THE TRUE GALAPAGOS EXPERIENCE
TWO WEEKS

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Juan Leon Mera y la Pinta
Quito - Ecuador
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SAN CRISTOBAL BIO - STATION:

Your work as a volunteer is aimed at controlling the spread of foreign plants, mainly, the blackberry, which is Galápagos’ most invasive plant that has taken over the majority of San Cristobal. The purpose of project is to try to restore the land to its native habitat. The Station resides on 200 hectares of native vegetation and aims to cultivate the four different vegetation zones. The reserve is mainly focused on organic agricultural and native habitat restoration in the highlands on San Cristobal, and aims to serve as a center for similar projects in the highlands on other populated islands in the Galapagos chain. The remaining native highland forests on the populated islands are disappearing due to farming activities, and the introduction of invasive plant species. The station has established a Plant Conservation Center for the production of native plant species for this work.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:

- Unique Itinerary: Combines travel excursions to four different islands with volunteering activities.
- “Real Galapagos” Experience: Allows you to stay on various islands and experience Galapagos off the beaten path, from land to underwater, and beyond the coastline to the highlands & volcanos.
- Flexible Schedule: Enables you to take part in a variety of activities and excursions with options, like diving with sharks, snorkeling with sea lions, day trips to see more islands, etc.
- Socially Responsible: Contributes revenue back into the Galapagos by creating jobs within the local community & giving back to the islands through volunteer projects that benefit the people, plants, & animals of the Galapagos.
- Environmentally Responsible: Environmentally-conscious experience through conservation volunteering.
- Scientific Briefing: Learn important information about the native plants, animals, & people, as well as the issues affecting the Galapagos Islands.
- Excellent Value: Lead Adventures is an Ecuadorian-based company that employs locals and our services are provided by local providers. We are able to offer competitive pricing versus transnational providers.
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PROGRAM ITINERARY

WEEK 1 - SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:
• Observe high-flying boobies and frigate birds from the famous Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock)
• Volunteer with Conservation projects at the Biology Station
• Free time for independent exploration and activities

WEEK 2 - ISABELA, FLOREANA & SANTA CRUZ HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:
• Go on a trekking tour to Sierra Negra Volcano, one of the most beautiful volcanoes in the world.
• Snorkel in “Los Tuneles”
• Explore the lava-made caves once used by pirates
• Visit the Giant Tortoise Breeding Center
• Observe the Giant Turtles
• Enjoy a guided walk through the dark lava tunnels as our guide explains the origin of this island.
• Visit the Charles Darwin Station
• Tour through the Academy Bay, where you can observe the diversity of the underwater world.
• You can opt to explore Tortuga Bay Beach, one of the most pristine white-sanded beaches in Galapagos.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Thursday- Arrival to Quito</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Quito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Arrival in Quito</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Friday- Orientation and Exploration of Quito</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Offices of Lead Adventures in the Mariscal Neighborhood of Quito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>A member of the Lead Adventures Staff will accompany you to our office where you will receive a comprehensive orientation about Ecuador and the program itself. You will be free for the remainder of the day to explore Ecuador’s capital city.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Saturday- Flight to the Galapagos Islands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>San Cristobal Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Depart from Quito to the Galapagos. Our local guide will receive you around 12h00pm in the airport and then we will have lunch. Please note: the Galapagos are one-hour behind the time zone in Quito.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Sunday- Snorkeling tour</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Lobos Island or Kicker Rock in San Cristobal Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>You can witness the high-flying boobies and frigate birds. You will have the opportunity to swim with rays, seals, iguanas, multicolored fish, and many more depending on the ocean currents.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Monday- Day 1 of Volunteer Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>San Cristobal Biology Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>In the morning you will go to the highlands of the island to the Biology Station, which located 45 minutes from the town (Puerto Baquerizo Moreno). The Station resides on 200 hectares of native vegetation and aims to cultivate the four different vegetation zones. The main objective of this project is clearing invasive plants and reforesting the land with native and endemic species. This innovative approach is believed to be the only true way to forge a sustainable future for the Galapagos.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Tuesday- Day 2 of Volunteer Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>San Cristobal Biology Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Volunteer Hours: 8:30 - 12pm and 3pm to 5pm. Some of the activities will include: Reforestation with native and endemic species in the reserve and in local farms - Environmental education with local people and schools. Station maintenance (trail maintenance, sign elaboration for trails, basic construction activities, help clean fresh water supply, help in kitchen, etc.) Organic agricultural activities and vegetable production (help maintain and secure food production for the station). Guided hike throughout reserve and/or nearby related areas (learn about biodiversity themes, natural history, &amp; ecology)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 7</th>
<th>Wednesday- Speedboat Ride to Isabela Island</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Santa Cruz and Isabela Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Departure in the morning to Puerto Ayora in Santa Cruz. You will have free time in Santa Cruz until the boat departs. In the late afternoon you will depart to Isabela Island in a speedboat. The ride is around 2.5 hours from Santa Cruz to Isabela. Upon your arrival, a local guide will transfer you to the hotel.</td>
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### PROGRAM ITINERARY
#### TWO WEEKS SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 8</th>
<th>Thursday- Volcano Hike Tour</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Sierra Negra Volcano in Isabela Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>You will visit one of the most beautiful volcanoes in the world. The crater of this volcano called “Sierra Negra” and is approximately 7 kilometers in diameter. You will have a trekking tour (2 hours) to the Volcano in order to enjoy the wonderful scenery unique in the world.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 9</th>
<th>Friday- Observe Giant Tortoises and Snorkel in “Los Túneles”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Isabela Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>You will visit Los Túneles, a labyrinth of arches in crystal clear water where blue-footed boobies breed, sea lions frolic, penguins sun, tropical fish feed, white-tipped reef sharks rest, and turtles navigate from the mangrove to the sea. Later that day, you will observe the Giant Tortoises in the Breeding Center. The center houses around 330 tortoises.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 10</th>
<th>Saturday- Visit the Charles Darwin Station and Tour of Lava Tunnels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Ranch visit and Charles Darwin Station in Santa Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Early departure on a speedboat to Puerto Ayora. In the morning we will visit a ranch in the island’s highlands where you will see Giant Turtles in their natural habitat. You will go through the dark lava tunnels as our guide explains the origin of this island. In the afternoon we will visit the Charles Darwin Station, home to the giant tortoises and the land iguana captive breeding programs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 11</th>
<th>Sunday- Observe the Underwater World in the Academy Bay</th>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Academy Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>In the morning you will have Free to visit Tortuga Bay Beach independently. The beach is located 40 minutes walking distance from the hotel, and is one of the most pristine white-sanded beaches in Galapagos. In the afternoon after noon, you will have a tour through the Academy Bay. During the trip you can observe the diversity of the underwater world and with a little bit of luck see some of the bigger inhabitants of the ocean, like marine turtles, white tip reef sharks, and manta rays.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 12</th>
<th>Monday- Snorkeling tour in Santa Fe Island</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Santa Fe Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>During this tour you will visit 2 snorkel sites around the coast of Santa Fe. It is generally a great place to snorkel with the playful Galapagos sea lions. You can also see many reef fish, and sometimes turtles, reef sharks and rays.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A hot lunch will be served on the boat, after which you will move to Playa Escondida.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The afternoon is taken up with a visit to Playa Escondida on the coast of Santa Cruz, only accessible by boat. Here you can relax on the beach, swim or snorkel, and possibly catch site of some more friendly sea turtles. Lunch included.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 13</th>
<th>Tuesday- Depart to Quito</th>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Baltra Airport Departure to Quito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>This day you have to take a bus or a taxi (not included in the program), across Santa Cruz Island to reach the Baltra Airport, where we will check in for our flights to Quito. Accommodation in Quito is provided.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 14</th>
<th>Wednesday- Flight Home</th>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>International flight home. Have a good journey home!</td>
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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Quito** - You will stay in a hostel for a total of two nights (one upon arrival, one before departure home) near the tourist area of town.
- **San Cristobal** - You will stay in a hotel in town close to restaurants, shops, & beaches. During the volunteering project, participants stay in one of two participant houses, each house has 11 rooms and common area with hammocks & table. There is a separate kitchen & dining area with a ping-pong table. Accommodations are rustic, with space for groups of up to 45 people. There is electricity, but no Internet or telephone access.
- **Isabela** - You will stay in a family-owned hotel with double and triple rooms. The hotel has hot water for showers, electricity, and common areas to relax with other participants.
- **Santa Cruz** - You will stay in a hotel in the town of Puerto Ayora, by the port, tour operators, Internet cafes, and restaurants.

MEALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Santa Cruz</th>
<th>San Cristobal</th>
<th>Isabela</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast included per day except for Saturday ans Sunday</td>
<td>Breakfast included in the project. Meals are not included on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.</td>
<td>Breakfast Included</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Two nights in Quito on arrival, and one night after Galapagos before departure home
- Comprehensive Orientation in Quito
- Reception at the airport in San Cristobal Island
- Accommodation and meals as described above
- Activities as previously described above
- Boat transfers: San Cristobal-Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz-Isabela

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- International flights to Ecuador
- Flight to Galapagos (can purchase through Lead Adventures at an extra cost)
- Personal travel insurance for the duration of your placement (can be purchased through Lead Adventures at an extra cost)
- National Park entrance fee ($115) to enter the Galapagos
- Soft drinks, beer, wine, spirits
- Tours to other islands
- Any activities beyond your planned itinerary
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

In your free time, you have the option to book other day tours and activities through local island operators for an additional cost. Some options to consider are:

• **Scuba Diving** in the underwater world of the Galapagos can be as exciting and diverse as exploring the land on the Galapagos Islands. Coral reefs are not the star attraction, but rather the combination of ocean fish, birds, mammals and reptiles are what set Galapagos diving apart. Divers share the water with penguins, sea lions, marine iguanas, sea turtles, manta rays, eagle rays, octopus, moray eels, a variety of sharks including hammerhead, Galapagos, white-tip reef sharks, and many more!

• **Small Boat Tours** are a great way to explore more remote areas of the islands and can include some hiking, snorkeling, and stops on pristine beaches only accessible by boat.

• **Surfing** - You can rent surf board or get lessons from local guides on the islands.

DESTINATION INFORMATION

The Galapagos National Park is located just 960 kilometers off the mainland of Ecuador. The islands originally emerged from the Pacific Ocean floor as a result of a sub oceanic lava vent and are the world’s first World Heritage Site, proclaimed by UNESCO. These isolated islands are rich in diversity, providing an abundance of natural wonders to see. Currently there are sixty named islands; three of the main ones are Isabela, Santa Cruz, and San Cristobal, which you will be staying on.
HELPFUL INFORMATION

CURRENCY

The currency of Ecuador is the United States dollar, accepted as the national currency back in January 2000. The money in circulation includes US $100, $50, $20, $10, $5, and $1 bills, and the coins are in denominations of $1, 50¢, 25¢, 10¢, 5¢ and 1¢. Please note that most shops and restaurants will not accept bills over $20, so it is better to have small currency denominations on you. ATMs are available on Santa Cruz & San Cristobal, but there are none on Isabela. Credit cards, mainly Visa and MasterCard, are also accepted in Ecuador. Additionally, you may use traveler checks; in Quito there are traveler check exchange bureaus that are easily accessible.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

All tourists need a valid passport and to fill out an entry form-tourist card which is provided by your airline carrier. This form will be available at either the ticket counter when checking in for your flight to Ecuador or once on-board your flight. Citizens of Canada, UK and USA do not need to obtain a visa for stays up to 90 days. If you are of a different nationality, please check with Lead Adventures Staff and your local Ecuadorian Embassy. For stays longer than 90 days, you must obtain a 6-month Tourist visa (12-IX) at your local Ecuadorian Embassy. Lead Adventures will provide you with more information about visas and immigration if needed.

HEALTH & VACCINATIONS

When traveling abroad it is important to seek advice on the potential hazards, how best to protect your health, and minimize the risk of harm or disease. Planning ahead and taking preventive measures will reduce the risks. We are not qualified to assess individuals’ health, therefore we highly recommend that you seek assistance from a medical professional regarding specific vaccinations and medications. You can visit http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ for additional helpful information.

LEAD ADVENTURES SUPPORT

Ensuring our participant’s safety is of the utmost importance. Prior to your departure, our program coordinators will work with you to plan and prepare for your trip with us. Upon your arrival to Quito, you will receive a detailed orientation and last minute questions will be addressed. You will also have a 24-hour emergency contact number for our on-call Ecuadorian based coordinators.

WEATHER

Ecuador’s climate varies with its regions. Temperature in the Highlands ranges 13º-25ºC, Coast 23º-36ºC, Amazon 23º-32ºC, and Galapagos from 22º-36ºC depending on the time of the year.

ELECTRICAL STANDARDS

Ecuador’s electrical current is 120/60 (volts/Hz) Type A and Type B Electrical Outlet (same as North America). 23º-36ºC, Amazon 23º-32ºC, and Galapagos from 22º-36ºC depending on the time of the year.
HELPFUL INFORMATION

KIT LIST - WHAT TO PACK

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore you may not need all of the listed items on your travels. In addition, it is worth noting that you can buy lots of the above in Ecuador and at a very cheap price and there will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets and towns.

PERSONAL ADMIN

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Guidebook on country - recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

CLOTHING

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket
- Long trousers!!
- Swimwear
- Towel

GENERAL

- Camera / Film / Batteries/Battery Charger!!!
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Bottled Water
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mosquito Net and face net (for San Cristobal Station)
- Personal hygiene items (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

MEDICAL KIT

- Personal Hygiene Kit (ex. Antihistamines, Anti-diarrhea tablets, headache tablets)
- Personal Toiletries
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent
FAQ’s

How do I help support conservation in the Galapagos?

In our program we strive to have minimal impact through land travel, focus on saving and preserving the unique wildlife, and leave our mark by planting endemic flora.

What is the best time of year to travel to Galapagos?

It is warmer and may be wet from December to April, the sea is generally more calm. It is cooler from June to November, a fine mist (garua) falls regularly at this time of year and the vegetation in the highland areas is lush and green. That being said, there is no "best time" to visit the islands as there is an abundance of unique flora and fauna year round.

Do people live on the islands?

A few islands have inhabited towns, though most islands have no human inhabitants and most people living in the Galapagos were born there. All of the residents are acutely aware of the ecological importance of the islands, both for the animals and the economy. The towns are small yet well-equipped with modern conveniences; two of the islands have airports.

Are there any fees upon arrival to the Galapagos?

At the airport on Ecuador's mainland, before departing for the Islands, you must purchase a transit card from the Consejo del Gobierno counter, which costs $10 USD per person, and is payable in cash. The Galapagos National Park entry fee is $100 USD per person. There is a $5 USD tax when going to Isabela.

Do I need travel insurance?

Lead Adventures highly recommends travel insurance for volunteers. You can elect to purchase travel insurance through Lead adventures at an additional cost.

Do I need to speak Spanish to volunteer at Galapagos?

You can still volunteer at the Galapagos even if you do not speak Spanish.

How many volunteers can the project employ monthly?

At the Galapagos Foundation in Santa Cruz and the Biological Station in San Cristobal we choose to manage small groups of 10 volunteers at the same time.

Are there any requirements to attend this program?

An interest in conservation, education, the environment, and community work.
FAQ’s

What is Lead Adventures’ position on diversity?

Lead Adventures strives to pursue its mission by providing an inclusive environment, and selects its participants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, or age.

Are there age requirements for this program?

You must be at least 18 years old or accompanied by an adult. This program is suitable for people over the age of 50.

Does the project receive participants all year round?

The Foundation and Station are closed for the holidays from December 15 to January 15.

Is the program’s itinerary firm or is there room to make adjustments?

This program is customizable! Please contact us to see how we can help make this experience suitable for you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT THE PROGRAM ON OUR WEBSITE

http://www.lead-adventures.com/programs/true-galapagos-experience

ALSO YOU CAN READ OUR BLOG