



Magno Bennet

CNH TOURS GALAPAGOS

PHOTOGRAPHY ADVICE FROM PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO HAVE BEEN THERE, AND WHO LIVED THERE, AND WHO MAKE A LIVING TAKING PICTURES THERE

Galapagos is a wildlife photographer's paradise. This page is dedicated to providing prospective visiting photographers some practical advice.

Much of Galapagos Advisor's inspiration for this page comes from our earlier friendship with Daniel Fitter, a Galapagos native, naturalist guide and professional photographer. More information is sourced from DP Software, a dedicated photographer, and former TripAdvisor Destination Expert for Galapagos and ken_photo_geek, who provided an exhaustive set of recommendations on TripAdvisor, emanating from his photography trip to Galapagos.

Galapagos Photography - Tips & Lessons Learned

1. Have some way to back up your photos so that you don't run the risk of losing them all due to a technical glitch. You can drop your camera in the water, your SD card can get stuck in the "locked position", or suddenly go blank on you. You may want to consider bringing a computer to back up your pictures there, or onto USB sticks.
2. If you are going to do any snorkeling, either bring a waterproof camera or a waterproof housing for one of your cameras. You can get some remarkable underwater pictures in Galapagos. Galapagos currents carry lots of nutrients, which contribute to both animal diversity and turbidity of the water. Shooting a fast film without flash (against park regulations anyway) works best.
3. If you have an SLR or a camera that will support a Polarizing filter, you should consider using one. While riding or touring in a Panga (small boat) you will have opportunities to photograph animals such as rays, turtles, sea lions and penguins in the water. A polarizing filter will help you cut the glare and see into the water.

4. The lighting in the Galapagos can be challenging. It can be very stark with a lot of contrast. You have to select your angles carefully when shooting things such as a dark sea lion on a white beach with a bright sun overhead. A neutral density filter can help with this.
5. Bring a spare camera. If you only have one camera, and you lose it or it breaks, you are out of luck. A fairly large SLR can be complemented by a point and shoot special (e.g. about the size of a pack of cards).
6. If you bring an SLR think carefully about lenses. Swapping lenses frequently can be impractical. It is not uncommon to quickly want to change from wide angle for a landscape to telephoto (say for an animal). In the end, a 18-270 mm lens can be a good compromise, or a 70-300 mm. When you are moving with a group, swapping lenses can be difficult.
7. Condensation can be a large issue as you move your camera from the cool (sometimes cold) environment of your cabin to the hot, humid air outside. Before doing any shooting you need to let your camera to warm up and acclimate. If you just wipe the condensation off a cold camera or lens, it will come right back. Remember to take your camera to a warm environment a good 15 minutes or more before you intend to use it.
8. You will be making a lot of small boat transfers, some with dry landings and some with wet landings. The possibility is always out there of your equipment getting wet during a transfer, a landing or when getting back in the boat. It is a good idea to buy some dry bags for your equipment, just to be safe.
9. A tripod is usually a burden. You will have limited opportunities to use it. You will be with a moving group of people and not always have the time required to set up a good tripod shot. A monopod is a good alternative (and can also be used as a walking stick!).
10. Using a flash is against park regulations, except in town and on the boat.
11. Do what you can to get early morning, or late afternoon walks on the islands - light is best then. Talk to your naturalist guide.
12. Keep your camera well secured around your neck - you don't want to drop it into the ocean!
13. Take a good cleaning kit as everything gets really dirty.
14. Double the number of SD cards you think you will need, because you will take thousands of photos.

For yet more information, Galapagos Advisor recommends visiting Peter Norvig's excellent "Galapagos Photography" webpage here: <http://norvig.com/galapagos-photography.html>