On the Road with Ecoventura: The Galápagos Islands

By Chris Force

In the week I spent exploring the Galápagos Islands, days would go by where I didn’t see a single road. No cars. No buildings. No cell phone towers. No streetlights, no airplanes. And, except for the other passengers onboard Origin, a luxury yacht from Ecoventura, I saw no other people.

Instead, the chaos and noise of the human world was replaced by the chaos and noise of the natural one. With the help of Ecoventura’s extremely skilled local naturalists I was surrounded by sea lions, iguanas, lizards, turtles, finches, cormorants, doves, frigates, boobies, albatrosses, flamingos, giant tortoises, whales, sharks, crabs, penguins, gulls, manta rays, and dozens of types of fish that exist only in the Galápagos.
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The Galápagos Islands are one of the most elusive destinations in the world. Located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador, the majority of the islands are carefully monitored and protected National Parks that are only accessible by sea. Since you must travel by boat, and the islands themselves are completely natural and undeveloped (no hotels, no running water, no bathrooms), the only way to truly experience the Galápagos is on a liveaboard boat.

For a week I lived on Origin, where guests are treated to a private chef offering fantastic meals and snacks throughout the day, as well as two fully stocked and staffed bars, a hot tub, sun loungers, outdoor showers, king size beds, daily laundry, air conditioning, Wi-Fi, Apple TV, and all the luxuries and care of a modern hotel. The real luxury, though, was the pristine and unrivaled natural world Ecoventura delivers—a truly wild string of active volcanoes crammed full of fascinating history and wildlife.

I learned there are three main types of lava that created the islands and how to spot them. Imagine you stepped on sharp, crumbly land in bare feet and said, “Ah! Ah!” This is what they call the first kind of lava, a’a’, as its viscous flow dries into rough, jagged surfaces. The second type is pahoehoe, when the lava forms in a smooth, ropy like texture. The third is the result of the molten magma finally meeting the water and forming a skin, or crust, that makes hard pillow shapes. They call this pillow lava. Even the land itself in the islands is beautiful and unusual.
Origin is a 142-foot luxury expedition yacht from Ecoventura. The 10 spacious staterooms offer panoramic views of the sea.

A blue-footed booby.

Baby giant tortoises at the Charles Darwin Research Station

A Nazca booby.

A juvenile Nazca booby.
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Our Zodiac boats arrive on the shore of Punta Pitt. Origin by Ecoventura seen in the distance.

A fantastic sea lion latte onboard Origin by Ecoventura.

Guests can relax in a jacuzzi hot tub on the Beagle Deck after a busy day of snorkeling and water activities.
A lazy sea lion snoozes on a chunk of lava at Española Island.

A blue-footed booby in flight.

Galápagos penguins are seen near Pinnacle Rock on Bartolomé Island.
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The “powdered sugar” Playa Cerro Brujo

A whale skeleton on a pristine white sand beach.

A colony of sea lions is seen on the white coraline sand beach of Gardner Bay. There are an estimated 50,000 sea lions on the Galapagos Islands.
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Paddleboards and kayaks catching a tow back to Origin.

Snorkeling off Sombrero Chino Island

A sunset excursion on the Zodiacs.

One of 10 staterooms on Origin. Luggage courtesy of Peak Design and Away. Show here: the Travel Backpack 45L in black by Peak Design and “The Large” in black by Away.
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Hiking down the 870 stairs from the Pinnacle Rock Overlook on Isla Bartolome.

Enjoying the views of Pinnacle Rock.

A land iguana, one of three types of iguanas found in the Galápagos.

A blue-footed booby on Isla Seymour.
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A Galapagos stingray.

A dolphin skull.

A scalloped hammerhead shark.

There are less than 2,000 of these endangered penguins left in the world. They are the only penguins to live north of the equator.
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World-class cuisine onboard Origin by Ecoventura.

The food served has a focus on sustainable and organic ingredients from local island farmers.

I was surprised to find delicious vegan and vegetarian options at each meal.

Exploring the flavorful tastes of Ecuador.

The Origin’s staterooms offer individualized climate controls, memory foam mattresses, a private luxury bathroom, Apple TV, a coffee and local chocolate station, plenty of storage and Wi-Fi. The rooms are impeccably cleaned, with no grain of sand left behind, multiple times a day.
A drawing of Charles Darwin onboard Origin.

Gerardo Duran is the captain of the Relais & Chateaux luxury yacht Origin. “I really enjoy sailing in Galapagos. It is the most beautiful office in this world,” he says.

For more information visit ecoventura.com. Hotel accommodations in Guayaquil courtesy of Hotel Del Parque. Luggage courtesy of Peak Design and Away.