

In 1998 Metropolitan Touring established Fundación Galápagos-Ecuador, the first ever initiative by tourism's private sector for helping the islands to preserve its fragile ecosystems. Its mission started as, and continues to be, brown issues, human impact, and waste management on the islands. If we think of a rational way of acting upon current realities of the islands, it is the presence of humans that need the most actions.

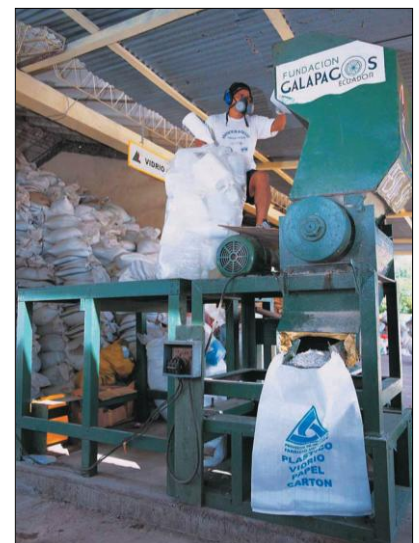
Metropolitan Touring's Fundación Galápagos-Ecuador concentrates its efforts in five aspects:

✦ **Coastal Clean-Up:** the shores of the islands become the ending trip for floating debris unfortunately discarded in the ocean hundreds of miles away. The coastal ecosystems of the Galápagos are home to many species of flora and fauna some found nowhere else on Earth. Thus, the coastal cleanup project directly benefits coastal ecosystems and its components. Mangroves, for example, retain most of floating plastics and get their subaerial roots wrapped in such debris. This prevents mangroves for dispersing effectively and grabbing onto rocky shorelines; mangroves are the feeding and nesting habitat including pelicans, mangrove finches, herons, and provide shade for other species. Sea lions can also be at risk from floating debris since their mammal curious behavior incites them to play with plastics, rubber o-rings, etc. Marine turtles feed on jelly fish and plastic bags in the water can look like potential food to them. This is how local species are affected by floating debris and how this project can directly protect them.



With local fishermen and volunteers, we collect these materials and process them at the recycling facility. So far, over 165,000 pounds (75,000 Kg) of solid debris have been collected from the islands' shores. As part of the project, fishermen receive an economic incentive allowing them to periodically stop fishing activities, but connecting them with natural resources protection. Every September we also lead local actions during the International Coastal Cleanup Day, and have become the only location where underwater cleanup is also managed. The event involves local community members in a volunteer basis.

✦ **Solid-waste Recycling:** on Santa Cruz Island, and in cooperation with the Municipality of Santa Cruz Island and the Galapagos National Park, we developed the Fabricio Valverde Center for managing solid waste. Volcanic islands like the Galápagos have a very thin layer of top soil, which means landfills store solid waste at very fast rates. The less waste is produced, the longer the lifespan of such areas. Plastics and cardboard are compacted and shipped at our own expense back to the mainland for reprocessing and remanufacturing. Also, glass is milled and then becomes material for making patio blocks that now cover parks and sidewalks on the island. As of June 2010, **4,522,221** million pounds (2,055,555 Kg) of solid waste have been already recycled at our facility, and these were never part of the local landfill. We recently launched this project in Isabela Island too.



✦ **Environmental Education and Local Student Support:** volunteers conduct a local door-to-door campaign that teaches locals the benefits of classifying and recycling garbage. Local radio and TV campaigns are also common. Additionally, local students from elementary and high school levels are invited to join our expedition voyages for a better understanding of the islands' complex ecosystems. These experiences will give them a broad perspective of the archipelago's importance, while providing them with solid background for making the right decisions. After all, those students will be in the near future the decision makers of the islands, and if they can have a broad understanding of the islands' complexities, their decisions are likely to be made from a more realistic approach to what is very important and what is truly needed. So far, in 2009 we took 66 students, and since 1998 we have taken a total of 192 local students on board our vessels. In 2010 we will take at least 60 more students.



✦ **Burned Oils:** fossil fuels represent in many ways a source of island pollution. After combustion of fossil fuels, one of the most toxic items is burned oils because diffusion of such components is virtually impossible on the islands' fragile ecosystems. Since the islands lack a local environmental facility for degrading these products the only way of eliminating the problem is by shipping these materials back to the mainland. We support the RELUSAN Initiative which includes collecting burned oils from tour vessels, fishing vessels, local machinery, electric generators, etc. Additionally, the RELUSAN Initiative also collects oil filters, bilge oily waters, batteries, and other toxic materials. After collection and classification, these materials are shipped back to the mainland via Metropolitan Touring's cargo vessel MV San Cristóbal. Upon arrival, materials are transferred to the processing environmental facility for technical disposal. So far, more than 17,000 gallons of burned oils and 6,000 Kg of oil filters have been shipped out from the islands. Before the existence of this project, the islands suffered the environmental impact of land and coastal disposal of these materials.



✦ **Galápagos Community Social Projects:** For us, the social component is a priority in sustainability. Thus, it is important to get involved with the local community, and contribute to their well being and their income generation. If we believe in the community's improvement, we must incorporate them in our business scenario. We support the local production by purchasing local supplies, as much as possible, but we additionally incorporated two local projects that provide sustainable future for the community.



First, it is the **“FUN Galapagos”**, involving a local women’s cooperative: Manos Mágicas. Women with great sewing skills, and motivated to improve their own quality of life, make Galapagos'-related rag souvenirs filled with milled plastics from our recycling centre. Sales of this merchandise support the project itself.



Second, the **“Bread for the Future”** project, where a local bakery belonging to fishermen's wives called Perla del Pacífico produces local bread. Our direct contribution to the project is by purchasing all our bread needs from them. Our ships serve Galapagos bread including brioche, ciabatta, rolls, baguette, and more. This initiative was launched by ASOGAL, the Association of Galápagos Tour Operators.



We share our contributions with our guests, as well as the islands’ realities, and a clear message on how sustainability works. This approach will make guests aware their travel choice made a difference.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Francisco Dousdebés – Environmental Affairs Manager – [fdousdebes@metropolitan-touring.com](mailto:fdousdebes@metropolitan-touring.com)

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