

ITINERARY B1

8Days/ 7Nights

DAY 1/ Fri: SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

AM: Flight to Galapagos from Quito Airport

The flight from Quito to the Galapagos is approximately 2 ½ hours on a Boeing 727. Upon arrival at Baltra travelers pass through an airport inspection point to insure that no foreign plants or animals are introduced to the islands and to pay the park entrance fee of \$100 (unless prepaid), and \$10 for the INGALA card which is an identity card that you need . Guides will meet you, collect your luggage, and escort you on the short bus ride to the harbor. Motorized rafts, called 'Pangas' will transport you to the M/C ANAHI and our crew will welcome you onboard. After departure and lunch, the first island visit is made.

PM: Santa Cruz Highlands

Journeying across Santa Cruz into the highlands visitors are delighted by the island's variety of life and geology. Beginning at the coast and traveling across Santa Cruz the road departs from Puerto Ayora climbing through the agricultural lands and into the mist covered forests. Santa Cruz possesses all of the various life zones present in the archipelago. As you travel through these zones birders are enchanted. Whether it's the bright red feathers of a vermillion flycatcher or one of Darwin's Finch almost every bird present in the islands can be found here.

Santa Cruz offers excellent opportunities for viewing wild Galapagos Tortoises. Tracking tortoises is not the only exciting activity to be found in the highlands. There are also plenty of lava tubes, sinkholes and craters to explore. These eerie formations offer a fascinating hike into the belly of the island to view its volcanic make-up.

DAY 2/ Sat: ISABELA ISLAND

AM : Sierra Negra Volcano.

Isabela Island is the largest and one of the youngest islands in the Galapagos archipelago. We land in Puerto Villamil, which has the second smallest populated island in Galapagos with approximately 3,000 habitants. We head up to the highlands from Puerto Villamil to Sierra Negra slope, and later we will do some hiking on uneven terrain until we arrive to the Sierra Negra volcano rim. Sierra

Negra is the second widest crater in the world. From this viewpoint, you have fantastic sights to the 6 x 5 mile wide crater, the rest of the volcanoes, and Perry Isthmus, a 12 Km wide lava field. From here we can hike to Chico Volcano to watch the striking lava formations, examples of the geological occurrences that have created the Galapagos Islands.

PM : Breeding Center "Arnaldo Tupiza"

The Tortoise Breeding Center of Isabela is located 1.5 km from Puerto Villamil.

In this Breeding Center populations from South Isabela (Sierra Negra Volcano, Cerro Azul): Cazuela, Cinco Cerros, Roca Union, San Pedro, Tables and Cerro Paloma have been reproduced in captivity. In total there are 330 between juvenile and adult tortoises.

From the population of Cerro Paloma, there are 4 males and two female Galapagos, which, so far, are the only survivors. The raising of this breed of tortoise is of particular interest since genetic analysis performed in 1994 based on blood samples has determined that tortoises from this Galapaguera are different from the others. This is compounded by the fact that one of these two females is infertile, as shown by analysis of absent follicles. However, in 1998, the second female nested and now finally has 9 Galapaguitos of Cerro Paloma.

Cazuela tortoises are not in as serious danger of extinction. In their home there are still adults and juveniles. The main problems we have in the field are the competition for food by feral goats, trampling of nests by wild donkeys and killing by man from many years ago.

*Cinco Cerros has a giant tortoise subpopulation quite different. Locally it is known as "aplastada" (flattened) by the peculiar shape of its shell. In 1994 it was estimated that there were approximately 70 "aplastadas". The main reason for its low population size is apparently strong nest predation by ants of the genus *Solenopsis*. In September 1998, the eruption of Cerro Azul Volcano, threatened to burn the Galapaguera where this very rare sub-population is concentrated. Due to the emergency of the situation, and with the assistance of the Ecuadorian Army, an evacuation of tortoises "aplastada" was carried out in the affected area. The rescued animals were moved to the Breeding Center of Puerto Villamil, bringing the number that is there now to 17 (previously 2): 7 males and 10 females.*

In addition to the Cinco Cerros tortoises, all endangered adult tortoises were brought by helicopter in 1994. Juveniles and sub adults were carried by hand and on horses, a commendable and outstanding work of the park rangers, who had to cross areas of difficult access and under pretty poor conditions in order to give these reptiles, insignia of the Galapagos, a chance of survival.

The tortoises are fed three times a week, based on an Otoya (*Xanthosoma saggitifolium*) plant diet, and cachimuella (*Potomorphe peltata*). The water they drink is from small artificial ponds that exist within the corrals.

The Breeding Center has beautiful gardens consisting of native plants, as manzanillo (*Hippomane mancinella*), mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*), prickly pear (*Opuntia spp*), palo santo (*Bursera graveolens*), lime prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum Fagara*), thorn shrub (*Scutia pauciflora*) Galapagos croton (*Croton scouleri*), Glorybower (*Clerodendrum molle*), sea island or creole cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*), Radiate-headed (lechoso) (*Scalesia affinis*), yellow cordia (*Cordia lutea*), snowberry or milkberry (*Chiococca alba*), myrtle (*Maytenus octagon*), nickerbean or nickernut (*Caesalpinia bonduc*) and Darwin's Daisy (*Darwiniothamnus spp*).

THE WETLANDS

The visitor site "Wetlands", is a complex of trails that include the following sites:

Cerro Orchilla, a lookout which you can access via a staircase; from this site you can see the bay and the town of Puerto Villamil, Sierra Negra Volcano, the Cerro Azul Volcano, islets and rocks. These sites form spectacular scenery.

El Estero is a 227m path of lava rocks, 1.5 meters wide. It consists of a picnic site where the people come to do leisure activities. On this site you can see the four species of mangrove found in Galapagos and a small majagual forest. It forms part of the stories and legends of the penal colony era on Isabela.

La Poza Escondida is a path of stone and wood, where the main attraction is a mangrove forest and at the end of this path is a this pool.

Poza Redonda, is a path of 50 meters long, of lava plates leading to a pool formed inside a collapsed lava tube.

Tunel del Estero, a path 75m long and with adequate lava plates ending in a staircase inside a lava tunnel. Above the tunnel you can see the intertidal landscape that offers a tapestry of Galapagos Sesuvium between "El Túnel del Estero" and Love Beach.

Love Beach, has a rocky sea access, is a site frequently used by the community of Isabela.

Los Tunos Viewpoint and Pozas Verde are paths with several lookout points that allow observation of birds and plants.

La Playita: Is a path that leads to a small beach that is part of the greater beach in Villamil.

You can see several ancient tombs in the cemetery, tombs that have been built with unusual materials, represent a historical account of Isabela and its first inhabitants. The main attraction of these sites is the variety of flora and fauna can be observed.

DAY 3/ Sun: ISABELA ISLAND

AM: Punta Moreno

Punta Moreno is located on the north coast of Isabela Island between the volcano Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul volcano. The trail runs along a lava flow Pahohoe (solidified lava in the form of corrugated or an accordion) into a complex of coastal lagoons, its main attraction are several species of birds which can be found around this lakes and mangroves

PM: Elizabeth Bay

This is a marine visitor site, the excursion is carried out in a zodiac and so there is no landing point. Your zodiac ride starts with a visit to the Marielas islets where there is the largest and most important penguin colony in the Galapagos Islands. The excursion continues into the cove that is surrounded by red mangroves where you can admire their red roots and green leaves. It is here that you are able to observe sea turtles, flightless cormorants, spotted eagle rays, golden rays, brown pelicans, and sea lions. Frequently visitors have been able to see Galapagos hawks soaring overhead while schools of Pompano and Dorado fish swim below

DAY 4/ Mon: ISABELA ISLAND

AM: Urbina Bay

South from Tagus Cove and still on the West coast is Urbina Bay. It is an easy wet landing on a gentle sloping beach. This area is very interesting in that it is a perfect example of the geological activity of the islands. The waters of the bay are a good place to see turtles and rays and ashore is a short trail leading to a coral reef, which is evidence of an uplift from the sea which occurred in 1954.

From here it is easy to reach the Alcedo and Darwin volcanoes. You can see large colored land iguanas here and the possibility of seeing giant Galapagos turtles, flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies, Galapagos penguins, pelicans, and marine iguanas is excellent.

PM: Tagus Cove

Tagus Cove, a tour along the cliffs in a zodiac will give the visitors a good chance to see the Galapagos penguin, the flightless cormorant and other sea birds. From the landing dock it is about a 30 minute hike along the trail up to the top of the cliff from where you can view Darwin Lake, an uplifted ultra saline lake saltier than the sea. You can also see several volcanoes from this location. Look carefully at the graffiti on the surrounding cliffs of the cove, it has been written by pirates, whalers and bucaners in past centuries.

DAY 5/ Tues: FERNANDINA – ISABELA ISLANDS

AM: Espinoza Point

Fernandina is the third largest island in the archipelago and has a single visitor site: Punta Espinoza located at the northeastern tip of the island. Just across Tagus Cove, is a visitor site where some of the unique species of Galapagos can be seen. Marine iguanas conglomerate in larger groups than in any other island. They bask around in the sand, swim near the shore, and some time block the way at the landing dock. Among the unique species found here, is the flightless comorant. A bird that do to the lack of predators had to adjust their way of survival and perfectionate their skills of finding food in the ocean. Their wings, tails, and feet progressively adapted for swimming. To see these birds, is to witness evolution happening right in front of you.

PM: Vicente Roca Point

Located at the 'mouth' of the head of the sea horse, which forms the northern part of the Galapagos Islands, is Punta Vicente Roca. Here the remnants of an ancient volcano form two turquoise coves with a bay well protected from the ocean swells. The spot is a popular anchorage from which to take panga rides along the cliff that are the remains of the volcano or explore a partially sunken cave at the water's edge. Masked and blue-footed boobies sit perched along the point and the sheer cliffs, while flightless cormorants inhabit the shoreline.

The upwelling of coldwater currents in this part of the Galapagos, give rise to an abundance of marine life which, in combination with the protection of the coves, make Punta Vicente Roca one of the archipelago's sough after dive spots.

One cove is only accessible from the sea by way of an underwater passage. The passage opens to calm waters of the hidden cove where sea lions like to laze on the beach having traveled along the underwater route. The entire area of Punta Vicente

Roca lies on the flank of 2,600 foot Volcano Ecuador. This is the Galapagos Island's sixth largest volcano.

DAY 6/ Wed: SANTIAGO ISLAND

AM: Puerto Egas.

The excursion to Puerto Egas with its black sand beaches leads to one of the more rewarding visits of the Galapagos. The island was the site of a small salt mining industry in the 1960s, one of several unsuccessful attempts to commercialize the Galapagos. A hike inland to the salt crater is an excellent opportunity to see land birds such as finches, doves, and hawks. A walk along the rugged shoreline, especially at low tide, will allow us to observe many marine species as Iguanas bask on the rocks and sea lions laze in the tide pools. At the end of the trail there is a series of grottoes or sea caves where fur seals and night herons are regularly found resting on the shady ledges. For many, this is the only opportunity to see the Galapagos fur seal, once thought to be on the verge of extinction.

PM: Rábida

Rábida Island is unique because the red color of the rocks and sand. The volcanic material in this island is very porous and external factors as rain, salt water, and sea breeze have acted as an oxidizing agent.

A short walk along a trail lead you to a coastal lagoon behind the beach which permits you to observe the land birds such as finches, doves, yellow warblers, and mocking birds. At the lagoon there is a colony of flamingos.

DAY 7/ Thur: CHINESE HAT - BARTOLOME

AM: Chinese hat

This is a small islet (1 sq km) located just off the southeastern tip of Santiago Island. It is a recent volcanic cone, shaped like a Chinese hat when seen from north side. On the west you can see lava formations, formed under the sea and raised upward, this is why coral heads are found on the lava. This is an excellent visit for interpretation of geological features such as lava tubes and lava flows. The landscape is covered by sea lions colonies, marine iguanas, and Galapagos penguins.

PM: Bartolome Island

A small barren island that is located across from Sullivan Bay off James Island, Bartolome has two main visitors' sites. The first site offers the possibility to climb to the summit of the island, from where visitors can observe a variety of volcanic

formations including lava bombs, spatter and cinder cones, lava flows, and lava tubes. The moon like landscape provides one of the most scenic panoramas in the archipelago. At the second site, visitors have the chance to relax on a beautiful beach, which offers great snorkelling opportunities. Multi –coloured fish and occasionally penguins and sea turtles have been seen at the base of the tall pinnacle rock, which dominates Bartolome’s landscape. A short walk across to Bartolome’s second beach, which swimming is strictly prohibited visitors can see white-tipped reef sharks, at a safe distance swimming along the shoreline.

DAY 8/ Fri: SEYMOUR

AM: North Seymour

Is an uplifted (as opposed to volcanic) island and so is generally flat and strewn with boulders. There are good nesting sites here for a large population of magnificent frigate birds. Blue-footed boobies perform their courtship dance in the more open areas and swallow-tailed gulls perch on the cliff edges.

Despite the tremendous surf that can pound the outer shore, sea lions haul out onto the beach and can be found bodysurfing.

After the morning excursion you will be taken to the airport for your flight to the mainland.