

GALAPAGOS TRAVEL PLANNER

Cruise & Island Hopping Options for Tailor-Made Extensions

*Brought to you by Maquita Impact-Based DMC
Where Travel Creates Equity*

1. POSITIONING LINE

Galapagos can be experienced through two complementary travel formats: cruise-based journeys, designed for integrated expedition flow and wider geographic reach; and island hopping programs, designed for land-based flexibility, hotel comfort and modular daily exploration.

Maquita DMC supports international operators in selecting the right Galapagos format according to traveler profile, comfort expectations, route logic and operational feasibility, connecting the islands with mainland Ecuador under one coherent and reliable DMC framework.

2. THE EXPERIENCE

The Galapagos Islands offer one of Ecuador's most iconic nature-based experiences, shaped by protected ecosystems, marine biodiversity, volcanic landscapes and carefully regulated visitor sites.

This Travel Planner presents two strategic ways to integrate Galapagos into tailor-made Ecuador programs. Cruise-based experiences offer seamless navigation, onboard comfort and a stronger expedition rhythm. Island hopping experiences offer hotel-based stays, flexible routing, local island atmosphere and daily excursions from inhabited islands.

Both formats can be adapted according to travel dates, budget, comfort level and buyer profile. Maquita DMC adds value through selected local operators in Galapagos, clear logistics, transparent inclusions and exclusions, and a service standard aligned with its mainland Ecuador programs.

3. HOW GALAPAGOS WORKS

Galapagos requires precise planning. The final experience depends on:

- entry and exit airport: Baltra or San Cristóbal;
- chosen format: cruise or island hopping;
- island sequence and visitor sites;
- vessel or hotel category;
- domestic flight timing;
- maritime conditions;
- National Park regulations;
- availability of guides, tours and cabins;
- local taxes, entrance fees and transfer logistics.

The key decision is choosing the correct operational model before building the itinerary.

4. TWO WAYS TO EXPERIENCE GALAPAGOS

Cruise-Based Experience

A cruise-based experience uses the vessel as the central platform of the journey. Accommodation, meals, navigation, excursions and naturalist interpretation are integrated into a continuous expedition flow.

Best for: nature-focused travelers, premium FITs, mature travelers, wildlife-oriented clients and passengers seeking wider geographic coverage.

Main strengths: efficient navigation, onboard comfort, remote visitor sites, structured expedition rhythm and reduced hotel-to-hotel logistics.

Island Hopping Experience

Island hopping is a land-based format using hotels on inhabited islands and daily excursions. It combines inter-island transfers, local island atmosphere, selected visitor sites and flexible routing.

Best for: FITs, families, comfort-oriented travelers, flexible groups and buyers seeking adaptable extensions.

Main strengths: flexibility, hotel comfort, modular excursions, local island life and easier adjustment by traveler profile.

5. OPERATING MODEL COMPARISON

Criteria	Cruise-Based Experience	Island Hopping Experience
Format	Vessel-based expedition	Land-based hotel itinerary
Accommodation	On board	Hotels on inhabited islands
Best for	Nature travelers, premium FITs, expedition clients	FITs, families, flexible groups
Mobility	Navigation by cruise route	Speedboats, transfers, day tours
Flexibility	Fixed by vessel itinerary	More flexible, subject to logistics
Main value	Seamless expedition flow	Modular land-based experience
Main risk	Fixed departures and cabin availability	Ferries, sea conditions, scattered logistics
Comfort driver	Vessel category	Hotel and excursion category

6. SERVICE LEVEL & COMFORT STANDARDS

Maquita DMC works with a reliable comfort-oriented standard in Galapagos, adaptable toward higher categories according to buyer needs.

Comfort International Standard

Selected hotels or vessels, certified guides, reliable transfers, clear inclusions and a balanced comfort-to-value ratio.

Superior Comfort

Better hotels or vessels, smoother pacing, stronger local assistance, upgraded rooms or cabins and higher consistency for European and North American buyers.

Premium / High-End on Request

Higher-category vessels or hotels, upgraded cabins or rooms, refined service, selected excursions and greater personalization when available.

7. CRUISE-BASED GALAPAGOS OPTIONS

Cruise-Based Planning Logic

Cruise itineraries are defined by vessel, category, route and departure date. Once selected, the route follows the approved cruise program. The buyer must choose duration, vessel level, cabin type, route focus and comfort expectations.

OPTION CR-01

Short Galapagos Cruise

4 Days / 3 Nights, Southern Islands Itinerary

Best for: short extensions, first-time visitors and travelers with limited time.

Experience Focus: a compact introduction to Galapagos through onboard accommodation, guided landings, marine activities and naturalist interpretation.

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in Galapagos – Boarding and welcome on board – First visitor site according to cruise route – Accommodation on board.

Day 2: Selected island route – Wildlife landing, guided walk, snorkeling or panga ride – Accommodation on board.

Day 3: Second island route – Coastal landscapes, marine activity and naturalist interpretation – Accommodation on board.

Day 4: Final visitor site or highlands experience – Transfer to airport – Departure.

Planning Note: ideal for compact extensions, with active pacing and fixed routing according to vessel departure.

OPTION CR-02

Balanced Galapagos Cruise

5 Days / 4 Nights, Northern Islands Itinerary

Best for: travelers seeking stronger cruise content within a manageable travel length.

Experience Focus: balanced island diversity, marine activity, wildlife observation and expedition rhythm.

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in Galapagos – Boarding and welcome on board – First coastal or highland visitor site – Accommodation on board.

Day 2: Selected island route – Guided landing, snorkeling, kayak or panga ride according to vessel program – Accommodation on board.

Day 3: Second island route – Wildlife, volcanic landscapes or marine environments – Accommodation on board.

Day 4: Third island route – Beach landscapes, seabird areas, snorkeling or naturalist interpretation – Accommodation on board.

Day 5: Final visitor site or conservation experience – Transfer to airport – Departure.

Planning Note: strong commercial balance between time, naturalist content and onboard comfort.

OPTION CR-03

Full Galapagos Expedition Cruise

8 Days / 7 Nights, Combined Northern & Southern Islands Itinerary

Best for: higher-value nature travelers and buyers seeking a deeper expedition experience.

Experience Focus: wider island coverage, stronger biological and geological diversity, efficient navigation and a more complete naturalist narrative.

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in Baltra or San Cristóbal – Boarding and first visitor site according to vessel route – Accommodation on board.

Day 2: Central or northern island route – Guided landing, snorkeling and naturalist interpretation – Accommodation on board.

Day 3: Remote visitor site – Panga ride, coastal exploration and marine wildlife experience – Accommodation on board.

Day 4: Western or volcanic island landscapes – Isabela / Fernandina route or equivalent according to confirmed cruise – Accommodation on board.

Day 5: Marine biodiversity focus – Snorkeling, wildlife observation and expedition activities – Accommodation on board.

Day 6: Southern or southeastern island route – Española / Floreana / San Cristóbal area according to vessel itinerary – Accommodation on board.

Day 7: Final expedition day – Landings, interpretation and farewell briefing on board – Accommodation on board.

Day 8: Final visitor site or highlands experience – Transfer to airport – Departure.

Planning Note: the strongest cruise-based option for travelers whose main motivation is wildlife, geology and expedition depth.

8. ISLAND HOPPING BASE ITINERARIES

Island Hopping Planning Logic

Island hopping itineraries are built through island bases, hotels, inter-island transfers, selected excursions and traveler profile. They are flexible, but require careful coordination of ferries, flights, visitor sites, guides, taxes and maritime conditions.

OPTION IH-01

Essential Galapagos Island Hopping

Santa Cruz & Isabela

5 Days / 4 Nights

Best for: short extensions, first-time visitors, FITs, couples and compact land-based programs.

Experience Focus: Santa Cruz highlands, giant tortoises, lava tunnels, Isabela coastal landscapes and flexible activity options.

Route Logic: Baltra / Santa Cruz → Isabela → Santa Cruz / Baltra

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in Baltra – Transfer to Santa Cruz – Highlands, giant tortoise reserve and lava tunnels – Accommodation.

Day 2: Santa Cruz – Speedboat to Isabela – Tintoreras coastal experience – Accommodation.

Day 3: Isabela – Sierra Negra Volcano or Los Túneles marine experience – Return to Santa Cruz or overnight in Isabela according to final routing.

Day 4: Santa Cruz – Charles Darwin Research Station, Tortuga Bay or Bay Tour according to traveler profile – Accommodation.

Day 5: Santa Cruz – Transfer to Baltra Airport – Departure.

Planning Note: Day 3 is the key decision point: Sierra Negra for volcanic landscapes; Los Túneles for marine biodiversity and snorkeling.

OPTION IH-02

Classic Galapagos Island Hopping

San Cristóbal & Santa Cruz

6 Days / 5 Nights

Best for: travelers seeking two island atmospheres, marine life in San Cristóbal and operational flexibility in Santa Cruz.

Experience Focus: coastal wildlife, snorkeling, protected landscapes, highlands, giant tortoises and navigable day tours.

Route Logic: San Cristóbal → Santa Cruz → Baltra

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in San Cristóbal – Coastal wildlife introduction, Tijeretas or Interpretation Center – Accommodation.

Day 2: San Cristóbal – León Dormido, Manglecito Bay or selected marine excursion – Snorkeling and protected landscapes – Accommodation.

Day 3: San Cristóbal – Speedboat to Santa Cruz – Highlands, Twin Craters and giant tortoise experience – Accommodation.

Day 4: Navigable day tour from Santa Cruz to Bartolomé, Seymour, Santa Fe or Plazas, subject to availability.

Day 5: Santa Cruz – Free day, Tortuga Bay or optional excursion according to traveler profile – Accommodation.

Day 6: Santa Cruz – Transfer to Baltra Airport – Departure.

Planning Note: a commercially strong route when flights allow arrival in San Cristóbal and departure from Baltra.

OPTION IH-03

Extended Galapagos Island Hopping

[Santa Cruz](#), [Navigable Islands & Isabela](#)

8 Days / 7 Nights

Best for: travelers seeking a fuller land-based Galapagos experience with stronger naturalist content.

Experience Focus: Santa Cruz as hub, selected navigable tours, Isabela marine and volcanic landscapes, wildlife, snorkeling and conservation.

Route Logic: Baltra → Santa Cruz → Navigable day tours → Isabela → Santa Cruz → Baltra

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Arrival in Baltra – Transfer to Santa Cruz – Charles Darwin Research Station or first island introduction – Accommodation.

Day 2: Santa Cruz – Highlands, lava tunnels, tortoise reserve and local production experience – Accommodation.

Day 3: Santa Cruz – Navigable day tour to Bartolomé, Santa Fe, Seymour or Plazas – Snorkeling and naturalist interpretation – Accommodation.

Day 4: Santa Cruz – Second navigable day tour or selected visitor site – Marine biodiversity and protected landscapes – Accommodation.

Day 5: Santa Cruz – Transfer to Isabela – Tintoreras coastal experience – Accommodation.

Day 6: Isabela – Los Túneles marine experience or relaxed island module according to traveler profile – Accommodation.

Day 7: Isabela – Sierra Negra Volcano – Volcanic landscapes and wildlife – Transfer to Santa Cruz – Accommodation.

Day 8: Santa Cruz – Transfer to Baltra – Departure logistics.

Planning Note: ideal for stronger Galapagos content while keeping the hotel-based format.

9. EXPERIENCE MODULES

Santa Cruz Modules

- Baltra arrival and transfer to Puerto Ayora.
- Santa Cruz Highlands.
- Giant tortoise reserve.
- Lava tunnels.
- Twin Craters.
- Charles Darwin Research Station.
- Tortuga Bay.
- Bay Tour.
- Navigable day tours to Bartolomé, Seymour, Santa Fe or Plazas.
- Local production / Trapiche-style experiences where applicable.

San Cristóbal Modules

- San Cristóbal arrival.
- Interpretation Center.
- Cerro Tijeretas.
- La Lobería.
- León Dormido.
- Manglecito Bay.
- Coastal wildlife introduction.
- Highland-and-marine combination days.
- Tour 360: León Dormido, Cerro Brujo, Bahía Sardina, Punta Pitt, Bahía Rosa Blanca.

Isabela Modules

- Isabela arrival by speedboat or inter-island flight.
- Wetlands and Flamingo Lagoon.
- Tortoise breeding center.
- Tintoreras.
- Sierra Negra Volcano.
- Los Túneles / Cabo Rosa.
- Concha Perla or relaxed island atmosphere.
- Puerto Villamil beach experience.
- Muro de las Lágrimas.

Cruise Expedition Modules

- Wet and dry landings.
- Guided nature walks.
- Panga / zodiac rides.
- Snorkeling.
- Kayak or paddle board, depending on vessel.
- Glass-bottom boat, depending on vessel.
- Naturalist briefings.
- Beach landings.
- Volcanic landscape walks.

Soft / Comfort Modules

- Free afternoon.
- Tortuga Bay self-paced visit.
- Hotel upgrade.
- Higher-category vessel selection.
- More nights on Santa Cruz to reduce inter-island transfers.
- Softer pacing with fewer early departures.

10. BUYER DECISION GUIDE

Buyer Need	Recommended Option
Short cruise experience	CR-01 4D/3N
Balanced cruise content	CR-02 5D/4N
Full expedition cruise	CR-03 8D/7N
Short land-based extension	IH-01 5D/4N
Classic island hopping	IH-02 6D/5N
Extended land-based Galapagos	IH-03 8D/7N
Strong marine focus	IH-02 or IH-03
Local island atmosphere	Island Hopping
Seamless expedition flow	Cruise-Based
Higher-value nature traveler	CR-03 or IH-03 upgraded
Family travel	IH-01 or IH-02 with softer pacing
Seasickness-sensitive traveler	Reduced ferry movement or stabilized vessel

11. RECOMMENDED COMFORT LEVEL BY CLIENT TYPE

Client Type	Recommended Comfort Level
FIT comfort travelers	Comfort International Standard
European responsible travel buyers	Comfort / Superior Comfort
Families	Comfort or Superior Comfort with softer pacing
Soft adventure travelers	Comfort with selected high-value excursions
Premium nature travelers	Superior Comfort or Premium on request
Educational / academic groups	Comfort with strong interpretation
Mature travelers	Superior Comfort with reduced transfer stress
Luxury nature clients	Premium / High-End on request
Cruise-focused clients	Superior / First Class or Premium

12. WHAT MAQUITA DMC ADDS

Maquita DMC connects mainland Ecuador and Galapagos through one coherent service framework. Through selected local operators in the islands, Maquita coordinates cruise-based and island hopping experiences aligned with its standards of care, reliability and responsible travel.

This support includes guidance on the most suitable travel format, route logic, comfort level, inclusions, exclusions, entrance fees, maritime transfers, domestic flights and operational conditions. For international buyers, Maquita becomes a single strategic partner in Ecuador capable of integrating mainland programs and Galapagos extensions with consistency and transparency.

Looking ahead, Maquita aims to extend its social and territorial approach to Galapagos, building on the experience already developed with communities in mainland Ecuador.

13. USUALLY INCLUDED / USUALLY NOT INCLUDED

Usually Included — Cruise-Based

- Accommodation on board according to selected cabin category.
- Meals on board according to cruise itinerary.
- Certified Galapagos National Park naturalist guide.
- Excursions according to approved cruise itinerary.
- Maritime navigation according to route.
- Panga / zodiac rides according to itinerary.
- Snorkeling equipment when included.
- Wetsuit, kayak or paddle board when included by vessel.
- Onboard briefings.
- Transfers in Galapagos when included by cruise operator.

Usually Not Included — Cruise-Based

- International flights.
- Domestic flights to/from Galapagos, unless specified.
- Galapagos National Park entrance fee.
- TCT / Migratory Control Card.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Soft drinks, when not included.

- Wetsuit rental, when not included.
- Travel insurance.
- Personal expenses.
- Tips.
- Fuel surcharge or administrative fees, if applied.
- Additional hotel nights before or after cruise

Usually Included — Island Hopping

- Accommodation according to selected hotel category.
- Transfers according to itinerary.
- Airport transfers in Galapagos when specified.
- Certified Galapagos National Park guide for guided excursions.
- Shared land transportation according to itinerary.
- Shared speedboat / ferry between islands when specified.
- Navigable tours explicitly listed.
- Meals according to itinerary.
- Snorkeling equipment when included by the operator.
- Assistance from local operator according to service level.

Usually Not Included — Island Hopping

- International flights.
- Domestic flights to/from Galapagos, unless specified.
- Galapagos National Park entrance fee.
- TCT / Migratory Control Card.
- Isabela local tax.
- Water taxis at ports or inter-island boarding points, if not included.
- Bus Lobito, if not included.
- Wetsuit rental.
- Meals not specified.
- Dinners when not included.
- Soft and alcoholic drinks.
- Optional activities.
- Personal expenses.
- Tips.

14. OPERATIONAL NOTES FOR BUYERS

General Notes

- Galapagos itineraries are subject to National Park regulations.
- Visitor sites and order of visits may change due to weather, safety, operational conditions or protected-area management.
- Wildlife observation depends on natural conditions.
- Domestic flights must be coordinated according to route logic.
- Local fees and taxes must be verified at confirmation.
- Equivalent-category hotels or vessels may be proposed according to availability.
- Final itinerary must be reconfirmed before quotation and booking.

Cruise-Based Notes

- Cruise routes depend on vessel itinerary, departure date and National Park authorization.
- Flights must match embarkation and disembarkation windows.
- Cruise departures operate with strict timing.
- Dietary restrictions must be reported at booking stage.
- Expedition rhythm can be active, with landings, snorkeling and navigation.
- Equipment inclusions vary by vessel category.

Island Hopping Notes

- Island hopping depends on flight routing, ferry schedules and visitor site availability.
- Public speedboat transfers may take approximately 2.5 to 3 hours, depending on sea conditions.
- Travelers prone to seasickness should be advised in advance.
- Water taxis may be required at ports.
- Early departures may require box breakfast.
- Navigable day tours are subject to availability and National Park regulations.

15. COMMERCIAL CONDITIONS / RATES ON REQUEST

Rates are provided on request and depend on:

- travel dates;
- number of passengers;
- travel format;
- vessel or hotel category;
- cabin category, when cruise-based;
- selected excursions;
- guide language;
- domestic flights;
- inter-island logistics;
- local taxes and fees;
- availability at confirmation.

Commercial Notes

- Package rates are not published in this Travel Planner.
- Domestic flights are quoted separately unless specified.
- Local taxes and entrance fees are subject to change.
- Navigable tours are subject to availability.
- Supplements may apply for upgraded excursions, premium cabins, superior hotels or private services.
- Final itinerary, inclusions and exclusions must be reconfirmed before quotation.
- Cruise routes must be confirmed according to vessel departure date and cabin availability.
- Island hopping itineraries may be adjusted according to ferry schedules, hotel availability and visitor site conditions.

FINAL POSITIONING STATEMENT

Maquita DMC helps international operators choose the right Galapagos format according to traveler profile, comfort expectations, route logic and operational feasibility. Through selected local operators in the islands, Maquita offers cruise-based and island hopping extensions that connect naturally with mainland Ecuador programs under one clear, reliable and responsible DMC framework.