



Galapagos Islands Visitor
Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct for Visitors to the Province of Galapagos

The Galapagos Islands Visitor Code of Conduct is designed to strengthen shared responsibility, conservation and the overall wellbeing of Galapagos.

Through ethical guidelines and shared commitments, the Code aims to support the conservation of the Islands' natural heritage, the wellbeing of the local population and the strengthening of the Islands' ecotourism model, in line with the Galapagos Special Regime and current legislation (Resolution No. 035-CGREG-2010).

This Code of Conduct complements existing legislation and seeks to broaden visitors' commitment to include social, environmental and economic considerations, as well as a renewed appreciation of local identity. It recognises Galapagos as a fragile and unique socio-ecosystem.

Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to all domestic and international tourists, people in transit and members of the local community, collectively referred to as "visitors", who enter and/or travel within the province of Galapagos. This includes protected areas, populated areas, transport and visitor infrastructure, and public and private spaces used for tourism.



Principles

The Code recognises Galapagos as a living, interdependent system in which nature, communities and the economy are deeply interconnected, and in which tourism actively contributes to the wellbeing of the whole system.

It seeks to guide visitor behaviour beyond simple compliance with regulations, promoting shared responsibility, respectful coexistence and a positive contribution to Galapagos as a whole.

Visitors should be guided by the following principles:

1. Integrity of the Socio-Ecosystem

The health of protected areas and that of towns and settlements are interdependent. Visitors' attitudes, behaviour and actions should therefore reflect this interconnectedness, regardless of where in the Islands they take place.

2. Shared Responsibility

Conservation and respectful coexistence in Galapagos depend on conscious, collective action by individuals and wider society.

3. Prevention and Regeneration

Visitors should receive clear guidance before and throughout their visit to help prevent environmental, social and cultural harm, while encouraging them to take action that supports the care, restoration and resilience of the Islands and their communities.

4. Respect for Living Identity

Intangible heritage should be valued as a fundamental part of the visitor experience, fostering a harmonious and empathetic relationship with local communities, wildlife and shared spaces. This means recognising Galapagos as both a place where people live and a living system in which communities coexist with a unique and exceptional natural world.

5. Knowledge and Learning

Learning about the natural, cultural and scientific value of Galapagos should be recognised as an evolving process and an integral part of the visitor experience.

Guidelines and Commitments

Visitors arriving in the province of Galapagos are expected to follow this Code, which sets out the ethical guidelines and shared commitments that should guide their behaviour, attitudes and actions throughout their visit.

A. Safeguard Ecosystems and Uphold Critical Biosecurity Measures

- Follow the [Galapagos National Park Rules](#).
- Prevent the introduction of species: Thoroughly inspect and clean all luggage, footwear and clothing before travelling to Galapagos or between islands, to prevent the spread of seeds, insects or pathogens that could threaten the ecological integrity of the Islands. Visitors should also choose locally produced goods wherever possible, helping to reduce the risk of accidental species introductions and the environmental damage they can cause.
- Respect wildlife and the ecosystem services it supports: Respect wildlife habitats and do not interfere with animals. Remain at least two metres (six feet) away and never feed or touch wildlife, recognising that any disturbance can compromise the evolutionary processes underpinning the unique value of the Archipelago.
- Value and protect the landscape and geology: Recognise that every natural element plays a part in maintaining the ecological integrity of Galapagos and the ecosystem services it provides. Do not collect natural materials (including rocks, shells, sand or wood) or alter the physical environment, so that the pristine character of the landscape is preserved.
- Recognise the ecological limits of a unique and fragile island environment: Be aware of the high environmental costs associated with supplying fresh water, generating energy and managing waste in Galapagos, and minimise your consumption by using resources efficiently and responsibly. This means reducing water and energy use, producing less waste, avoiding single-use plastics and refraining from activities that place additional pressure on public infrastructure and the Islands' limited capacity to provide local services.
- Make a meaningful commitment to caring for the ocean: Help maintain the health of marine ecosystems by avoiding activities and purchasing choices that damage them or the services they provide. Follow the Guidelines for Responsible Behaviour during Marine Activities in Galapagos.
- Recognise that your visit can contribute to conservation and science: Take opportunities to support conservation, research and citizen science initiatives through meaningful participation, giving back to the Islands while contributing to our knowledge and protection of Galapagos ecosystems.

B. Support a Circular, Regenerative Local Economy

- Support local livelihoods: Purchase local products and services, recognising that your spending decisions have a direct impact on conservation, equity and the resilience of the Islands. Make conscious choices that strengthen communities and Galapagos as a whole.
- Strengthen Galapagos supply chains: Choose products from local farms and small-scale fisheries wherever possible, helping to reduce the carbon footprint associated with imports and strengthen the economic resilience of Island residents.
- Value products with a local origin: Recognise the work of local producers by choosing food grown or produced in Galapagos and crafts made in the Archipelago. Understand that choosing local rather than imported products reduces environmental impacts, strengthens the local economy and food security, and supports the Islands' self-reliance.
- Value local work, knowledge and the true cost of living in Galapagos: Avoid practices such as excessive bargaining, and recognise the difference between price and value in a remote World Heritage Site.
- Use authorised accommodation, tourism operators and accredited guides: By complying with regulations and contributing to the formal economy, these businesses help support a fair, sustainable and responsible tourism industry.
- Do not stay in unregistered accommodation advertised through residential property platforms such as Airbnb: Unauthorised accommodation operates without the required permits, undermining efforts to conserve the Islands' ecosystems and manage the Archipelago's limited visitor capacity. Visitors should also check whether their accommodation has signed up to the Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Tourist Accommodation.
- Consume consciously and take responsibility for your waste: Refuse products with excessive plastic packaging and separate waste correctly at source, following municipal waste management guidelines to help prevent microplastic pollution. Where possible, take waste such as plastics and batteries back to the mainland for appropriate disposal.
- Participate in return and collection schemes: Prioritise products that support circular practices. Make an active commitment to reducing or refusing single-use plastics, choose products in returnable containers and use designated collection and return points.

C. Respect and Value the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Identity of Galapagos

- Value cultural exchange: Engage with local communities, recognising them as the rightful custodians of the Islands. Avoid reducing local culture to stereotypes or folklore, and promote a respectful exchange of knowledge. Recognise that Galapagos is a place where people live, not simply a tourist destination, and adapt your behaviour, pace and expectations to respect the tranquillity and dignity of those who make this World Heritage Site their home.
- Engage with living heritage: Take part in experiences that celebrate the history, culture, arts and traditions of the Islands, helping to keep local identity alive. Understand that learning about the context and culture of Galapagos is itself an active form of respect, and not solely the responsibility of guides or institutions.
- Support harmonious coexistence: Respect peaceful spaces and local quiet hours in towns and settlements. Keep noise and disruptive behaviour to a minimum, and show consideration for island ways of life when using shared spaces.
- Support tourism initiatives that deliver genuine local benefits: Choose experiences, local enterprises and services that reinvest in conservation, community wellbeing and the responsible development of the Archipelago.
- Participate respectfully and voluntarily in community life: Recognise the opportunities for learning and exchange offered by activities such as 'mingas' (collective community work), clean-ups, cultural events and local initiatives. Where appropriate and when invited, share your knowledge, time or skills as a way of making a positive contribution that extends beyond your visit.
- Help uphold human rights by reporting any activity that violates them, particularly the rights of children and adolescents.
- Help protect women by reporting any activity that threatens the safety, dignity or rights of local women or women visiting the Islands.
- Help prevent offences against human dignity and all forms of gender-based violence.
- Comply with current Ecuadorian law governing the use, possession and trafficking of controlled substances, including the specific circumstances and conditions authorised by law.