

A Year in the Life of the GALAPAGOS

The Galapagos Islands are one of the world's great travel experiences. No matter which time of year you go, there are always some fascinating experiences to be had. Our Galapagos specialists select their highlights of what to discover each month.

January

The islands become greener as the rainy season begins. Land birds nest, green sea turtles arrive to lay eggs until March, and land iguanas begin to breed on Isabela Island. Both water and air temperatures rise, and stay elevated until June.

February

Greater flamingoes start nesting and Bahama pintail ducks begin their breeding season. Marine iguanas nest on Santa Cruz Island and the breeding season of the Galapagos dove reaches its peak. The water temperature reaches 25C and remains constant until April. Nazca boobies are at the end of their nesting season.

March

Humidity reaches its highest and the air temperature can climb to 30C. The climate is hot with intense sun and sporadic tropical rains. Marine iguanas nest on Fernandina and late March signals the arrival of the waved albatross.

April

The rains should be ending and water visibility is excellent for snorkelling. Waved albatrosses arrive in massive numbers to Española Island, it is the end of hatching season for giant tortoises, and green turtle eggs and land iguana eggs begin to hatch.

May

Blue-footed boobies begin their extraordinary courtship on North Seymour Island. Marine iguanas start to hatch on Santa Cruz and sea turtle eggs are still hatching. Band-rumped storm petrels begin their first nesting period and the waved albatross start laying their eggs on Española. The sea temperature starts to drop towards the end of the month and Galapagos penguins become active around Bartolomé Island.

June

As the drier season begins, the garua (sea mist) returns and currents become slightly stronger. Giant tortoises start moving from the highlands to the lowlands to nest, male great frigate birds on North Seymour start to develop their red pouches and humpback whales can be spotted in open water. Southern migrant birds rest on their way north.

July

Sea birds are actively breeding and flightless cormorants start their nesting rituals on Fernandina. Lava lizards initiate mating rituals until November and blue-footed boobies start hatching. Whales and dolphins are more likely to be observed and seas cool to around 21C.

August

Galapagos hawks court on Española and Santiago. Nazca and swallow-tailed gulls nest on Genovesa and migrant shore birds arrive on the islands, staying until March. Giant tortoises return to the highlands of Santa Cruz and sea lion pupping starts. The sea is a bit choppy, currents are at their strongest and water temperatures drop to around 18C.

September

Peak of the garua season, and air temperatures reach their lowest levels at 19C. Sea birds remain active at their nesting sites and Galapagos penguins are at the peak of their activity around Bartolomé Island. Female sea lions have reached oestrus stage so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting.

October

Garua mist in most locations, but less prolonged in the western islands. Lava herons start nesting until March and Galapagos fur seals begin mating. Giant tortoises are still laying eggs and blue-footed booby chicks are being raised all over Española and Isabela.

November

Good transitional weather between seasons, with calm seas, weakening southeast trade winds and slowly

rising water temperatures. Pupping of sea lions continues and band-rumped storm petrels begin their second nesting period. Curious sea lion pups frolic next to snorkellers.

December

Mostly sunny days and waters continue to warm up. Hatching of giant tortoise eggs begins and lasts until April. Green sea turtles start to mate and the first young albatross fledge. Northern migrants and some whales start their journey towards the south, stopping at the Galapagos on their way. First red pouches of great frigate birds can be seen at Genovesa.

FACT FILE

A seven-night cruise of the Galapagos Islands, plus two nights in Ecuador and all flights, starts from £2,300 per person. For details, please contact our Galapagos specialists, Vicky, Paula, Nikki, Mark, Phil and Pat on 01869 276 210.

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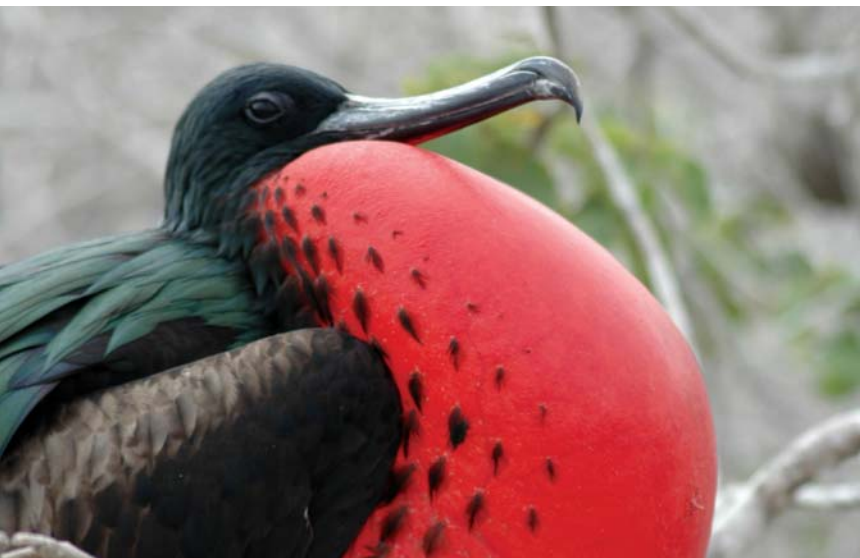
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▲ Diving sea lion

▼ Nazca booby

▼ Marine iguana



▲ Great frigate bird



▼ Giant tortoise



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