Your Guide to the Galápagos
World ARC 2027-28



Introduction

The Galápagos Islands are a special stopover on the World ARC schedule and a highlight for many.

They are governed by a Special Law that supports conservation and the preservation of its unique environment and inhabitants.

There are many protection measures in place and it is important that you understand these to make the most of your visit.

Ninety-five percent of the land area of Galápagos is designated as protected by the Galápagos National Park (GNP) and you are only permitted to explore specific visitor sites with Park-certified naturalist guides.

Entry Formalities

World Cruising Club begins the process for obtaining permits for Galápagos in advance of your arrival. It is essential that copies of crew passports and boat documents are uploaded to the World Cruising Club website as soon as possible to allow this to happen.

Visas

British, U.S., Canadian, and most European citizens do not require a visa (unless you plan to stay more than ninety days).

Check with local immigration offices or the Ecuadorian consulate prior to sailing to determine if you require a visa.

Galápagos Visitor Fees (October 2026)

All visitors to Galápagos will need to purchase on arrival (by sea or air):

- Tourist Transit Control Card ($20) (TCT)
- Galápagos National Park Visitor fee (currently $200 for adults and $100 for children 11 years old or younger).

You may be asked to present these permits if you go on a local tour or visit any of the research or information centres.

Other Galápagos Fees

- Park inspection fee US$50 per adult or child on board
- International Immigration fee US$32 (per boat)
- Galápagos Temporary Entry Permit $174 (per boat)

These fees will need to be paid by the skipper in cash on arrival in Galápagos - ensure you stock up on US$ before you leave mainland Panama.

Please note these fees are subject to change.

Your Guide to the Galápagos World ARC 2027-28

'Autografo' Cruising Permit

Included in your World ARC fees. The 'Autografo' allows you to anchor in the following ports with your boat:

- Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (Wreck Bay), Isla San Cristobal: landfall port for World ARC
- Isla Floreana, Puerto Velasco Ibarra
- Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabela
- Puerto Ayora (Academy Bay), Isla Santa Cruz: departure port for World ARC

This permit only allows your boat to visit the ports listed, and not any anchorages around it.

The movement of vessels between inhabited ports is strictly controlled. Crews will need to plan and communicate their sailing movements in advance with the Rally Control team. Once these are submitted to our agent & the authorities, there will be less flexibility for changes.

The anchorage at Isabela is quite small and the number of World ARC yachts visiting and the duration of their stay may have to be controlled in the sailing plans.

A single journey to Puerto Ayora is covered by World Cruising Club. The World ARC agent will communicate with the authorities for the movements between the islands above.

Additional movements will need to be arranged with Rally Control and paid for by the skipper (US$30 per boat, per movement).

Once anchored in port, further exploration can be done ashore - for some sites you will need to be accompanied by a registered guide. See Islands and Excursions.

World Cruising Club Support

Whilst the World Cruising Club Team will do our best to prepare you for the formalities of entering Galápagos, but **be prepared to expect last minute changes.**

The World Cruising Club Galápagos Agent will visit each boat with the following Officials:

- Medical Doctor (who will board first)
- Port Captain / Navy Immigration Officer
- National Park Inspector (GNP)
- Quarantine Inspectors x2 (one will dive the hull)
- Narcotics Officer

Please note this procedure can take 24 hours from arrival

Preparing your boat for Galápagos

Given the scientific importance of the Galápagos, there are regulations in place to prevent bio-contamination which are strictly enforced.

On arrival in Galápagos, officers from the Galápagos Quarantine and Inspection System (SICGAL) will board your boat to undertake an environment risk assessment of your boat. The officers will look at a number of areas of risk and will seek evidence to satisfy themselves that your yacht presents only acceptable risk to the National Park of Galápagos.

Top Tip: Have a large jug of water and glasses ready for the officials

Before entering the national waters of the Galápagos Islands you will need to:

Fumigate

All yachts entering the Galápagos Islands must be fumigated, and have a certificate as proof of fumigation.

- Fumigation is organised by World Cruising Club and will take place as part of the pre-transit preparations in Panama
- Use a non-toxic spray
- Yachts need to be vacated for two hours once fumigated.
- The cost of fumigation is included in your World ARC fee.

Clean Hull

Your hull and fittings must be totally free from organisms which might pose a threat to the Galápagos ecosystem.

- Hulls must be cleaned in Panama City using recommended divers, who will issue a certificate.
- Alternatively the boat can be lifted out of the water and thoroughly cleaned or fresh antifouling applied (keep receipts of when antifouling was applied).
- Hull cleaning is not covered in your World ARC fee.

If your hull is not clean when inspected by Quarantine Officials on arrival in Galápagos you may be required to leave the National Park.

Vessels which fail inspection are required to exit the marine reserve (60NM offshore) to clean their hulls and fittings and then pay US$150 for a re-inspection.

Top Tip: Before leaving Las Perlas put on your snorkel, mask & fins to check your hull for growth - particularly seacocks, rudder and propeller as these are areas that often fail.

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Foodstuffs

A guide list of food allowed/restricted/prohibited in Galápagos will be given to you by the Rally Control team in Saint Lucia and Panama so you can plan your provisioning in advance.

Prohibited fresh food items must be disposed of well before entering national waters of the Galápagos Islands.

Engine Maintenance

- You must be able to demonstrate what is done with old engine oil, and how oil spills are managed onboard.
- You will need to confirm when the engine was last serviced and whether you intend to work on it during your stay.
- There is an engine oil recycling centre in Galápagos.

All boats must carry special absorbent pads for soaking up oil.

Rubbish

You must have a rubbish disposal policy that considers the environment.

- All rubbish must be separated, with plastic kept onboard.
- Further information about the recycling policy for Galápagos will be provided at the Galápagos briefing in an earlier port
- We will provide you with appropriate onboard signage in Panama.

Black Water

World Cruising Club will declare on your behalf that you have a holding tank or if you don't, that you will not discharge overboard during your stay in Galápagos.

The main islands have toilets or cruisers on the docks.

Detergents

Eco-friendly or biodegradablle household products (soap, detergent, dishwashing etc) are mandatory.

Crew Joining or Leaving in Galápagos

When flying to the Galápagos Islands you must transit through mainland Ecuador to either Quito or Guayaquil and then take a connecting flight. You may need to arrange overnight accommodation.

Crew joining in the Galápagos Islands who have a one-way inbound ticket must email Rally Control a copy of their airline ticket and their booking code. An approval from the GNP (Galápagos National Park) will be required before onward travel. Crew departing by plane or friends and family visiting the Galápagos on a two-way ticket do not require this documentation.



Your Guide to the Galápagos World ARC 2027-28

Exploring the Galápagos Islands

Your 'Autografo' Cruising Permit only allows you to anchor in the following ports with your boat:

- Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (Wreck Bay), Isla San Cristobal
- Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabela
- Puerto Ayora (Academy Bay), Isla Santa Cruz
- Floreana

San Cristobal

The easternmost island in the Galápagos, and entry port for the Rally. The main town, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, is the capital of the Galápagos. This is a great place to see wildlife, particularly sea lions, giant tortoises and blue footed boobies. There are shops and a market here to provision. We recommended a tour to Kicker Rock (dive or snorkel).

Islabela

It is the largest island in the Galápagos, formed by the merging of six volcanoes, some of which are still active. The Sierra Negra volcano, one of the largest volcanic craters in the world, is a must see.

Isabela is great for wildlife you are likely to see giant tortoises, penguins and marine iguanas. Rent bikes in town and cycle to the Wall of Tears. There is a snorkelling beach next to the jetty where you can swim with marine iguanas, sea lions etc.

Santa Cruz

The main town is Puerto Ayora, although not the capital, it is the largest town in the archipelago. There are more repair and chandlery options here and this is also the main place for refuelling. Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, with a facinating visitor centre and tour. Here you can see marine iguanas, sea lions, rays, sharks and crabs from the town/wharf. Good spots to visit are Tortuga Bay, an amazing beach with lots of wildlife, Las Grietas, Los Gemelos and Lava Tunnels.

Floreana

Home to the famous Post Office Bay - where British Whalers started the tradition of the post barrel in the 1700s. It is still possible to leave mail there or collect some to be posted on.

Floreana is also the setting of the events described in the book 'The Galapagos Affair' by John Trehame, a true tale of a 1930s murder featuring a self-styled baroness and her three lovers, a German dentist and the Wittmer family, whose descendants still run the post barrel in Post Office Bay.

Tours and excursions

There are a number of tour operators, based in all inhabited ports, who you can book places on tours to visit sites in the National Park with. All are similarly priced and offer very similar tours and excursions due to the strict regulations in place.

There are only a small number of places you can 'explore' on your own, or visit without a guide, on each of the Islands. Make sure you do your research before you arrive.

We work with Islanders Galápagos to provide tours around the islands. Please contact them through info.islandersgalapagos@gmail.com

World ARC 2026 fleet recommendations

San Cristobal

- Kicker Rock (León Dormido) - dive or snorkel with hammerhead sharks, sea lions, eagle rays and turtles.
- Seymour Norte - recommended as an easier dive than Kicker Rock but still seeing hammerheads.
- Snorkel at Las Tijeretas - best on spring tides. You can expect to see reef fish, rays, sea lions and turtles, as well as incredible coral formations

Isabela

- Volcano Tour – always very popular with lots of different options for hiking. It is also possible to do on horseback.
- Paddle to the Penguins - SUP or Kayak to Las Tintoreras looking for the Galapagos penguins and blue-footed boobies, fishing and resting alongside the islet.
- Los Tuneles Cabo Rosa - explore lava tunnels under the sea, snorkel with some playful sea lions, sharks, rays, turtles, and starfishes!

Santa Cruz

- Explore the lava tunnels with a guide and experience fine dining 70 feet underground in a volcanic vault at the Lava Restaurant.
- Santa Fe Island Tour - an hour boat ride from Santa Cruz - snorkel with playful sea lions and swim with turtles.
- Charles Darwin Research Station - Visitor Centre - learn about the history of conservation on the Islands.

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Floreana

- Playa Negra – a public beach with black volcanic sand a short walk away. Great for snorkelling, turtles and sea lions.
- La Loberia beach - reached by a short walk along the shoreline. Good for seeing large marine iguanas, and sea lions.
- Take a trip to Post Office Bay and the mail barrel. The walk is two hours one way and return to town by boat.
- Take a tour to visit the highlands and the pineapple plantation, Asilo de Paz, Pirate
- Caves and Tortoise Corrals, where the first settlers used to live.

Multi day excursions

These are on 'liveaboard' tour boats which will visit several islands in the national park. These boats usually have 8 cabins and a maximum capacity of 16 guests with options to suit a range of budgets.

Important to note - if you choose to go on these tours **we do not recommend you leave your boat unattended in an anchorage.**

Devils Crown on Floreana, is known as one of the best snorkelling sites in the Galapagos. Described as "like swimming in a tropical fish tank".

Bartolome

Bartolome Island is a small island just off Sullivan Bay east of Santiago, home to the iconic Pinnacle Rock. Snorkel with sea lions and penguins or hike to the top of the Island where you can get a fantastic view of the Islands. The trail consists of wooden steps and a boardwalk protecting the fragile volcanic tufa from human erosion and the spatter cones and lava tubes seem more akin to the moon than a Pacific island!

North Seymour

Located just north of Santa Cruz and Baltra this small islet has a 2km visitor trail that crosses the Island and explores the rocky coast. A great spot to see the blue-footed booby and frigate birds, as well as marine iguanas.



World ARC Tour

San Cristobal Half Day Tour

Included within your World ARC crew fee is a half day tour, visiting:

El Junco Lagoon

A freshwater lake 700m above sea level, formed by the collapsed caldera of an extinct volcano. You may see frigate birds, white cheeked pintails, common gallinules.



Galapaguera

A breeding centre helping giant tortoises repopulate while living in semi-natural conditions.



Puerto Chino Beach

A popular swimming spot, you may see Galápagos green turtles, stingrays, sea lions and blue-footed boobies. Remember your swimwear, snorkel and fins!



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Exploring the Galapagos National Park on your own boat

It is possible to cruise the National Park onboard your own boat but the fees to obtain a permit for doing so are expensive:

- Permission arrangement fee circa $2,000
- $200 per crew member for each day the boat is not in a recognised port
- Circa $300 per day for a naturalist guide who must accompany you at all times and be accommodated onboard.
- Dinghies cannot be left ashore so one crew member will probably have to stay onboard whilst the group explores on land.

If you wish to explore the National Park in this way, you will need to let World Cruising Club know well in advance, giving a minimum of 2 months' notice. We will then put you in contact with our agent so you can organise this directly.



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