

SOUTHERN ISLANDS GALÁPAGOS ITINERARY

Friday to Tuesday – 5 days /4 nights
Effective from 20th January 2012



FRIDAY

Baltra – El Chato Twin Craters (Santa Cruz Island)

Arrival at Baltra Airport and transfer to the Itabaca Channel to take a ferry across to Santa Cruz Island. A 30-minute bus ride to the Highlands of Santa Cruz Island. Arrive at the famous Tortoise Reserve and witness the impressive migrations these giant reptiles must endure every year for feeding and reproduction. Santa Cruz hosts one of the largest tortoise populations in Galápagos. The enclosure is framed with lush vegetation and many unique land birds can be seen, such as the rare woodpecker finch, one of the world's few tool-using species. Lunch at a local restaurant, and then continue to Puerto Ayora.

Charles Darwin Research Station

Afternoon visit the Charles Darwin Research Station and the 'rearing in captivity' programme for the giant tortoises. Here, guests witness the efforts and results of all the field work done in the name of science. An impressive giant prickly-pear cactus forest and many land birds can be also seen. Then, a stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora allows guests to get a feel for local Galapagueño life while browsing the many handicraft and souvenir shops before embarking on Yacht Isabela II. Welcome cocktail, expedition plan for Saturday and dinner.

SATURDAY

Baroness Cove & Post Office Bay (Floreana Island)

Wet landing at the Post Office Bay to visit the historic barrel that has been serving as a post office in the archipelago for over two centuries, to learn about the human side of the islands, its early inhabitants and the adventures of pirates and whalers. Panga ride along the maze of channels on the north shore of Floreana, see the Sea Lion colonies, marine turtles in shallow waters, rays and occasionally penguins. Wet Landing at Baroness Cove and a short walk up to the observation tower to enjoy breath taking views of Floreana and its nearby islets. Snorkelling and/or kayaking is possible. Back on board for lunch

Cormorant Point (Floreana Island)

Disembark at Cormorant Point (wet landing) at an olivine-crystal beach for an easy walk that includes a brackish water lagoon where bird species like greater flamingos, pintail ducks, common stilts, herons, sandpipers, and others may be observed. This outing also includes a white-sand beach where sea turtles come out at night to nest (from December to May). The afternoon visit includes a short navigation to Champion Islet near Floreana. Fantastic snorkelling with the option of the glass bottom boat. Expedition plan for Sunday and dinner.

SUNDAY

Punta Suárez (Española (Hood) Island)

Morning outing at Punta Suárez (dry landing) for an exciting walk on lava/boulder terrain to visit its unique sea bird colonies, including waved albatrosses (April - December), Nazca boobies, blue-footed boobies, swallow-tail gulls, as well as a view of the Galápagos' famous "blow-hole". Among its land birds, the Hood island mockingbird, Galápagos hawks and doves, and three species of Darwin's finches are common highlights. Also, look for red-green-black marine iguanas. Back on board for lunch.

Gardner Bay (Española Island)

In the afternoon, disembark (wet landing) at a white coral beach for a short walk to observe the sea lions, mockingbirds, finches or enjoy the beach. There is great snorkelling in this area, paddle on kayaks or a ride aboard the glass-bottom boat. Expedition plan for Monday and dinner.

MONDAY

Punta Pitt (San Cristóbal Island)

Morning disembarkation (wet landing) on the eastern tip of the island. Punta Pitt is an eroded tuff cone; the trail that ascends from the beach provides spectacular views of the shoreline. This is the only site in the Galápagos where the three species of boobies can be found together, as well as the two frigate species, plus a colony of bachelor sea lions along the beach. After the walk, if conditions are favourable, there is a chance to swim from the beach or, for more advanced snorkelers or kayakers, off the nearby islets. Lunch on board.

Cerro Brujo (San Cristóbal Island)

A dinghy ride along the shores of tuff-stone layers takes guests to Cerro Brujo's white coralline beach (wet landing). The beach is a large expanse, great for walking, with rewarding bird watching with good views of seabirds like blue-footed boobies, brown pelicans, herons, frigate birds, and more shore birds. Also, look out for Galápagos sea lions. Highlights ashore include the Chatham (San Cristóbal) mockingbird, Chatham lava lizard; both species are endemic to this island, and seen nowhere else in the Galápagos. These are the same shores that Charles Darwin walked upon, back in September 1835, as San Cristóbal was the first island where he set foot in the Galápagos. Farewell cocktail, departure briefing and dinner.

TUESDAY

Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (San Cristóbal (Chatham) Island)

After breakfast, departure to the port and airport to take the flight back to the mainland.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Itineraries and programme are subject to change without previous notice due mainly to readjustment of the National Park policies and regulations, weather conditions, seasonal changes or safety reasons

- Dry landing: guests step from the dinghy onto rocks or a dock.
- Wet landing: as the dinghy edges onto a sandy beach, guests step into knee-deep water and wade ashore.

