

Galapagos Tips:

Because the Galapagos Islands is a world-destination, prices vary greatly depending on dates of traveling. You will likely pay quadruple the price if you travel June, July, Christmas, or on any Ecuador or International Holidays. OSSO searched out many options, and volunteers were very impressed with the experience of their trip compared to other options significantly more expensive. The more flexible you are with travel dates, the better price you can get! Feel free to ask the travel agency to pair you with another OSSO volunteer so you can travel together.

OSSO recommends you plan your trip to the Galapagos at the end of your service with OSSO. However, we are flexible and allow volunteers to check out for a week of “Independent Traveling” to the Galapagos and to return to serve with OSSO. Please see the required “Independent Traveling” form on the website for more information.

While on the Islands, you will have a bit of free time in the afternoon or evenings after your guided tour that day. Here are a few tips to help you make the most of your free time. Many locations in the Galapagos require you are accompanied by a certified Naturalist Guide. However, all of the following items may be done independently.

- White pick-up trucks drive up and down the main road all day. These are the taxis for the town. You can go most places in town for 1\$.
- You can go to the port and taxi a yellow “water taxi” for 80 cents/person each way.
- Charles Darwin Research Center – you can get a map in the Hotel lobby. Tell the taxi driver, or point on the map to the Center. Cars are not currently permitted to drive up to the center; however they will drop you off at the start of the walking trail. It takes about 30 minutes to walk the path, and there is a small beach along the way (Playa Estacion).
- Go to the port and ask which dock to take a taxi to the beach, “Playa Aleman” or fresh water fisher, “Las Grietas”. (It has previously been port #4). Take a water taxi across the bay in about 5 minutes. They will drop you off on the beginning of a walking path. Walk about 10-15 minutes and you will arrive at the beach, “Playa Aleman”. Continue walking another 20 minutes and you will arrive at “Las Grietas”. Entrance is free to both; however you can rent snorkel gear for a few dollars at Las Grietas if you choose.
- You can take a water taxi to this same location to eat at the restaurant, *Angermeyer Point* that is built over the ocean. It’s a beautiful view and experience, but plan on \$20-\$30 for a meal.
- Tortuga Bay – tell the taxi driver Tortuga Bay and he will drop you off at the beginning of the hiking path. The taxi will cost \$1. It takes about 45 minutes to hike to Tortuga Bay. The first beach you reach has strong waves and it is prohibited to swim (although you may see locals surfing). Continue walking and you will reach the 2nd half of Tortuga Bay. It’s a larger beach with soft white sand. Because it takes 45 minutes to walk there, the beach closes at 5:15pm so you everyone is off the walking path by 6:00 when it gets dark. We highly recommend you do this when you have a free afternoon, and head there right after lunch so you have enough time!

General Tips:

- Arrive at the airport in Ecuador 2 hours before your flight. You will need to pay \$20 for a control card at the airport. It is on the right side of the Quito airport as soon as you enter. There are signs well-marked for “Galapagos Travelers”.
- When you arrive in the airport in the Galapagos, they will require you pay \$100 to enter the Galapagos (which is Ecuador’s largest National Park). They only accept cash – be prepared.
- Although mainland Ecuador is quite relaxed in their enforcements with some policies, the Galapagos is highly monitored. Ecuador is VERY protective about conserving the Galapagos Islands. It is restricted what foods or items you can bring with you. They also require you have a certified Naturalist guide to visit many places. Listen to the guides and obey their instructions. It is prohibited to touch or feed the animals, and littering is a sin. Do not be that embarrassing American who tries to climb on a Giant Tortoise, it will not be tolerated.
- They will often ask for your passport number. For example, entrance is free to “Las Grietas”, but they will make you sign your name and passport number. The airport is the only place you need your actual passport. While touring for the day on the Islands, you don’t need your actual passport, but you will have to write down your passport number. Memorize your passport number, but if you forget just write down your number to the best of your memory.
- Wear good water/hiking shoes! We recommend Keens, Teva, or Chaco type sandals. You will be walking and hiking along a lot of rocky terrain, but you will often be in the water.
- SUNSCREEN – enough said.
- Fill up your water bottle every day at the hotel with the purified water offered in the dinning room where breakfast and lunch is served. Water bottles (and everything else) is about 3x the price than what you pay for items on mainland Ecuador.
- Breakfast and Lunch will often be included in your touring prices (confirm with the travel agent).
- The main road is lined with shops and restaurants. It is well lit, and has a playground for children by the main port. Almost all of the locals work in tourism. Because tourism is the main source of income for most people, it is the town’s priority that tourist feel safe.
- You can buy dinner for anywhere from \$5-\$20 at a variety of restaurants.
- Bring travel size shampoo/conditioner, because the hotel often does not provide it. Good thing Ecuador does not restrict bringing liquids on the plane!