

# GALAPAGOS ENTRY FEE INCREASES TO FIGHT MASS TOURISM



According to Ecuador's local media reports, the cost of entering the Galapagos National Park, a natural heritage site located off the coast of Ecuador, will increase in 2024. This measure aims to preserve the islands' environment and fight mass tourism.

The entrance fee for foreigners will double from \$100 to \$200, and for Ecuadorians, it will increase sixfold from \$5 to \$30. The Minister of Tourism, Niels Olsen, **explained that the fee increase aims to tackle the negative impact of mass tourism on the islands.** Introducing invasive species and food shortages are among the damaging effects of mass tourism on the islands.

The authorities believe the measure will come into effect in six months and generate up to \$40 million annually. This is a significant increase from the present revenue of \$14 million to \$18 million. The extra funds will benefit local governments, which will help the island inhabitants who rely on tourism for their livelihood. However, not all islanders are convinced that the measure will benefit them.

The Galápagos archipelago, located off the coast of Ecuador over 1,000 kilometers away, is renowned for its exquisite flora, giant tortoises, marine reserves, rare birds, and iguanas. This archipelago's unique nature has developed due to its isolation from the outside world. The islands have been selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1978 and recognized as biosphere reserves.

Some experts warn that a sudden and significant increase in access fees could deter international tourists from visiting the Galapagos Islands. However, they **support the price hike for Ecuadorians and justify it by comparing it to admission fees in European museums**, which can cost over \$30 and provide less beauty than the Galapagos.

On the other hand, Charles Wittmer, the president of the Galapagos Association of Tourist Shipowners, disagrees and argues that tourists who are willing to spend \$180 for a day trip and \$20 for a restaurant will not be deterred by the first increase in admission costs in two decades.

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