

The BIG 15!

With so much diversity, who and what should be on your Galápagos must-see list? The Big 15 includes the most iconic wildlife in the archipelago. And, on our itinerary, there are opportunities to see a whopping 12 of them!



- Galápagos giant tortoise**—the largest living tortoise species can live to well over 100 years
- Blue-footed booby**—altered by how much they eat, their blue hued feet make them more—or less—attractive to mates
- Nazca booby**—these orange-beaked boobies are hot-headed, often violently competing for nesting sites
- Waved Albatross**—the largest birds in the archipelago, their wingspans can reach over 8 feet
- Galápagos penguin**—of the penguin species, this is the second smallest, the rarest, and the only one to live on the equator
- Flightless cormorant**—flying evolved away, and diving prowess was enhanced; they plunge 33-45 feet to fish
- Red-footed booby**—only found on a few islands, they are the most numerous and elusive booby species
- American flamingo**—like baleen whales, flamingos filter-feed, sifting food through small plates in their mandibles
- Galápagos sea lion**—these small, excellent divers have a playful attitude often “barking” a welcome to visitors
- Great & Magnificent frigatebirds**—the two species coexist amiably; both have large, balloon-like red gular sacks
- Galápagos hawk**—like the jaguar or wolf, they’re the apex predator of the islands; only 150 breeding pairs exist today
- Galápagos fur seal**—a relatively recent arrival, they hunt fish and squid 200-330 feet below the surface
- Land iguana**—weighing up to 30lbs, they fight, aggressively chase, and change skin color to court potential mates
- Marine iguana**—can live to around 40 years, and are found on all the Galápagos Islands, but nowhere else
- Santa Fe land iguana**—found only on their namesake island, they subsist primarily on prickly pear cactus

In the Galápagos, wildlife is unafraid of the human presence and chances are high for ticking off 12 of the Big 15. Some species make their homes on only one or a few islands, like flamingos on Isla Floreana, or Santa Cruz, where the tortoises roam. Others can be seen in multiple locations, like the zippy penguin found on Islas Floreana, Fernandina, and Isabela. And many islands are home to multiple species—large Isla Isabela offers variable landscape for frigatebirds, hawks, land and marine iguanas, giant tortoises, fur seals and sea lions, and the endearing Blue-footed booby. With the exception of the Waved Albatross, Santa Fe land iguana, and Red-footed booby, **get ready to check the big ones off your list!**



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