

Galapagos Islands June 2014

by www.pawsontour.com

Parking

Finca Sommerwind in Ibarra charges 1\$ a day.

Coordinates: N 0.38094 W 78.08944

Dogs

We were lucky to find a private place for our dogs in Ibarra with a lovely Swiss couple.

In Quito we saw an ad for a dog care place

Pet Shop and Hospedaje Quito

S 0.18818 W 78.44696, from 10\$/day

Tel.: (2) 289 85 35 oder (2) 289 83 25 or Cell 09 585 651

Flights

LAN, Tame, AeroGal

We flew: Quito-Guyaquil-Baltra

Return: San Cristobal-Guyaquil-Quito

This flight is without changing planes, it just makes a 45 minute stopover in

We booked 2 weeks in advance with LAN and paid 261\$pP + 40\$pP Tax

Your baggage will be checked for fresh foods. Only processed food is allowed.

Island Taxes

10\$pP Communityfee

100\$pP Nationalparkfee

5\$pP Isabela Portfee

Transport

From Ibarra to the airport it costs a few bucks

From the airport in Baltra, you can board a bus for free, it takes you to the water taxis. There, it costs 1\$pP to cross the canal with your luggage and from there, you can either wait for a bus to come (which we assume NEVER happens at the same time a plane lands) or you can share a Pickup Taxi. There is a max of 4 people in a Taxi (and they mostly follow the law strictly!) and it costs 18\$ per Taxi for the 45 minute ride to town (Puerto Ayora). Just look for some other people to share the Taxi costs.

Taxis within the city always cost 1\$

Watertaxis cost 60 cents

The speedboats between the islands are around 25\$ to 30\$, depending on your negotiating skills.

The boats leave 1-2 a day, your luggage is searched for fresh foods, your shoes must be clean.

Takes around 2 hours to get there, speed is between 35 and 55km/h depending on the motors

Weather

Clouds, sun, wind- but no rain at all

The water in June was mostly rough, its temperature at 22 to 24 degrees Celsius. We would advise to bring or rent a shorty for snorkeling. The ocean gets even rougher in July we heard. Check out the sea conditions before you book. It depends on the season if it's flat like a lake or very rough. The water temperature also changes from 16 Celsius up to 30 Celsius depending on the season (currents).

Accommodation

Brattle Hospedaje, Puerto Ayora, in Calle Saigon, 2 minutes walk from the main square.

Nearby you find travel agencies, restaurants, the docks, ATM machines, a supermarket.

Single, double, triple, quadruple rooms all with private bathroom, hot water, TV Cable, Wi-Fi and either air conditioning or fan. Communal kitchen.

Single with fan 20\$, with ac 25\$

Double with fan 15\$pP, with AC 20\$pP

Triple and quadruple is negotiated on the spot

Phone Brattle hospedaje: (593) (0)52 526 581

Mobile Simon: (593) (0)99 814 7938

Mobile Viviana (593) (0)98 313 8729

Same family owns the '**Hospedaje el Delfin Azul**' on **Isabela**, a brand new hotel, all rooms with private bath, AC, Wi-Fi and TV. Breakfast is included. 30\$pP

Also, they own a new, small suite on **Isabela** called **Iguana Rosa**. It is a bungalow house with 2 bedrooms, each with private bathroom, with a large kitchen/ lounge area. 15\$pP

Daniel Jimenez, born in Puerto Rico, grew up in New York, lives on **San Cristobal** for over 20 years, speaks fluent English, very nice family!! He took us around when we needed it, has a lot of tips, also lends snorkeling gear, knows good restaurants, tour companies etc. Has various rooms on offer, some in town, some on the beach. We stayed in **Fragatas Home**, up the hill in town. Room has its own kitchen, bathroom, Wi-Fi, TV, fan or AC. The AC is a bit loud, maybe ask to hear it first...

room with fan 15pP

room with AC 17.50 pP

the rooms on the beach are more expensive

We also called **Casa de Nelly** on **San Cristobal**, 60\$/night, use of communal kitchen

Avenida Tijeretas y Manuel Agama (Sector Playa de Oro)

mobile: (593) (0)99 164 5580 or (593) (0)99 961 7970

Individual Trips

We visited the following places (almost) for free:

On Santa Cruz:

- Tortuga Bay, 45 to 60 minutes by foot from downtown, opens at 6 in the morning , great jogging!
- Playa los Alemanes, from there on foot to Playa los Perros and las Grietas (a lava canyon with sweet/salt water mix. It's worth to keep swimming & snorkeling through the canyon). Great for swimming and snorkeling. Water taxi from harbor for 60cents/Person.
- Charles Darwin Center, path with areas for different turtles and iguanas
- Stroll through town
- Fishmarket and its Pelicans (opposite Restaurant Chocolate)

On Isabela:

The pier and its surroundings, good for snorkeling, you often see penguins here!

On San Cristobal

- La Loberia, wonderful sunsets, snorkeling, sea lions on the beach, lava fields. It's a 30 minutes walk from town center. Alternatively you can take a taxi (1\$) to the parking lot and from there it is only a 5 minute walk.
- La Negrita, follow the trail along the La Loberia beach and keep walking for about 30 to 40 minutes (or less if you wish). You will need good shoes, it's all sharp Lava, difficult terrain. Beautiful! Great for birding.
- Interpretation Center direction Las Tijeretas
- Las Tijeretas area, nice trails, different beaches to snorkel, we especially liked Darwin Bay. Very clear water with lots of turtles!
- Playa Mann, nice beach, lots of sea lions
- Right on the boardwalk in the east of town gathers a huge colony of sea lions every night- what a smell, noise and spectacle!!!

Ausflüge organisiert

Upon arrival on **Santa Cruz** we were quoted the following prices for day tours (without bargaining)

Seymour Norte 140\$, Time: 8-17 . Great for birding (Boobies, Frigates, Iguanas etc.)

Santa Fé 65\$, Time:9-17 . Great for snorkeling. Very clear water, lots of sea lions.

Floreana 70\$, Time:8-17 . Different tours, just ask.

Isabela 220\$, 2nights/3days, transport, hotel, food, trips, 5\$pP port fee Isabela . Los Tuneles is a must see on this tour! Ask if it's included! Great snorkeling with penguins, turtles, sharks etc.

Bartolomé + Santiago, 160\$, Time:8-17 . Another option besides Isabela to see penguins. Just ask!

Leon Dormido (FROM San Cristobal) 80\$, Time: 8-17 . AWESOME snorkeling. LOTS of sharks, mantas etc.

Taxidriver Wilmer on **San Cristobal** does the 'tour terrestre' (overland tour)

ca. 8 till 14 o'clock, 60\$ per Taxi (max. 4 persons). You will visit the Laguna el Junco, the Galapaguera Turtle Center, Playa Chico (beautiful white beach) for snorkelling, swimming and birding (bluefooted boobies, sea lions etc.), a viewpoint and, if you wish, a stopover at the famous 'el Ceibo' treehouse.

Phone: (593) (0)97 988 9690

We had the choice of doing a short 4 to 5 day cruise or booking single days tours. When we arrived at the airport in Baltra, one single tour operator was present and gave us his card. We ended up booking a 5 day package with him, including all transport between and on the islands, a luxurious hotel, all the food and drinks (without alcohol), 1 to 2 tours of our choice a day (depending on the duration) and a very intense, personal assistance. The company based in Puerto Ayora is called Iguana Tours, its manager Paddy. His contact is:

Paddy Intriago

Iguana Travel

Tel. 052 52 44 64 oder 052 52 708

paddy@iguanatravelgalapagos.com

www.iguanatravelgalapagos.com

Pros: he was nice, helpful and incredibly flexible, but also stressed out all the time. He can make really interesting offers. You have to bargain with him about the price.

Cons: Lots of 'stranded' people book at his place. For us at the time we were there, it meant that there were almost only young Israeli tourists. They can behave pretty ignorant towards animals, guides and regulations sometimes, so be prepared!

We met another Swiss couple in the same Hotel and they booked a pretty alike packet. The booked with a guy named Freddy. We don't know more about him, but it seems that he's the competitor of Paddy. Maybe you want to check him out too?

What you might want to know

-Flights are usually cheaper from Guayaquil

-It is possible to fly to San Cristobal and fly back from Santa Cruz or vice versa

-All short (4 to 5 days) cruises start on San Cristobal and end on Santa Cruz!

-There are good offers for last minute cruises, without bargaining we were offered an 8 day luxury cruise for 1100\$ or a 5 day cruise on a 'normal' boat for 550\$.

-Cheap lunch and dinner are to be had for 3\$ to 5\$ including refill drinks. As soon as you order à la carte, it gets WAY more expensive. Also, proper lunch is only served from noon on, not earlier.

-You can bring your own food to the islands (no fresh stuff) which is perfect if your accommodation has use of kitchen. Also we brought snacks because you can never be sure of how much food there will be on the tours. We brought spices, couscous, tea, chocolate, snack bars etc.

-In the Ecuadorian winter (around July, August) also bring your own snorkeling gear and if you have a shorty. The water temperature drops down very low!

-Water sandals and hiking boots are good to have, lava rock is very sharp!

-We brought a few waterproof bags that came in handy for camera gear and our other stuff

-The waves reach their highest in Ecuadorian winter, one captain told us, that even he gets sick sometimes....! So be prepared!

-On the local market in Puerto Ayora, food is cheap. You can also buy cheap and delicious Empanadas for little \$.

-There is NO ATM on Isabela Island. There are on San Cristobal and Santa Cruz. BUT often they don't work or are empty because of tourists. Most tours are paid cash. So better take all the cash you need from the mainland!

...surprising

-Santa Cruz is the beach paradise!!!

-The animals really do come close! You are not allowed to go closer than 2 meters to them, but sometimes they will. Don't touch or feed the animals!

-The people of Galapagos have their own identity cards that have nothing to do with the mainland ones. If you don't have this Galapagos ID, you cannot stay longer than 3 months, nor buy land, nor work in tourism.