

## **NORTH ISLANDS ITINERARY 2016**

On departing from Quito or Guayaquil, you will take a three hour flight to the Galapagos Islands landing on the Island of Baltra. Here you will be met by your guide and after a short bus ride you will board the yacht Floreana and start your holiday.

### **1.- THURSDAY:**

#### **BALTRA AIRPORT**

**HIGHLANDS OF SANTA CRUZ:** This is the second largest island in the Galapagos, and has the most developed vegetation zoning found in the archipelago. On the short journey to the highlands you will drive through Coastal, Arid, Transition, Scalesia, Miconia, and Pampa Zones. During this visit you have the opportunity to see the famous giant tortoises (during the rainy season) in their natural environment; you will visit the twin craters, formed when large caverns left empty by flowing lava collapsed. You will also find Darwin's finches, vermilion flycatcher, and the Galapagos Hawk.

### **2.- FRIDAY:**

**GENOVESA** (also known as bird Island): **DARWIN BAY**, is the caldera of a collapsed volcano, we land on a small coral beach, where we take an easy walk. For those that want this will lead into a more demanding walk over lava rock. This will allow for stunning views from the cliffs and allow ample time and opportunity to photograph the amazing bird life such as swallow-tailed gulls, red-footed booby, nazca booby, large ground finch, large cactus finch, sharp-billed ground finch, small marine iguanas, and great frigate bird.

**EL BARRANCO**, This is a demanding walk up a steep cliff, where tropicbirds, red-footed boobies and other nesting seabirds can be found. We follow the trail through a palo santo forest to a storm petrel colony passing boobies and great frigate bird along the way.

### **3.- SATURDAY:**

**SANTIAGO ISLAND: SULLIVAN BAY:** The main attraction of this bay is the broad, pahoehoe or rope lava flow. It is one of the most incredible places to compare the lava flows and their characteristics.

**BARTHOLOME ISLAND**, most likely the first of the islands to rise from the sea, Bartolome, is a small island that has beautiful white sand beaches and luxuriant green mangroves. Here, penguins may join us at the swimming beach, and a hike to the summit of a once-active volcano rewards us with beautiful panoramic views of the often-photographed Pinnacle Rock panoramic and it's amazingly moon landscapes

### **4.- SUNDAY:**

**CHINESE HAT:** Sombrero Chino gets its name from its appearance, which is that of a Chinese hat. Sitting just off the south-eastern tip of Santiago, this fairly recently formed island makes for a pleasant visit as the island itself is quite beautiful and is definitely worth a trip.

To truly appreciate the shape of this island, visit the northern end of Sombrero Chino. Here there is a tiny sea lion colony on the north shore cove, where one can anchor their boats and land. Galapagos penguins can also be found swimming here sometimes. Follow the trail around the cove and you will catch a glimpse of American oystercatchers in action, along with marine iguanas, lava lizards and Sally Lightfoot crabs. Starting from a crescent-shaped white sandy beach, this 400 meter long trail provides some wonderful landscapes to view. There are also some good swimming and snorkelling opportunities in the cove area amidst white-tipped reef sharks and tropical fish.

**WHALE BAY:** On the coast of Santa Cruz Island, this is a semicircle beach, which is green in color, due to a high volume of olivine crystals. It extends 25 meters from the base of the hill. The beach has some historical interest as it was the first trail to the highlands used to search for fresh water. There are a number of pieces of ceramics strewn about, although no verified information exists concerning the origins of the ceramic. Here can be found a curious Galapagos Hawk.

## 5.- MONDAY:

### **ISABELA: TINTORERAS / THE HUMEDALES / BREEDING CENTER**

Isabela, the largest island in the archipelago, occupies over fifty-eight percent of entire landmass of the Galapagos. It is a relatively recent island and consists of a chain of five fairly young and intermittently active volcanoes.

**TINTORERAS** It takes approximately 10 minutes from Puerto Villamil to arrive at The Tintoreras. The islet of the Tintoreras is situated to the south of Puerto Villamil. It has a small lagoon of completely tranquil turquoise water, where is possible to appreciate sea lions, sea turtles, marine iguanas, rays, etc. This bay is connected to a shallow crevice of crystalline waters whose entrance closes when the tide is low. In this crevice, it's possible to see sharks swimming with other small fish and sea lions.

It is not advisable to swim in these beaches because of the presence of the colonies of sea lions which may be disturbed.

**HUMEDALES:** This site is a series of lagoons known for its migrant bird populations the black-necked stilt is one of the most famous birds of the area. The vegetation around the lagoons is dense and there are no trails, although the road to the highlands and the open beach does provide reasonable access

**BREEDING CENTER;** the giant tortoise rearing center of Isabela is located 1.5 kilometers from Pto. Villamil, this important center has a captive breeding program for tortoises from the populations of southern Isabela. In total there are 330 tortoises between juveniles and adults.

## 6.- TUESDAY:

**FERNANDINA ISLAND: PUNTA ESPINOSA,** Fernandina Island is the youngest and most active volcano in the Galapagos, with eruptions taking place every few years. The flat lava of Punta Espinosa offers a stark and barren landscape, but here flightless cormorants build their nests on the point, sea lions sprawl on the beach or play in the tide pools and large numbers of marine iguanas dot the sand. We also will have the opportunity to compare the aa and pahoehoe lava types here.

**TAGUS COVE (ISABELA ISLAND)** is situated directly east of Fernandina Island on the west coast of Isabela Island. It is a beautiful, well-protected cove sheltered by the shoulders of two volcanic craters and has been used as an anchorage for over 300 years. A nature trail here ascends through the typical dry vegetation zone and offers spectacular views of Darwin Lake, a saltwater crater lake and the long narrow inlet that appears to connect with it. At the top of the trail it is possible to observe the different vegetation zones, catch a glimpse of Darwin and Wolf volcanoes, and observe Galapagos penguins, flightless cormorants and pelicans.

## 7.- WEDNESDAY:

**SANTIAGO ISLAND: EGAS PORT,** with its black sand beaches, was the site of a small salt mining industry in the 1960's and a hike inland to the salt crater is an excellent opportunity to sight land birds such as finches, doves and hawks. Here we can also swim and play with Galapagos sea lions in a quiet grotto cut into the lava cliffs. We may see sea lions basking on the rocks beneath a natural rock bridge, diving blue-footed boobies, sally light foot crabs and colorful lava lizards scurrying at our feet.

**RABIDA ISLAND,** One of the special features of Rabida Island is its remarkable red color, which is a result of the high percentage of oxidized iron in the composition of lava. Here we will witness the nine varieties of finches also the large-billed flycatchers and brown pelicans. Here a small salt-water lagoon where greater Flamingos can be seen and a beautiful colony of sea lions.

## 8.- THURSDAY:

**DAPHNE MAYOR,** is a volcanic tuff cone, formed by successive explosions produced by the mixture of lava and water. On this island, Dr. Peter Grant has made a long-term study of Darwin's finches, which is why you can see these birds are banded. The palo santo present herein Bursera malacophylla is endemic to the Daphne Islands, North Seymour and Baltra. The blue-footed booby nests inside the craters and the masked booby nests on the flanks of the cone and the edge of the craters and the tropical bird that nests in cavities in the cliffs.