

Diving the Galapagos

The most spectacular pelagic diving on the planet! The Galapagos is one of those rare places where you can dive through hundreds of hammerhead sharks to find a whale shark cruising along. Toss in silky sharks, sea turtles, giant morays and schooling fish in their thousands... And that's just the first dive at Darwin! At Wolf Island you can expect huge Galapagos sharks and eagle rays up close, whilst dives at Cabo Marshall will put you face to face with giant manta rays and inside a school of millions of black-striped salemas. Mola mola (sunfish) may be seen in the depths too. Macro life is plentiful. Black coral bushes shelter seahorses, blennies, nudibranchs, hawkfish and frogfish. Sea iguanas are a unique sight, along with speedy penguins and playful sea lions. This is but a mere taste of why divers consistently proclaim the Galapagos to have the healthiest marine life in the Pacific.

Galapagos Liveaboard

Built of steel, the Galapagos Master is set to be the most eco-friendly dive liveaboard cruising the Galapagos Islands. She has 8 well-appointed modern cabins, a spacious interior and generous outside space for relaxation and dive gear preparation. Our experienced crew of 12 is waiting to welcome you aboard and show you the best of the Galapagos, both underwater and on land.

Yacht Information

Built in 2004 the yacht, known as Deep Blue, joined the Master Liveaboards brand and underwent a full refit in November 2014. The refit was supervised by our own experienced team of yacht builders, who have also brought you the Siren Fleet. Divided over 2 decks, there are 8 comfortable cabins with en-suite facilities. Our 16 guests have a choice of fixed doubles, fixed twins and convertible double/twin cabins. Communal areas comprise of a spacious indoor lounge, on the middle level, with cushioned bench seating and plasma screen for movie and photo viewing. Adjacent to the lounge is our indoor dining area complete with cocktail bar.

An indoor camera set-up station, with numerous charging points (US flat pin plug) and storage drawers is situated to the rear providing ample room for a full photography charter group. Further camera preparation areas can be found on the rear deck next to the dive deck. The upper level has shaded outdoor bench seating with cushioned loungers from where our guests can enjoy the fresh air and views of The Galapagos.

For those who enjoy to relax in the sun there is the top level sun-deck or upper level bow area with additional cushioned loungers provided for your comfort. Guests are free to take advantage of the gangways on both the port and starboard sides to walk around the yacht or visit the Captain in his bridge on the upper deck.

The dive deck is found on the aft of the lower level deck. We provide individual dive equipment set up areas, with under bench storage for all your personal items. Rinse tanks are conveniently located for washing dive equipment and camera gear, whilst there are 2 shower heads for those wishing for a quick post-dive rinse down.

A further 2 deck heads are situated on the starboard side of the boat, just in front of the salon entrance.

Galapagos Itinerary

On a typical day we offer up to 4 day dives. On our 7-night itinerary we schedule up to 18 dives, whilst during our 10-night itineraries up to 27 dives will be possible. We do not offer night dives in the Galapagos.

The diving day aboard the Galapagos Master is scheduled as follows:

Light Breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1

Full Breakfast, relaxation period, briefing and Dive 2

Lunch, relaxation period, briefing and Dive 3

Snack relaxation period, briefing and Dive 4

Dinner

To allow our guests to explore the Galapagos to its fullest, on days 2, 7 and 10, dives 3 and 4 will be substituted by an island visits at North Seymour, Santa Cruz or Isla Isabela.

Diving in the Galapagos can be challenging, even for the experienced diver. At many sites currents can be strong and visibility may diminish due to currents and an influx of nutrients. We highly recommend our guests have training beyond beginner level and a minimum experience of 50 dives, preferably in similar conditions. If our dive crew feel that you do not have the relevant skills or experience to dive the more challenging sites safely then they may stipulate that you sit out some dives.

Water temperature ranges from 21-30°C (70-86°F) between December and May when manta rays are more commonly sighted. However it drops to an average of 16-24°C (60-75°F) between June and November when the Humboldt Current comes up from the south, bringing with it plankton; making this the best time for seeing whale sharks. Thermoclines can also be expected and divers are advised to bring suitable thermal protection.

Punta Carrion – This boulder strewn reef provides a superb introduction to some of the larger pelagics we expect to see in the Galapagos, including white tip reef sharks but also the occasional hammerhead and Galapagos shark. Sea lions are ever-present and there is the opportunity for some macro critter spotting with sightings of neon nudibranchs. *The wall has an average depth of 15m (50ft) and mild-medium current is to be expected.*

Wolf Island – Named after the German geologist, Theodor Wolf, this extinct volcano reaches 253m (780ft) above sea level and lies some 160km (100 miles) northwest of Isabela Island. Land visits are not permitted however bird life, including red-footed boobys and vampire finch, may be spotted from the boat.

Darwin Island – This extinct volcano reaching 165m (490ft) above sea level was named in honour of naturalist Charles Darwin. It is amongst the smallest island within the Galapagos Archipelago and like Wolf Island, no land visits are permitted. Perhaps the most famed dive site is **“Darwin’s Arch”** which provides an amazing drift dive along the wall at an average depth of just 9m. Medium to strong currents are to be expected but bring with them hammerheads, black tips, silky and Galapagos sharks – and in large numbers! Schools of jacks are a common sight, along with turtles, angelfish and moray eels. Occasional sightings of tiger sharks, manta rays and bottle nose dolphins make for a thrilling time spent here. Whale sharks may also be seen between May – November.

Douglas Cape – Situated on the northwest point of Fernandina Island, this wall dive, with an average depth of 20m (70ft), offers something truly spectacular and is now famed for the feeding marine iguanas that congregate here along with sea lions, fur seals and speedy penguins!

Punta Vicente Roca – Alternatively known as “The Ice Box”, due to its chilling thermoclines, this point off the Northwest coast of Isabela Island offers a wall drift dive, along which mola mola can be spotted. The occasional Port Jackson shark may also be seen as well as the endemic Camotillo (White spotted sand bass).

Roca Redonda – This underwater volcano, with its bubbling streams of natural gas (fumaroles) plays home to schools hammerheads sharks and barracuda. With typically strong, changeable currents and some down currents, the diving here is challenging, though with an average depth of 18m (60ft).

Cabo Marshall – The craggy volcanic walls are covered with black coral bushes and the sheer variety of marine life is astounding. Sightings of manta, mobula and cownose rays are to be expected during the warm season (November – May). Meanwhile shark varieties include scalloped hammerhead, Galapagos and white tips. Let’s not forget the sea lions and turtles!

Cousin’s Rock– One of the most photographically productive dives of the region, Cousin’s Rock is formed of coral covered rock and lava flow. Sea fans, hydroid bushes, red sponges and small hard corals encrust ledges and overhangs, sheltering hawkfish, nudibranchs, frogfish and seahorses. Plenty of larger visitors are also seen including giant manta and mobula rays, spotted eagle rays and hammerhead sharks. The wall drops beyond 30m (100ft) but rises up shallow to just 3m (10ft) providing an ideal spot to end your dive playing with the sea lions.

Punta Albermale – Drifting along this wall on the north of Isabela Island, we stay at an average depth of 25m (85ft) to see manta rays, hammerheads, turtles, schools of barracuda and tuna.