

Bringing Children to Galapagos

When I left Galapagos, my 1st child, a boy, was nearly 3 years old, and I was 7 months pregnant (with another boy). Possibly the most difficult part of leaving was taking my boy away from such a stimulating and friendly environment. Galapagos is a marveled filled place for children. Imagine a place where the weather is nice, the sea is always at hand, people are “child friendly”, and animals have no fear!

My boy was 8 months old when I took him on a cruise – he was not mobile and it was easy to have him along. I returned to Galapagos with my children when they were 7 and 10. We booked on a “family cruise”. We all had a wonderful time.

In all cases – be very watchful of the sun and be sure your kids are very well protected.

Caveat: Some ships have policies restricting children on their cruises – please ask about these when considering a cruise.

CNH TOURS RECOMMENDATIONS

Infants

When still infants and not mobile (e.g. 5-12 months), children can be easy to bring along. You can put them in a baby back-pack while on the trails. You might be able to take them to a beach for a play in the water.

Toddlers

When kids start to be mobile, a ship can be a dangerous place for them. The rocking motion might have them falling over, bumping their heads etc. Parents might end up suffering constant anxiety as they watch over the children, ensuring they stay in sight. Generally, this is not a recipe for a relaxing holiday. As a result, I don't recommend taking kids between 1 and 7 years on a cruise.

Youngsters

Once kids start developing a sense of personal responsibility (yes, it does eventually happen!!), it becomes easier to take them on a cruise. Your child should understand that he/she'll be required to stay on the trails, respect the animals, listen to the guide and not disturb the group. Remember, your fellow-travelers will have paid a lot for their Galapagos experience, and they won't appreciate having it ruined by a constantly whining or an uncontrollable child. If they are swimmers, all the better. You should have them practice using a mask and a snorkel before going – the underwater experience in Galapagos is at least 50% of the marvel. Each child is different, but starting at about 7 or 8, I find that some kids begin to display the necessary self-control and discipline that would make them welcome guests aboard a cruise. There are significant savings to be had on the cost of a Galapagos vacation for kids under 12 years of age.

Teens

Once they hit the teen years, who knows if/how they will react to the prospect of going to Galapagos! You should be confident that your kids will appreciate the adventure before taking them.

FAMILY CRUISES

Several ships organize “family cruises”, usually during the northern hemisphere school holiday season (Christmas, Easter, July / August). I strongly recommend such cruises for families – as the kids will find friends on-board, test their independence, and be able to share their adventures with some peers. The guides will usually also take time to entertain the kids, or to organize special activities.

Kids Reading List – Websites

Here are some suggested websites to inspire kids who will be travelling to the Enchanted Isles:

The Galapagos Conservation Trust Kid's Pages: <http://www.gct.org/children.html>

The Darwin Foundation's Kid's Corner: <http://www.darwinfoundation.org/en/library/children>

Kid's Biology: <http://www.kidsbiology.com/animals-for-children.php?animal=Galapagos%20Land%20Iguana>

Kid's Planet.org: <http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/tortoise.html>

Science News for Kids: <http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org/articles/20050413/Note2.asp>

Darwin and Evolution for Kids: http://www.yesmag.ca/review/darwin_kids.html

Galapagos Penguins: <http://kids.yahoo.com/directory/Science-and-Nature/Living-Things/Animals/Birds/Types-of-Birds/Aquatic-Birds/Sea-Birds/Penguins/Galapagos-Penguins>