

GALAPAGOS CRUISE & TRAVEL BLOG



MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN PLANNING YOUR GALAPAGOS TRIP OF A LIFETIME

TIPS FOR PLANNING THE ULTIMATE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS TRIP

Home (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog>) > Galapagos Islands (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/category/galapagos-islands>) > Mistakes to Avoid When Planning Your Galapagos Trip of a Lifetime

Like 125 ([http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands)

[u=https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands](https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands))

4.86/5 (97%)
based on 7 ratings

Google+ 0 ([http://plus.google.com/share?](http://plus.google.com/share?url=https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands)

[url=https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands](https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands))

Tweet (<http://twitter.com/share?url=https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands&text=Mistakes+to+Avoid+When+Planning+Your+Galapagos+Trip+of+a+Lifetime&hashtags=TravelBlog&via=QuasarEx>)

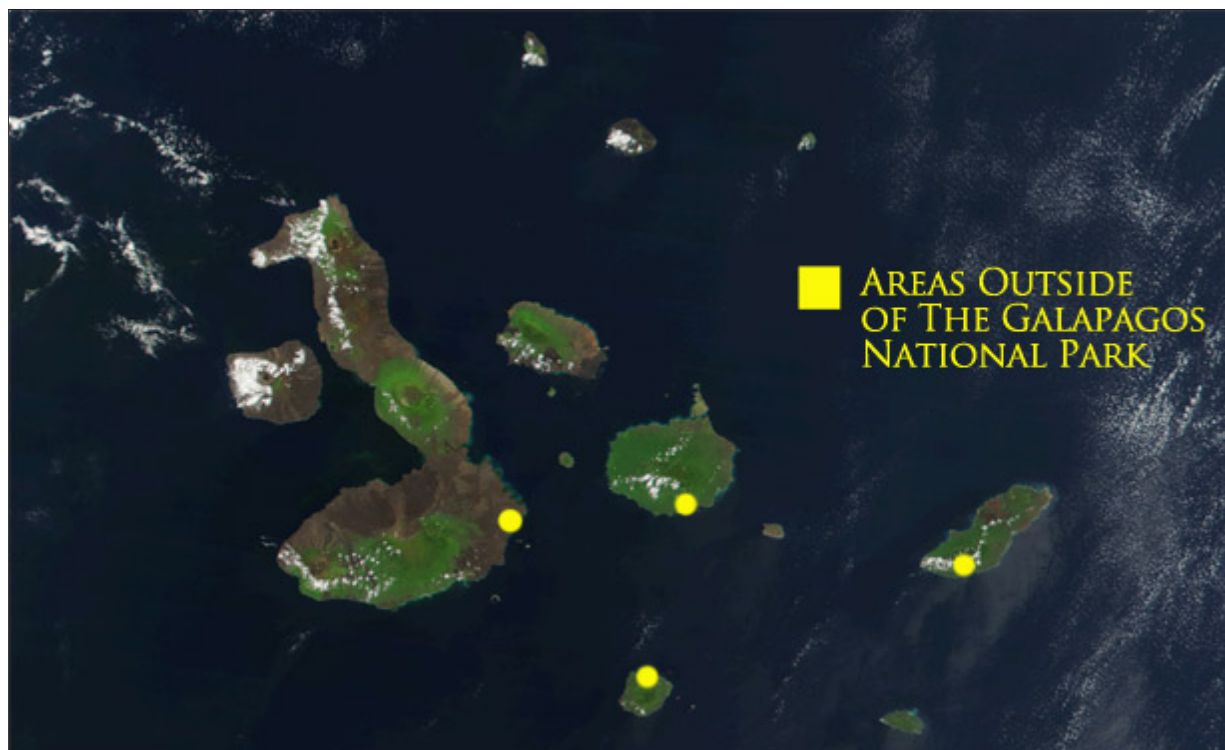




The Galapagos Islands is a trip of a lifetime that actually lives up to and surpasses expectations, and our 30 years of experience have allowed us to perfect the art of adventure travel to this remote corner of our world.

Simply put, it is the best place in the world to safely get up-close to, and even interact with, animals in the wild. That's why it's so important to avoid the common mistakes some travelers make in the planning stage that can result in anything less than a trip of a lifetime. Before you decide on the ideal trip for you, we would like to offer this guide past those pitfalls to maximize your enjoyment of the Galapagos Islands and those amazing animal encounters.

Make Sure You Know Which Galapagos You Are Planning to Visit



97% of the land area and 100% of the maritime area of the Galapagos Islands is within the National Park. The only places not within the Park are the population centers where you will find the hotels. There are 70 terrestrial visitor sites and 75 marine visitor sites throughout the National Park where travelers are permitted to go ashore or go snorkeling to see animals up close in their natural habitat. The only way to access the great majority of these landing sites is on a live aboard vessel that takes you on a cruise through islands.



The only way to access the great majority of landing sites is on a live aboard vessel that takes you on a cruise through islands.

Only a hand full of landing sites are accessible from the hotels and this is mostly by day boat. All the hotels compete for spaces on the day boats as there are more hotel accommodations than there are spaces on the day boats because few boats that are permitted to go into the Park operate day trips. If you are lucky enough to get a day boat out into the National Park, you start your day by having to take a power boat ride to the landing site. These can be two hour rides each way. Not that pleasant and really a waste of your day.

In contrast, the permitted live aboard yachts arrive at your first landing site before you wake up and you'll have the opportunity to go ashore and visit two different sites for up to 2 ½ hours each, along with snorkeling, kayaking and dinghy rides. Many yachts offer cabins, services and amenities equivalent to Galapagos hotels. The hotels are best for those who want to stay on after or arrive before their cruise for some diving or down time as well as families with toddlers too young to travel aboard the yachts.

The lesson here is that when you see a hotel package that seems too good to be true it is because you are likely to spend very little time within the Galapagos National Park seeing its animals. The hotels give you access to the port towns, which are small and can be fun, but they are not the key reason the Galapagos has become a premier destination.

A variation on this theme is port-to-port tours. These are provided by vessels that are not permitted to visit the Galapagos National Park (<https://www.quasarex.com/galapagos/the-galapagos-national-park>) landing sites. Instead they visit the ports, which are also the population centers. If your aim is to visit population centers this is a good option.

Take Care Before You Book Your Air



The Galapagos is a destination where you are far better off working out what you want to do first, and then organizing your flights afterwards. If you are planning to take a cruise it is far better to work out your cruise dates and availability before you purchase your international tickets, and to let the cruise company purchase you tickets from the Ecuadorian mainland to the Galapagos for you. Doing so insures you arrive at the right airport in the Galapagos at the right time to make it to the start of your cruise.



Some Galapagos dates, like Christmas and Easter sell out years in advance, while other dates end up sold out well before departure.

Travelers booking their international flights—or flights all the way to the Galapagos—before they have worked out their plans in the islands first, run into a number of problems. Some Galapagos dates like Christmas and Easter sell out years in advance, while other dates end up sold out well before departure. Travelers who purchase flights before arranging their Galapagos stay may discover there is literally no room at the inn (or on the yacht). Another common error when booking flights first is to discover that it is hard to fit a cruise into the flights you have booked. The cruise dates or availability of cabins may not work. Another mistake some travelers make is to book flights in and out of Baltra Island (<https://www.quasarex.com/galapagos/islands/baltra>) airport in the Galapagos, only to discover that the cruise leaves from the Galapagos Islands' other airport in San Cristobal (<https://www.quasarex.com/galapagos/islands/san-cristobal>).

Galapagos cruise vessels must follow a permitted itinerary defined by the Galapagos National Park, so at some point the yachts have to start their itinerary and they can't wait for a straggler who was trying to be clever by booking his or her own flights separate from the rest of the group. Catching up with a cruise can be expensive and sometimes impossible. That is why it is better to rely on the cruise company to purchase your Galapagos flights. That is also why many cruise companies require passengers to book Galapagos flights with the cruise company. Even if you plan to stay at a hotel remember that many of the hotels now require multi-day stays and they also get blocked out in advance. So deciding on going the hotel route does not insure immunity from problems when you decide to book your flights first. A good cruise company will allow you to place a courtesy hold on your cabins while you arrange international flights.

The tried and true method is to work out your plans in the Galapagos Islands first and then book your flights around them and allow your cruise company to book your flights to and from the Galapagos Islands.

So Little Time So Take All You Can



Probably the biggest mistake a traveler can make when visiting the Galapagos is simply not leaving enough time to see it. For most people it's a long way to go to get to the Galapagos. Both the first day you travel to the Galapagos and the day you return to the mainland are down days. So, for example, if you plan to spend 4 days in the Galapagos you are really spending 2 and a bit days in the islands.

Experience shows that an 8 Day / 7 Night trip is just right to maximize amazing animal encounters, balanced with optimal relaxation.

Remember that the Galapagos is really not about the port towns or the airports, it's about the animals and the National Park, so during those two days left you had better have worked out how to get into the Park. If your option is a day boat that means you will typically get to visit one landing site per day, or you can combine one landing site with a visit to see the tortoise in the wild. Right about the time you are starting to relax and wanting to stay longer, you will realize just how many amazing experiences are waiting for you throughout the archipelago...and then you will have to leave. Experience shows that an 8 day / 7 night cruise is just right to maximize amazing animal encounters balanced with optimal relaxation. For real animal enthusiasts you can stay on the same cruise vessel for another week and, since vessels cannot return to the same landing site for a fortnight, it means you will get to see all new landing sites!

Galapagos Wilderness vs. Crowded Beach



One of the things that makes the Islands so special is that they are a true marine wilderness. The Galapagos National Park is doing more to keep it that way. To lighten the environmental impact on its landing sites the Park now requires vessels to wait 14 days before returning to the same National Park landing site. This policy has had the positive effect of dispersing vessels more evenly throughout the Park with fewer crossover.

As a result, you have the feeling of having the Galapagos more to yourself... that is unless you bring the crowd along with you by traveling on a vessel carrying 50 to 100 passengers. When you land on a wilderness beach with that many passengers, it is hard to call it a wilderness beach anymore. At that point it becomes a beach with a lot of people on it. Most landing sites offer trails of roughly a mile and a half to two miles and, no matter how you divide these larger groups, you cannot avoid a crowd when you bring it with you on every landing site.

Do you really want to wait in line on a nature trail to see blue footed boobies doing their mating dance or constantly vie for position to get the photo you want? Do you want to go snorkeling with more people than would be considered acceptable in a crowded classroom?

Basics take longer in larger groups. More passengers translates into more time waiting for food, putting on wet-suits and waiting to board dinghies. Extra time spent on logistics and lectures translates into less time spent enjoying the Galapagos and its amazing animals.

The only way to encounter crowds in the Galapagos is by bringing them with you. You can avoid all that and enjoy an authentic experience of the Galapagos wilderness by traveling on a yacht that carries fewer passengers.

Mistake to avoid: To avoid crowds in the Galapagos avoid yachts that carry a crowd, as that is the only way you will encounter them in the archipelago.



Great Guide or Lost Soul



A key component to experiencing the Galapagos wilderness is your Galapagos National Park Guide. If you get the right guide they will become your hero (no kidding). The best of these not only have degrees in environmental sciences, are top notch educators (to the point you feel you are being entertained), and are on a first name basis with all the Galapagos animals (<https://www.quasarex.com/galapagos/animals-and-wildlife>) you will meet, they are consummate hosts who love to show you, their guest, their Galapagos home. The counter point is a guide who speaks poor English, doesn't know their stuff and is lost when it comes to understanding what it means to be a consummate host. Make sure you look for yachts that work with the best guides. How do you do that? Seek out the type of vessels that attract the best guides. Don't be fooled by quantity of guides, over consistency of quality guides either, as you will surely find yourself competing to be with the good guide over the mediocre guides along with everyone else on your vessel.

Think about it, if you are a top guide and can live on any yacht in the Galapagos Islands which would you pick? The best guides live and work on the best yachts because they can. Ask for customer comments on guides.

Mistake to avoid: *If you were a great guide, would you choose a boat to work on just because it is cheaper? The answer is simple: Great guides work on the best yachts.*

It's Not About the Boat but the Boat Must Be About the Galapagos





Finally, while it's not all about the boat, the best Galapagos yachts recognize that their job is to compliment the experience you are enjoying in the Galapagos National Park wilderness and not the other way around. Remember that the Galapagos is all about getting out into the National Park and up close to the animals as often as possible and not about sitting in an on board lecture hall with lots of other passengers. You don't need to go to the Galapagos to sit and listen to a lecture. A competent interpretive naturalist guide will provide you with all kinds of interesting and entertaining information in the open air class room of the archipelago. The best yachts are designed to maximize that experience.

Your yacht is there to give you access to the National Park, and the best yachts, like the Galapagos, are unique. They provide plenty of space outdoors and under shade from which you can enjoy that relaxing Galapagos climate rather than encasing you behind smoked glass. If it looks like a floating budget motel it likely is one. The best yachts are one-of-a-kind that are specifically configured to maximize your enjoyment of the surrounding Galapagos environment, while also providing an atmosphere, amenities and a crew that makes you feel right at home.

**Want information & rates on a
Galapagos cruise with Quasar Expeditions?**



of Guests Traveling *

1

Travel Dates *

Select month and year

SUBMIT FORM

You might also like



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/why-the-galapagos-is-the-ultimate-family-vacation>)
 Why the Galapagos is the Ultimate Family Vacation (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/why-the-galapagos-is-the-ultimate-family-vacation>)



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/how-do-you-know-you-are-getting-the-best-of-the-galapagos-islands>)
 How Do You Know You Are Getting The Best Of The Galapagos Islands?

(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/how-do-you-know-you-are-getting-the-best-of-the-galapagos-islands>)



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/what-is-the-galapagos-transit-control-card>)
 What is The Galapagos Transit Control Card? (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/what-is-the-galapagos-transit-control-card>)



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/the-cotopaxi-volcano-eruption-updates>)
 The Cotopaxi Volcano Eruption Updates (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/the-cotopaxi-volcano-eruption-updates>)



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/internet-access-in-the-galapagos-communication-in-the-galapagos-islands>)
 Internet Access in the Galapagos? – Communication in the Galapagos Islands

(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/internet-access-in-the-galapagos-communication-in-the-galapagos-islands>)



(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/top-10-reasons-to-take-kids-family-to-the-galapagos-islands>)
 Top 10 Reasons To Take Kids & Family To The Galapagos Islands (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/top-10-reasons-to-take-kids-family-to-the-galapagos-islands>)

This entry was posted in Galapagos Islands (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/category/galapagos-islands>) and tagged galapagos trip planning (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/tag/galapagos-trip-planning>), planning a trip to galapagos (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/tag/planning-a-trip-to-galapagos>), trip to galapagos (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/tag/trip-to-galapagos>), trip to galapagos islands (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/tag/trip-to-galapagos-islands>). Bookmark the permalink (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands>).





PAUL SCHICKE

MANAGER E-COMMERCE & DIRECT SALES AT QUASAR EXPEDITIONS

f (QuasarExpeditions) **t** (QuasarEx) **g+** (<https://plus.google.com/+PaulSchicke>)

Hello! My name is Paul. I am a photographer, traveler, teacher and writer. I have extensive experience in travel to Galapagos, Peru, Patagonia and the western seaboard of South America specializing in ways travelers can experience these once-in-a-life destinations like locals on the road. Lover of wine, chocolate, travel, coffee, and helping others plan vacations of a lifetime!

3 comments



Name

Email

Website

Best **Oldest** **Newest**

Mike and Julie Harper

• October 24, 2015 at 9:00 pm (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands#comment-38>)

Excellent information. My husband and I are in the beginning stages of planning our trip to the Galapagos. We appreciate this interesting article.

1 ▲ 0 ▼ • ↻ Reply

DanieloMarceloGallo

• July 14, 2013 at 11:39 am (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands#comment-15>)

It's an amazing place. I had read about Galapagos Islands and its animals, but I never imagine it was going to be such a wonder experience. Beth and I never expected to be like that, it's the best adventure we ever had.

0 ▲ 0 ▼ • ↻ Reply

stanleynicole3

• July 16, 2014 at 1:18 am (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/planning-your-trip-of-a-lifetime-to-the-galapagos-islands#comment-16>)

Excellent advice!! We are planning for family trip.....I will definitely consider some of these places for sure. When Planning Your Galapagos Trip, make sure that everyone comfortably and the luggage and that it's in good shape.

0 ▲ 0 ▼ • ↻ Reply



SHARE YOUR QUASAR EXPERIENCE

#MEMORIESFORALIFETIME
TAG @QUASAREX

Submit your Story
HERE

(<https://www.quasarex.com/blog/submit-story>)



([HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/QUASAREXPEDITONS](https://www.facebook.com/quasarexpeditons))
SUBMIT VIA
FACEBOOK

CLICK HERE
([HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/QUASAREXPEDITONS](https://www.facebook.com/quasarexpeditons))



([HTTPS://INSTAGRAM.COM/QUASAREX](https://instagram.com/quasarex))
SUBMIT VIA
INSTAGRAM

CLICK HERE
([HTTPS://INSTAGRAM.COM/QUASAREX](https://instagram.com/quasarex))



CONNECT
WITH US

<https://www.quasarex.com/blog><https://www.facebook.com/QuasarExpeditions><https://www.youtube.com/user/QuasarExpeditions><https://plus.google.com/+Quasarex><https://www.pinterest.com/QuasarEx/><https://vimeo.com/quasarexpeditions><https://twitter.com/QuasarEx><https://www.flickr.com/groups/quasarexpeditions/><https://www.linkedin.com/company/quasar-expeditions><https://instagram.com/quasarex>

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE DEALS, NEWS & MORE

Enter your email address

QUASAR EXPEDITIONS AS SEEN ON

PROUD PARTNERS
WITH<https://www.quasarex.com/partners><https://www.quasarex.com/partners><https://www.quasarex.com/partners><https://www.quasarex.com/partners>

CAREER

OPPORTUNITIES ([HTTPS://WWW.QUASAREX.COM/CAREER-OPPORTUNITIES](https://www.quasarex.com/career-opportunities))

PROTECTING

OUR DESTINATIONS ([HTTPS://WWW.QUASAREX.COM/PROTECTING-DESTINATIONS](https://www.quasarex.com/protecting-destinations))

TRAVEL

PROFESSIONALS ([/TRAVEL-PROFESSIONALS](https://www.quasarex.com/travel-professionals))

GEAR

SHOP ([HTTP://QUASAREX.NEWHEADINGS.COM/](http://quasarex.newheadings.com/))

Galapagos Island Cruises (<https://www.quasarex.com/galapagos>) | Patagonia Overland Safaris (<https://www.quasarex.com/patagonia>)

In The Press (<https://www.quasarex.com/press>) | Reviews (<https://www.quasarex.com/reviews>) |

Sitemap (<https://www.quasarex.com/quasar-sitemap.html>) | Travel Blog (<https://www.quasarex.com/blog>) |

Travel Videos (<https://www.quasarex.com/videos>) | Privacy Policy (<https://www.quasarex.com/privacy-policy>) |

Terms & Conditions (<https://www.quasarex.com/terms-conditions>) | Contact Us (<https://www.quasarex.com/contact-us>)



© Quasar Expeditions 2018

