



An underwater crater in the foreground and Pinnacle Rock in the background showcase Bartolome Island.



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/DOINYANEDOMAM

The entertaining sally lightfoot crab lives amongst the rocks at the turbulent, windy seashore.

find anywhere else. Here is a guide to “what lives where” to ensure your visit is everything you want it to be.

THE SOUTH ISLANDS

The South Islands are home to top-notch snorkeling, volcanic bays, and unusual land formations for the cool birds and fish. Espanola (Hood) Island is small and flat, with a magnificent beach used by colonies of sea lions, and is a major nesting site for marine turtles and brilliantly colored marine iguanas. Floreana is best known for its colorful history of buccaneers, pirates, whalers, convicts, and colonists. There is a salt lagoon frequented by flamingos, and a popular roosting site for seabirds such as blue-footed boobies, pelicans, and frigates. The center of the crown is an outstanding snorkeling spot full of sea lions and colorful fish.

The Galapagos Islands

A PARADISE OF EXTRAORDINARY CREATURES

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS are a natural treasure for the whole world to enjoy, located 600 miles due west of Ecuador. Spread across 13 principal islands, six smaller ones, and dozens of tiny islets are the creatures that inspired young Charles Darwin to pen his theory of natural selection and evolution. With no known predators, the wildlife within the islands exhibit almost no fear of humans.

I first visited the Galapagos by way of a small expedition cruise ship, which I believe is the best way to experience the most these islands offer. Since each island has different flora, fauna, and wildlife, and are spread apart (much like the Hawaiian Islands), a cruise ship will hop from island to island, allowing you more time to explore each area.

The Galapagos Islands are home to a dazzling array of birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals that you won't



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/PASIT-CHANSAREEKORN

Galapagos Island greeters! Two sea lions make their way toward a visitor.

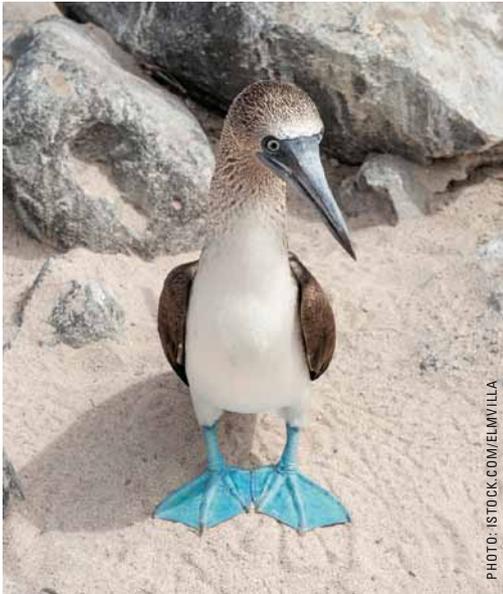


PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/ELM/ILLA

A blue footed booby on Espanola (Hood) Island.



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/UEW-BERGWITZ

A female tourist approaches a tortoise in its natural forest habitat.

THE CENTRAL ISLANDS

The Central Islands, isolated from its neighbors, are probably the best spot to witness the full scope of the diversity here, both on land and under the sea. Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz (a good choice of islands for a land stay, possibly at the Galapagos Safari Camp). Trek through the giant lava tubes, or to the Tortoise Reserve to search for giant 100-year-old tortoises in their natural surroundings. Enjoy stunning views of Pinnacle Rock on Bartolome Island, snorkeling and white sand beaches on Santiago, or swimming with the playful sea lions off North Seymour. While you can only get as close as several feet to the sea lions lying on the beach, in the water they like to play with you, and will “nose dive” as you snorkel in the cold Humboldt current!

SAN CRISTOBAL AND GENOVESA

The East Island of San Cristobal, often the hub of transportation, offers just about every kind of creature imaginable in its clear waters. The land and sky are also amazing, with hosts of boobies, frigate birds, and volcanic landscapes.

North Island’s Genovesa is a low volcano barely breaking the surface of the ocean. Great frigate birds, red-footed boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, and storm petrels all breed here by the thousands.

THE WESTERN ISLANDS

The Western Islands of Fernandina and Isabela are generally visited only on longer itineraries. The youngest and most active volcanos, with eruptions taking place every few years, has large colonies of birds and iguanas. Flightless cormorants build their nests on the point, and sea lions

sprawl on the beach. A two-day trek up Alcedo Volcano will lead you to some of the last wild tortoises found in the islands.

This isolated haven remains nature’s greatest science laboratory. While it is among the most popular destinations for scuba divers, sea kayakers, and other active outdoor adventurers, this is also the perfect travel spot for anyone searching for unique surroundings with the most exquisite wonders of nature you won’t find anywhere else. 

Sue Shimkus, president of Lake Zurich Travel, and her professional staff know the best ways to visit the Galapagos Islands. She has created custom trips for clients since 1992. Lake Zurich Travel is located at 461 S. Rand Road in Lake Zurich. Learn more at www.lztravel.com or call 847-438-5551.



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A land iguana stands out with its bright colors.



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A male frigate with its red throat pouch partially extended.