



GALAPAGOS: Enchanted Isles



Blue-footed boobies

The most celebrated visitor to the Galapagos was undoubtedly Charles Darwin on board the HMS Beagle in 1835. We can now retrace his steps and make our own discoveries in the Enchanted Islands. While our discoveries may not re-write *The Origin of the Species*, what we learn will put us more in touch with what the world was like before the two-legged invasion.

Our trip begins with a two-day stay in Quito to enjoy the city's rich colonial architecture and to visit the famous Otavalo market with its characteristic crafts. Then it's a short flight to San Cristobal to board our Galapagos cruise. Our three sister ships each accommodate only twenty guests, which we think is the ideal size for cruising the Galapagos, ensuring access to the islands without compromising comfort and stability. And the experiences as we cruise between the islands are truly fantastic. We meet face to face with giant tortoises, snorkel with penguins and sea lions, hike along ancient lava tunnels and observe the courtship dance of various impressive seabirds.

We offer weekly departures; the Galapagos is truly a year-round destination but please tell us your special interest and we'll get you there at the right time. Our Quest Nature Tours offers several Galapagos Islands chartered cruises in 2009 and 2010 with our own naturalist leaders. Please view these tours on our website, or ask us to send you our Expedition Cruise brochure. We think this is a perfect family trip for parents, grandparents and young people to enjoy together. Please consult us to arrange a private charter or select the right vessel for your family trip.

SIGNATURE MOMENTS:

- Swimming with the sea lions at San Cristobal
- Getting into a zodiac at Darwin Bay
- Basking in the sun with the marine iguanas at Ferdinandia
- Climbing to the top of the volcano on Bartolome
- Finding a sally light-foot crab on Espanola

ITINERARY IN BRIEF:

- Day 1:** Arrive Quito
- Day 2:** Quito
- Day 3:** Fly to Galapagos
- Day 4:** Tower Island
- Day 5:** Ferdinandia Island
- Day 6:** Santiago Island
- Day 7:** Bartolome Island
- Day 8:** Santa Cruz Island
- Day 9:** Espanola Island
- Day 10:** San Cristobal Island. Fly to Quito
- Day 11:** Depart Quito



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS: Enchanted Isles



ITINERARY IN DETAIL:

Day 1: ARRIVE IN QUITO

Ecuador's Andean capital sits almost upon the equator, yet at such a high altitude (almost twice as high as Denver), its climate is superb —warm days, cool nights all in a setting few cities in the world can match. Most flights arrive in the early evening, so we'll get you to your hotel in the city centre and let you relax.

Overnight – Swiss Hotel, Quito



Day 2: QUITO

The Andean region north of Quito is famous for crystal lakes, traditional adobe villages, snowcapped volcanoes and bustling markets. The famous market at Otavalo with its magnificent Andean setting is one of the largest in South America. In spite of its popularity, the indigenous people continue to maintain their ethnic identity, wearing traditional blue ponchos and speaking Quichua, their native language. Here you'll find an array of native, locally-made crafts including alpaca sweaters, ponchos, Panama hats (an Ecuadorian creation despite its name), hammocks and woven tapestries.

You'll also visit Calderón, famous for its bread-dough figures, and Cotacachi with its fine leather goods. Back in Quito, walk the steep and winding cobble streets of the old town with its rich colonial architecture, churches, monasteries and museums. A host of treasures rim the majestic Plaza de la Independencia including the 19th-century Cathedral and

Presidential Palace. Built in 1605, the church of La Compañía with its ornate baroque facades is a stunning display of art and architecture — both inside and out. And don't miss the Capilla del Hombre (Chapel of Man), the former home and private museum of Oswaldo Guayasamin, a legend of Ecuadorian art, paintings, sculpture and jewelry, on permanent exhibit.

Overnight – Swiss Hotel, Quito

Meals – Breakfast & Lunch



Day 3: FLY TO GALAPAGOS

A short flight this morning takes you to Guayaquil on the coast and then onward by air to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on San Cristobal Island. Here our crew is waiting at the airport to escort you to your anchored yacht. After the welcome briefing, buffet lunch and safety drill, we set sail for Playa Ochoa where we have a wet landing. Here, we can test our snorkeling equipment and at the same time swim with a small colony of sea lions. Behind the beach, there is a tidal lagoon where bird can be spotted including the rare Chatham mockingbird. At sunset, we cruise

around Kicker Rock (Leon Dormido), a vertical tuff cone formation that abruptly juts up almost 500 feet out of the ocean. On the cliffs, we spot blue-footed boobies, masked boobies and magnificent frigate birds. This evening, the guides hold a briefing followed by the Captain's welcome cocktail.

Overnight – On Board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 4: TOWER ISLAND

We spend the entire day on Tower Island considered to be one of the most spectacular Islands in Galapagos for bird species. This morning, we have a dry landing at Prince Philip's Steps. Red-footed boobies nest here in Palo Santo trees and Nazca (formerly masked) boobies nest near the trail. In an open lava field, we find storm petrels in large numbers. If we're lucky, we will see the elusive short-eared owl. After the walk, our kayaks are available to paddle along the shoreline. Look for the beautiful red-billed tropic bird usually found in the crevices. After lunch, take a siesta or relax on deck with a book from our library.

This afternoon, we have a wet-landing on Darwin Bay, a coral sand beach where swallow-tailed and lava gulls gather near the tide pools. Enter a forest of Optuntia cactus and mangroves where colonies of great frigate birds nest. The males inflate their red-throated pouches to attract females as they fly overhead. The trail leads through a rich inter tidal zone where we find a wide diversity of wildlife. After the walk, we can swim and snorkel from the beach with sea lions in these northern warmer waters. We set sail early to motor to the western Islands during the briefing followed by dinner.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



Day 5: FERDINANDA ISLAND

This morning, we have a semi-wet landing at Punta Espinoza, Ferdinand, the youngest and most pristine Island in Galapagos. Recent lava flows formed by an active volcano stretch their way around the coast. Hundreds of marine iguanas, the largest colony in Galapagos, bask in the sun along the rugged shoreline. Observe sea lion harems with resident bulls carefully guarding their territory. Flightless Cormorants build their nest on the point and Galapagos Hawks fly overhead. After lunch, we cross the Bolivar Chanel where we often spot whales and dolphins riding the bow wave.

This afternoon, we have a dry landing at Tagus Cove, located on the western Island of Isabela Six volcanoes flowed together and formed the largest Island in Galapagos. During the walk, we discover a salt-water lagoon, a scenic overlook with a spectacular view of the ocean, lava fields and volcanic formations. Graffiti dating back to the 1800's is written on the rocky cliffs. Explore the Coves by Zodiac or in one of our clear-bottom sea kayaks to find Galapagos penguins, boobies, pelicans and other seabirds. An excellent snorkeling opportunity is offered here after the walk. After the briefing and dinner, a sky full of stars beckons to go out on deck and observe the galaxy.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



Day 6: SANTIAGO ISLAND

This morning, we have a wet landing at Puerto Egas, Santiago (James). Stroll along the shoreline looking for octopus, starfish and other sea life caught in the tide pools. At low tide, catch a glimpse of marine iguanas as they



feed on exposed green algae. Watch for great blue herons, lava herons, American oystercatchers and yellow-crowned night herons. Our walk ends at the grottos, deep pools of clear water where we encounter fur sea lions once on the verge of extinction. Before returning to the yacht, there is a snorkeling opportunity with loads of tropical fish. As an alternative, you may use the kayaks to explore the marine life without getting wet. During lunch, the yacht motors to the other side of the Island that provides for scenic landscapes.

colonies, the trail gives way to a primeval landscape of volcanic rubble including cracked lava formations and lava tubes. The lava tubes are fragile and one must be careful to stay on the trail. We find marine iguanas and pairs of oystercatchers. There are good photographic opportunities here as this site conveys a strong feeling that you've come to a very special place in the world. There is a briefing followed by dinner as we anchor in a calm protected area.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



Located off the Southern tip of Santiago, Sombrero Chino or Chinese Hat owes its name to its shape. After a wet beach landing with sea lion

of the Island, encounter sea turtles and white-tipped sharks.

Day 7: BARTOLOME ISLAND

It seems like we are walking on the moon. This young Island is inhospitable to most plants and animals. After a dry landing, climb 30 minutes up stairs leading to the summit of a once active volcano. Along the way, we pause to marvel at lava bombs, spatter cones and cinder cones. From the top of the wooden stairs, we can gaze out across the island for a panoramic view of the island and “Pinnacle Rock”, an eroded tuff cone. Down below, crystal clear water is an invitation to snorkel from the beach or Zodiac with schools of tropical fish and Galapagos Penguins. On the other side

of the Island, encounter sea turtles and white-tipped sharks.

This afternoon, we have a dry landing at North Seymour, a small geological uplift. We follow a trail that leads us to swallow-tailed gulls, blue-footed boobies and the endemic land iguanas. Visit the largest colony of magnificent frigate birds found in Galapagos. As we stroll along the beach, we find marine iguanas and sea lions body surf the northern swells. After the walk there is a snorkeling opportunity offered in deep water.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



Day 8: SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

This morning we travel by bus to the highlands of Santa Cruz Island. The scenery gradually changes as we wind our way through all seven vegetation zones found in Galapagos. Here, we visit the tortoise reserve at one of the private farms in the highlands where we encounter giant tortoises in their natural habitat. We visit Los Gemelos, Spanish for “The Twins”, a pair of large pit craters where we find the bright red male vermilion flycatcher. We stop at “the tunnels”, the largest lava tubes found in Galapagos.

After lunch on board, we visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. We visit all three tortoise corals and the breeding center with new hatchlings and miniature tortoises not yet ready to be repatriated. Scientists from all over the globe work at the station and conduct biological research from anatomy to zoology. We also visit the Van Straelen Hall where there are exhibits and a short video presentation. Visitors can see the pen of Lonesome

George, the last surviving member of the Pinta Island subspecies. Stroll through the town of Puerto Ayora, the largest town in the Galapagos.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 9: ESPANOLA ISLAND

This morning we have a dry landing at Punta Suarez where we witness the highest rate of endemic species in Galapagos. Sea lions noisily greet us as we land on their beach. Curious Hood mockingbirds peck at our shoelaces. From April to November, the waved albatross, found only on Espanola, perform their wild mating ritual. Colonies of blue-footed boobies engage in “sky-pointing” to show off for potential mates. Nazca (formerly masked) boobies busily care for their young. Stunning swallow-tailed gulls are the only nocturnal gulls in the world. Red-billed tropicbirds take shelter under the cliffs. We also find Darwin’s Finches, Galapagos Doves and Galapagos Hawks. Observe a unique species of marine iguana identified with traces of red and green colorings. Colorful sally light-foot crabs crawl along the shoreline near to the famous “blow hole”. This is the scene most people envision when they decide to visit Galapagos. During lunch, we motor to the other side of the Island.

On our last afternoon in Galapagos, we have a wet landing on Gardner Bay. Walk along seemingly endless stretches of this white sandy beach where you’ll find large colonies of sea lions. There is no trail to follow so this is a chance to explore and you may find a Galapagos Hawk, Darwin’s Finches or Hood Mockingbird. Swim with sea lions from the beach or just relax on your last glorious day in Galapagos. There’s an excellent snorkeling site off Gardner Islet with a colorful diversity of sea life near Tortuga Rock in caves covered with invertebrates. Passengers are also permitted to use the kayaks at this particular site. This evening, enjoy the Captain’s Farewell cocktail followed by dinner and a briefing.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 10: SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND, FLY TO QUITO

This morning, we drop anchor in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. We visit the Interpretation Center opened in 1999. Here we gain a more complete understanding of the natural and human history of the Islands. Afterwards, we head straight to the airport for our flight back to Quito. The afternoon is yours to enjoy the city.

Overnight – On board

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 11: DEPART QUITO

Transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

Meals – Breakfast

