

WorldwideQuest  
Alumni Expeditions

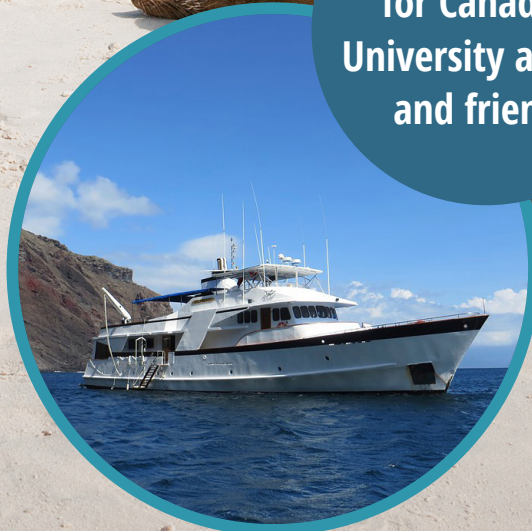
# The Galapagos Islands

EXPLORE DARWIN'S ENCHANTED ISLES

October 23 – November 2, 2023

16 passenger  
yacht

Exclusively  
for Canadian  
University alumni  
and friends





Full eight-day cruise to 9 islands



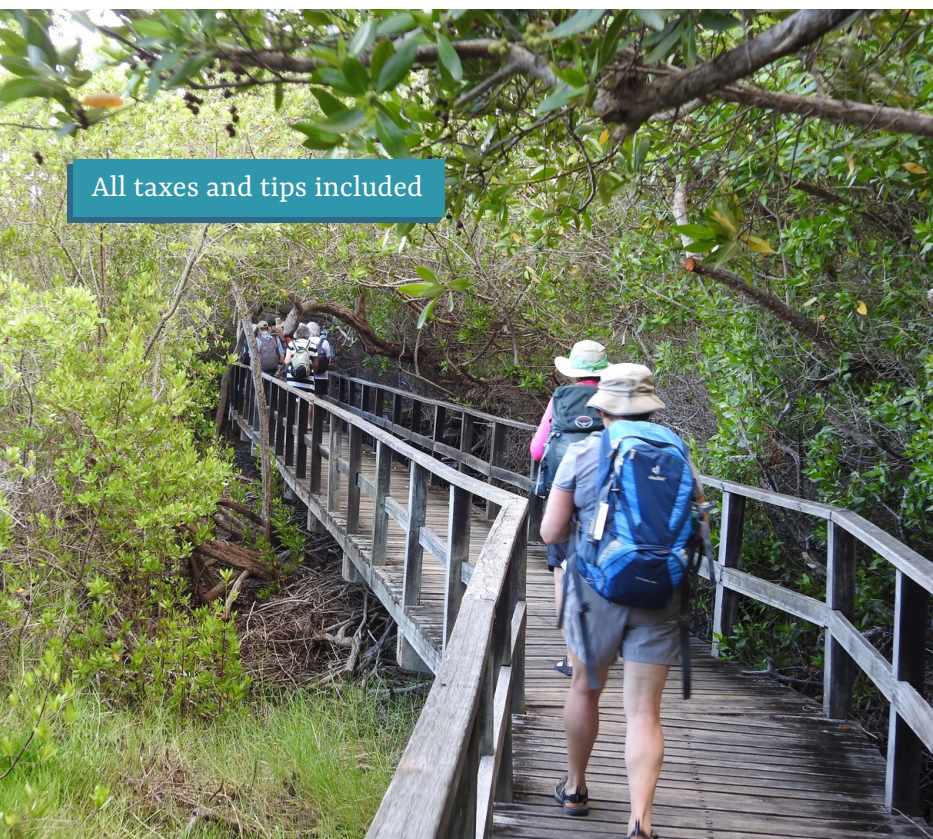
Island walks with your dedicated Galapagos Park naturalist



Snorkelling sessions

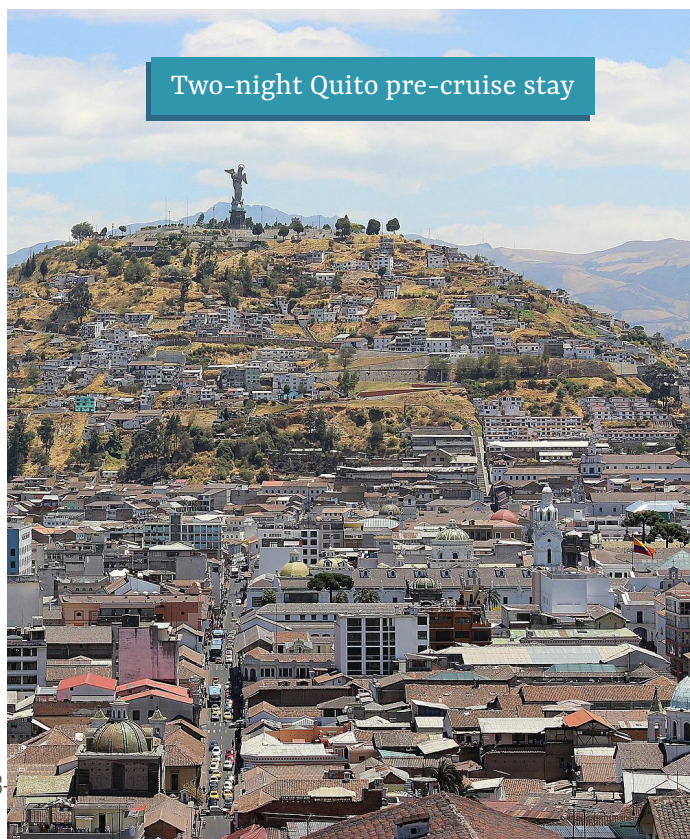


Zodiac excursions  
in 8-person groups



All taxes and tips included

Two-night Quito pre-cruise stay







Challenge ourselves to distinguish the “Darwin’s Finches”



Walk amongst dozing Galapagos Sea Lions



Observe Galapagos Giant Tortoises foraging peacefully on Santa Cruz



Watch the interactions among the bizarre Swallow-tailed Gulls



Discover the unique Chocolate Chip Sea Star clinging to the rocks while snorkelling





**Our Galapagos private yacht expedition remains one of our most highly rated natural history programs and is consistently our travellers' "trip of a lifetime".**

Our Alumni Study Leader and our Galapagos naturalist guide are on board to lead island walks and on-board talks as we set sail to discover these remarkable island ecosystems, skirting past nesting boobies, scouting the seas for breaching whales and snorkeling among colourful fish. Desolate at first sight, these rough and rocky isles are home to wonderfully strange and abundant wildlife. As Charles Darwin did almost 200 years before us, we will marvel at the many creatures found nowhere else on Earth.

**All of the reptiles, half the birds, 32% of the plants, and 25% of the fish are unique to this amazing archipelago. It is a living museum of evolutionary changes.**

What is so special about the Galapagos experience is that these creatures act as though humans are nothing more than a passing interest, allowing us to observe them up close. Undisturbed by our nearness, they engage in intriguing courtship displays, groom one another, forage for food and nurture their young. Giant Tortoises graze in the lush highlands and dinosaur-like Marine Iguanas sun themselves on black lava rocks along the shores. Tiny Galapagos Penguins and playful Galapagos Sea Lions dart through the waters like torpedoes, while frigatebirds patrol the skies.

There is no place in the world quite like the Galapagos Islands. Please call us to register for this small group tour!

**This tour is presented by the alumni associations of the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, Western University, McGill University, York University, and McMaster University. All are welcome!**

### **Special Inclusions:**

- Daily landings and walks
- Snorkelling excursions with complimentary gear
- Presentations and daily recaps
- Complimentary water bottle
- Pre-cruise guided Quito city tour









## Study Leader

**Josh Vandermeulen** is a field ecologist and an active and well-known member of Ontario's naturalist community. A graduate of the University of Guelph and veteran international nature tour leader, Josh has been the regional editor for the Ontario winter season bird report and is a past Chair of the Ontario Bird Records Committee. Josh has led successful tours to Colombia, Cuba, Spain, Borneo and the Galapagos.

Josh has a particular interest in herptiles and will be keen to showcase these along with the other wondrous life forms and habitats during your time in the Galapagos.





# Detailed Itinerary

## Monday, October 23: Arrival in Quito, Ecuador

Our adventure begins on our arrival in Quito, a dazzling old colonial city nestled in the snow-capped Andes Mountains. After clearing airport Customs, we'll be met and taken to our hotel for a good night's rest before the next day's tour. Those participants that have just completed the Amazon or Machu Picchu extensions will also join us when we arrive.

*Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo, Quito*

## Tuesday, October 24: Quito City Tour

After breakfast, we will depart for a city tour of Quito. We will visit the colonial centre of one of South America's oldest capitals with its narrow streets and hanging balconies. Our tour will include Independence Plaza, La Compañía Church, one of Quito's most beautiful religious buildings and San Francisco Church with its monastery, the first great colonial building. We'll also drive to El Panecillo Hill for a panoramic view of the city. After lunch, we'll visit the Quito Botanical Gardens, located within Parque La Carolina. Here, we can enjoy an array of plants as well as become acquainted with some of Quito's beautiful birds such as the Southern Yellow-Grosbeak, Black Flowerpiercer, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sparkling Violetear, and Hooded Siskin.

*Overnight: Hilton Colón, Quito*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

## Wednesday, October 25: Flight to Baltra, Galapagos, and visit Santa Cruz

After an early breakfast, we'll transfer from our hotel to the airport for the morning jet flight to the Galapagos Islands. The flight will take us to the airport on the small island of Baltra and, after going through the entry formalities, we'll meet our Ecuadorian naturalist guide. From here, we will take a very short ferry ride to Santa Cruz Island and have a fitting introduction as we drive across Santa Cruz, going to sea level into the highlands. We'll stop at the El Chato Tortoise Reserve, home to the Western Santa Cruz Tortoise, one of the many species of famous giant Galapagos tortoise found in the archipelago. The cloud forests here are also home to various Darwin's Finches, including two species of tree finch, the Green Warbler-Finch and the Vegetarian Finch. Later, we'll descend to the far side of Santa Cruz and Puerto Ayora. This town is the home of the Charles Darwin Research Station, the operations centre for wildlife and conservation programs in the Galapagos.

*Overnight: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



© Justin Peter

## Thursday, October 26: Sombrero Chino and Rábida Island

Sombrero Chino is a small volcanic island just off the southeast tip of Santiago. The name of the island describes the shape of the island. Fauna includes the Galapagos Sea Lion, Marine Iguana, and the Galapagos Penguin. Rábida is a small island with a dark red coral sand beach. Highlights include the lagoon with resident American Flamingos, a nesting site of Brown Pelican, male sea lion bachelor colony, and a snorkeling site at the end of the beach.

*Overnight: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Cruising by Galapagos Penguins



© Brian Ratcliff

## Friday, October 27: Isabela (Albemarle)

Isabela (also known as Abermarle) is the largest island with 5 active volcanoes. One of these, Sierra Negra, erupted in October 2005. We will have a number of visits on this largest of the Galapagos Islands over a few days. We will visit Sierra Negra via Puerto Villamil, a charming small town on a white sand beach. At Sierra Negra we can view recent lava flows, moist highland vegetation, and parasitic cones. Time permitting, we may visit the Tortoise Breeding Station at Puerto Villamil and a lagoon where American Flamingos may be found.

*Overnight: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



On the small island of North Seymour,  
observe the largest colony of Magnificent  
Frigatebirds in the Galapagos archipelago.





### **Saturday – Sunday, October 28 – 29: Isabela**

We plan to land at Punta Moreno on a beautiful rocky shore and hike across an extensive lava field to some small ponds that are teeming with wildlife. The site has spectacular views of volcanoes Alcedo, Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul. Some highlights include impressive lava flows, desolate and pristine landscape, varied and unusual arid zone vegetation. Further along we'll land at Elizabeth Bay where Green Sea Turtles and rays can usually be seen. Other sites include Urbina Bay and Tagus Cove.

*Overnight: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Monday, October 30: Fernandina (Narborough) and Punta Vicente Roca**

Fernandina is just over 100,000 years old and is one of the youngest islands in the Archipelago. It is also the most volcanically active. Our landing at Punta Espinosa is at the edge of an expansive lava field with a very interesting trail. The tidal pools and the snorkelling opportunities make this one of the best landings on the Galapagos. The Galapagos Penguins, nesting Marine Iguanas, Flightless Cormorants, dolphins, and perhaps spouting Bryde's Whales, seen from shore, are a bonus on this landing. The beautiful, but menacing, Volcán la Cumbre overlooks the area. There is also a great view of the island of Isabela. We will plan approach Isabela again at Punta Vicente Roca, a site we would visit by panga, either along the cliffs or the partially sunken cave at the water's edge. Nazca Boobies, Blue-footed Boobies and Flightless Cormorants inhabit the shoreline.

*Overnight: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Exploring lava flows



© Josh Vandermeulen

### **Tuesday, October 31: Santiago and Bartolomé**

Santiago (James) is an island has very interesting landforms that attest to the volcanic origins of the Galapagos. We may visit Playa Espumilla, which has a beautiful contrast between the golden beach and the green mangroves. It is also a great site to see flamingos, Galapagos Pintail ducks, Green Sea Turtle nests and the Galapagos Hawk. It is also a good site to go for a cool off swim or a snorkel. We may also visit Buccaneers Cove, a site that was Charles Darwin's home for 9 days but earned its name as a resting site for many whalers and pirates. A panga ride or snorkelling expedition may bring us into proximity of Galapagos Fur Seals, Brown Noddies, Brown Pelicans, and the beautiful Swallow-tailed Gull.

Located just off the north coast of the much larger Santiago, Bartolomé is one of the best-known islands in the archipelago mainly because of its spatter cones and striking Pinnacle Rock, which seem to appear on most postcards from the islands. There is also a tiny colony of Galapagos Penguins residing at the foot of Pinnacle Rock. A hike via a series of boardwalks and stairs will take you to the highest point on Bartolome for a spectacular view of Santiago and other islands. Galapagos Sea Lions and Galapagos Penguins may be seen around Pinnacle Rock. There's also a sandy beach with great swimming and snorkeling.

*Overnights: M/Y Beluga*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Wednesday, November 1: North Seymour Island, fly from Baltra to Quito**

This is our last day in the Galapagos Islands. We'll visit the small island of North Seymour to visit the largest colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds in the Galapagos archipelago. We can also see more Blue-footed Boobies, both the Lava and Swallow-tailed Gulls, and Galapagos Land Iguanas in addition to the endemic Palo Santo tree. Our ship returns to Baltra and the crew will transfer us to the airport for our flight to Quito. Stay near the Quito airport this evening, convenient for an early morning departure or onward travels.

*Overnight: Garden Hotel San José de Puembo*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Farewell Dinner*

### **Thursday, November 2: Departure day**

We will be taken to the international airport for our flights home.

*Meals: Breakfast*

*Note: The itinerary and accommodation described in these notes are subject to change due to logistical arrangements and to take advantage of local events.*



Despite the Land Iguana's intimidating appearance, they are primarily herbivores – feeding on prickly pear leaves and fruit.





# Our Exclusively Chartered Vessel



We charter the *M/Y Beluga* exclusively for our group of Canadian university alumni and friends.

This steel-hulled motor yacht is 33.5 metres long, accommodating 16 passengers and 8 crew. She travels at a speed of 12 knots, allowing us to get to 8 islands comfortably during our 8-day expedition cruise. She is well-appointed with comfortable air-conditioned private cabins and ample lounge and observation deck space.

## Here are your cabin options:

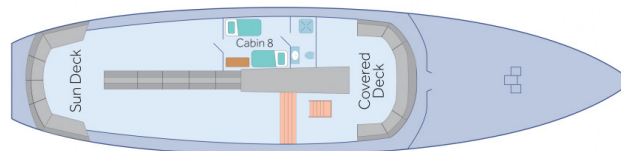
### Standard

- Cabin #1 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
- Cabin #2 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
- Cabin #3 (Lower Deck): one double bed and portholes
- Cabin #4 (Lower Deck): two lower beds and portholes
- Cabin #5 (Lower Deck): one queen size bed and portholes

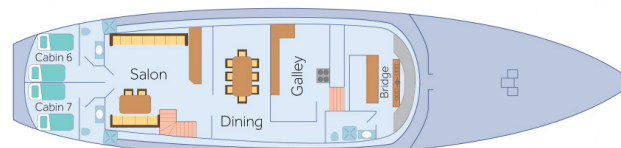
### Premium

- Cabin #6 (Main Deck): two lower beds and windows
- Cabin #7 (Main Deck): two lower beds and windows
- Cabin #8 (Upper Deck): two lower beds and windows (opens onto sun deck)

### UPPER DECK



### MAIN DECK



### LOWER DECK







Marine Iguanas

## Tour Details

**Tour Cost (per person):** US\$7295 (standard) – US\$7495 (premium)

**Single Supplement:** If you wish guaranteed single accommodation, the single supplement for this trip is the tour cost plus an additional 50%. If you are travelling alone and you are willing to share, we will match you up with an appropriate roommate.

If we cannot, the single supplement will apply. This will be collected at 90 days prior to departure.

### Group Size:

12 – 14 participants

### What's Included:

- Taxes and gratuities: US\$275
- 3 nights hotel in Quito, in double occupancy (in hotel listed or similar)
- Services and meals as listed in the itinerary
- Airfare from Quito to the Galapagos / Return to Quito
- 7-night Galapagos cruise aboard the *M/Y Beluga* based on double occupancy
- Gratuities for services provided by Quest
- Airport transfers if travelling with the group
- Services of bilingual naturalist guide on board, trained by the Darwin Research Station
- Services of your Study Leader Josh Vandermeulen

### Not Included:

- International airfare from your home to Quito / return from Quito
- Fuel surcharges on the boat or flights (if applicable)
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Day room in Quito (if required due to flight schedules)
- Galapagos National Park Fee (US\$100 per person)
- Quito international airport departure tax
- Airport transfers, if not travelling with the group
- Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation
- Galapagos Transit Control Card (US\$20 per person)

### Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$500 per person is required to reserve your space on this tour. A payment of US\$1000 is due six months prior to departure. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.



# What to Expect



## Joining Instructions

Our tour starts upon arrival in Quito on October 23. All travellers arriving on the start date of the tour will be met on arrival and transferred to the group hotel. This transfer is included in the cost of the tour. When you book the designated pre-trip accommodation with Worldwide Quest, your transfer from the airport to our group hotel on arrival is included. If you are making your own pre-trip arrangements, this transfer can be provided at additional cost. The tour concludes with an included transfer to the Quito airport on November 2. Transfer times will be settled once your flight arrangements have been finalized. Please contact us if you have any questions.



## COVID-19 Entry and Travel Requirements

All travellers on Worldwide Quest tours are required to be fully vaccinated and prepared to show proof of vaccination as per local regulations. Please refer to these websites for current requirements:

**Galapagos:** <https://ecuador.travel/en/travel-safe-in-ecuador-2/>

**Canada:** <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/>



## Level of Activity: Moderate

You will be getting in and out of Zodiacs (pangas), for wet and dry landings, with assistance from the crew, walking at a leisurely pace, with frequent stops, on ground which is sometimes rough/rocky and hilly. Sturdy hiking shoes or boots are strongly advised. A trekking pole is also useful for extra balance. If you have any concerns about being able to participate in this trip, please contact us for further information.



## #SafeTravels

Worldwide Quest has been awarded the World Travel and Tourism Council's #SafeTravels Stamp for adopting health and hygiene global standardized protocols. [Learn more.](#)



## Weather

Although the Galapagos Islands straddle the equator, the tropical heat is tempered by Pacific Ocean breezes and cold ocean currents. We will be visiting during the “cool and dry” season when air and water temperatures are relatively cool, with a maximum averaging 25°C. Mornings will generally be cloudy in the lowlands, while skies generally break and begin clearing in the afternoon. Fine mist and drizzle is possible in the highlands during this time of year.



## Travel Documents

You will require a passport for your trip to Ecuador. Please make sure it is valid for six months after the date of your return home. A visa is not required for Canadian or US passport holders at this time.



## Additional Info

### Extend your Stay

Many of our travellers like to arrive a day or two earlier or extend their stay to take advantage of being in the region. We have three exciting extensions that may interest you: an **Amazon Rainforest Lodge** extension; an **Ecuador Cloud Forest Birding** extension; and a **Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas** extension in Peru. The two first extensions are best done as pre-trips and the third could be done as a post-trip. We will be happy to send along details on any or all of these extensions so please don't hesitate to write. We can also suggest other options, based on your time available, budget and interests.

### Terms and Conditions

For additional information about our terms and conditions, please refer to your booking form, the current brochure or our website. All participants booking with Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946). See full details [here](#).

### Cancellation Policy

All payments are non-refundable, however you may transfer your initial deposit for any land tour to another tour 90 days or more prior to your scheduled departure date. Initial deposits for cruises are non-refundable and non-transferable. Your second payment and your final payment are non-refundable and non-transferable. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing. See full details [here](#).

### Travel Insurance

We urge you to ensure that you have adequate cancellation and medical insurance in place, should an unexpected event cause you to cancel or interrupt your trip or should the tour not be operable per our terms and conditions. We will offer you Manulife insurance coverage. Medical insurance including emergency medical evacuation coverage is mandatory on all our tours.



## How to Book

Please contact the Worldwide Quest office for more information and to secure your booking.

**1-800-387-1483 | 416-633-5666**  
**[travel@worldwidequest.com](mailto:travel@worldwidequest.com)**



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