

## Galapagos & Ecuador itineraries: Master the Galapagos 7 nights - MV Galapagos Master...

**The Galápagos Islands are an Ecuadorian archipelago of volcanic islands straddling the equator about 970 km west of continental Ecuador. The Galapagos are a UNESCO World Heritage site, an official Ecuadorian province, an Ecuadorian National Park as well as a biological marine reserve.**

You may wonder what all this fuss is about, but we can assure you that these islands have earned all of these titles!

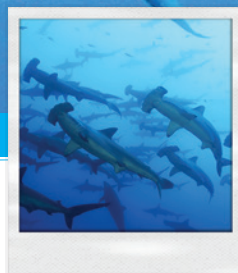
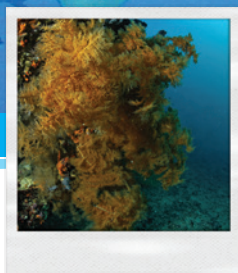
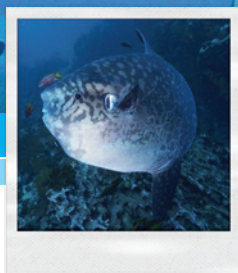
Firstly, these 18 islands and 100 islets are world-renowned for their vast endemic and unique wildlife, which were studied by Charles Darwin during the voyage of the Beagle. His observations and collections in the Galapagos contributed to the famous 'Darwin Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection'.

In being located both in the Southern and Northern hemispheres, the islands are already an oddity themselves, but this archipelago is the land of every extreme.

Their vastness (220 km from North to South, 7,880 km<sup>2</sup> of land spread over 45,000 km<sup>2</sup> of ocean) is surprising, but the fact that it's still being shaped by volcanic activity is amazing. The wildlife is just beyond wonders and plants, birds and animals do not seem to have changed much since ancient times. You'd be forgiven for thinking that this place seems frozen in time and to visit the Galapagos is truly a chance of a lifetime.

Few people are granted the opportunity of diving these pristine waters, and no place on Earth will boast such a variety of underwater sightings. Your underwater adventures will encompass everything from whales to nudibranchs and much, much more. The islands are best known for amazing shark diving and you will generally have a chance to encounter silky sharks, the famous Galapagos shark and an abundance of schooling hammerheads. Macro-lovers will also get their share of the pies with an array of seahorses, blennies, hawk fishes and many others.

Your trip to the Galapagos will be filled with memories to last you a lifetime. While your experience can be challenging, the rewards will be unforgettable!



## Qualification needed:

We can welcome everyone, but we recommend being qualified as **PADI Advanced Open Water Diver** or equivalent and have a minimum of 50 logged dives. Dives can often be challenging, with strong currents and reduced visibility. All dives are guided by an instructor/naturalist guide and due to Galapagos National Park regulations all divers must dive with the guide at all times and no night diving is permitted.

Diving and travel insurance are mandatory to access the National park.

## Sample itinerary:

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\*** The itinerary below is an example only and is subject to change depending on local regulation, guests' experience, flight schedules, weather & logistics and is at the Captain's discretion. Currently, each week the itinerary includes the same islands. The order of the island visits, however, is dictated by the Galapagos National Park and may vary weekly.

The diving day aboard the Galapagos Master has a typical schedule as follows:-

- **Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1**
- **Full Breakfast, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 2**
- **Lunch, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 3**
- **Snack, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 4, where possible**
- **Dinner**

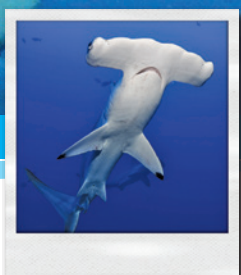
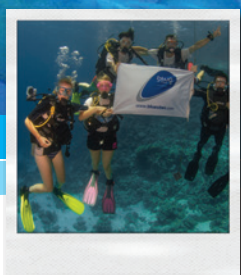
*To allow our guests to explore the Galapagos to its fullest, on days 2 and 7, dives 3 & 4 will be substituted by an island visit. Prior to your flight home, you may also opt to visit the Interpretation Center on San Cristobal Island.*

## Itinerary highlights:

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\*** The following is a description of the dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari aboard the M/V Galapagos Master. During 7-night itineraries we schedule 3 days at Darwin & Wolf.

### San Cristobal Island:

After boarding at San Cristobal the Galapagos Master cruises to Isla Lobos for your check out dive. The sheltered bay provides an excellent shallow spot, at a max depth of 9m (30ft), in which to check your dive gear but also become acquainted with some of the local marine life. Sea lions playfully interact with divers, whilst sightings of turtles and rays are also common. Sea iguanas may be spotted too.



## Itinerary highlights continued:

### Santa Cruz Island:

**Punta Carrion** - This boulder strewn reef provides a superb introduction to some of the larger pelagics we expect to see in the Galapagos, including white tip reef sharks but also the occasional hammerhead and Galapagos shark. Sea lions are ever-present and there is the opportunity for some macro critter spotting with sightings of neon nudibranchs. The wall has an average depth of 15m (50ft) and mild-medium current is to be expected.

**Seymour North** - Situated off the northern tip of Baltra Island, this site provides a stunning drift with sightings of white tip reef sharks, turtles, eagle rays and moray eels. Average depth 18m (60ft) medium current is to be expected.

**Mosqueras** - Lying in between Baltra and N. Seymour islands, this white sandy islet is not only home to a sea lion colony but supports a myriad of marine life from manta rays and bonitos to Peruvian grunts and fields of garden eels, whilst occasional schools of hammerhead sharks may be seen here. Average depth 20m (70ft) with a typically mild current expected.

### Wolf Island:

Named after the German geologist, Theodor Wolf, this extinct volcano reaches 253m (780ft) above sea level and lies some 160km (100 miles) northwest of Isabela Island. Land visits are not permitted however bird life, including red-footed boobys and vampire finch, may be spotted from the boat.

For our dives here we choose from a selection of reefs and walls, most having typically medium to strong currents where the use of gloves and reef hooks is advised. Schooling pelagics are the main draw with sightings of hammerheads, white tips and Galapagos sharks at each site. During the season (May - November) whale sharks may also be seen here. Divers should also be on the lookout for red-lipped batfish, barracudas, moray eels and dolphins!

**El Durrumbe (the Landslide)** - Average depth 20m (70ft).

**La Ventana (the Window)** - Shallow lagoon leads down to a pinnacle and then out along the reef wall - average depth 15m (50ft).

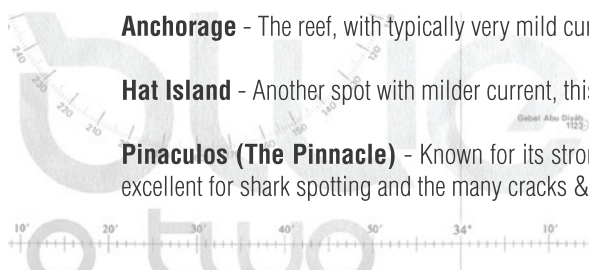
**La Banana** - Wall dive with an average depth of 9m (30ft) - can have strong currents.

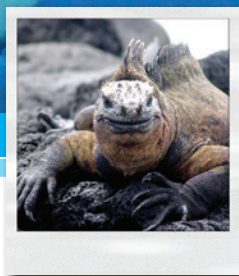
**Punta Shark Bay** - Reef dive with an average depth of 20m (70ft), typically good visibility, however care must be taken in the shallow water where waves crash up against the reef.

**Anchorage** - The reef, with typically very mild current, provides a good spot for a sunset dive, average depth 18m (60ft).

**Hat Island** - Another spot with milder current, this reef provides sightings of numerous colourful fish species, average depth 20m (70ft).

**Pinaculos (The Pinnacle)** - Known for its strong currents and speedy drift along the reef at an average depth of 20m (70ft), the site is excellent for shark spotting and the many cracks & crevices in the wall provide extra interest.





## Itinerary highlights continued:

### Darwin Island:

This extinct volcano reaching 165m (490ft) above sea level was named in honour of naturalist Charles Darwin. It is amongst the smallest island within the Galapagos Archipelago and like Wolf Island, no land visits are permitted.

Perhaps the most famed dive site is "Darwin's Arch" which provides an amazing drift dive along the wall at an average depth of just 9m. Medium to strong currents are to be expected but bring with them hammerheads, black tips, silky and Galapagos sharks - and in large numbers! Schools of jacks are a common sight, along with turtles, angelfish and moray eels. Occasional sightings of tiger sharks, manta rays and bottle nose dolphins make for a thrilling time spent here. Whale sharks may also be seen between May - November.

### Fernandina Island:

**Douglas Cape** - Situated on the northwest point of Fernandina Island, this wall dive, with an average depth of 20m (70ft), offers something truly spectacular and is now famed for the feeding marine iguanas that congregate here along with sea lions, fur seals and speedy penguins!

### Isabela Island:

**Punta Vicente Roca** - Alternatively known as "The Ice Box", due to its chilling thermoclines, this point off the Northwest coast of Isabela Island offers a wall drift dive, along which mola mola can be spotted. The occasional Port Jackson shark may also be seen as well as the endemic Camotillo (White spotted sand bass). Yet Punta Vicente Roca is not just for the larger marine life but is also a fantastic place to spot pacific seahorses, frogfish, octopus, nudibranchs, flat worms and a variety of sponges. We stick to a maximum depth of 30m (100ft) with an average of 18m (60ft) whilst enjoying some milder currents!

**Punta Albermale** - Drifting along this wall on the north of Isabela Island, we stay at an average depth of 25m (85ft) to see manta rays, hammerheads, turtles, schools of barracuda and tuna. Roca Redonda - This underwater volcano, with its bubbling streams of natural gas (fumaroles) plays home to schools hammerheads sharks and barracuda. Other commonly sighted marine life include Galapagos sharks which typically come close to divers during safety stops, as well as manta rays, silky sharks and some beautiful green/blue nudibranchs. With typically strong, changeable currents and some down currents, the diving here is challenging, though with an average depth of 18m (60ft).

**Cabo Marshall** - The craggy volcanic walls are covered with black coral bushes and the sheer variety of marine life is astounding. Sightings of manta, mobula and cownose rays are to be expected during the warm season (November - May). Meanwhile shark varieties include scalloped hammerhead, Galapagos and white tips. Schools of chevron barracuda and black striped salemas are regular visitors along with yellowfin tuna and big eye jacks. And let's not forget the sea lions and turtles!

**Tagos Cove** - On the west side of Isabela Island, opposite Fernandina Island, this shallow reef is an excellent late afternoon dive, where we have the opportunity to find seahorses, frogfish and long nosed hawk fish.



### Itinerary highlights continued:

#### Santiago Island:

**Cousin's Rock** - One of the most photographically productive dives of the region, Cousin's Rock is formed of coral covered rock and lava flow. Sea fans, hydroid bushes, red sponges and small hard corals encrust ledges and overhangs, sheltering hawkfish, nudibranchs, frogfish and seahorses. Plenty of larger visitors are also seen including giant manta and mobula rays, spotted eagle rays and hammerhead sharks. The wall drops beyond 30m (100ft) but rises up shallow to just 3m (10ft) providing an ideal spot to end your dive playing with the sea lions.

### Itinerary map:

