

Trip Report — Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands II 2026

July 11-21, 2026 with Willy Perez



A classic picture from the Galápagos, taken by our guide, Willy Perez: an Española Lava Lizard watching a Waved Albatross. We came across these stunning creatures several times during our hike at Punta Suárez.

Going back to the Galapagos Islands, even for guides, is a privilege. No matter how many times you have been there, it is always special and this second tour of the year was no exception. We started in Quito taking a direct flight to Baltra Island where we met Ely, our Galapagos guide and after a short bus transfer we embarked into the Nemo III which was our home for a week. Our first navigation was short and we visited North Seymour in the afternoon. It was a great taste of what we had coming for the following days. Here we came across our first Swallow-tailed Gull, the stunning Blue-footed Booby and the two species of Frigatebirds that occur in the islands. During the week, we visited all the important places to fill up our list of endemics, but also saw special sites for geology, natural and human history.



Gardner Bay was one of the most iconic white sandy beaches of our trip. We really enjoyed walking alongside Sea Lions and Española Mockingbirds. Photo by Willy Perez.

We spent a full day in Genovesa, where in the morning, we witnessed the biggest colony of Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels in the archipelago and a Short-eared Owl hunting them. Also, we had our first challenge trying to identify some of the Darwin finches, but I have to say that we were lucky, because some of them were side by side so we could compare them. The Large Ground-Finch was the easiest one, with its gigantic beak. After an overnight navigation, we woke up at the northern part of Isabela, where we had our first sight of the two flightless birds in the Galapagos, Flightless Cormorant and the Galapagos Penguin. After a pleasant navigation along the Bolivar Canal, we visited Fernandina, which is the youngest island in the Archipelago, and there we saw the largest Marine Iguanas of all. The next morning we were anchored in Puerto Villamil in the south of Isabela, and we went to visit the highlands. Our first cultural experience was meeting Pablo, our driver who took us in his special open bus (the chicken truck). This morning the agenda was to find some of the elusive birds, Paint-billed Crike, Galapagos Rail and Brujo Flycatcher. We saw them very well, even the difficult Galapagos Rail that came to the open. In the afternoon we went to

the wetlands and saw American Flamingos and other water birds, followed by a COCO LOCO! in the local bar... (a local cocktail that was a killer).



The Galápagos Penguin is the only penguin found in the Northern Hemisphere. Despite its low population, it is not too difficult to find them resting on the rocks, as shown in this photo by Willy Perez.

The next island was Floreana, where we disembarked in the tiny town of Velasco Ibarra, and we drove up to the highlands to look for one of the most critically endangered species on the tour, Medium Tree-Finch. A short walk put us in the right place where we came across a male that was singing and gave us nice views. This area was also very good for Dark-billed Cuckoo, and Ely shared with us a lot of the history of this incredible island. Back to the boat, we did a short navigation towards Champion islet where we saw another endemic, the Floreana Mockingbird. Late in the afternoon we did a wet landing and visited Punta Cormorant (no cormorants there) but it was great to see more American Flamingos, and after reviewing some photos, there was one single Chilean in the group.



The happy group with a Giant Marine Iguana and the Nemo III in the background. Photo by Willy Perez.

Espanola was our next island and it was the same schedule, with a navigation overnight, we were just in front of a pristine white sandy beach, Bahia Gardner, where we went and found our first Espanola Mockingbirds, Espanola Ground-Finch, Gray Warbler-Finch and many Galapagos Sea Lions. The excitement was building up during the morning because Espanola is the place where the Waved Albatrosses nest, so the expectations were big and everyone wanted to go to see them. After lunch we disembarked in Punta Suarez, and did a hard but very incredible hike to see the Albatrosses displaying, and there were many of them doing their incredible courtship. The site was covered with other birds, too: Red-billed Tropicbirds, Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies, Galapagos Hawk, Swallow-tailed Gulls and some finches. After a very exciting afternoon, we started to navigate towards San Cristobal island where we spent the night in the port of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno.



The Vegetarian Finch is the largest of Darwin's finches, and we had great views of some of them, even watching them eat leaves. Here, our guide Willy Perez got a great shot of one during our visit to Santa Cruz Island.

After an early breakfast, we took a bus to the foothills of the island and our first stop was the cemetery, where we saw another endemic, the San Cristobal Mockingbird. We wanted to see a Woodpecker Finch but they were not present there, so we went higher in elevation. After some work eventually we found one of them that gave us fantastic views. With the mission accomplished we went back to town and people had time to do some shopping and relax in town.

With lunch along the way, our next destination was Santa Fe island, and after throwing the anchor down in a beautiful bay, we did the usual walk. Here we saw the endemic Santa Fe Land Iguana, Common Cactus-Finch, and again Galapagos Hawk and many Galapagos Mockingbirds. Tonight being our last night in the Nemo III, we had our farewell dinner and cocktail.



Our visit to Genovesa Island was one of the highlights of the trip. Here we are at the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony. Photo by Willy Perez.

We woke up the last morning on the boat in the Itabaca Canal, and we left the boat after breakfast, said goodbye to the crew, and got a bus to go to the highland of Santa Cruz. Our first stop was to find a Vegetarian Finch and after a few minutes we saw one eating leaves so it was a perfect sighting. We were just missing a couple of targets, so we put some emphasis on them. Before lunch we managed to see American Barn Owl and Large Tree-Finch. At this point we had achieved our wish list with the birds, so we really enjoyed watching the Giant Tortoises, and had a cup of coffee. Tonight we were staying in the biggest town of the Galapagos, Puerto Ayora, and after lunch we managed to squeeze in a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station before dinner.



The Flightless Cormorant is a unique species. It has completely lost the ability to fly and is the only flightless cormorant in the world. Photo by Willy Perez.

The time flew by and suddenly the last day came. We took our flight to Quito, where we had our farewell dinner and we talked about how wonderful the trip was. I have to admit that it was just fantastic. Everything worked well despite a one hour delayed flight the first day. The Nemo III was perfect for what we needed and the crew took great care of us. Stalin the chef provided us with incredible food and managed to supply some special food restrictions to perfection. Ely, our Galapagos guide, did a great job sharing all her knowledge of the islands. Being the time for the World Cup, we even managed to see some of the games and support Spain to be champions of the tournament. Also during the week we did several outings for snorkeling, where we saw a lot of stunning tropical fish, many sea turtles and marine iguanas feeding on algae.

This was one of the most diverse groups of people that I have ever had, in terms of different necessities, ages, food and even the list of birds that some of you needed to see. Thank you to you all! Everything worked out brilliantly because you people were fantastic and got on really well together, so I really appreciate that and I hope that we can do more seriously fun birding.

Other Wildlife in the tour.

Common Dolphin

Galapagos Sea Lion

Galapagos fur Seal

House Mouse

Marine Iguan

Galapagos Land Iguana

Santa Fe Land Iguana

Mourning Gecko

Santa Cruz, Espanola, Floreana, San Cristobal, Sant Fe and Isabela, Lava
Lizards

Green Sea Turtle

Santa Cruz Giant Tortoise

Davil Ray

Spotted Eagle Ray

Diamond Sting Ray

White tipped reef Shark

Sally Light Foot Crab

Hermit Crab

Blue and Monarch Butterflies.

Painted Locus

Mola Mola

Mexican Hogfish

Blue Chin Parrotfish

Black Striped Salema

Moorish Idol

Razor Surgeon Fish

King Angelfish

Panamic Sergeant Major

Guineafowl Puffer

Giant Damselfish

Cortez Rainbow Wrasse

Harlequin Wrasse

Dusky Sea Chub

Yellow Tailed Mullet

Bluechin Parrotfish
Bicolour Parrotfish
Bullseyes Puffer
Panamic Fanged Blenny
Blacktip Cardinalfish
Bluespotted Cornetfish
Flying Fish.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

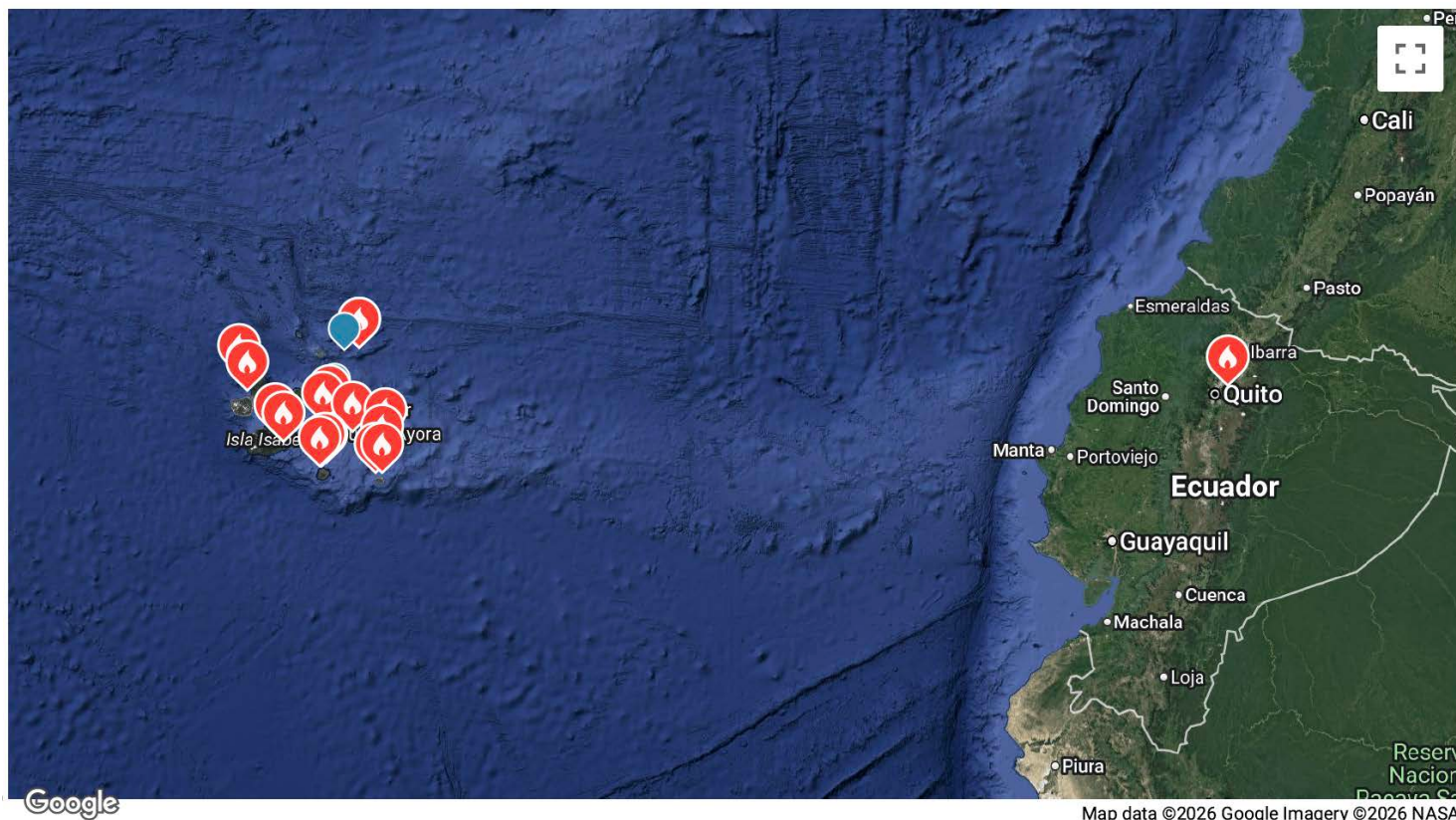
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-- Abrazos from Dorset, Willy

Field Guides Birding Tours, Ecuador Galapagos 2026b (With Willy Perez)

12 – 19 Jul 2026 (8 days) Link-only



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 Ecuador

Galápagos | Pichincha

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For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

 78

 24

 3

[Species Observed](#)[Checklists](#)[Species with Photos](#)LIFERS  2  3 

Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

14	White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>	  3
36	Galapagos Dove	<i>Zenaida galapagoensis</i>	  9
1	Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>	  1
38	Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i> *	  11
4	Dark-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus melacoryphus</i>	  3
1	Sparkling Violetear	<i>Colibri coruscans</i>	  1
1	Black-tailed Trainbearer	<i>Lesbia victoriae</i>	  1
1	Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>	  1
1	Paint-billed Crake	<i>Mustelirallus erythrops</i>	  1
7	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>	  3
2	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>	  1
2	Galapagos Rail	<i>Laterallus spilonota</i>	  1
8	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	  2
2	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>	  1
2	Hudsonian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>	  2
1	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i> 	  1
2	Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>	  2
12	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	  3
70	Swallow-tailed Gull	<i>Creagrus furcatus</i>	  7
11	Lava Gull	<i>Leucophaeus fuliginosus</i>	  5
66	Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	  6

1	Chilean Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus chilensis</i>		▶  1  1
26	American Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>		▶  3
52	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>		▶  6
8	Galapagos Penguin	<i>Spheniscus mendiculus</i>		▶  3
4	Waved Albatross	<i>Phoebastria irrorata</i>		▶  3
34	Elliot's Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanites gracilis</i>		▶  10
4	White-faced Storm-Petrel	<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>		▶  1
4	Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	<i>Hydrobates castro</i>		▶  2
1018	Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel	<i>Hydrobates tethys</i>		▶  6
11	Galapagos Petrel	<i>Pterodroma phaeopygia</i>		▶  3
72	Galapagos Shearwater	<i>Puffinus subalaris</i>		▶  10
71	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>		▶  13
33	Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>		▶  4
48	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>		▶  3
82	Nazca Booby	<i>Sula granti</i>		▶  10
69	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>		▶  9
18	Flightless Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum harrisi</i>		▶  3
4	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>		▶  3
2	Lava Heron	<i>Butorides sundevalli</i>		▶  2
43	Western Cattle-Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		▶  5
2	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>		▶  2
31	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>		▶  9
5	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>		▶  1
9	Galapagos Hawk	<i>Buteo galapagoensis</i>		▶  5

1	American Barn Owl	<i>Tyto furcata</i>	▶  1
2	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	▶  1
5	Brujo Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus nanus</i>	▶  2
8	Galapagos Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus magnirostris</i>	▶  4
1	Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>	▶  1
2	Blue-and-white Swallow	<i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i>	▶  1
24	Galapagos Mockingbird	<i>Mimus parvulus</i>	▶  5
3	Floreana Mockingbird	<i>Mimus trifasciatus</i>	▶  1
16	Española Mockingbird	<i>Mimus macdonaldi</i>	▶  2
4	San Cristobal Mockingbird	<i>Mimus melanotis</i>	▶  1
2	Great Thrush	<i>Turdus fuscater</i>	▶  1
1	Golden-rumped Euphonia	<i>Chlorophonia cyanocephala</i>	▶  1
1	Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	▶  1
49	Mangrove Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶  14
2	Blue-and-yellow Tanager	<i>Rauenia bonariensis</i>	▶  1
2	Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>	▶  1
1	Scrub Tanager	<i>Stilpnia vitriolina</i>	▶  1
1	Rusty Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa sittoides</i>	▶  1
2	Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>	▶  1
9	Green Warbler-Finch	<i>Certhidea olivacea</i>	▶  3
16	Gray Warbler-Finch	<i>Certhidea fusca</i>	▶  4
3	Vegetarian Finch	<i>Platypiza crassirostris</i>	▶  1
5	Woodpecker Finch	<i>Camarhynchus pallidus</i>	▶  3

2	Large Tree-Finch	<i>Camarhynchus psittacula</i>	▶  1
1	Medium Tree-Finch	<i>Camarhynchus pauper</i>	▶  1
19	Small Tree-Finch	<i>Camarhynchus parvulus</i>	▶  6
36	Small Ground-Finch	<i>Geospiza fuliginosa</i>	▶  13
6	Large Ground-Finch	<i>Geospiza magnirostris</i>	▶  2
12	Genovesa Ground-Finch	<i>Geospiza acutirostris</i>	▶  2
3	Common Cactus-Finch	<i>Geospiza scandens</i> 	▶  1  2
6	Medium Ground-Finch	<i>Geospiza fortis</i>	▶  3
8	Española Ground-Finch	<i>Geospiza conirostris</i> 	▶  1  2
8	Genovesa Cactus-Finch	<i>Geospiza propinqua</i>	▶  2