

M/S SAMBA ITINERARY 2015

Pristine and Born of Fire (NW islands)

Day 1 – AM:	Arrive to Baltra airport
Day 1 – PM:	Las Bachas - Santa Cruz Island
Day 2 – AM:	Darwin Bay - Genovesa Island
Day 2 – PM:	Price Philip's Steps (El Barranco) - Genovesa Island
Day 3 – AM:	Punta Mejía - Marchena Island
Day 3 – PM:	Black beach - Marchena Island
Day 4 – AM:	Punta Albemarle - Isabela Island
Day 4 – PM:	Punta Vicente Roca - Isabela Island
Day 5 – AM:	Punta Espinoza - Fernandina Island
Day 5 – PM:	Urbina Bay - Isabela Island
Day 6 – AM:	Elizabeth Bay - Isabela Island
Day 6 – PM:	Punta Moreno - Isabela Island
Day 7 – AM:	Asilo de La Paz and Cerro Alleri - Floreana Island
Day 7 – PM:	La Lobería - Floreana Island
Day 8 – AM:	Highlands - Santa Cruz Island
Day 8 – PM:	Baltra - Flight back to Quito or Guayaquil

PRISTINE AND BORN OF FIRE: NORTH AND WEST

TUESDAY

AM: BALTRA AIRPORT

PM: LAS BACHAS, Santa Cruz Island

On arrival at **Baltra Airport** all visitors pay their entrance fee to the Galapagos National Park and get their hand luggage checked by the Quarantine system. You will then be met by the Samba's naturalist guide, who will assist you with your luggage collection and accompany on a short bus ride to the harbor to board Samba.

After a light lunch the Samba will navigate for 25 minutes to **Las Bachas**. This are organic white sand beaches located on the northern shore of Santa Cruz Island and they are the most important nesting site for the green Pacific sea turtles of the Galapagos. Named Las Bachas after the American military occupation on Baltra during the Second World War, the place is a peaceful a beautiful introduction to the Enchanted Islands. On the shore is easy to encounter marine iguanas, sally light foot crabs, blue footed boobies diving and, in a nearby lagoon, we often find grater

flamingos, black necked stilts and other shore birds. Visitors are welcome to swim or snorkel from the beach.

WEDNESDAY, TOWER (GENOVESA)

AM: DARWIN BAY

PM: PRINCE PHILIP'S STEPS

After 6 to 7 hours of navigation from Santa Cruz you will wake up to the beautiful cacophony of one of the largest tropical sea bird colony of the planet. The cliff tops are decorated with frigate birds, red-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, swallow tailed gulls, tropic birds and many other pelagic animals. **Darwin Bay** is the home of many nesting sea birds. Following a wet landing and with the early morning light you will blend in with the red-footed boobies displaying for potential mates as they collect nesting material. The great frigate birds inflate their gulag sacks hoping to attract a female while others play their favorite game: piracy. Darwin's finches, Galapagos doves and mocking birds stroll the ground to find seeds and insects. The red mangroves, cactus and saltbushes contrast with the blue sky and the dark basaltic walls.

Following lunch you will do a dry landing to climb **Prince Philip's Steps**. The steep ascend takes you 100 feet above sea level, to be welcomed by the elegant silhouette of red billed tropic bird and the aerobatic Galapagos shearwater, both interact with the precipice on fast approaches. The lava rock trail takes through the endemic dwarf incense tree forest, to find more red footed "lancers" nesting and many of their gannet like relatives, the Nazcas, loudly claiming the floor as their residence. The Palo Santo forest is dormant most of the year, to awaken in the rainy season and contaminate the air with a refreshing aroma. As you exit the latent trees your breath may cease by the panorama of thousands of storm petrels flying erratically beyond the lava flows. This is the perfect scenario for the island predator to make a successful kill. The short-eared owl, known elsewhere around the world as a nocturnal predator, in Genovesa hunts in bright daylight. More cat than owl, waits patiently outside lava tunnels and crevasses to capture the stormy petrels as they leave their houses after feeding their young.

Snorkeling on Tower offers a view of a wide variety of tropical fish.

THURSDAY, MARCHENA (BINDLOE)

AM: PUNTA MEJIA

PM: PLAYA NEGRA

All boats will travel back south after sailing to Tower; the Samba is the only one heading west-northwest. The Galapagos National Park Service granted us the chance of using Marchena's magical shorelines to snorkel, dinghy ride and kayak. The forbidding endless and untouched lava flows where only science has reached land, no fresh water and very little precious soil, Bindloe's serenity scenario is only awaken by the murmur and surge of the Pacific swells and musical argument of the castaway sea lions. **Punta Mejía** is one of the best sites in the Archipelago to snorkel. The calm and clear deep blue water of the north west coast, and the dark hostile topography of the location give the sensation of witnessing the beginning of our planet and its underwater world. Apart from great fish diversity, when we snorkel we often see rays, reef sharks and sea turtles.

Navigating southwest for 45 minutes to **Playa Negra** is always an exciting experience. More than once in the past we have seen bottle nosed dolphins, other cetaceans or feeding frenzies. After an early afternoon snorkel around recently formed lava grotto where marine iguanas feed, we will start a 5 to 6 hour sail to the west. As we get further away from the island the sea floor changes dramatically

and we enter deep water, an oceanic drop-off. The Cromwell current, which arrives from the west from the very profound waters, brings richness to the surface and generates a superlative upwelling. As a result, there are positive effects throughout the marine food chain and we have a good record of cetaceans and other ocean wonderers on this navigation. Whales or dolphins are never a guarantee, but we will we do our best to find them.

FRIDAY, ISABELA (ALBEMARLE)

AM: PUNTA ALBEMARLE

PM: PUNTA VICENTE ROCA

Human history has left its footprint on this small corner of the Galapagos. **Punta Albemarle**, the farthest north point of Isabela, was one important US radar station to prevent any Japanese attempt of destroying the Panama Channel. A small and deteriorated building is the reminder of the boredom and routine that rusted the mind of the juvenile navy officers. The soldiers were in charge of the three-week shifts where they never saw any action. Nevertheless, the wild life gives the best example of constant struggle for survival, a fight were only the fittest continue. The recent lava flows are the nesting ground of the only flightless cormorant in the world and the basking terrain of the largest marine iguanas of Galapagos. Because not many boats visit this site the cormorants, that are very shy birds, display as they built their bulky nest we seaweed with total indifference to human presence. As the morning advances the iguanas give a show of adaptation as they wonder in to shoreline to feed on green and red algae. With this fantastic setting you can only be reminded that the only constant of the Islands is change.

Punta Vicente Roca offers an overwhelming diversity of geological formations. Located on the southwest end of Ecuador Volcano only a few miles south of latitude 0°, the area is an outstanding example on how the Islands were formed and how the forces of change have transformed the landscape and shaped the wildlife. Vicente Roca is the home of tuff cones and lava dikes and is fertile ground for erosion and the disaster of collapse. We will look at the dramatic structures from our dinghies, as we also enjoy watching the Galapagos penguins, brown noddies, blue-footed boobies and other marine life. When the waters are calm enough the snorkel is fascinating. The walls of the tuff cones are full of colorful invertebrates and rich algae blooming give us a great chance of watching numerous sea turtles feeding.

SATURDAY, FERNANDINA (NARBOROUGH) AND ISABELA

AM: PUNTA ESPINOZA, Fernandina Island

PM: URBINA BAY, Isabela Island

Only 30,000-100,000 years old Fernandina is the youngest island of the Archipelago. This immature shield volcano is less than an instant in the geological time scale. Not even your wildest imagination can give you a better setting to experience the start of life on an island. The whole Island is cover with hostile worthless lava. However, at **Punta Espinoza** the shoreline is teeming with life. Reptiles, birds and mammals all coexisting, singing and sexing. It is a living museum with piles of marine iguanas, playful sea lions, hard working flightless cormorants, dwarf penguins, busy Sally light-foot crabs and much more. Don't forget to look around because Galapagos Hawk is always on the hunt. The site is a true cradle of evolution. Snorkeling with turtles, iguanas, cormorants and plenty of fish is the best way to refresh after the lava walk.

The hotspot under the Galapagos generates intense volcanic activity. The west islands are the youngest and most active of the Archipelago. Located in the center of Isabela, Alcedo Volcano is remainder of how volatile this Islands are. On the west

shore line of Alcedo lays **Urbina Bay**. The landmass of the inlet was uplifted in 1954. More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of shoreline were created, and many coral reef extensions were exposed to air as the upheaval rose the seabed. The brand new land became a perfect nesting terrain of the most beautiful land dragon. The land iguanas of Isabela are the largest in the Galapagos and in Urbina the colorful population offers a great example of their growing potential. The impressive yellow, orange/brown iguanas roam the low lands looking for flowers, fruits, leaves and shoots of their favorite plants. Also, when the rains arrive it is possible to see giant tortoises sharing the land with the other primitive looking reptile. Urbina is a miniature reminder of a Jurassic time.

SUNDAY, ISABELA

AM: ELIZABETH BAY

PM: PUNTA MORENO

Isabela Island constitutes almost half of the entire surface of the Archipelago. It is nearly 100 miles long and offers a remarkable diversity of habitats. Shaped like a seahorse and with volcanoes over 5000 feet of altitude, it is also the place of birth of vast mangrove extensions. **Elizabeth Bay** is the only place of the Earth where old tropical mangrove forests and penguins can be conjugated on the same sentence. The ecosystem is also the residence of spotted eagle rays, sea turtles and a nursery for fish and marine invertebrates. With the outboards off and using only our oars for speed, we will enjoy this serene array of life.

When you land on **Punta Moreno** you understand why the Spanish Bishop that discovered the Islands said: "It was as if God had decided to rain stones". When he first set foot on a lava field he struggled to find fresh water and in desperation was reduced to chew on cactus pads to quench his thirst. More than three centuries later a young Naturalist saw beyond the lava. Charles Darwin was amazed by the colonization of plants and the start of life over this terrain. He thought this process could easily compare to the origin of life in our planet. The mystery of mysteries... The pioneer cactus growing over the country of lava is contrasted with a stunning oasis. Where lava tunnel roofs have collapsed, brackish water accumulates and gives life to greater flamingoes, moorhens, black-necked stilts and Galapagos Martins.

MONDAY, ISABELA

AM: TINTORERAS AND TORTOISE BREEDING CENTER

PM: SIERRA NEGRA

Before breakfast you will wake up to walk on **Tintoreras**, a very small islet, where marine iguanas breed and blue-footed boobies dive and sharks rest. A small trail along the shore takes you to grotto formations where with tipped reef sharks are resting. Through the clear and shallow water you will get a great view of the sharks that keep our oceans healthy. Sea turtles and penguins are always around and you will enjoy all of this without getting wet!

After a good Breakfast we will land on the main peer of Puerto Villamil. A five-minute bus ride will take us to the **Tortoise Breeding Centre**. Here we will learn about this emblematic reptile after which the islands have been named. Giant tortoises breeding were decimated for over one century and it is national priority to bring their numbers back.

We can't leave the west of the Archipelago without climbing **Sierra Negra**. This giant and active shield volcano has one of the largest calderas of the world. Last active in 2005, the volcano is key to acknowledge how the islands are born of fire.

The fumaroles, the lava flows and the vast depression formed by the collapse of the magma chamber are a reminder on how the world was when it was new.

TUESDAY, SANTA CRUZ (INDEFATIGABLE)

(FOR DEPARTING AND ARRIVING GUESTS)

AM: HIGHLANDS - Baltra

If you are not joining us for 15 days, before you go to the airport you will stop at the **Highlands** of Santa Cruz. At 1800 feet the greenery offers the opportunity to admire the remnant of a Galapagos mature forest. The Daisy trees of the genus *Scalesia* decorate a couple of extraordinary geological formations. Known as "Los Gemelos", this collapse craters and its surroundings are the home of many Darwin's finches, mocking birds, vermillion flycatcher and a wonderful diversity of indigenous plants. It is important to leave the boat early in the morning to have a pleasant visit. Breakfast will be served at 6:00 am.

Departing visitors going to **Baltra Airport** and those who are staying on the Samba for a second week will all go together in a bus to **Los Gemelos**. Departing guests visit the craters and clients staying on board will have a full morning around the Highlands to see lava tubes and giant tortoises in their natural habitat. If you are remain on board have lunch on the Samba. A transfer guide will meet all arriving guests from Baltra Airport.

After to settling into your cabins onboard the Samba and having a snack, you will land for the afternoon stopover at the **Charles Darwin Research Station**. Here you will learn how the magic is done behind the scenes. This NGO celebrates 50 years of scientific work, and it is responsible, in a great deal, for the conservation status and the restoration of the Galapagos. An important partner in the duty of preservation of this pristine archipelago is the National Park Service and they run the tortoise breeding centre. At this facility you will meet our conservation Icon Lonesome George, the last remaining animal from the species of Pinta Island.

OCEANIC FORCES AND ENCHANTED LAND: SOUTH, EAST & CENTRAL ITINERARY

Oceanic Forces and Enchanted Land (CE islands)

Day 1 – AM:	Arrive to Baltra airport
Day 1 – PM:	Charles Darwin Research Station - Santa Cruz Island
Day 2 – AM:	Punta Cormorant and Champion Rock - Floreana Island
Day 2 – PM:	Post Office Bay & La Baronesa lookout - Floreana Island
Day 3 – AM:	Punta Suárez - Española Island
Day 3 – PM:	Gardner Bay and Gardner Rock - Española Island
Day 4 – AM:	Isla Lobos and Kicker Rock - San Cristóbal Island
Day 4 – PM:	Punta Pitt - San Cristóbal Island
Day 5 – AM:	Barrington Bay - Santa Fe Island
Day 5 – PM:	South Plaza Island and Punta Carrión
Day 6 – AM:	Sullivan Bay - Santiago Island
Day 6 – PM:	Bartolome Island
Day 7 – AM:	James Bay - Santiago Island
Day 7 – PM:	Rabida Island

Day 8 – AM: North Seymour Island
Day 8 – PM: Baltra - Flight back to Quito or Guayaquil

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WEDNESDAY, FLOREANA (CHARLES)

AM: PUNTA CORMORANT & CHAMPION

PM: POST OFFICE BAY & THE BARRONESS LOOKOUT

Following a four-hour navigation from Puerto Ayora we will do a wet landing on a volcanic olivine beach. **Punta Cormorant** lays on the northern shore of Floreana and is the house of greater flamingos and sea turtles. On one side, the point is partially flooded with a brackish lagoon where flamingos nest and feed. Whimbrels, herons and stilts are other common shore and migratory birds of the wetlands. On the other side sea turtles use every corner of a white sand beach to deliver their eggs. You often see stingrays and reef sharks from the shore and if you are lucky turtles ending basking.

Around mid morning we sail for 25 minutes do a dinghy ride and snorkel at **Champion** Islet. This small piece of land is one of two places were the Floreana mocking bird survives after its extinction on the big Island. While trying to find the rare bird from our dinghies, we will enjoy a beautiful landscape full of fairy tale cactus and terracotta rock formations. Soon sea lions will invite us to enjoy the water. The snorkeling around the island is extraordinary, lots of fish, rays, sharks and the playfulness of the Galapagos sea lions.

Adventure, survival, mystery and murder are the main ingredients for our next stop. **Post Office Bay** has left a legacy of pirates, whalers, scientific expeditions and intense stories of slay and constant ambiguity. After a wet landing we walk a very short distance to be part of the most important Galapagos tradition. Later we will Kayak or ride our dinghies to the west. We will go through a small set of islets with a sea lion colony, boobies and mangroves. Finally, following our ride we will land at the **Baroness lookout**. On top of this eroded spatter cone we will embrace the vivid obscurity of the human history of "Las Encantadas".

THURSDAY, ESPAÑOLA (HOOD)

AM: PUNTA SUAREZ

PM: GARDNER BAY & GARDNER ISLAND

Hood is the oldest Galapagos Island, the Queen. Her Majesty has travel 100 miles away from the volcanic hotspot; she sets an example of splendor and wisdom. When landing on its western tip, on **Punta Suárez**, it is difficult to digest the beauty and the overwhelming amount of life. It takes a few minutes to understand that you are not dreaming and that the marine iguanas are really covered with fiery colors, sea lions leisurely wander around you, blue-footed boobies and Sally light-foot crabs coat the rocks with their intense grace. The long walk leads you the finest illustration of ancient sea bird colony. The endless cliff shaped by strong wave action and the force of the wind is the home of the only tropical albatross of the Earth. This mythical elegant glider shares the precipice with many others sea birds like the tropicbirds, the swallow tailed gull, the Nazca booby.

Depending on weather conditions, either at the end of the morning or early in the afternoon, we will snorkel or kayak around **Gardner Island**. Its calm waters and attractive landscape give you a great experience above and below water.

Located on the north coast of Española **Gardner Bay** has tranquil white sand beach. The fine grains of sand make perfect terrain for a soft walk and a relaxing late in the afternoon. Don't get me wrong, you won't be alone, sea lions and Hood mocking birds will keep company.

FRIDAY, SAN CRISTOBAL (CHATHAM)

AM: ISLA LOBOS & KICKER ROCK

PM: PUNTA PITT

You will wake up to the barking of Galapagos sea lions, animals after which the Island was named. After a dry landing on **Isla Lobos**, we walk on over very rocky terrain. To your surprise red balloons will soon bound you, great and magnificent pirates nest on this small flat Island. Frigate birds with their magenta and green iridescent feathers decorate the saltbushes. The island is also the nesting ground of blue-footed boobies. Don't miss the chance of swimming with sea lions; a few sea creatures are as playful as these marine mammals.

Before lunch we navigate by a dramatic tuff cone formation, **Kicker Rock**. The eroded structure has vertical walls of over 450 feet and has a great numbers of sea birds nesting and resting on it. We will circumnavigate the rock to admire its magnitude, soon after that we will jump in the water to swim with Galapagos sharks, sea turtles, and eagle rays and drop offs full of colorful fish and invertebrates.

On **Punta Pitt** we do a wet landing late in the afternoon to climb a tuff cone and enjoy the sunset. This point is closest to mainland South America. Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, frigate birds and storm petrel nest in the area. The ochre color beach is perfect for a relaxing plunge after the walk.

SATURDAY, SANTA FE & PLAZAS

AM: BARRINGTON BAY

PM: SOUTH PLAZA & PUNTA CARRION

The bay looks as if artist ornamented it. **Barrington Bay** is one of the most picturesque inlets of all visitor sites of the Galapagos. The white sand on the seabed reflects the light to turn the calm waters turquoise. A small forest of gigantic prickly pear cactus grows on a peninsula that keeps the bay sheltered. All the before

mentioned are suitable conditions for a large sea lion colony. Santa Fe is an ancient extinct volcano and it has been isolated from other islands long enough to have an endemic land dragon. Paler in color than its relatives, the Barrington terrestrial iguana has a primitive morphology. Galapagos Hawks, mocking birds, finches and endemic rice rats make company to yellowish monster. The snorkeling won't disappoint you.

A two-hour navigation north will take us to **South Plaza**. The dry landing takes you to a brilliant combination of life and colors. Land iguanas wondering through bright red carpet weed, Swallow tailed gulls nesting around the overhang tops and red-billed tropicbirds and shearwaters flying with dancing displays. Mind the pirates of the sky; they will strike if you drop your guard. 13 acres of beauty Hectare is one of the best spots in the archipelago to see land iguanas and swallow-tailed gulls, both indigenous to the Galapagos. There are iguana nests scattered all over the hill. The sheer cliffs of the southern shore are a perfect bird habitat, making it an unparalleled bird observatory for especially swallow-tailed gulls, Audubon shearwaters, and red-billed tropicbirds.

If we have enough time and good weather we will swim or snorkel in **Punta Carrion**. A great way to end an active day!

SUNDAY, SANTIAGO & BARTOLOME

AM: SULLIVAN BAY

PM: BARTOLOME

The genesis of the islands is easy to acknowledge at **Sullivan Bay**. The coiled shiny structures of the pahoe-hoe lava appear as if they were formed yesterday. Located on the east shores of James Island these 131 years old lava flow has intact dribble cones. Older cinder cones were flooded by the rivers of lava and are a great example of aging igneous rocks. The contrast of colors and shapes of the basalt, and the distinction of rust and shine of its surface will take you back you of Mars, if you've been there before.

Bartolome Island offers an explosive volcanic landscape. Get ready to climb above 270 feet to admire the dramatic spatter cones and the view of Pinnacle Rock that everyone wants. Later, take a walk on magical golden beaches where sea turtle nest (December to March). Don't forget to make time to swim near penguins, sharks and lava tubes.

MONDAY, RABIDA & JAMES

AM: RABIDA

PM: JAMES BAY

Galapagos offers a diversity of geological formations without boundaries. The island of **Rábida** has lavas rich in iron and after millions of years of exposure to air they have turned red. The rusted volcanic material has eroded to form a beautiful crimson sand beach, lovely for a walk. The protected shore provides excellent conditions for a Galapagos sea lions nursery and brown pelicans use the nearby saltbushes as a resting and nesting area. Hawks and mocking birds are common visitors of the lowlands. Furthermore, you will find that snorkeling of the beach can be very exiting as sharks, rays and many colorful fish are often visible.

Subsequent to a two-hour sail northwest we will do a wet landing at **Puerto Egas** also known as **James Bay**. The magical shorelines of the west of James Island are a combination of tuff cone, lava flows and organic sand. A rocky coast with a very gentle slope is used by a great number of shore birds and reptiles. Oystercatchers, whimbrels, sanderlings, turnstones, tattlers and other waders are mixed with

marine iguanas and bright painted crabs to feed by the rich littoral zone. As grand finally, large lava tunnels, that are partially collapsed, are the houses of the Galapagos fur sea lions. The snorkel can be one of the best in the archipelago. Sea turtles feeding, parrot fishes, damsel fishes, white tipped reef sharks and many more...

TUESDAY, NORTH SEYMOUR & BALTRA AIRPORT

AM: NORTH SEYMOUR

AM: BALTRA AIRPORT

The visit to **North Seymour** is the best way of saying goodbye to the Galapagos. Following a dry landing at sunrise we will walk amongst the largest blue-footed booby colony of the Islands. If breeding you will enjoy their dancing and singing to find a mate. Not far from the dancers we have great and magnificent frigate birds nesting. The males inflate their pouches to attract the ladies that fly above them. Swallow tailed gulls and tropicbirds decorate the large basaltic walls of the island. We will be back on board for breakfast at 8:00 and we have to be ready to check out at 9:00. It is always a good idea to do most of your packing the previous night so you can have a pleasant last early morning visit and a relaxed breakfast.