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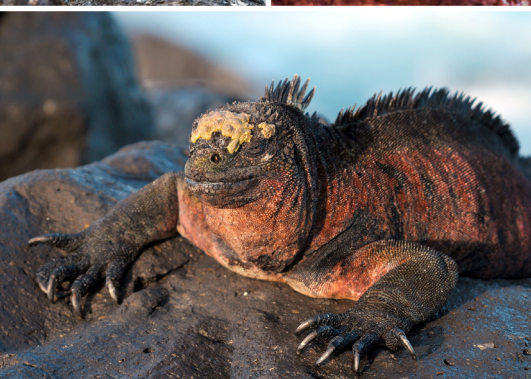
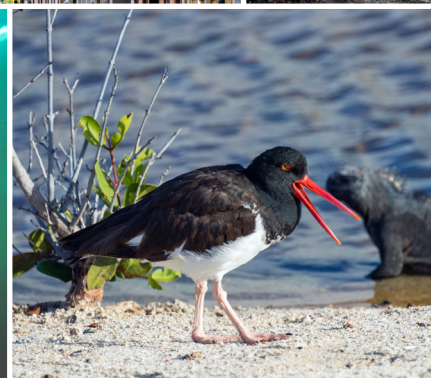
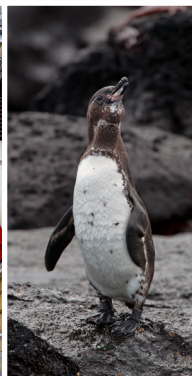
# UQ ALUMNI TRAVEL

## GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, 2026

3 May—12 May









# UQ ALUMNI TRAVEL

## Your academic host



### Professor Bernard Degnan

Professorial Research Fellow  
School of the Environment

Professor Bernard (Bernie) Degnan will accompany you throughout your journey, offering unique insights into the evolutionary wonders of the Galápagos Islands, drawing on decades of groundbreaking marine biology research.

An expert in evolutionary genomics, Professor Degnan is renowned for his work on sponges, which has reshaped our understanding of how complex animal life, including humans, evolved. His research has been featured in Sir David Attenborough's *First Life* and continues to inspire students and scientists around the world.

If you're curious about life's origins and the intricate ties between ancient and modern ecosystems, Professor Degnan will make this journey to the Galápagos Islands unforgettable.

## Explore the Galápagos Islands

### Travel highlights and inclusions:

- A UQ expert as your academic host
- Connections with fellow UQ alumni
- A curated range of 3-star accommodation, built for adventure in the remote Galápagos Islands
- Internal flights and boat trips
- 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 2 evening meals  
Where meals are not included your travel guide will be able to provide you with suggestions on where to buy meals.
- A chance to encounter lava lizards and Darwin finches on the walk to Las Grietas, a crystal-clear swimming hole tucked between volcanic cliffs
- A visit to the marine iguanas at Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island
- An experience with giant tortoises at the conservation centres on Santa Cruz and Isabela Islands
- A tour of the Charles Darwin Research Station, a hub for conservation and research into the islands' unique ecosystems
- A hike across the rim of Sierra Negra
- A chance to stand on the equator at the Middle of the World, with one foot in each hemisphere



### What's not included:

- International and domestic airfares (exception: there is one included internal return flight between Quito and Baltra Island Airport)
- Travel insurance (essential), visas and items of a personal nature
- Galápagos Islands Park entry fee of \$200 USD per person paid in cash only at Baltra Island airport
- The Consejo de Gobierno (local government council) Transit Control Card fee of \$20 USD per person paid in cash only at Quito airport
- Early check in and/or late checkout
- Gratuities to the drivers and local experts
- Personal expenses, beverages and incidentals at the hotel
- Transportation, sightseeing and admissions other than those specified in this brochure
- Paid optional activities on Isabela Island and Santa Cruz Island

Day 1 | 3 May

## Quito

Bienvenido a Ecuador!

Lose yourself in the magic of Quito, a city layered with history and alive with culture. Built atop the ruins of an ancient Incan settlement, its historic heart is a tapestry of cobbled streets, ornate churches and architecture that weaves together Indigenous, Moorish and European influences. Here, every plaza and passage tells a story centuries in the making.

In the evening, meet up with your UQ academic host and travel companions.

### Optional activity

#### Cotopaxi Volcano - Full Day

*(You must arrive in Quito the night prior to take part in this activity)*

*(\$89 USD per person)*

Travel two hours to Cotopaxi National Park, home to the highest active volcano in Ecuador\*. Visit the park museum, hike around a lagoon, then walk to the refuge and glacier (weather permitting). Return to Quito by evening.

*\*Park entrance fee is not included and is split among the number of travellers in the tour*

**Hotel** Hotel Eugenia or equivalent

Day 2 | 4 May

## Quito to Santa Cruz Island

Fly from Quito to Santa Cruz Island and begin your Galápagos adventure.

In the afternoon, visit the Fausto Llerena Tortoise Breeding Center and the Charles Darwin Research Station in Puerto Ayora.

Brought back from the brink of extinction, see the famous Galápagos tortoise up close and learn about local conservation efforts to protect this unique ecosystem.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast



Day 2 highlight: Fausto Llerena Breeding Center



Day 3 highlight: Las Grietas

Day 3 | 5 May

## Santa Cruz Island to Floreana Island

Start the day with a walk through a rugged cactus forest on Santa Cruz Island, spotting lava lizards and Darwin finches on the way to Las Grietas, a crystal-clear brackish swimming hole nestled between volcanic cliffs.

In the afternoon, board a speedboat for a 2-hour journey to Floreana Island, keeping an eye out for dolphins and seabirds along the way.

Floreana Island is a small, isolated island and many of its residents have been living there for the past 3 generations since the island was first inhabited.

Upon arrival, settle into a community-run guesthouse and enjoy meals prepared by local residents. This unique stay supports Floreana's pioneering community tourism initiative, designed to benefit both its people and the island's delicate ecosystem.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast, dinner

**Hotel** Floreana Community Guesthouse

Day 4 | 6 May

## Floreana Island

Spend the day exploring Floreana Island, beginning with a walk along the black-sand beach to Loberia, where you can snorkel or swim among the island's rich marine life.

In the afternoon, venture into the remote highlands for a guided walk through Floreana's unique landscape, rich with wildlife and stories of pirates and early settlers. Meals are provided by local residents through a community tourism initiative, offering an authentic experience while directly supporting the island's economy.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast, lunch and dinner

**Hotel** Floreana Community Guesthouse





Day 4 highlight: La Lobería

Day 5 | 7 May

## Floreana Island to Isabela Island

Start the day with a 2-hour speedboat ride to Isabela Island. In the afternoon, lace up your hiking boots to explore the landscape around the Sierra Negra Volcano, which has the largest basaltic caldera in the Galápagos. The volcano last erupted in June 2018, making it the most recent eruption in the Galápagos.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast

**Hotel** Hotel Iguana or equivalent

Day 6 | 8 May

## Isabela Island

Enjoy a free morning on Isabela Island to explore at your own pace. You can relax on the beach or take part in one of the additional paid activities such as snorkelling, kayaking, or cycling in the surrounding area.

In the afternoon, walk through the town's scenic wetlands to visit the Giant Tortoise Breeding Centre. This conservation facility was established in response to the species' near-extinction in the late 1950s and plays a crucial role in protecting and restoring the population of these iconic Galápagos creatures.

### Additional paid activities

*Please note that space may be limited for optional activities during high season. These activities are operated by third-party operators and will be subject to availability.*

#### Los Tuneles snorkelling

*(\$140-\$150 USD per person)*

Grab your snorkel and head out to explore the waters and see what's living under the sea. Travel to Los Tuneles, about a 40-minute boat ride away from Puerto Villamil. The lava formations and mangroves make this an ideal place for snorkelling. Keep an eye out for eagle rays, sea turtles and large schools of colourful fish.

#### Surfing lesson

*(\$120 USD per person)*

Learn how to find and ride the waves with surfing lessons from local experts. Enjoy the fresh sea air and try to spot local marine life while enjoying the waters.

#### Islote Tintoreras snorkelling

*(\$45-\$50 USD per person)*

Go snorkelling at the islet Las Tintoreras, located south of Puerto Villamil. Enjoy a calm, turquoise bay and look for the whitetip reef shark, which are fairly common in the archipelago. (The sharks are called Tintorera in Spanish, which is where the site gets its name.) Keep an eye out for sea lions, sea turtles, marine iguanas and rays as well.

#### Wall of Tears bike visit

*(\$20 USD per person)*

Cycle to the 'Wall of Tears' and tour this sombre historical site that pays homage to the prisoners of an on-island penal colony, who were forced to build a wall out of huge blocks of lava. Many prisoners died during the wall's construction between 1946 and 1959.

#### Concha de Perla snorkelling

*(\$5 USD per person)*

Visit the calm bay of Concha de Perla for a snorkelling experience. Snorkel alongside up to 20 different species of bird as well as tropical fish, sea lions, and maybe even penguins.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast



Day 6 highlight: Marine Iguanas at Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island



Day 7 | 9 May

## Isabela Island to Santa Cruz Island

In the morning, take a 3-hour speedboat transfer back to Puerto Ayora, the main town on Santa Cruz Island and the largest settlement in the Galápagos.

Enjoy a walk along a lava stone pathway to the beautiful white beach of Tortuga Bay. Relax on the beach or walk along the mangroves looking for marine iguanas and birdlife.

In the evening, enjoy free time to explore this lively coastal town, known for its charming waterfront, local shops, art galleries and cafes.

### Additional paid activities

*Tortuga Bay kayaking*  
(\$15 USD per person)

Grab a life jacket and go for a kayak adventure in the mangroves of Tortuga Bay. Keep an eye out for a wide variety of marine life, including colourful reef fish, rays and sea turtles, as you paddle the blue waters. Afterwards, relax on the beautiful fine white sand beach and soak up some sun – you may spot some iguanas doing the same.

*Surfing lesson*  
(\$120 USD per person)

Learn how to find and ride the waves with surfing lessons from local experts. Enjoy the fresh sea air and try to spot local marine life while enjoying the waters.

### Included meal/s Breakfast

Day 7 highlight: Tortuga Bay



Day 8 | 10 May

## Santa Cruz Island to Quito

Say farewell to the Galápagos Islands!

As you leave the islands behind, reflect on the incredible wildlife encounters and natural beauty experienced throughout the journey.

Upon arrival in Quito, enjoy a free night to explore the local sites and flavours.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast

**Hotel** Hotel Eugenia or equivalent

Day 9 | 11 May

## Quito

Spend a full day exploring the best of Quito starting in the historic Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit key landmarks including the Basilica del Voto Nacional, La Compañía Church, San Francisco Square and Plaza Grande. Then, take in sweeping views of the city from El Panecillo, home to the iconic Virgin of Quito statue.

In the afternoon, travel just 25 km (16 miles) north to the Middle of the World, where you can stand on the equator with one foot in each hemisphere and explore engaging exhibits on geography and local culture.

**Included meal/s** Breakfast

**Hotel** Hotel Eugenia or equivalent

Day 10 | 12 May

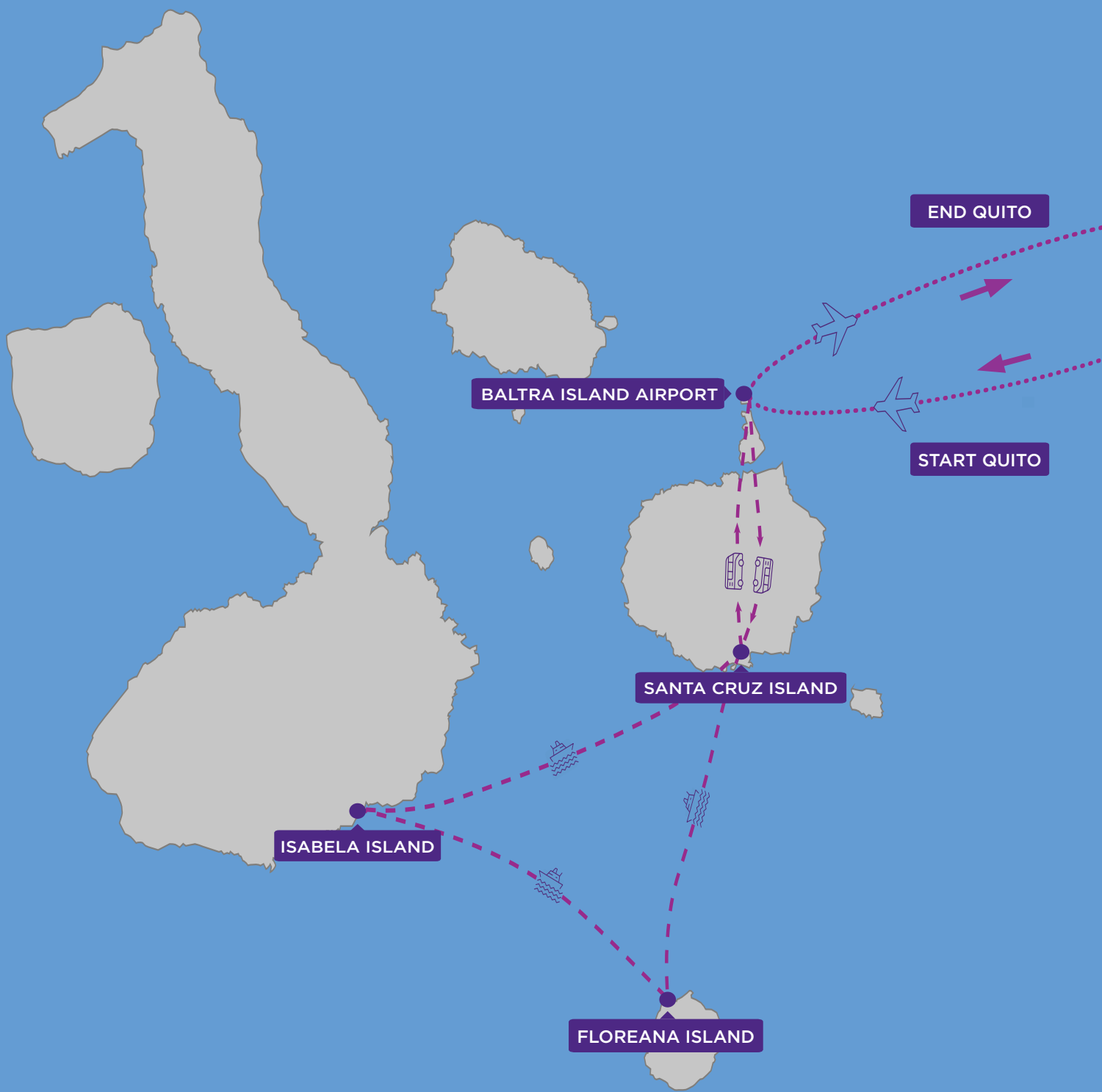
## Quito

Your adventure comes to an end today, and you are free to depart at any time.

Take a final moment to enjoy the surroundings before



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