

SUSTAINABLE TOP 100 DESTINATION SUCCESS STORY

Galapagos Islands - Ecuador

The Galapagos Islands Destination consists of the Province of Galapagos and Municipalities and Islands within the Province, including Santa Cruz, Isabela, San Cristobal and Floreana; the Galapagos National Park; and the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

Galapagos Vision:

As established in the new model of ecotourism adopted since 2011, the vision for the destination is: "Galapagos, a World Heritage Site, is the most important ecotourism destination in the world, thanks to a model of sustainable tourism development, the guarantee of the conservation of the environment, the full satisfaction of the visitor and the Good Living of the community." Tourism in the Galapagos Islands is under the "Ecotourism Model" approach, this means that all tourism activities should ensure:

- Maximization of local participation and equal distribution of benefits
- Conservation on natural resources
- Shared responsibility between stakeholders

Sustainability Coordinator and Galapagos Tourism Plan

Galapagos Board (Pleno del Consejo de Gobierno de Galapagos) is the sustainability coordinator. This Galapagos Board is established under the Galapagos Special Law (LOREG). Within its activities, this Galapagos Board is the one in charge of generating the Galapagos Sustainable Plan and the policies to accomplish it (Art. 9, 10, 11). In relation to tourism activities, the Galapagos Tourism Board (Comité Provincial de Turismo) is a multi-stakeholder board that works toward sustainability in tourism, as indicated in the Galapagos Special Law Norm (Reglamento de la ley). This norm establishes the creation of this board. Art. 61 LOREG establishes all tourism in the province must be inside the concept of sustainability.

Since 2010, a new model of ecotourism was established. This model has 4 components: a) The Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG), b) strengthening governance, c) reengineering the destination, and d) market positioning. See the Nuevo Modelo de turismo. In addition, as a planning tool, the destination has a Sustainable Development Plan and Land Use Planning 2015- 2020 to ensure the conservation of the Archipelago.

The current Galapagos Tourism Plan is under the Galapagos Plan and it is being updated. The prior version is available in the file (Resumen Educomunicativo). Besides this document, Galapagos adopted an Ecotourism model as the tourism development plan (uploaded: esp_nuevo_modelo_turismo). The Galapagos Plan has been constructed with a participatory basis.

All Galapagos' tourism activities are under the SIMAVIS (Sistema de Manejo de Visitantes), which is strictly applied by the National Park and monitored by the Park and the Observatory

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of Tourism. See <https://www.galapagos.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/footprint2-SIMAVIS.pdf>

The Galapagos Tourism Plan relies on funding from visitors' entrance fees, of which an estimated US\$ 14 million are collected each year. The mechanism is explained in Galapagos Special Law Chapter III. This mechanism enables financial viability and funding of the action plan. The Observatory of Tourism of Galapagos, (see <http://observatoriogalapagos.gob.ec/>) and the Galapagos National Park (<http://www.galapagos.gob.ec/estadistica-de-visitantes/>) are in charge of monitoring tourism and sustainability in the Galapagos Islands. Water and energy consumption, waste management and urban development indicators are kept at the municipal level, and each municipality has a sustainability plan.

Management Structure

Integration of sustainability to destination's management structure: To date, Galapagos has a specific legal framework for the islands where in the first articles it is established that sustainable development is the only framework for all types of activities in the islands. The "Galapagos Plan", which is the main planning document for the islands, is framed within the special law of the Galapagos, establishing sustainable development as a fundamental aspect of all activities. Also 97% of the Galapagos territory is under the National Park Management Plan, which allocates sustainable development, as the only form of development in areas where public or other uses different to conservation are allowed.

Departments involved in sustainability. At municipality level: each county has a sustainability department for planning and executing actions. At the provincial level, the Galapagos National Park is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for the administration and management of the protected areas of Galapagos, and the Galapagos Government Council who is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for planning and the administration of the province. The Galapagos National Park has a Public Use Department who is charged of the management of the tourism and the public use within the protected area. Both institutions are in charge of accomplishing the Galapagos Plan and the National Park Management Plan.

Responsible. At least 30 members are involved within departments in charge of executing and monitoring the Galapagos Plan and National Park Management Plan. In addition, in accordance with the new ecotourism model established since 2010, the destination has the Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG). The TOG is a technical tool designed to generate tourism information to be used in planning and managing tourism at both local and regional levels.

Funding. The Ecuadorian government finances all executive institutions in Galapagos. In addition to this, a visitor fee is charged to every tourist. The fee (US\$ 100 for foreign visitors and US\$6 for locals, is designated: 50% to National Park activities, 25% to Government

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Council activities (under the Galapagos Plan) and 25% to Municipalities (this funding not restricted to sustainable development).

Management Team

The Province of Galapagos Islands has the Galapagos Tourism Board (Comité Provincial de Turismo), whose members include: representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Galapagos National Park Service (GNPS), CGREG, and the National Secretary of Planning and Development (SENPLADES); a representative from each Galapagos municipality; a delegate for all of the Galapagos parishes, and a delegate from the private sector. Some of the actors involved include:

- Yvonne Torres and Mendieta - Municipality of Santa Cruz. - Municipality of Santa Cruz.
- María Casafont - World Wildlife Fund.
- Mariuxi Farias - World Wildlife Fund.
- Veronica Santamaria - Public Use Director of the Galapagos National Park.
- Sofía Darquea - Galapagos Naturalist Guides Association (President).
- Oscar Aguirre - President of the Galapagos Chamber of Tourism.
- The Committee, which provides recommendations to the CGREG regarding decision-making, public policy, and regulations for the development of ecotourism in the Galapagos Islands.

Stakeholder Involvement

The Galapagos Board (Pleno del Consejo de Gobierno), is intended to work as a multi-stakeholder where private actors can participate through the Chamber of Tourism or as individuals. The private sector has contributed for the sustainability of the destination through being part of a Best Practices Ecotourism Campaign in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, the Municipalities, and the Galapagos National Park. The Best Practices include proposing energy saving, local consumption, water management, and plastic waste reduction in hotels, restaurants, and tourism operators. Since 2016, this process is strengthened with the implementation of the International Certification TourCert, which is based on a sustainable business management system for tourism operations.

The Galapagos Government Council Board, formed by several institutions (Galapagos Government Council, Ministry of Tourism, Galapagos National Park, National Planning Office, Municipalities, Parishes and Chambers of Tourism) meets at least four times a year for decision making processes that involve relevant aspects for the islands. Some of the relevant information of the Government Council (and other related institutions) are available at the "transparency" section of their websites, see

<http://www.gobiernogalapagos.gob.ec/transparencia/>; and

<http://www.galapagos.gob.ec/transparencia/> and <http://www.turismo.gob.ec/transparencia/>.

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Select Awards and Designations:

- UNESCO recognised the Galapagos Islands in 1978 as a World Heritage Site
- UNESCO recognised the Galapagos Islands in 1985 as a Biosphere Reserve.
- UNESCO extended the Biosphere Reserve to the marine portion of the Galapagos Islands in 2001.
- In 2009, the Galapagos Islands were shortlisted by the New7 Wonders of Nature Foundation. Galapagos Islands were ranked first in Group B in the category for islands.
- The Darwin and Wolf Islands, the northern most islands, were declared Marine Sanctuary by Ecuadorian government in 2016.
- The Renewable Energy Resources for the Galapagos Islands (ENERGAL) project was judged the Best Off-Grid Project in the Multilateral/ International Organizations category by Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) in 2017.
- Santa Cruz Island was named Top 100 Sustainable Tourism Destination in 2017.
- On December 3, 2018, the Galapagos Island was celebrated at the UNESCO Head Quarters for the 40th Anniversary of their inclusion in the World Heritage List in 1978.
- Galapagos Islands were named Top 100 Sustainable Tourism Destination in 2018.

Select Travel and Tourism Awards:

- World Travel Awards: South America's Leading Dive Destination 2007
- World Travel Awards: South America's Leading Green Destination 2012
- The Galapagos Ecological Airport was awarded the LEED GOLD certification by the USGPC on November 20, 2014, due to its design and construction, strategies and environmental characteristics.
- The Santa Cruz Island of the Galapagos Islands was named one of the Top 100 Sustainable Tourism Destination in 2017.
- Ecoventura, has been named the #2 Top Small-Ship Ocean Cruise Line in the Travel + Leisure 2017 World's Best Awards.
- Condé Nast Traveler Readers Choice Award for one of Best Islands in the World, 2018
- Travel and Leisure Award for Galapagos Islands as one of Best Island in World, 2018.

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