

Are you planning on taking a "Last Minute" Galapagos Cruise?

Here are some things you should know about finding and securing a Last Minute Cruise in the Galapagos Islands.

Buying a Last Minute Cruise is a great way to save money on your Galapagos cruise. Unfortunately many people think if they wait until the very last moment they are going to save hundreds of dollars on their Galapagos cruise. This is somewhat of a myth.

Can you save money by buying a Last Minute cruise?

The answer is YES, but you do need to have a plan of action of your own to be prepared to secure and make this purchase.

Walking into a travel agency and wanting to leave the next day is more likely to be impossible and possibly more expensive; not to mention you may be buying a cruise that nobody else wanted due to a poor itinerary or the general conditions and accommodations of the ship.

The Cheapest Price is not necessarily in your best interest. There is a reason why the price is cheap.

Let me explain:

1. What is a Last Minute Cruise?

About 2 weeks or less before a ship begins its cruise, the Last Minute prices become available. In an effort to sell any spaces aboard the ship that may be available the ship's owners will discount the price. These last minute prices are announced directly to the travel agencies in Ecuador.

2. Does this mean you don't have to plan out a cruise in advance?

NO. Planning is essential! It would be very beneficial for you to have some planning of what you expect from your cruise, even if it is just a week away from when you want to go.

- a. The reason you want to plan is because you will never know when it is going to be busy or slow in the Galapagos. Often in what is considered Low Season it is very busy due to the large number of other bargain hunters traveling to the Galapagos during time of the year. Ships often become fully booked 1 or 2 weeks in advance during this time of the year.
- b. Consequently waiting until the very last moment in hopes that prices will drop even lower is a very bad plan. While you are waiting and hoping for something that hasn't happened, and is not likely to occur; somebody else will see the same good deal and act on it. Then the spaces you were wanting became sold to someone else.
- c. All cruise ships and itineraries are not the same! It is true that all the ships will be visiting only locations designated by Galapagos National Park and ships of all classes will be visiting these locations, but many of the destinations are not the same in the quality of the experience, sights, and activities. Some itineraries will

difficult to check on availability both on the ship and flight tickets. It will be to your advantage if you are flexible with your travel dates to the Galapagos.

- c. Here in Ecuador some banks have larger maximum amounts which can be withdraw from the ATM; also, depending on your bank at home and your daily withdrawal amount, you may be able to have several withdraws from the ATM in one day. Some banks in Ecuador will allow you to take a cash advance on credit card (not debit). It is always best to communicate with your bank about withdrawing larger than normal amounts of money here in Ecuador for purchasing a Galapagos cruise.
- d. Banks in Ecuador are not usually open on Saturday or Sundays. Only the ATMs will be available for getting money. So if you are showing up on Saturday or Sunday and hoping to leave the next day without a cruise organized with a travel agency, it is most likely not going to happen.

In conclusion:

You need to think about how much time you have to spend in the Galapagos and plan accordingly. A good Travel Agency can save you hours of research on the internet and the headache of running around trying to save a dollar. You certainly do not want to fly to the islands hoping to find something great and ending up with a not-so-special Galapagos trip. The agent should be able to explain the differences between itineraries, ships, and included services. Also they should find what is right for you and your needs. I would advise speaking with someone who sells numerous ships and not just their company's ships.

Too often, people think they can just go to the Galapagos and speak directly with the captain of the ship and get a great deal. The reality is the captain or crew members do not have the authority to sell cruises and could lose their job for doing such a thing. Only the owners, management companies, or travel agencies can sell you.

The Galapagos is a very special place. With this said, it does have a cost in going there; it cannot truly be done on a shoe-string. As stated before, the islands are 97% national park. What this means is that you cannot just go anywhere you like, and the places you can go on your own are limited. In order to preserve the Galapagos the national park and the government have implemented a system which controls the access to the islands in way that minimizes the human impact on these unique islands. A cruise is the best way to truly appreciate the Galapagos Islands and going to places where nobody lives and the animal experiences are unbelievable. This is what you want from the Galapagos. You will not find these places and experiences just going out there on your own. Day tours only go to the most visited places and do not go to the majority of the locations a cruise will take you. I highly encourage you to seek out the Last Minute Deals to save money. But, do it wisely and be prepared to buy that deal when you see it. I hope you found this useful.

Good Luck,

EE Doc. Boswell