



# The Galápagos Islands

POP 30,000

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ El Atardecer del Nene (p312)
- ➔ La Cueva de Gus (p312)
- ➔ Oasis (p326)
- ➔ Calypso Restaurant (p321)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Floreana Lava Lodge (p331)
- ➔ Caleta Iguana Hotel & Surf Camp (p325)
- ➔ Finch Bay Hotel (p311)
- ➔ Casa Blanca (p318)

## Why Go?

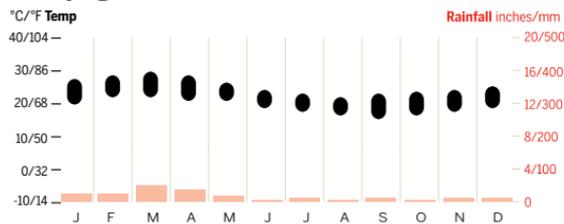
The Galápagos Islands may just inspire you to think differently about the world. The creatures that call the islands home, many found nowhere else in the world, act as if humans are nothing more than slightly annoying paparazzi.

This is not the Bahamas and these aren't typical tropical paradises; in fact, most of the islands are devoid of vegetation and some look more like the moon than Hawaii. However, more humans live here than is commonly assumed, and there's a surprising level of development in the islands' towns, mostly geared toward the thriving tourism industry.

This isolated group of volcanic islands and its fragile ecosystem have taken on almost mythological status as a showcase of biodiversity. Yet you don't have to be an evolutionary biologist or an ornithologist to appreciate one of the few places left on the planet where the human footprint is kept to a minimum.

## When to Go

### Galápagos Islands



**Jan–May** Sunny, warm, occasional short downpours. Water is less rough and winds slacken.

**Jun–Dec** The cool and dry season. Seas tend to be choppy due to the Humboldt current.

**Jun–Dec** Sea mammals and land birds tend to be at their most active during this time.



## The Galápagos Islands Highlights

- 1 Lock eyes with sea horses among the super lava formations of **Los Túneles** (p323).
- 2 Witness the pageantry of birdlife at **Punta Suárez** (p331) on Isla Española.
- 3 Hike amid otherworldly scenery and fumaroles at **Volcán Sierra Negra** (p322).
- 4 Take in spectacular views at **Isla Bartolomé** (p328), then snorkel with sea turtles around Pinnacle Rock.
- 5 Gawk at the slumbering beasts in **Rancho Primicias** (p305), in the highlands of Santa Cruz.
- 6 Sunbathe alongside marine iguanas on the sublime white sand of **Tortuga Bay** (p307).
- 7 Kayak past penguins by day and enjoy beachside cocktails at night on **Isla Isabela** (p321).
- 8 Surf, snorkel, kayak, bike or dive within minutes of **Puerto Baquerizo Moreno** (p317) on Isla San Cristóbal.
- 9 Relax on a pretty beach on peaceful **Floreana** (p329) after days of adventuring.

## ISLA SANTA CRUZ (INDEFATIGABLE)

The island of Santa Cruz has the largest and most developed town in the Galápagos; almost every visitor to the islands spends at least some time here, even if it's simply

commuting from the airport on nearby Isla Baltra to a cruise ship in the harbor of Puerto Ayora. However, to anyone who stays for longer, the island of Santa Cruz is more than just a way station or place to feel connected to the modern, man-made world; it's a destination in itself, full of visitor sites, easily