



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 and something which is only possible in this exact corner of our vast planet.

With its incredible level of biodiversity, the Galapagos National Park and Galapagos Marine Reserve form part of a fascinating corner of the natural world. Charles Darwin visited the islands in 1835 and from his observations developed 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 for you!

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip offers a fantastic combination of exploration, observation and swimming. It is ideal for the swimmer who is as keen to explore remote volcanic coastlines as to tread water and view exotic wildlife above and below the water. Due to strong currents and choppy conditions, we recommended that swimmers are experienced in open water, as the swims on this trip can be challenging, yet extremely rewarding. 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.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Santa Cruz

The central island of the Galapagos, Santa Cruz is the base for the first half of our trip. 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.

Isabela

The largest island in the archipelago, Isabella 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, and 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.

Cuatro Hermanos

The Four Brothers are an archipelago of four uninhabited islands located near Isabela Island and is a popular area for diving. They are of volcanic origin and are cone shaped as well as being moulded from the action of the waves. The islands are 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 Santa Cruz Island, 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 be transferred with your fellow swimmers to the highlands, which offer a lush contrast to the beaches and arid lowlands that we'll experience for the rest of the trip. We have our welcome meeting over lunch at the open air Rancho Primicias before taking a tour of the surrounding highlands where you'll see dozens of the world famous giant Galapagos tortoise wandering and grazing freely in their natural habitat.

After leaving the highlands, we travel to the south of the island and our base for the first three days in Puerto Ayora, which is at the centre of the Galapagos Islands conservation efforts. After checking into our hotel, we meet for an acclimatisation swim on the shore of Academy Bay, just off of the Charles Darwin Research Centre, giving us an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with the local conditions.

Day 2

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 first of many opportunities 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 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 3

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.

Day 4

After breakfast we set off this morning by foot from our accommodation to Tortuga Bay Beach. Here we'll take a snorkel as this perfectly preserved beach is home to marine iguanas, galapagos crabs and many species of birds dotted along the volcanic rocks and provide so much for us to see both above and below the water's surface.

Upon completing our morning's activities, we make our way back to Puerto Ayora for a sea transfer over to Isabela Island for the second half of our trip. This boat journey can take up to two hours, depending on sea conditions, with several of the archipelago's islands visible as we make our way towards the peak of Volcan Wolf, which dominates the Isabela skyline before us. We take lunch onboard today before disembarking to discover our new hotel.

Our accommodation on Isabela is located on a beautiful sandy beach, providing plenty of opportunities to take a swim or relax on the shore before settling in for dinner at the hotel or heading out to explore the nearby town of Puerto Villamil.

Day 5

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 6

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 of Isabella'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.



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. It's a wonderful way to bring to an end this week of swimming and exploring in the Galapagos Islands. After arriving back at Isabela, 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 boat transfer back to Santa Cruz which connects with our transfer back to Baltra Airport. This transfer is scheduled to arrive at the airport at approximately 10:30.

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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	High Factor Sunscreen and Zinc	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece / Waterproof Jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sea Sickness Tablets (if susceptible)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Camera
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rash Vest and Swim Leggings or Shorts**

*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.**

Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

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.

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
Santa Fe North Coast	2km	Santa Fe West Coast	3km
Pinzon Island	2½km	Pinzon	1½km
Tortuga Bay Beach	2½km		
Isla Tortuga (Inner Rim)	3km	Isla Tortuga (Outer Rim)	1½km
Hermano Mayor (Big Brother)	3½km	Hermanito (Little Brother)	1½km

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 snorkelling and swimming, so sea life is used to human interaction. If you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Distances

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 note that on Day 4 we will walk to Tortuga Bay Beach and take the boat back. 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. As a consequence, 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.



Ecological Awareness

SwimTrek is conscious of the importance of protecting the world's natural wonders. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to not only take care of the natural environments which we are lucky enough to explore, but also to educate our guests about the importance of conservation efforts and responsible tourism. It's for this reason that we have worked so closely with our partners in the Galapagos Islands to ensure that our trips are conducted in the most responsible and sustainable way possible. The rules surrounding where we swim, how long we are in the water for, and how we behave during our time on the islands are extremely strict and rigorously enforced and we work tirelessly to minimise the impact of our presence on local marine life and the natural habitat.

Group Size

This trip has a maximum group size of 15 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.

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 Seymour Airport on Baltra Island (airport code: GPS). It is also worth mentioning that there is a limit of 20kg for checked luggage (per person) on all flights to Baltra. 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.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only. We suggest that you use www.skyscanner.net to search for alternative flight options for this trip.

Whichever route you choose to take, we recommend confirming your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

Flights from the US

Flights to Quito and Guayaquil are available from most major US cities, however, please be aware that these may include a stopover in other cities before catching a connecting flight.

Flights from the UK and Europe

Airlines which operate flights from the UK and Europe to Quito and Guayaquil include KLM (via Amsterdam) and Iberia (via Madrid). Other airlines offer flights with stopovers in US cities such as Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, etc. When travelling via the US, please ensure that you leave enough time between connecting flights and you meet US visa entry requirements (e.g. ESTA).



Flights from Quito/Guayaquil to Baltra

Once you arrive in either Quito or Guayaquil, there are several airlines which operate flights to Baltra airport. These airlines include Tame, Avianca and LATAM, who all operate morning flights to Baltra which arrive in time to catch the transfer below.

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 take a five-minute boat trip across to Santa Cruz. From there, you'll have a 25-minute bus ride to the Highlands tour.

*If your flight arrives **after 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. The VIP team will organise a taxi for you, at a cost of US\$86 for up to three people, to either transport you to the Highlands tour or directly to the hotel. Please note that the Highlands tour will run from approximately 14:00 - 16:00 and you should allow up to two hours from the time that your flight lands to get to the Highlands tour or the hotel.

*If you are arriving **before 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 Day 1 of your SwimTrek trip. The Galapagos Alternative team can be reached via: info@galapagosalternative.com*

Departure Information

On the last day of the trip, a SwimTrek boat will depart from Isabela early morning. This boat will take approximately three hours to the airport on Baltra island. The approximate arrival time is 10:30, however, this may vary by up to 30 minutes either way, depending on sea conditions, connections etc. Guest should not plan to be at the airport any earlier than 10:30.

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 catch a boat which leaves Isabela earlier. This will involve catching a taxi and boat transfer. Please contact our partners at Galapagos Alternative to arrange this transfer: info@galapagosalternative.com



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Payment Terms

Due to the unique nature of this trip, our payment terms vary slightly from other SwimTrek adventures. 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

Accommodation

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

Posada del Mar offers simple, local-style accommodation in the town of Puerto Ayora, while Casa de Marita is situated on a sandy beach near the small town of Puerto Villamil. Rooms at both hotels are based on twin share with en suite 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.

Extra Accommodation and Tours

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

Meals

All breakfasts are included on the trip, as well as all lunches on Days 1 - 6. Dinners are at your own expense (except on Day 6), which gives 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.

Extra Expenses

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 Santa Cruz on Day 4 of your trip.



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.

Tipping

Tipping is considered to be part of the culture in the Galapagos Islands and is an important part of earning a living for local workers.

Your SwimTrek package *includes* daily tips for all of 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.

WiFi and 3G

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.

Passports and Visas

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

Travel Insurance

As well as covering open water swimming, your travel insurance must also cover **emergency medical evacuation**. This is due to the fact that access to medical treatment on the islands is limited and there is only an emergency helicopter service between islands. For further information about travel insurance, please visit: www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance



Health Information

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.

UK health authorities have classified Ecuador as having a high risk of Zika virus transmission. For further information about this assessment, you should visit www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk and follow the advice on the www.travelhealthpro.org.uk. It is also recommended that you discuss your travel plans with your healthcare provider, particularly if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Tap water

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.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/.