



# ***Sea Kayaking, Snorkeling and Hiking the Enchanted Islands*** **TRIP PLANNER**

Congratulations! You are about to embark upon the vacation of a lifetime...Sea Kayaking the Enchanted Islands.

As you plan for your trip, many questions may arise. What should I pack? What equipment will be provided? What will the weather be like? What about accommodations before and after the trip?

Please use this Trip Planner as a resource for general information on your Sea Kayaking the Enchanted Islands adventure. The information enclosed covers most everything you'll need to know before your trip. Of course, if you have questions that are not answered in this packet, we are happy to help! Just call 1-800-346-6277 in the USA or Canada or 1-209-736-4677 if outside the USA or Canada to speak with an adventure consultant, or email us at [info@oars.com](mailto:info@oars.com).

## **Pre-Departure Information**

**\*\*\*Please fill out the Guest Registration form included with your confirmation e-mail and return it to our office at least 90 days prior to your departure—this information is invaluable to us in planning your trip.\*\*\***

### **Getting There**

- Your Sea Kayaking the Enchanted Islands trip begins and ends in Quito, Ecuador. American and LAN Airlines offer nonstop flights from Miami, Continental Airlines offers nonstop service from Houston and Delta Airlines offers nonstop flights from Atlanta.
- We will make the arrangements for your Quito-Galápagos flights and the cost will be added to your invoice. The round trip fare is approximately US\$525 and your guide will distribute your tickets at the airport.
- For assistance in making your flight arrangements to Quito, please contact Exito Travel. Exito has been an airfare specialist to Latin America since 1994. With years of regional experience, Exito knows Latin America intimately, along with the region's potential airfare pitfalls and how to avoid them. To obtain an online quote, fill out the request form at: [www.exitotravel.com/affiliate/templateform.php?id=OARS](http://www.exitotravel.com/affiliate/templateform.php?id=OARS) or contact Exito at [info@exitotravel.com](mailto:info@exitotravel.com) or 800-655-4053.

*Please do not purchase airfare until your departure has been confirmed by the minimum number of required guests.*

### **Rendezvous**

- Upon arrival at the Quito Airport, you will be met by an Explorer's Corner representative and taken to Hotel Vieja Cuba. The second day of the itinerary will feature a half-day city tour of Quito with a welcome dinner in the evening.

### **After Your Trip**

- Following seven nights aboard the *M/V Nemo II*, we will return to Quito from Baltra. We will spend one final night in Quito after our farewell dinner then transfer to the airport the following morning for flights home.

### **What's Included?**

- Fully crewed sail boat with naturalist kayak guide
- 3 nights lodging in Quito / 7 nights lodging on catamaran (based on double occupancy)
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary

- Airport transfers
- All kayaking gear and safety equipment
- All activities as noted in the itinerary
- Ground transportation

### **What's Not Included?**

- Flights to/from Quito, Ecuador
- Flights to/from Galápagos approximately US\$525
- Galápagos Immigration/Transit Card US\$10 per person
- Galápagos National Park entrance fee US\$100 per person, US\$50 per child under 12, cash only
- Single supplement US\$100 (applicable for Hotel Vieja Cuba only; catamaran cabins are based on double occupancy and solo travelers will be assigned a roommate of the same gender)
- Cabins 1 & 2: guaranteed lower double US\$100
- Meals not covered in the itinerary
- Alcohol and beverages at restaurants, hotels and onboard
- Insurance of any kind, including **mandatory** medical evacuation and suggested cancellation insurance
- Medical immunizations (if necessary)
- Items of a personal nature (an equipment list will be provided)
- Gratuities

### **Equipment & Clothing**

Please refer to your detailed packing list for a complete list of what to bring on your trip.

Any clothing you bring should be synthetic, quick drying, and breathable. During this sub-tropical adventure you will be exposed to sun, wind, and water. Long sleeves, long pants, and wide brimmed hats are recommended for sun protection. In general, you will need loose fitting clothes for the hotter parts of the trip and some extra layering for evenings. Keep in mind that some of what you bring may get sweaty and wet due to the humid climate. You will also encounter dust, sand, and salt, and may feel a little grubby from time to time. No fancy dress clothing is required.

#### **Footwear**

For daily wear on the boat, in the kayaks and on shore, we recommend an amphibious sport shoe such as those made by Teva or sport sandals with an ankle strap and snap or buckle. (Velcro tends to clog with the fine tropical sand.) It's rocky on the islands so sandals are not always a good option unless they protect the feet and have hiking soles. These shoes will most likely be wet much of the time. Make sure you get good-grip, no-slip soles. Some people prefer to wear sport sandals in the boat and on wet hikes, and cushioned-soled athletic shoes or lightweight hiking shoes for the longer hikes. If you plan to buy footwear for the trip, make sure you get it far enough in advance to break it in and wear your footwear until it's comfy—if your feet hurt you won't enjoy the trip.

#### **Daywear**

Start with sunscreen, a swimsuit, shorts, and long-sleeved shirt, and then add additional layers if needed. As the day warms up layers can be taken off and stored away.

#### **Eveningwear**

After a long active day, you may want to refresh and change into clean comfortable clothing. Soft, loose-fitting shorts or pants, t-shirts, etc. will allow you to truly relax in the evening. Many women find sarongs or cotton dresses a nice change. Evenings in Quito may be cool and a lightweight jacket can come in handy.

#### **Sun Protection**

Protecting yourself from the sun should be taken very seriously. A sun hat, sunscreen, lip balm and sunglasses are a must. Also it's a good idea to have a long-sleeved shirt and lightweight long pants (preferably light colors) to cover up when you need a break from the sun. Women may prefer to bring a sarong or a piece of fabric to be used as a cover up. Lightweight gloves can also protect your hands. At the end of each day you will want to have some good moisturizing lotion or cream to replenish your skin from the drying effects of the sun and water.

## Cameras

Bringing the right camera equipment and film will go a long way toward determining the quality of your photographs. If you're an avid photographer, we recommend bringing a good digital or 35mm SLR camera that can be used on land and when aboard the catamaran. In addition to this, bring a smaller and less-expensive salt-water resistant camera that you can use while paddling, and store it in the breast pocket of your life jacket.

Bring more memory cards or film than you think you'll need. And don't forget to pack spare camera batteries, as well. You should be ready for mostly bright sunlight, so you may want to bring some slow speed film and a polarizing filter. We highly recommend Fuji's Provia 100 for sea kayaking in the tropics. Zip-Lock plastic bags help protect your camera against sand and salt. You will be able to plug in to recharge your camera on the boat. We strongly recommend you take out a rider on you homeowner's policy to cover your camera—especially if it's fine equipment.

## For Women Only

Even if you aren't anticipating your menstrual period, come prepared for it. We recommend you bring some sandwich size zip-lock bags. They can be used during the day while you are on the water or hiking and can be disposed of later. (o.b. ® tampons are 1/3 the size of regular tampons, tuck discreetly into pockets and have less paper wrapping). Many women suggest bringing a small supply of baby wipes.

## Packing Your Gear

We recommend traveling as light as possible! Excess baggage can be a burden to you and to support personnel. On an international flight, you are typically allowed 1-2 pieces of checked luggage at no additional fee but luggage restrictions are changing regularly and vary according to airline—please check with your specific airline to determine luggage allowance.

## Extra Luggage

***On the flight from Quito to the Galápagos, you will only be allowed 44 lbs. (Be warned that the airline may refuse bags that exceed these limitations and you will be required to pay for excess baggage on the spot.)*** Additional luggage may be kept at the hotel in Quito.

## Weather

You may want to check one week prior to your trip for an up-to-date weather forecast. We recommend you check the following web sites: [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com) or [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov).

	Av. Air Temp F	Av. Sea Surface Temp F	Hrs sunshine	Av rainfall"	Wind Factor
Jan	70-84	74	5.3	1.5	2
Feb	74-86	76	7.5	2.1	1
Mar	74-88	76	6.0	3.0	1
Apr	72-86	76	7.5	3.0	1
May	72-82	74	5.2	2.7	2
Jun	66-78	74	4.4	2.2	2
Jul	64-76	72	2.8	1.1	3
Aug	64-74	66	3.3	0.7	4
Sep	62-76	68	2.9	0.5	4
Oct	64-77	70	3.8	0.5	3
Nov	66-78	72	3.5	0.8	3
Dec	68-80	74	4.0	1.5	2

There are two primary seasons during the year in the Galápagos. Each is a good time to visit, but the character of each season is somewhat different.

December through June is the warmer time of year, with the highs in the upper 80s. Although the islands receive more rainfall during this time, most of the lower elevations of the islands are quite arid and there is plenty of sunshine and blue skies. The sea is at its warmest, and it is usually calmer at this time of year.

The drier garua season lasts from June or July through November. The garua is mist that forms in the highlands of the islands. Ironically, the garua season provides more moisture at the upper levels of the islands than the so-called wet season. There is plenty of sunshine during the day with generally cloudless skies. Air temperatures are lower, with highs in the upper 70s or mid-80s. The climate at this time is affected by the strong Humboldt Current, which comes from the south. The water temperature, therefore, is at its coolest during this time—about 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit in the later part of the season going into fall.

In mainland Quito, which is about 9000 feet above sea level, the elevation greatly moderates the climate. The temperature ranges from 45 to 70 degrees, with lower temperatures from April to October. Daytime temperatures are generally warm and pleasant, while evenings are cool. Bring a warmer layer for the evenings.

### **Essential Travel Documents**

*Your Passport*—If you don't have a passport, apply for one immediately because the process can be lengthy. If you do have a passport, find it and check the expiration date. The passport must be valid for 6 months beyond your intended date of departure from Ecuador. Make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carry it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement.

Also check your passport for blank pages. If you do not have a least two blank pages in your passport, we recommend that you apply to have additional pages added.

Please do not pack your passport in your check-in luggage. You may be asked for your papers not only upon departure but a various times during your trip, even while checking into the hotel in Quito. If you are carrying a customs form, please keep it in a safe place at all times, perhaps in your pouch along with your other valuables. We do not recommend carrying it in the passport because we often must submit the passport at hotels, where the form can easily be lost.

*Visas*—Visas are not required for US citizens to enter Ecuador. For non-US citizens, please check with the Ecuadorian Consulate or your embassy.

*Travel and Evacuation Insurance*—Travel insurance that includes medical emergency evacuation is mandatory in order for you to take part in this expedition. You must provide proof of purchase of evacuation insurance prior to the trip. Broader coverage that includes trip cancellation, trip interruption, baggage loss and medical protection is highly recommended. Information on Travel Insurance Services is included in your confirmation, however, there are many other travel insurance companies offering coverage. When selecting a policy please make sure you are very clear about what they will and will not cover. No travel insurance covers all scenarios. Proof of insurance will be required prior to your trip.

### **Physical Preparation**

The Galápagos Sea Kayaking adventure involves moderate exercise. Hiking, snorkeling and sea kayaking require a combination of cardiac and strength training. Jogging, swimming and aerobic exercises will help increase endurance for the activities. Push-ups, sit-ups and other weight training exercises that increase upper and lower body strength will ensure you get the most out of your time. Regular exercise prior to your trip will certainly add to your enjoyment.

- **Hiking**

The hikes on our Galápagos Sea Kayaking excursion are moderate and allow you to get up close and personal with the magnificent wildlife in the islands. We recommend that your hiking shoes be lightweight, have sturdy soles and be well worn in. If you are buying new hiking shoes for this trip, be sure to walk them in well in advance to avoid blisters during the trip.

- **Sea Kayaking**

You will have daily opportunities to practice your sea kayaking strokes. This relatively low impact sport allows us to unobtrusively observe many of the various sea and shore animals found in the Galápagos Islands. We will provide all sea kayaking equipment. We use the Feathercraft Gemini Double inflatable and Java Single sit-on-top kayaks (see [www.feathercraft.com](http://www.feathercraft.com)). These boats are perfect for warm water kayaking and we may have opportunities to jump out and snorkel right from our kayaks. The paddles are a composite take-apart Camano paddle made by Werner.

- **Snorkeling**

Snorkeling will expose you to a new world. You may come face-to-face with baby sea lions as they dart playfully past your mask. Penguins flit by in a trail of bubbles and sea turtles glide beneath you. The ecological diversity characteristic of the Galápagos is on grand display beneath the surface of the ocean as much as it is on land. If you've never snorkeled before, you'll want to try it out here as the experience is not to be missed.

### **Special Considerations**

Please let us know if you're having a birthday or anniversary on the trip. We'll also need to know of any medical or dietary requirements that you'd like us to consider in planning your trip (i.e. if you're a vegetarian or vegan, or if you have food allergies). Please note this on the Guest Registration Form (be specific as to what your needs are) and return it to our office at least 90 days before your trip. If you're booking your trip less than 90 days before departure, please make sure you've discussed any special requests with our office.

### **During Your Trip**

#### **Medical Matters**

The trip leader is responsible for the safety of all trip members and he or she may evacuate or disqualify a trip member in the field if anyone's safety is jeopardized. Please be aware that hospital facilities for serious medical problems may far away, doctors are not always available and that evacuations can be prolonged, difficult and expensive.

- **Medications**

If you are taking any prescription drugs, be certain that you bring a sufficient supply to last through the trip. Do not pack these medications in your checked luggage. You will not find common American drugs in Ecuador. Talk with your doctor about Cipro as a treatment for stomach ailments. If you have problems with seasickness, we suggest that you speak with your doctor about that as well. Scopolamine patches (prescription) or Bonine (over the counter) are common medications for preventing seasickness, while an electrostimulator worn on the wrist can also be an effective prevention.

- **Immunizations**

Currently, if you fly direct between the USA and Ecuador, no vaccinations are required. However, regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with the Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ecuador.aspx](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ecuador.aspx)) for up-to-date information.

- **Drinking Water**

Complimentary bottled drinking water is available at the hotel in Quito. We will provide purified water while in the Galápagos. Do not drink water from the tap as it frequently contains bacteria that can cause stomach problems.

*It is crucial that you stay hydrated while in the tropics, especially when we are hiking and kayaking. Electrolyte powders make water taste better, while replacing salts and minerals lost to sweating.*

- **Staying Healthy**

In hot climates, cuts and scratches can easily become infected and take a long time to heal. Prevent infection from coral cuts by immediately washing wounds with fresh water, then rubbing in vinegar or alcohol—painful but effective. Use an antiseptic like hydrogen peroxide and an antibacterial like Neosporin. Prickly heat, or salt/heat rash is a common ailment for tropical paddlers. It is caused by salt buildup in the sweat glands. The skin becomes soggy and small red blisters appear. At first sight of the rash, wash with fresh water and apply calamine lotion, dust with talcum or medicated powder and change

clothes. Until the rash improves, avoid alcohol and caffeine. The sun is very strong in the Galápagos. Reapply sunscreen often, and wear your hat and sunglasses.

### **Cabin Service**

The cabins are cleaned every morning. Towels and sheets are changed 3 times a week. Please do not bring any food or drinks into the cabins in order to avoid bad odors and bugs.

### **Bar Service**

There are a variety of soft drinks, beer, wine and liquor available for purchase. The bartender will open a consumption card for you; please sign it every time you request a drink. You may pay your tab at the end of the trip with your credit card. Due to the fact that there is a bar on board, we ask you to not bring your own alcohol.

### **Laundry**

Laundry service is available at the hotel in Quito. Check with the front desk for turn-around times. You might also want to plan for quick washes with biodegradable soap in case you need to clean an essential item while on the catamaran. We recommend lightweight, quick drying articles of clothing.

### **Money Matters**

Ecuador uses US dollars as their currency. Travelers should bring between \$500 and \$900 for fees, tips, and other expenses. In the Galápagos Islands, you will most likely need cash as ATM machines are limited and credit cards are not widely accepted. In hotels and shops in Quito you can use credit cards to charge purchases such as food, accommodations, and clothing. American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are widely accepted.

### **Electricity**

Ecuador is on the 110V AC system. Sockets are the standard US style, either 2 flat prongs or 2 flat prongs and a round ground. There are sockets on the catamaran for recharging batteries. In order to save power, please remember to switch off the light and A/C when not in your cabin.

### **Toilets**

Everywhere in Ecuador, including Quito, the Galápagos Islands and our catamaran, people are asked not to throw anything into the toilets, including toilet paper. A wastebasket is provided for toilet paper and it is emptied often. This may seem strange to North Americans, but please obey this rule and avoid being the cause of a backed up septic system. Thanks!

### **Time Zones**

The Galápagos Islands are in the same time zone as US Central Standard Time. Quito time is the same as US Eastern Standard Time.

### **Something Voluntary**

In reviewing your statement, you'll note a \$50 per person donation to the International Galápagos Tour Organizers Association (IGTOA), a non-profit association of travel companies, conservation organizations and other groups that are dedicated to a complete and lasting protection of the Galápagos Islands. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to conservation, research and education in the Galápagos and your contribution is tax-deductible. For more information, go to [www.igtoa.org/funding](http://www.igtoa.org/funding). This donation is voluntary and may be removed from your invoice if you choose not to participate. Please notify our office if you would prefer to delete the donation from your balance.

IGTOA has produced a series of videos that are available for travelers to the islands. These videos will help you learn more about challenges facing the Galápagos Islands and how travelers can be part of the solution by following best practices. Please view these videos before your departure! [www.igtoa.org/save](http://www.igtoa.org/save)

### **Gratuities**

Guests often ask whether gratuities are appropriate, and in what amount. If you feel your guide and crew have provided a very special trip for you, a gratuity will be very much appreciated. If the service has been excellent, we have found that our travelers will leave \$120-\$150 per guest for the captain and crew (they will share it) and another \$100-\$110 per guest for the National Park Naturalist Guide. Once again, tipping is entirely discretionary and varies by culture.

## The Outfitter

After a rigorous development and review process, O.A.R.S. is proud to be working with Explorers' Corner, LLC to facilitate our trips to the Galápagos. Explorers' Corner is a specialty adventure travel company offering unique itineraries and custom adventures to destinations around the world.

## Contact Information

- For more information on this or any of our over 75 rafting, sea kayaking, or multi-sport adventures, please call 1-800-346-6277 in the USA or Canada or 1-209-736-4677 if outside the USA or Canada or email us at [info@oars.com](mailto:info@oars.com) and one of our knowledgeable adventure consultants will be happy to help you.

In the event that you are delayed en route, please call Travel Outdoors at 800-446-2411. If it is after hours, please try the Explorers' Corner emergency cell number at 1-510-559-8099.

## A Few Important Details

### Reservations & Deposit

- An \$800/person deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

### Pricing

- We believe travel experiences are enhanced by small group sizes. In order to operate with a limited number of participants, our trips are priced according to size and the number of full-paying passengers determines group size. Explorers' Corner staff guests, guides in training or trip doctors are not included. At 45 days, your trip cost will be adjusted down if the group size is 8 or more full-paying guests and the additional fees will be refunded.

### Cancellations & Refunds

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, please notify us as soon as possible. The cancellation fee after you've made your deposit can range up to the entire trip cost, based upon the number of days prior to your trip that we receive your cancellation notice. We regret we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, **we strongly urge you to investigate trip insurance** (see Insurance).

### Cancelled Trips

- Travel Outdoors, Inc. and the outfitter Explorers' Corner reserve the right to cancel any trip due to insufficient sign-ups (**this trip requires a minimum of 6 guests**). In such a case, you will be given a full refund of the tour cost, but Travel Outdoors, Inc. and Explorers' Corner are not responsible for additional expenses incurred in preparation for the trip.

### Medical

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying a Travel Outdoors trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

### Insurance

- Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, **we require that you purchase medical evacuation insurance to participate in this expedition**. Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website at [www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635](http://www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635) for inexpensive options that cover this requirement. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury, as well as including the coverage required above. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on a river trip, evacuation could be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and we accept no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed, or stolen property.

### Liability Waiver

- Everyone is required to sign a standard release form before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with Travel Outdoors cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

### Responsibility—An Important Notice

- Travel Outdoors, Inc., Explorers' Corner and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no

responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings, (this trip requires a minimum of 6 guests), and other factors. There is risk in kayaking, particularly during changeable conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to "self-help" and "float-it-out" without further endangering yourself or others. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

### **Explorers Corner**

- Explorers' Corner, a travel partner of Travel Outdoors, Inc. is the operator of this trip. Upon arrival, a representative will meet you and escort you throughout the program. These staff members are the very best and will strive to ensure your complete satisfaction.

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