



CNH Tours Galapagos Wildlife Calendar

January

- Beginning of the rainy season (which means the occasional, short lived tropical downpour – on average 1-2 a week)
- Land birds start nesting, generally after the first rain
- On Hood (Española) Island adult marine iguanas become brightly colored (green & red + black)
- The green sea turtles arrive to beaches in the Galapagos for egg laying period
- Land iguanas begin reproductive cycles on Isabela Island
- Both, water and air temperatures rise and stay warm until June
- Vegetation bursts into leaf (if rains are on time)
- Ideal time for snorkeling

February

- On Floreana Island greater flamingos start nesting
- Bahama pintail ducks (Black-tailed pintail) start their breeding season
- Nazca (masked) boobies on Hood are at the end of their nesting season
- Marine iguanas nest on Santa Cruz Island
- The highest water temperature reaches 25C (77F). This temperature remains constant until April
- Very few penguins are sighted at Bartolome Island (most have followed the cool waters back to the west or near upwelling areas)
- Nesting season of the Galapagos dove reaches its peak

March

- The rainy season reaches the highest precipitation (this does not mean it rains everyday)

- Sporadic tropical rains, intense sun and hot climate. Air temperature can reach up to 30C (86F). Humidity is high.
- Marine iguanas nest on Fernandina
- March 21st, the beginning of the summer equinox signals the arrival of the waved albatross to Española.
- Even the western islands have warm waters where snorkeling is excellent. Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela) can be an amazing site. Penguins still active in the water, next to tropical fish! (How bizarre!)
- Some shores, specially those facing the north side, can receive deep surge (ola de fondo) coming from the northern currents. Wet landings at places like Puerto Egas, Gardner Bay, Bartolome can sometimes be a challenge.
- Snorkelers will remain long periods of time in the water by choice, marine life is very active.

April

- Massive arrival of waved albatrosses to Espanola. Amazing courtship starts.
- End of hatching season of the giant tortoises
- Eggs of green sea turtles begin to hatch
- Eggs of land iguanas hatch on Isabela
- While the rains have ended, the islands quite continue green
- Good visibility in the water for snorkelers
- Perhaps, together with May, the best months in Galapagos (weather, animals, water temperature)

May

- North Seymour's blue-footed boobies begin their courtship
- Sea turtles are still hatching on Gardner Bay, Punta Cormorant, and Puerto Egas
- Most of marine iguanas' eggs hatch from nests on Santa Cruz
- Palo santo trees begin to shed their foliage
- Waved albatross on Española start laying their eggs
- Ban-rumped storm petrels begin their first nesting period

June

- Beginning of the garúa season
- Giant tortoises on Santa Cruz Island migrate from the highlands to the lowlands in search of suitable nesting places
- Beginning of the nesting season of giant tortoises
- South east trade winds return. Currents become a bit stronger. Seas pick up in surge and wave action.
- Many red pouches by males of Magnificent Frigatebirds on North Seymour.

- Southern migrants have started their journey towards the north. Galapagos is a rest stop for such birds. Some species of cetaceans also follow this pattern of migration.
- Some groups of Humpback whales that migrate up to equatorial latitudes along the coast of Ecuador, can reach the Galapagos too.

July

- Sea bird communities are very active (breeding), specially the Blue footed boobies on Española.
- Flightless cormorants perform beautiful courtship rituals and nesting activities on Fernandina.
- If you walk along the shores of Puerto Egas (Santiago Island) you could find American oystercatchers nesting.
- Lava lizards initiate mating rituals until November
- Cetaceans (whales & dolphins) are more likely to be observed, specially off the western coast of Isabela
- Great month to see the four stages of nesting in Blue footed boobies: eggs, chicks, juveniles and subadults.
- Water temperature does not reach more than 21C (68F)

August

- Galapagos hawks court on Española and Santiago
- Nazca (masked) boobies and Swallow-tailed gulls nest on Genovesa Island
- The temperature of the ocean drops to 18C (64F), which obviously varies according to the geographic zones among the islands.
- Migrant shore birds start to arrive, and stay on the islands until March
- Giant tortoises return to the highlands of Santa Cruz
- Oceans are quite choppy, currents at the strongest levels, surge can be expected along the shores that face west or south
- Popping season (births) of sea lions has started. Western and central islands are common places for such sightings.

September

- Peak of the cold (garúa) season
- The air temperature reaches its lowest levels (19C-66F)
- Galapagos Penguins show remarkable activity on Bartolome.
- Since May swimmers and snorkelers can be delighted at Bartolome with penguins active at the surface or torpedo-like while underwater.
- Sea lions are very active. Females have reached estrus stage, and so harem-gathering males are constantly barking and fighting. Shore fighting is heavy.

Western and central islands are the most active ones in terms of sea lions' activities.

- Most species of sea birds remain quite active at their nesting sites.

October

- Lava herons start nesting until March
- The Galapagos Fur Seals (subspecies of Sea lions) begin their mating period
- Blue footed boobies raise chicks all over Española and Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela)
- Giant tortoises are still laying eggs
- Days are not always sunny. Garúa can be expected in most locations, except the western islands where most days have a misty start but after few hours of daylight it burns off.
- Sunrises in the west can be quite beautiful after the garúa covers only certain locations of the western volcanoes.
- Summits are clear, but low-lying fog covers the shoreline.

November

- Pupping of sea lions continue.
- Sea lions are sexually active on the eastern part of the archipelago.
- Breeding season for the brown noddies
- Some species of jellyfish can be seen around the islands.
- The genus Physalia is commonly seen floating around Gardner and Tortuga Islets. Some can also be seen stranded at the shores of the Flour Beach at Floreana.
- Band-rumped storm petrels begin their second nesting period
- Seas are calm. South east trade winds have decreased strength. Water temperatures are slowly rising.
- Generally great weather due to transition between one season and the next one
- Good visibility for snorkelers
- Sea lion pups (especially at Champion Islet) play aqua-aerobics next to snorkelers. Most pups here are curious enough to nibble at fins of snorkelers. The average age of most pups is 3-4 months.

December

- Hatching of giant tortoise's eggs begins and lasts until April
- Green sea turtles display their mating behavior
- The rainy season begins, all of the plants of the dry zone produce leaves. Galapagos becomes "green"
- The first young waved albatrosses fledge
- Great weather

Source: <http://www.galapagoscruise.com.ec/index.pl/galapagos-wildlife-activity-december>

Galapagos Weather

MONTH	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg High F	84	86	88	86	82	78	76	74	76	77	78	80
Celcius	29	30	31	30	28	26	24	23	24	25	26	27
Avg Low F	70	74	74	72	72	66	64	64	62	64	66	68
Celcius	21	23	23	22	22	19	18	18	17	18	19	20
Water Temp F	74	76	76	76	74	74	68	62	60	70	72	74
Celcius	23	24	24	24	23	23	20	17	16	21	22	23
Rainfall inches	1.5	2.1	3	3	2.7	2.2	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.5
cm	3.8	5.3	7.6	7.6	6.9	5.6	2.8	1.8	1.3	1.3	2	3.8

Source: INGALA website:

http://www.ingala.gov.ec/galapagosislands/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=70&Itemid=68