



PREPARING FOR THE GALÁPAGOS

A practical guide from Cometa Travel

We have prepared this guide with great care and based it on real travel experience, though information may change over time and cannot be guaranteed or considered legally binding.

Packing for the Galápagos

Shopping options on the islands are limited, so a bit of preparation goes a long way for a smooth trip. Don't worry, the checklist below will help you pack with confidence, and you can also download it as a free printable PDF.

If you plan to visit Quito, the Andes, or the Amazon as well, make sure to pack clothing for different climates since conditions can vary quite a bit between regions.

- Warm season (Dec-May): Warmer water (22-28°C/72 to 82°F), calmer seas, occasional rain
- Cool season (Jun-Nov): Cooler water (18-22°C/64 to 72°F), windier, more overcast (Humboldt current).

Luggage:

Best kept practical and lightweight!

- Suitcase, duffel bag, or backpack
- Daypack, preferably light, comfortable, and waterproof
- Drybag for phone and camera
- Smart organizers: packing cubes for easy sorting and quick access, and/or vacuum travel bags
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Clothing:

Lightweight, breathable, and quick-drying clothing

- Comfortable pants, shorts (ideally with side pockets), summer dress
- T-shirts, lightweight and quick-dry blouses or shirts, tops
- A light sweater, hoodie, or fleece (especially for the dry, cool season (May/June to December). On Galápagos boats, mornings start cool and windy; keep your light jacket or fleece handy for early excursions
- Lightweight windbreaker/waterproof jacket and/or
- Light rain cape/poncho; ideal, lighter if it is too warm for a rain jacket, and protects the backpack and camera bag at the same time (especially for the warm and wet season from January-May)
- Lightweight pajama
- Sufficient underwear and socks
- Swimsuits (at least 2)
- Optional/recommended for higher category cruise: a smart casual shirt, blouse, or summer dress for evening dinners
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- ★ Long-sleeved swim shirt (rash guard) for additional sun protection or to use under wetsuits

Footwear:

- Light trekking or hiking boots with good traction
- Some people prefer trainers or sneakers, and these can be a good option if you are comfortable walking on uneven terrain in them. However, don't bring your best pair; they will suffer in the lava.
- For beach outings or many of the trails: trekking sandals (e.g., Teva, Keen, Merrell, etc.)
- On board/house shoes: lightweight, non-slip slippers or flip-flops (shoes used on islands have to stay outside)
- Optional: flip-flops for the beach (not recommended for excursions)
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Toiletries:

- Toiletry bag, preferably water-resistant and ideally suitable for hanging

- Shampoo, soap, conditioner (solid versions are ideal as they do not leak). Most yachts provide it as bathroom amenities, deodorant
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss
- Cotton swabs, nail care set, tweezers
- For men: razor
- Hairbrush, comb, hair ties/clips
- Makeup (small quantities, only the essentials). Tip: compressed disposable wipes for makeup removal
- Facial hydration cream
- For women: sufficient menstrual hygiene products. Changes in altitude and climate can affect your cycle
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- ★ Not necessary: Shower and bath towels; provided in most bathrooms. Same for hair dryer
- ★ Tip: Pack a small microfiber towel

Sun protection:

UV radiation is extremely high, even on overcast days!

- Sunglasses with UV protection and a strap
- Head covering (!): a wide-brimmed hat or cap to protect your face from the intense equatorial sun, with ties or a chin strap so it fits securely and stays in place during the strong breezes while traveling from your yacht to the islands by panga boat.
- Sunscreen and lip balm (!) with a high sun protection factor, after-sun care, lotion for sunburn relief
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- ★ A lightweight, long-sleeved shirt, ideally with UV protection, provides additional sun protection when snorkeling.
- ★ Especially for January-April when it's hot and humid: Loose-fitting long-sleeved lightweight sun rash SPF 50, cotton or linen button shirts. They keep your shoulders and arms covered while still letting air flow through, so you feel cleaner and more comfortable instead of using sunscreen and bug spray that does not hold when you sweat.

Medical kit:

- An adequate supply of any daily medication you take
- Copy of prescription
- Pain relievers (paracetamol/acetaminophen, ibuprofen if appropriate)
- Diarrhea & constipation treatment
- Motion sickness medication
- Antihistamines
- Standby antibiotic: If recommended by your physician, a standby antibiotic for severe bacterial infections, such as gastrointestinal infections, respiratory infections, or urinary tract infections, particularly when traveling to remote areas where medical care may not be readily available.
- Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) and Electrolyte tablets or powder (for Quito and the Andes, hiking, Galápagos snorkeling days. Many travelers underestimate dehydration.
- Eye drops
- Disinfectant
- Plasters, Steri-Strips for cuts and wounds, which can often take the place of stitches
- Blister plasters (e.g., Compeed); these are extremely useful for hiking
- Small elastic bandage; helpful for minor sprains, ankle support, knee support. Especially relevant for active travelers.
- Tweezers
- Thermometer
- Disposable face masks
- Altitude sickness medication for trekking or mountain activity
- Insect bite treatment
- Sunburn cream

Condoms or other contraceptives. Keep in mind that vomiting or diarrhea can reduce the effectiveness of the contraceptive pill, so consider carrying a backup method if needed)

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Photography:

Camera or camera phone with waterproof protection

Optional: GoPro camera: underwater action in the Galápagos is really special

Plenty of memory cards and spare batteries (you will almost certainly take far more photos than you expect).

Chargers and electricity adapters (110 V, US flat plugs)

Lens cleaning products

Optional: underwater camera/GoPro, a recommended extra for snorkelers and divers

Optional: binoculars

Drones: prohibited in the Galápagos and in national parks on the mainland

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! Flash photography is strictly prohibited on the islands.

! Please maintain the required minimum distances of 2 meters (6.5 feet) from the wildlife at all times.

! A special permit from the National Park authorities is required for commercial photography.

Miscellaneous:

Writing materials, your journal, reading material, etc.; always keep one pen in your hand or daypack

Dry bags, larger and smaller plastic or fabric bags for small items, wet or dirty laundry, etc.

Optional: sweets or small souvenirs from your home country

Good flashlight, or even better, a headlamp, with spare batteries

Hand sanitizer and wipes, paper tissues

A small bag or piece of detergent (also to buy inexpensively locally); some laundry washing can help pack lighter

Refillable water bottle

Glasses or contact lenses, spare glasses or lenses, cleaning products

Optional: Headphones (for music and optionally noise-canceling)

Optional: Foldable walking sticks

Optional: Sarong/Pareo (light, to use on the beach)

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★ Tip: multifunctional neck gaiter (Buff) is very useful as a scarf, hat, headband, face covering, etc.

! Disposable mask(s): always keep at least one in your carry-on or hand luggage. We recommend always using a mask in situations of poor air quality on flights, or when coughing or flu-like symptoms are present (whether your own or within the group).

What you normally do NOT need to bring if you have booked cruises or tours:

× Wetsuit and snorkel equipment (except if you prefer your own)

× Shower and bath towels, hair dryer

× Jewelry and other urban life valuables

We hope this guide helps you feel prepared and excited for your journey. Ecuador and the Galápagos have a way of surprising even the most experienced travelers, and we are delighted to be part of your adventure.

The Cometa Travel Team