

Tourism in Galapagos – Restricted Yet Remarkable

The Galapagos Islands are located in the Pacific Ocean on both sides of the Equator and are located to the west of the Ecuador. The Galapagos Islands have been recognized both as a national park as well as marine bio reserve. The islands are volcanic in nature and they consist of thirteen main islands, hundred and seven rocks and islets and three smaller islands.



The Galapagos Islands are very remotely located and isolated. Thus they are the perfect location for deep relaxation in the lap of nature. The Galapagos Islands are home to so many endemic species that Darwin had conducted a number of studies here. In fact one of the main islands is named after Darwin.

One needs to understand that the Galapagos Islands are home to exotic species and are also not very densely populated. The government maintains very strict controls on the tourism and the entire industry is strictly regulated in order to ensure that the wild flora and fauna as well as the marine species are not threatened in any manner. The so called fearless wildlife on the Galapagos Islands served as an inspiration to the Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection.

Since tourism is highly restricted the total number of tourist visiting Galapagos Islands was a little more than 1.5 lakh in 2010. In fact until the 1970s the only way to travel to Galapagos Islands was either through chartered vessels or private planes. Forrest Nelson's Hotel was the first one to take up the initiative of organizing tours and regular air service in 1969.



However even today there are just about eighty five yachts that have the capability to accommodate overnight guests, and the government has placed a restriction on the number of passenger which is just a hundred. There are very few islands that provide the permission of camping. Only the islands designated by the government may be used and there is also a limit to the number of people allowed for

the camp and the number of days for camping can under no circumstance be more than 3.

There are a few small land hotels opening on the islands with no human habitation like Santa Cruz, San Cristobal, Floreana and Isabela. Today there are only about hundred and sixteen sites which have been allowed to be visited by the tourists, they consist of about fifty four sites that are located on land and about sixty two sites that offer great opportunity for snorkeling as well as scuba diving. Only very small groups are allowed to visit these sites in two to four hour shifts and they have to be accompanied by licensed guides.

The Galapagos Islands have been listed under the World Heritage Site list. The tourists must remember that visiting the Galapagos Islands will not be cheap, because of the remote location of the islands. In fact there is only one way to get into the islands which is by plane from either Guayaquil or Quito airports on the main land. There are daily flights from these two locations to the Isla Baltra Airport. There are also daily flights available for San Cristobal. Planes from Quito are slightly less priced than the ones from Guayaquil. There are two daily flights from Quito whereas there is only one daily plane from Guayaquil.



Private yachts are allowed to dock at any five of the ports on the Galapagos Islands for not more than twenty one days at a stretch and in case the tourists have the wish to visit more than one site they need a special permission from the national park and the permission is granted only to the yacht agencies who have license.

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