

FUN FACTS

Annexation to Ecuador: 1832

Government Declares Islands
a National Park: 1959

Tourism Revenue from the
Islands (2008): \$200 Million

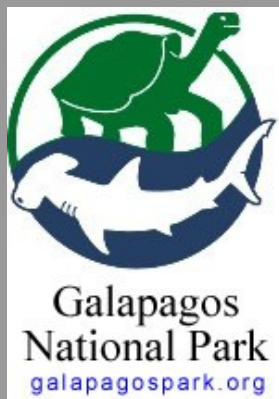
Park Entrance Fee: \$100

Interest Groups in the Galapagos



Who We Are, What We Want, and Why We Are Important

The Government of Ecuador



While the islands have belong to the Republic of Ecuador since 1832, little attention was need until tourism and the population of the islands began increasing during the 20th Century. With over 180,000 people visiting the islands each year, the economy of Ecuador is largely affected by the revenue generated by tourists coming to Ecuador to visit the islands. We are responsible for protecting the islands, supporting the infrastructure needed for tourism, assisting with scientific research and conservation, and supporting our resident citizens (the majority of which support themselves through tourism).

The Galapagos National Park Service (GNPS) is our primary governing institution that oversees the operation of the park. The number of tourists entering the islands every week is limited and the park entrance fee of \$100 is largely used for conservation. Visitors are restricted to official visitors sites and accompanied by certified guides that support the enforcement of park rules.

In order to support sustainable development, the number of permanent residents is restricted, but growing out of necessity to support increased tourism. Regulations are in affect that require recycling, and solar energy and desalination projects are underway. New regulations will also come into affect soon requiring tour boat operators to filter their own waste water and diversity their travel itineraries to decrease foot traffic in some areas.

However, the islands are currently experiencing some serious issues, including how to process all the waste generated in the islands and providing enough water for residents. Conservationists and other groups have suggested that the number of tourists and/or residents many require future limits or reductions.



FUN FACTS

Population on the Islands: 26,000

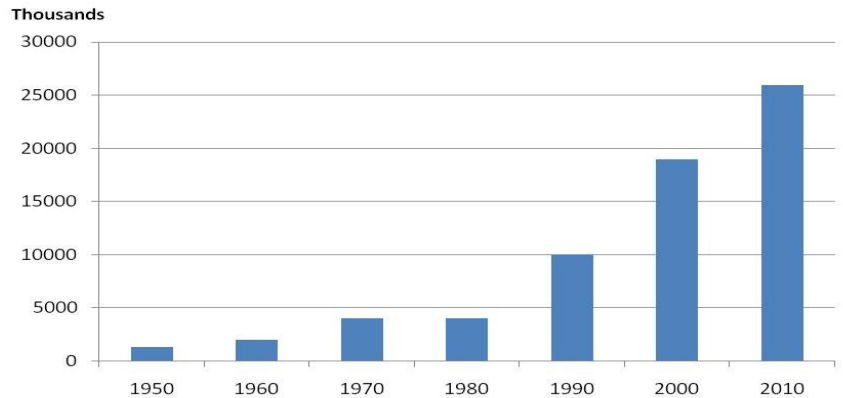
Year of 1st Permanent Resident: 1807

Number of Inhabited Islands: 5

Largest City: Puerto Ayora, Isla Santa Cruz

Interest Groups in the Galapagos

Galapagos Population: 1950-2010



Who We Are, What We Want, and Why We Are Important

Residents of the Galapagos

Just 50 ago, barely 1,000 people called the Galapagos home. Currently, there are over 26,000 people living on the islands. Some of us are fisherman, farmers, or workers for the government or a non-government organization. However, most of us have jobs that are one way or another connected to tourism. These job can include working on tour boats, running local businesses, and working at some of the hotels in the islands.



The population of the Galapagos is increasing at a rate of almost 10% in order to provide the workers needed to support the growing number of tourists that visit the islands. Many of have better jobs and a higher standard of living then we would on the mainland. Most of us are here legally, but in 2008 over 1000 Ecuadorian nationals without permits to be here were forced to leave. Another 2000 were given a year to move back to the mainland.



The increase in population and accompanying urban growth, has created controversy and groups that are against so many of us living in the islands. Air pollution caused by cars, waste removal, and water scarcity are problems we are having to face. We are also concerned with the cost of living on the islands, which is high since most things must be brought in from the mainland. Some of us wish we had more land to farm on or that the government would provide subsidized food. Overall, most of us desire a way to live in the islands without harming the environment, which makes the Galapagos so unique and important.

FUN FACTS

Creation of Marine Reserve:
1986

Marine Reserve Size: 82,642
Miles

Authorized Fishermen:
Approximately 1000

Interest Groups in the Galapagos



Who We Are, What We Want, and Why We Are Important

The marine life surrounding the Galapagos Islands is some of the richest and most bio-diverse in the world. The sea life ranges from algae and small shrimps all the way to the largest water mammals in the world—whales! Of the 26,000 people living in the islands, a large portion of us work and take advantage of the abundance of wildlife in the Galapagos waters.

Fishing Groups

Fishing is the second largest industry among the inhabitants and a crucial one at that. When migrants cannot find work in tourism, they often turn to fishing. There are several types of fishing as well.

There are large commercial fishing vessels (both Ecuadorian and foreign) that seek to reap the benefits of the rich waters. However, the Ecuadorian government, with the creation of the marine and whale reserve, has substantially limited the amount of commercial fishing around the islands. Many vessels still attempt to fish the waters, even within the reserve, illegally, which can have a huge impact on the diverse wildlife.

There are also artisanal fisherman, who are usually locals living on the island and who are small scale commercial or subsistence fishermen. Yet even these fishermen are held to strict seasonal restrictions and small areas where they can fish. They also have been known to fish out of season and even poach within protected waters.

“Artisanal vivencial fishing” has become a compromise between the Ecuadorian government and fishermen. This type of catch-and-release fishing “provides local fishermen with a tourist-based, sustainable alternative to traditional commercial fishing, with significantly reduced pressure on local species.” This type of fishing is allowed within the reserve, but only under strict control and supervision of the reserve authorities.

There are still many issues between the government of Ecuador and the fishermen of the Galapagos Islands. The fishermen feel they should be allowed to do more fishing, be given more areas to fish in, and more time to fish in order to make more money and the government of Ecuador needs to protect the islands’ wildlife.



FUN FACTS

Main Conservation

Organizations:

Charles Darwin Foundation

Galapagos Coalition

Galapagos Conservation Trust

Size of Protected Land: 95% of the Islands

Interest Groups in the Galapagos



Who We Are, What We Want, and Why We Are Important

Environmental Groups

The Galapagos Islands were discovered in 1535. Since that day, humans and the visitors to the islands have taken advantage of the natural resources offered by the islands. Beginning in 1960, the Ecuadorian government and conservation groups have begun to develop legislation and laws to protect the wildlife within the islands.

The two dominant forms of employment for the inhabitants of the islands are tourism and fishing and each has some impact on the wildlife of the islands. It is the job of the conservation groups present in the Galapagos to monitor and protect the islands from these influences.

In 1998, conservation groups successfully pushed for the passage of the Galapagos Special Law, which were numerous protective measures aimed at limiting environmental impact on the islands. These measures have helped to protect Galapagos wildlife over the years. In 2007, after President Rafael Correa and the Charles Darwin Foundation declared the Galapagos Islands to be in a state of crisis, serious ideas were pushed forth to limit the number of tourists that visited the islands. Many of these are still circulating within the government.

There is still tension between conservation groups and local, and foreign, fishing industries as well. While conservation groups are pushing for restrictions to be sustained or expanded, fishing groups are calling for more rights and less restrictions. The tourist industry is currently working with conservation groups to help protect the wildlife on which they base their livelihood. Perhaps one day we may come to a peaceful solution that benefits all.



FUN FACTS

Number of Islanders Who Work in Tourism: More than 13,000 (50%)

Estimated Number of Illegal Workers in Tourism Industry: Up to 30,000

Number of Tourist Who Visit the Islands: 180,000 a Year

Interest Groups in the Galapagos



Who We Are, What We Want, and Why We Are Important

Tour Operators

Tourism has been a major part of the Galapagos Islands for decades now. It is a major form of employment for local residents and is also a major source of revenue for the national Ecuadorian government, with yearly revenue of more than \$200,000,000.

While tourism has had positive impacts on our local employment and economy, it has also been behind major pushes to protect the islands and their surrounding waters. As tour guides, we want the islands ecosystems to stay intact and healthy because without them, tour guides would be out of a job. Who wants to see waste and filth on an island without any animals?

However, while the tourist industry has been a part of conservation, it has also been a part of the degradation of the islands as well. With the increased number of visitors to the islands each year, the amount of interaction between Galapagos wildlife and humans has also increased and is inevitable. Furthermore, the arrival of more tourists means an increase of tourist activities and facilities (i.e. clubs, restaurants, etc.) in the major cities of the islands, which, in turn, leads to more stress and waste for the surrounding environments.

Ultimately, we are a part of a struggle over the Galapagos Islands. Most of us would like to still make a decent living while trying to protect the environment we have chosen to showcase to the world.

