



International Galapagos Tour Operators Association. www.igtoa.org

Best Practices in Galapagos

> What you can observe and report as a traveler

Travelers can be the eyes and ears for conservation. Below are some best practices that should be taking place. If you observe any problems, or have questions, contact your IGTOA tour operator, or contact IGTOA.

Best Practices for Boats, Guides, and Island Visits

- There should be no leakage of gas or oil from boats.
- Non-biodegradable cleaners should not be used.
- There should be no dumping of bilge water or any other chemicals into the sea,
- Garbage or refuse must not be thrown overboard,
- Boat should have recycling procedures and containers,
- Fishing on board tourist ships is not permitted by travelers or crew members.
- Boats can do a maximum of two land visits per day in the morning and afternoon.
- If you have professional experience with boat operations, report anything you see that shows improper maintenance or operation of a boat
- The Park opens to visitors at sunrise and closes at sunset.
- Guides are responsible communicating, enforcing and following rules.
- Guides are allowed to have a maximum of 16 passengers with them at one time.
- Your guide should discuss general water safety and, along with the crew, provide proper monitoring of swimming and snorkeling. If this is not done, report this to the captain and to us upon your return.

> What you can do as a traveler

General

- Visitors must be accompanied at all times by a Galapagos guide.
- Visitors' sites at the Galapagos National Park are marked and indicated to guarantee your safety. You cannot leave the paths.
- Fishing on board tourist boats is not permitted.
- Don't throw anything away. Sea lions take cans that they deposit at the bottom of the sea and play with them hurting their noises. Plastic can be eaten by marine tortoises and they can die from an intestinal blockage.
- On the inhabited islands you can buy objects with Galapagos themes made of wood, ceramics, etc. Purchasing souvenirs made of black coral, marine tortoise shells, sea lion fangs, shells goes against the principles of conservation.
- Don't write anything on rocks, walls, or any other place.
- Do not smoke or light any fire within the Park. Through negligence in 1985 and 1994 Isabel Island suffered great fires.
- Camping can be done only at authorized sites by permission of the Galapagos National Park.

Introduced Species

The native animals and plants of Galapagos are highly vulnerable to pests and diseases. Because of this, the introduction of an exotic organism may put the economy, human health and biodiversity of the Galapagos Islands at risk.

Bringing any live organism from outside the islands or even transporting them from one island to another is prohibited. Plants, seeds, insects, plagues and illnesses are dangerous for the fragile island ecosystem.

If you are planning to travel to the Galapagos Islands you should expect that a quarantine inspector will check your luggage at the airport in Quito or Guayaquil, as well on your arrival to Galapagos. You must declare any kind of organic product in your possession; fruit, vegetables, plants, food or animal products of any type. The inspector will inform you if they are permitted in Galapagos or not. You should also make sure that shoes and clothes are free of soil and seeds.

- **Food Products:**

Fresh and perishable food products such as fruit and meat are restricted or prohibited. In some cases official documents are required to allow their entry. These types of products must be declared and inspected. Please do not enter Galapagos with perishable products from outside Ecuador as they are prohibited.

- **Animal Products:**

Animal products or those derived from animal sources may be prohibited or restricted as they could be carriers of numerous kinds of pests and diseases.

- **Vegetable Products:**

Articles manufactured from vegetable products could be carriers of transferable seeds, viruses, insects and fungi. In all cases an inspection is required to determine the risk level.

- **Plants and Fresh Flowers:**

Plants and fresh flowers are absolutely prohibited. Only seeds that are authorized and certified may be brought in.

- **Live Animals:** Live animals may not be brought into the Galapagos Islands.

- **Inter-Island Trips:** When traveling between islands do not take food, plants or animals. Make sure to clean your shoes and clothes of all soil and seeds before visiting new sites and islands.

Boat Sewage & Garbage Disposal

- Look for recycling practices and follow them. Recommend they be adopted by the boat if you don't see them in use.
- Don't throw anything overboard.
- Report if sanitation devices are not working properly.
- Keep disposable items to a minimum. Never litter. Reuse wherever possible rather than dispose.
- On hikes, do not leave anything behind except footprints.

Hiking & Wildlife Viewing

Galapagos is a unique place to view wildlife. Animals are tame. Improper behavior toward wildlife can cause them to change and endanger their welfare.

- Visitors must stay on the trails and be with a guide at all times.
- Don't feed or bait any animals with food, on water or land.
- Do not touch marine or land animals, or interfere with their natural behavior.
- Do not chase or harass any wildlife
- Don't surround animals so they feel confined or threatened
- You may watch birds at a distance of no less than two meters. The Galapagos marine birds leave their nests if you disturb or follow them. They let their eggs or chicks follow on the ground or leave them exposed to the sun.

Diving

There are many guidelines for divers that will be covered by your guide and tour operator. In addition,

- don't use Reef Hooks
- don't use Tank Bangers
- don't feed or harass any fish, especially sharks