

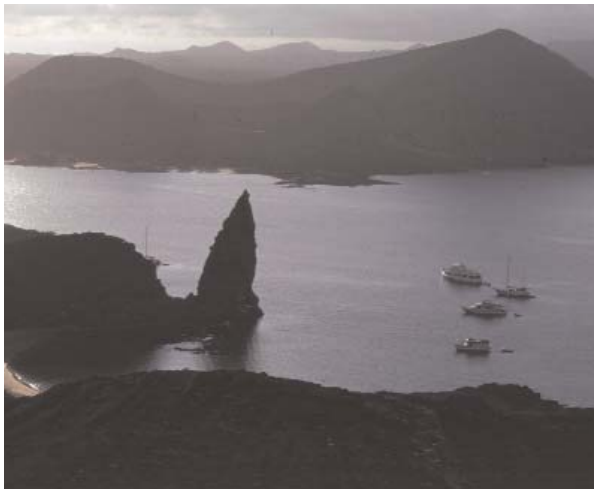
SMARTVOYAGER PROGRAM

Guaranteeing Eco-Conscious Cruises Through the Galapagos

*"The natural history of these islands is eminently curious, and well deserves attention."
- Charles Darwin, 1845*

This year some 60,000 tourists will visit the Galapagos Islands that lie 597 miles west of Ecuador's coastline. Most will marvel benignly at the sea lions, seals, blue-footed boobies and giant tortoises, which, having evolved in isolation from natural predators, so captivated Charles Darwin. Others, either unwittingly or by intent, will contribute to the islands' demise. Over the years, the influx of non-native species, fishing and poorly managed tourist boats – along with tourists themselves – have disturbed and distressed the waters and wildlife of the Galapagos.

To protect these wondrous living laboratories, and the people that live and work on and around them, the Rainforest Alliance – in collaboration with its Ecuadorian partner Conservación y Desarrollo– developed SmartVoyager. The program awards its seal of approval to operators meeting a set of strict conservation standards for protecting the environment, wildlife and the well-being of workers and local communities.



For travelers, the SmartVoyager seal is a guarantee that they are traveling with an operator who cares about the conservation of the islands and has taken every precaution to give passengers a memorable, educational and thrilling adventure, without harming the wildlife of this special environment. For tour operators and travel agents, SmartVoyager ensures that the tour boats it represents are doing the utmost to minimize their environmental and social impact.

SmartVoyager's standards were designed in collaboration with scientists, conservation experts and tour operators, and cover a host of environmental and social concerns. They protect against potential sources of pollution; set rules for the good management of docks, tour boats and the small craft that ferry passengers out to the boats; specify criteria for the procurement and management of supplies; and defend against opportunities for introducing alien species. For local people and workers, these standards require good living conditions and advanced training for the boat crew and guides.



SmartVoyager certification...

- Improves the quality of life for local residents.
- Reduces the ecological impacts of tourism.
- Gives tour operators a way to directly contribute to both the economy and the environment.
- Offers travelers the chance to help people and wildlife while visiting natural treasures.

After two years of research, SmartVoyager was introduced in May 2000. Today, five of the 20 large tour vessels – described as floating hotels – that travel through the Galapagos have been evaluated and certified as ecofriendly and socially responsible through the SmartVoyager Program. All five certified tour vessels have made tangible changes that include the use of lead-free and TBT-free paint, the implementation of waste disposal systems, the production of fresh water with a desalinization plant on board, the careful management of fuels and improved conditions for workers.

In 2001, the SmartVoyager initiative



was commended by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee "given the nature of tourism visitation to the Galapagos and the impacts of tourism on the fragile environment and in light of the proposed Marine Reserve. It believed that consideration should be given to promoting similar schemes in other World Heritage sites."

Why SmartVoyager?

Tourism is now the world's largest industry, and while it can lead to problems such as waste, habitat destruction and the displacement of local residents and wildlife, the Rainforest Alliance recognizes that properly managed tourism can contribute to conservation, sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty.

As one of the world's leading conservation organizations working to develop and promote economically viable and socially desirable alternatives to the destruction of natural resources, the Rainforest Alliance helped to develop SmartVoyager. After pioneering progressive forestry management in 1989, the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program became the world's most extensive in forestry certification. Today, the Rainforest Alliance is also internationally recognized for its certification of sustainably grown coffee, chocolate, citrus and flowers, as well as tour boats in the Galapagos. As the driving force behind the creation of the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council – a proposed international governing body that would develop standards and criteria for tourism certification, while ensuring that certifiers adhere to the guidelines – the Rainforest Alliance is quickly becoming synonymous with sustainable tourism.

SmartVoyager Certification Principles

SmartVoyager's certification standards are organized into twelve principles:

Company Policy

The Company must have a management policy that includes compliance with national legislation and international agreements as well as SmartVoyager standards.

Conservation of Natural Ecosystems

The tourist operation must support and promote conservation of the Galapagos National Park and the Marine Reserve.

Lowering the Risk of Introduction and Dispersal of Exotic Species

The tourist operation must prevent the introduction of species from the continent to the islands and the dispersal of species between islands.

Just and Proper Treatment of Workers

The tourist operation must elevate the socioeconomic welfare and quality of life of workers and their families.

Employee Training

All personnel involved with the tourist operation must receive environmental education and training.

Community Relations and Local Welfare

The company must make a commitment to the welfare and socioeconomic development of the Galapagos Islands community.

Strict Control of Use, Supply and Storage of Materials

Boat operators must plan and control the consumption, supply and storage of materials, taking into consideration the well-being of tourists, workers, local communities and the conservation of natural ecosystems.

Integrated Waste Management

Boats must follow a waste-management plan, including the reduction, reuse, recycling and adequate final treatment of disposal of all wastes.

Commitment on the Part of the Tourist

Tourists must be guided in their involvement in protecting natural resources and local cultures, tread lightly and collaborate with the island conservation programs.

Safety

The SmartVoyager program does not guarantee safety, but certified boats must adhere to international safety standards and have all the appropriate licenses and approvals.

Planning and Monitoring

Tourism operations must be planned, monitored and evaluated, taking into consideration technical, economic, social and environmental factors.

Smart Voyager is a joint program of Conservación y Desarrollo (CyD) – an Ecuadorian nonprofit group – and the Rainforest Alliance.



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