra Airport on Baltra Island, just off the coast of Santa Cruz, you will be met and escorted to the VIP lounge by our local partners, who will take care of all of your arrival paperwork and luggage collection. You will then board our Catamaran with your fellow swimmers and transfer over to



Isabela Island for the commencement of our trip. This boat journey will give us up to three hours, depending on sea conditions, to view several of the archipelago's distant islands as we follow our course towards the peak of Volcan Wolf, which dominates the Isabela skyline ahead of us.

On arrival on Isabela we check into our accommodation. It is located on a beautiful sandy beach, providing an ideal opportunity for an acclimatisation swim. This short swim allows you to familiarise yourself with the local conditions. After some time to rest and relax we will meet for dinner at the hotel, included in your package.

Day 2

This morning we set off from Isabela's south side towards the iconic island of Tortuga, whose crater rim is the only remnant of an ancient collapsed volcano. The island is a nesting site for a large variety of seabirds, including frigatebirds and the elusive red-billed tropicbird, as well as being a sanctuary for sea lions and marine iguanas. The sides of the volcano's crater create a protected natural cove, which allows us to split our day into two swims; the first on the inside of the crater and the second on the outside edge. It really is a swimming experience quite unlike any other.

Day 3

After breakfast we head out on our support boats to Los Islotes Cuatro Hermanos (Four Brothers Islands), a group of rocky islands rising out of the Pacific Ocean off Isabela's east coast. They feature stunning underwater vistas and offer some of the archipelago's more adventurous swims. The swim routes here feature caves and tunnels with starfish and sea urchins lining the cliff edge, while the rare Galapagos fur seal can often be seen lying on ledges. Tropical fish can be found all around here and the islands are also well known for the local manta ray population. There are also good opportunities to see white tipped reef sharks, Californian sea lions and sea tortoises during these swims.

The swimming options here are so varied that we bring lunch with us, so we don't miss a thing. Throughout the day, there is an opportunity to snorkel, as well as swim, as the seafloor is so varied and flourishing with life. We may find ourselves staring at penguins or face-to-face with the most playful and delightful Galapagos native: the sea lion!

Day 4

Today is a day of exploration as we first travel to Floreana in the far south of the archipelago. Floreana is one of the oldest islands of the archipelago and is still volcanically active to this day. We visit its west coast. Here we'll take a snorkel as this perfectly preserved coastline is home to marine iguanas, Galapagos crabs and many species of birds dotted along the volcanic rocks - there is so much for us to see both above and below the water's surface! Upon completing our morning swim, we make our way back to the main hamlet of Puerto Velazco Ibarra where we take lunch in a local restaurant overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

We then transfer by boat to Santa Cruz, which is our base for the remainder of the trip and the centre of the Galapagos Islands' conservation efforts. After arriving at our hotel, we meet for a swim on the shore of Academy Bay, just next to the Charles Darwin Research Centre, giving you an opportunity to visit these headquarters of conservation within the Galapagos National Park. Dinner will be taken in the main town of Santa Cruz, so we can get familiar with the surroundings.



Day 5

After breakfast, we travel by boat to Santa Fe Island. Located southwest of Santa Cruz, this is one of the oldest islands in the Galapagos archipelago and a real favourite for swimmers. While we are unable to go ashore, we do swim along its dramatic coastline with its numerous blowholes, sea caves and protected bays. Colonies of Barrington land iguanas roam the island, and here we also have the opportunity to swim with the playful Californian sea lions which can often be found slipping in and out of the water on the island's rocky coastline.

The morning swim is a coastal trip along the dramatic western side of the island, after which we will take lunch on board our boats in the stunning Santa Fe Bay with its resident sea lion colony. In the afternoon we swim out from the bay and head east along cliff ledges, which are filled with frigate birds and seals.

Day 6

This morning we journey to the isolated island of Pinzon, which marks the geographic centre of the Galapagos Islands. Our first swim is a snorkel in a small cove that is home to vast numbers of sea lions and marine iguanas, a truly fantastic experience.

After lunch, we continue our swim clockwise around Pinzon. There are various bays and coves to explore here with a wide variety of marine life to discover. Our on hand naturalist guides are always ready to share their wealth of knowledge and are able to help you learn more about your surroundings. It's a wonderful way to bring to an end this week of swimming and exploring in the Galapagos Islands. After arriving back at Santa Cruz, we have our final dinner together as a group and reflect on the incredible experience that we've shared in the Galapagos Islands.

Day 7

For those departing the Galapagos today, there is an early morning transfer to Baltra Airport. As we drive north we climb into the highlands, which offer a lush contrast to the beaches and arid lowlands. On the way we stop to visit the Rancho Primicias where you'll see dozens of the world-famous Galapagos tortoises wandering and grazing freely in their natural habitat. We leave the Rancho to complete our journey to the airport and the end of our adventure.



TRIP INFORMATION

Essential Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	Item	✓	Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume x 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Goggles x 2*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes / Sandals / Walking Shoes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece / Waterproof Jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	High Factor Sunscreen and Zinc	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Camera
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sea Sickness Tablets (if susceptible)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rash Vest and Swim Leggings or Shorts**	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal Drink Bottle (x2)

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

**Due to the archipelago's location on the equator, the sun can be very strong and we strongly advise that you bring a rash vest and swim leggings or shorts with you.

SwimTrek will supply swim hats, water and electrolyte drinks. The guides will no longer distribute shared drinks bottles, but rather will fill up each individual guest's personal drink bottle. Please ensure these are clearly marked to help our guides identify yours. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest, snorkel or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you. For more on our Updated Packing List check out our [Covid-19 guidance](#).

Snorkel Equipment

Our boat partners in the Galapagos Islands will carry a limited range of snorkel equipment which can be used by our guests, however, if you have your own mask and snorkel that you'd like to use, we strongly encourage you to bring this along with you.

Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 16 people with two swim guides and a boat crew. The trip will be split into a maximum of two groups based on speed, each of which will be accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

TRIP GRADING

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

Swimming Distances

This tour varies from trip to trip because of the regulations set by the Galapagos National Park. For



conservation reasons, the amount of time we are allowed in the water will sometimes determine our swims rather than what is listed below. Due to the unique nature of this tour and the abundance of wildlife, we will undoubtedly be stopping to look at marine life which may affect the distances swum. As a rough guide, we plan to undertake the following swims:

Swim	Distance	Swim	Distance
Isla Tortuga	2 km	Isla Tortuga (Outer Rim)	1½ km
Hermano Mayor (Big Brother)	3½ km	Hermanito (Little Brother)	1½ km
Floreana La Loberia to Playa Negra	2 km	Academy Bay, Santa Cruz	1½ km
Santa Fe West Coast	2 km	Santa Fe East Coast	3 km
Pinzon Island	2½ km	Pinzon (from Dumb Islet)	2½ km

Swimming Conditions

The Galapagos Islands is one of the most diversified ecosystems anywhere on Earth. The variety of sea life is staggering, with sea lions, sea turtles, manta rays and penguins to name but a few. Swimming in the Galapagos is an unforgettable experience, however, you need to be aware that certain marine life such as jellyfish, sharks, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. All of our swims are carried out under the approval of the Galapagos National Park, who control the areas from where we can operate. In the areas that we swim, there is a long history of snorkeling and swimming, so sea life is used to human interaction. If you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Distances

Walking is not a focus of this trip it is necessary to do some walking to explore the shoreside wildlife.

Walking Conditions

The walks on this trip take place on footpaths and unsealed trails, as well as more challenging terrain, such as lava. We advise that appropriate walking shoes are worn for all walks. Please also note that on most days you can opt to stay on the boat rather than participating in walks, if you wish.

Temperatures

Month	Water Temperature*	Air Temperature*
January	22-26°C / 72-79°F	22-30°C / 72-86°F
February	23-29°C / 73-84°F	24-30°C / 75-86°F
March	23-30°C / 73-86°F	24-31°C / 75-88°F

* Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. Consequently, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes



to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

GETTING THERE

All flights to the Galapagos Islands are from mainland Ecuador, normally starting in **Quito** and then stopping in **Guayaquil Airport** before flying on to the islands. Due to arrival and departure times, it is often necessary to stay overnight in one of these cities during transit. From Quito or Guayaquil, you can catch a flight to Galapagos Islands.

As SwimTrekkers come from all over the world, and join our swimming holidays in numerous destinations, we don't currently offer flights as part of our SwimTrek packages. We do however want to do as much as we can to ensure that our guests get the best deals when travelling to one of our trips so check out [SwimTrek's tips to help you get the best deals for your flights](#) page on the website.

Flights from Quito/Guayaquil to Baltra

Once you arrive in either Quito or Guayaquil, there are several airlines which operate flights to Baltra (Seymour) Airport on Baltra Island (airport code: GPS). These airlines include Tame, Avianca and LATAM, who all operate morning flights to Baltra which arrive in time to catch the transfer below.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a limit for checked luggage on all flights to Baltra, normally 20kg per person.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Arrival Information

*If your flight arrives **before 12:30** on Day 1 of the trip, the following information applies:*

Upon landing at Baltra Airport, you will be met by a VIP team member, who will have a SwimTrek sign, to escort you to the VIP lounge. Here, you will have access to bathrooms, refreshments and comfortable seating. You will need to provide the VIP staff your passports, the US\$100 entrance fee and the luggage stub you will have received upon your earlier check in for your flight to Baltra. The staff will then collect your luggage and process all of the passport and entrance paperwork whilst you relax in the lounge. Once the last guests (whose flights are due to land before 12:30) have arrived, you will be escorted to a private van which will take you across Baltra Island (approx. 10 mins) to the Itabaca Canal. You'll then board our comfortable catamaran boat for the crossing to Isabela island.

*If you are arriving **before Day 1**, or after 12:30 on Day 1 please contact our partners at Galapagos Alternative to arrange transfers to your hotel, as well as transport for you to meet the rest of the guests on your SwimTrek trip. The Galapagos Alternative team can be reached via: info@galapagosalternative.com*

Departure Information

It is recommended that guests arrive at the airport at least two hours before their flight in order to check in and reach their departure gate in time. With this in mind, we recommend that guests book their outbound flights for 12:30 or later.

If you choose to book an earlier flight, there may be the option to take a taxi directly from our hotel to the



airport. This will mean that you miss out on the Ranch tour on Day 7. Please contact our partners at Galapagos Alternative to arrange this transfer: info@galapagosalternative.com

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

Due to the large distances between the islands, we stay at two different hotels during our trip; the Casa de Marita on Isabela Island and the Posada del Mar on Santa Cruz Island.

Casa de Marita is situated on a sandy beach near the small town of Puerto Villamil whilst Posada del Mar offers simple, local-style accommodation in the town of Puerto Ayora. Rooms at both hotels are based on twin share with ensuite facilities with a limited number of single occupancies and sea view upgrades available.

WiFi is available in both hotels, however, please be aware that it is often slow and unreliable, and it is sometimes only possible to connect in reception or other common areas.

Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you require additional nights' accommodation or you would like to book other tours or day trips before or after the SwimTrek tour, you can do so directly through our partners in the Galapagos Islands, Galapagos Alternative. They can be reached via email at: info@galapagosalternative.com.

If you are looking to extend your holiday, we recommend stopping over in Ecuador before or after your flights to the Galapagos Islands. Ecuador's capital Quito is a vibrant city with a well-preserved colonial centre.

Food and Drink

All breakfasts and lunches on Days 1 – 6 are included on the trip. Dinner on the first night (Day 1) is included in your package price, but all other dinners are at your own expense giving you a fantastic opportunity to explore and experience the local cafes and restaurants of your choice over the course of your trip. Please note that on occasion fresh fruit and vegetables can be in short supply on the islands and our local partners try to source all produce locally rather than importing from mainland Ecuador.

As a guide, dinners range from \$25-\$35 for set menus or buffets. Soft drinks are \$1-\$2 and beers are \$2-\$4. Please note that some restaurants may not accept payment by credit card so we recommend that you take some cash with you for these occasions.

Due to the quality of the drinking water, we recommend that you only drink bottled water whilst in the Galapagos. You should also use bottled water to brush your teeth. Complimentary water filling stations are available in both hotels.

Extra Activities

Included in the trip itinerary are wildlife watching ashore and during the swims there is time for snorkeling (see Trip Information section for advice on snorkeling equipment).



Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

Due to the unique nature of this trip, our payment terms vary slightly from other SwimTrek adventures. Our [Covid-19 flexible booking conditions](#) also do not apply for this trip.

The payment terms and conditions for our Galapagos Islands trips are as follows:

Payment Type	Due Date	Amount Due
Trip Deposit	At time of booking	25% of trip price
Final Balance	120 days prior to departure	Outstanding balance

You should bring extra money with you to cover items such as dinners, entertainment, souvenirs, etc. The local currency is US dollars and cash bills should be in good condition and small denominations as it is often difficult to change \$100 and \$50 bills on the islands. There are ATMs on Santa Cruz Island and at Baltra Airport, however, there are no ATMs on Isabela Island, so we recommend that you withdraw enough cash for your stay there before leaving Baltra on arrival.

All people entering the Galapagos Islands must purchase an INGALA Transit Control Card from the Consejo de Gobierno in Quito or Guayaquil Airport *before* departing for Galapagos. The price of this card is US\$20 and must be paid in cash at the INGALA window prior to checking in for your flight.

Upon arrival at Baltra Airport, a \$100 Galapagos National Park entrance fee per person must be paid in cash. (Please note that a member of the VIP team will collect this money from you and take care of the payment while you relax in the VIP lounge). This money is used to conserve and restore the land, water, and animal populations, and to educate the human population about conservation efforts throughout the islands. Please note that this fee must be paid *before* you reach the area of the airport where ATMs are available, so you will need to bring cash with you on your flight.

Isabela Island Entrance Tax is included in our trip price.

In some countries tipping (gratuities) is not part of the culture, in others it has become an expected norm. We believe that tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you have been provided with excellent service, it may be something you wish to do. That said tipping is part of the culture in the Galapagos Islands and an important part of earning a living for local workers. So, your SwimTrek package includes daily tips for your local boat crew and Galapagos Naturalist Guides who will accompany you on all of your swims. All other tips throughout your stay in the Galapagos are at your own discretion. Nothing is expected for your SwimTrek guides, but many groups like to present something to the guides at the end of the trip.

Passports and Visas

Visitors to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands require a full passport that should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Most nationalities, including citizens of the European Union, the US



and Canada, do not require a visa to enter Ecuador (unless the expected length of stay is longer than 90 days in one year).

Non-residents of the United States travelling via the US should ensure they leave enough time between connecting flights and meet US visa entry requirements and visit: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>.

Please note that visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.

Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information about travel insurance, please visit: www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance.

Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to Ecuador (both mainland Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands), including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Internet Access, Electricity and Travel Plugs

Given the isolated nature of the Galapagos Islands and the limited local infrastructure, WiFi coverage is generally slow and can be quite unreliable. While both of our hotels have WiFi, it is sometimes only possible to connect in reception or other common areas.

If you would like to purchase a 3G SIM card to use during your stay in the Galapagos, this can be arranged via our partners for collection upon arrival. To purchase your SIM card in advance, please email: info@galapagosalternative.com.

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/.