

Sustainable Destination Award Good Practice Story

Galapagos Islands Destination Sustainability Success Story

The Galapagos Islands Destination consists of the Province of Galapagos, the Galapagos National Park, and all Municipalities and Islands within the Province of Galapagos, including Santa Cruz, Isabela, San Cristobal and Floreana. It also includes the surrounding Galapagos Marine Reserve.

Galapagos Vision:

As established in the new model of ecotourism adopted since 2011, the vision for the destination is: Galapagos, a World Heritage Site, is the most important ecotourism destination in the world, thanks to a model of sustainable tourism development, the guarantee of the conservation of the environment, the full satisfaction of the visitor and the Good Living of the community. Tourism in the Galapagos Islands is under the "Ecotourism Model" approach, which means all tourism activities should ensure:

- • Maximization of local participation and equal distribution of benefits, and
- • Conservation on natural resources Shared responsibility between stakeholders.

Galapagos Tourism Plan and Sustainability Initiatives

Galapagos Board (Plano del Consejo de Gobierno de Galapagos) is the sustainability coordinator. This Board is established under the Galapagos Special Law (LOREG). Within its activities, this Board is in charge of generating the Galapagos Sustainable Plan and the policies to accomplish it (Art. 9, 10, 11). In relation to tourism activities, the Galapagos Tourism Board (Comité Provincial de Turismo) is a multi-stakeholder board that works toward sustainability in tourism, as indicated in the Galapagos Special Law Norm (Reglamento de la ley). This norm establishes the creation of this board. Art. 61 LOREG establishes all tourism in the province must be inside the concept of sustainability.

Since 2010, a new model of ecotourism was established. This model has 4 components: a) The Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG), b) strengthening governance, c) reengineering the destination, and d) market positioning. See the Nuevo Modelo de turismo. In addition, as a planning tool, the destination has a Sustainable Development Plan and Land Use Planning 2015- 2020 to ensure the conservation of the Archipelago.

First produced by Fundación Natura and the World Wildlife Fund in 1996, the Galapagos Report was created as a tool to share both local knowledge and directed research with the stakeholders in the regional, national, and international communities working for the benefit of the Islands. In 2006, Galapagos Conservancy assumed publication of the Galapagos Report and expanded its content to include social and biophysical sciences, alongside topics in biodiversity conservation. The purpose of the Galapagos Report is to provide all Galapagos stakeholders — decision-makers, scientists, natural resource managers, and the general public — with up-to-date information, analyses, and recommendations on a variety of issues that may inform policy and management. The 2017-2018 Galapagos Report provides extensive information on sustainability initiatives and successes in the Galapagos Islands, and is located at the website <https://www.galapagosreport.org/>.

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One successful sustainability model is the collaborative Floreana Community Center (CECFOR), which is documented in the 2017-2018 Galapagos Report. CECFLOR is a socioeconomic development model based on community tourism and collaborative management of protected areas. At the time of its inception in 2010, there were planning challenges Members of CECFLOR work together to offer tourism-related services and activities with focus on lodging. Transportation services are managed according to a prepared itinerary for the tourists. CECFLOR provided the small community of Floreana the opportunity to collaborate directly in the management of Galapagos protected areas. CECFLOR also provides stepping stones for other smaller communities to get involved. In turn, the Floreana community recognizes the collective responsibility associated with its cooperative agreement with the Park.

CECFLOR stands as good example of a model that bridges the gap between the local community and National Authority. The CECFLOR model has caught the attention of international organizations such as World Wildlife Fund (WWF). WWF has worked with the Floreana community on CECFLOR and related initiatives since 2012, first by supporting tourism planning and then by strengthening capacity in sustainable and collaborative management of local resources.

The Galapagos Tourism Plan is under the Galapagos Plan in the process of being updated. The prior version is available in the file (Resumen Educomunicativo). Besides this document, Galapagos adopted an Ecotourism model as the tourism development plan. The Galapagos Plan has been constructed with a participatory basis. All Galapagos' tourism activities are under the SIMAVIS (Sistema de Manejo de Visitantes), which is strictly applied by the National Park and monitored by the Park and the Observatory of Tourism. The Galapagos Tourism Plan relies on funding from visitors' entrance fees. The mechanism is explained in Galapagos Special Law Chapter III, and mechanism enables financial viability and funding of the action plan. The Observatory of Tourism of Galapagos and the Galapagos National Park are in charge of monitoring tourism and sustainability in the Galapagos Islands. Water and energy consumption, waste management and urban development indicators are kept at the municipal level, and each municipality has a sustainability plan.

Governance

To date, Galapagos has a specific legal framework for the islands where in the first articles it is established that sustainable development is the only framework for all types of activities in the islands. The Galapagos Plan which is the main planning document for the islands, is framed within the special law of the Galapagos, establishing sustainable development as a fundamental aspect of all activities, with 97% of the Galapagos land territory under the National Park Management Plan. At municipality level: each county has a sustainability department for planning and executing actions. At the provincial level, the Galapagos National Park is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for the administration and management of the protected areas of Galapagos.

The Galapagos Government Council is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for planning and the administration of the province. The Galapagos National Park is charged of the management of the tourism and the public use within the protected areas. Both institutions implement the Galapagos Plan and the National Park Management Plan. In accordance with the ecotourism model established since 2010, there is the Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG).

The TOG is a technical tool designed to generate tourism information to be used in planning and managing tourism at both local and regional levels.

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The Ecuadorian government finances all executive institutions in Galapagos. In addition to this, a visitor fee is charged to every tourist. The fee (typically US\$ 100 for foreign visitors and US\$6 for locals), is designated: 50% to National Park activities, 25% to Government Council activities (under the Galapagos Plan) and 25% to Municipalities.

The Province of Galapagos Islands has the Galapagos Tourism Board (Comité Provincial de Turismo), whose members include: representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Galapagos National Park Service (GNPS), CGREG, and the National Secretary of Planning and Development (SENPLADES); a representative from each Galapagos municipality; a delegate for all of the Galapagos parishes, and a delegate from the private sector. The Committee, which provides recommendations to the CGREG regarding decision-making, public policy, and regulations for the development of ecotourism in the Galapagos Islands.

The Galapagos Board (Plano del Consejo de Gobierno), is intended to work as a multi stakeholder process where private actors can participate through the Chamber of Tourism or as individuals. The private sector has contributed for the sustainability of the destination through the Best Practices Ecotourism Campaign in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, the Municipalities, and the Galapagos National Park. The Best Practices include energy saving, local consumption, water management, and plastic waste reduction in hotels, restaurants, and tourism operators. Since 2016, this process is strengthened with the implementation of the International Certification Tour Cert, which is based on a sustainable business management system for tourism operations.

Select Tourism and Travel Awards

UNESCO recognised the Galapagos Islands in 1978 as a World Heritage Site. UNESCO recognised the Galapagos Islands in 1985 as a Biosphere Reserve. UNESCO extended the Biosphere Reserve to the marine portion of the Galapagos Islands in 2001. The Darwin and Wolf Islands, the northern most islands, were declared Marine Sanctuary by Ecuadorian government in 2016. The Renewable Energy Resources for the Galapagos Islands (ENERGAL) project was judged the Best Off-Grid Project in the Multilateral/ International Organizations category by Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) in 2017. Santa Cruz Island was named Top 100 Sustainable Tourism Destination in 2017. On December 3, 2018, the Galapagos Island was celebrated at the UNESCO Head Quarters for the 40th Anniversary of their inclusion in the World Heritage List in 1978. Finally, the Galapagos Ecological Airport was awarded the LEED GOLD certification by the USGPC on November 20, 2014, due to its design and construction, strategies and environmental characteristics.

Additionally, the World Travel Awards have recognized the Galapagos Islands as:

- South America's Leading Beach Destination 2019
- South America's Leading Beach Destination 2018
- World's Leading Beach Destination 2017
- South America's Leading Beach Destination 2017
- South America's Leading Green Destination 2012
- South America's Leading Dive Destination 2007