

Galapagos Natural Life

Tourist Superior - Galapagos Yachts

Aida Maria - YACHT



ITINERARY DAY BY DAY

Itinerary A+B 15 days / 14 nights

DAY 1 - SUNDAY

In the morning: Airport

Fly from the Ecuadorian mainland to the islands on an early morning 90-minute flight. As you prepare to land in Baltra, look out the window. The landscape below will seem otherworldly – you'll truly be landing in a place like no other. The Galapagos Islands are completely unique and you're about to see why. Your bilingual naturalist guide will greet you at the airport and meet you after customs.

In the afternoon: Bachas Beach

During lunch he/she will introduce you to the islands, specifically the flora and fauna that you will encounter at our first destination, Las Bachas Beach. On the sandy white beaches of Las Bachas you will get a close look at a sea turtle nesting area as well as a lake frequented by pink flamingos and other migratory birds. Afterwards, you'll cool off with a dip in the beautiful, blue Pacific Ocean. As this is the first evening together,

the crew will invite everyone to a pre-dinner cocktail on the yacht before the welcome dinner. If the night is clear, as it usually is, the stars above will sparkle; look for the Southern Cross, the Big Dipper (turned up-side down!) and Orion.

DAY 2 - MONDAY

In the morning: Darwin Bay

Early in the morning you'll have breakfast and then you'll disembark at Genovesa "Tower" Island, which is located in the northeastern part of the Galapagos (less than half a degree north of the equator).

At "Tower" Island you'll anchor at Darwin Bay, which is located on the southern part of the island, and is actually the caldera of an extinct, partially eroded volcano, with the surrounding cliffs forming the inner lining of the rim. While the origin of the name "Tower" is not known, one can imagine it had something to do with these towering cliffs. The tour will be a long, fairly-easy walk, but it is usually hot and dry here, so you may want to carry some water. After a wet landing on a coral beach the trail begins in an area where there are several swallow-tailed gulls. As you walk back from the beach, you'll see a variety of Opuntia cactus and mangroves Tower is an outpost for many sea birds (as Española is in the south). Interestingly, there are almost no land reptiles on Tower, only very small marine iguanas. This is attributed to the direction of the ocean currents, which wouldn't have carried the terrestrial animals here.

In the afternoon: El Barranco

Visit El Barranco during the afternoon then return to the boat for dinner.

DAY 3 - TUESDAY

In the morning: Bartolome Is.

Bartolome Island, which at its highest point is 114 meters, is one of the most photographed vistas in the archipelago. This island is quite young and quite volcanic, therefore, it's relatively unpopulated; only a small handful of die-hard plant and animal species have survived long enough to call this lava-land home.

In the afternoon: Sullivan Bay

After the visit to Bartolome Island you'll visit nearby Sullivan Bay. At the turn of the century a huge lava flow spilled right down to the sea and today you can stroll across this black volcanic expanse, admiring its time-frozen ripples, bubbles and ropes.

DAY 4 - WEDNESDAY

In the morning: Black Turtle Cove

Black Turtle Cove, is a red mangrove lagoon on Santa Cruz and is a nursery for many sharks and rays. It's also a great location to observe mating turtles around this time of year. You might see a large groups of resting White-Tip Reef Sharks, schools of Golden Rays and Spotted Eagle Rays, and a few juvenile Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks and Black-Tip Sharks. The water very calm so we often used paddles instead of the loud panga engines to move around the area.

In the afternoon: Dragon Hill

After this visit you'll navigate for a couple of hours to Cerro Dragon, where you'll make a dry landing on lava rocks. Cerro Dragon is a small bay on the west coast of Santa Cruz and got its name from the many land iguanas that live in the area. Land iguanas are endemic to the Galapagos Islands where they have found good mating and nesting areas.

DAY 5 - THURSDAY

In the morning: Charles Darwin Station

Charles Darwin Station. After breakfast you'll sail to Santa Cruz Island, where you'll visit the world-famous Charles Darwin Station, a non-profit institution that dedicates itself to studying and protecting the flora and fauna of the Galapagos. This is one of the best places to see land tortoises, including Lonesome George museum. Then you'll visit the station's Tortoise Rearing Center. Here you can find baby, hand-sized tortoises, between the ages of one and five, and marvel at how they achieve such large sizes as adults (500 lbs. or more!). Galapagos tortoises are believed to have a lifespan of over 100 years, so the young ones have a long life ahead of them as long as they receive the protection they need. Aside from the Station headquarters, Santa Cruz Island is home to the largest town and economic center of the Galapagos, Puerto Ayora. In this portside town you can buy souvenirs (postcards, t-shirts, books, etc.) of the islands. Check out the unique Galapagos ceramic shop near the entrance of the Charles Darwin Station.

In the afternoon: Highlands

After shopping in Puerto Ayora and lunch on the boat (guests may dine in town if they desire), you'll explore the highlands or "parte alta" of the island, which is a moisture-rich area with fertile volcanic soils. You'll learn about the vegetation and animal life of this zone, often strikingly different than that found at lower elevations and our best opportunity to find the famous giant tortoises in their natural habitat.

Darwin's Finches, Yellow Warblers, and other land birds will fly in and out of the moss-covered trees. From this high vantage point you'll be treated to beautiful views of the island. In the late afternoon you'll return to town. For those who wish to check out the nightlife, this is your chance; the boat will be docked in port most of the night.

DAY 6 - FRIDAY

In the morning: Cormorant Point / Devil's Crown

When you wake up and look out your porthole on Day 6 you will see Floreana, one of the greenest islands in the archipelago. Ask your guide to tell you about its mysterious history laden with rumors of witches, murderous baronesses, blackmail, and dubious disappearances.

Your first stop is Punta Cormorant, where you'll follow a footpath to a lagoon inhabited by flaming-pink flamingos. You will also pass by Carolina Beach, a Sea Turtle nesting area and a superb spot for watching sea birds and sea rays. Back on the yacht, you'll skirt the island's coast until you arrive at La Corona del Diablo (the Devil's Crown), a sub-marine crater that offers some of the most spectacular snorkeling in the Galapagos. This is a great spot for seeing the wide array of tropical fish, many endemic to the islands, including purple sea stars and spiky sea urchins. The crater's most thrilling undersea creatures, however, are the white-tipped sharks. As with most of the creatures in the Galapagos they are unperturbed by your presence, so you can swim in their company freely and fearlessly.

In the afternoon: Post Office Bay

After returning to the boat for lunch you'll sail on to Post Office Bay, where the islands' original post office (really only a wooden barrel) was established in 1793. The current system still functions as it did three centuries ago: Visitors drop off unstamped letters and postcards AND pick-up whatever mail they can hand deliver themselves when they return home! (Try it, it actually works!).

DAY 7 - SATURDAY

In the morning: Suarez Point

Española is one of the most magical of all the islands. It is a place where the animals reign supreme and we humans are merely guests. As your dingy brings you to shore you'll see Sea Lion pups sunbathing with Marine Iguanas and Blue Footed Boobies nesting in between, and nearby may be a Galapagos Hawk. If it is Booby mating season watch the bonded pairs do the infamous Booby dance (if it's not mating season, ask your guide to demonstrate - after all it's their job to teach you about the local fauna!). As you follow the footpath around the island, you will pass hundreds of Blue Footed Booby nesting sites including one colony of masked boobies.

There is a good chance you'll see the thief-like Frigate Bird (which has the habit of stealing other birds' food), as well as the stunning Red-Billed Tropicbird and the nocturnal Swallow-Tailed Gull. If it is the right time of the year (mid-April to December) you'll also encounter the giant Waved Albatross. Apart from a few pairs that breed on Isla de Plata, off the Ecuadorian mainland, all of the world's 12,000 Waved Albatross breed on Espanola Island. At the end of the breeding season, the entire population leaves the island and heads out to sea, where they spend years without touching land; four or five years may pass before the fledglings return to Espanola.

In the afternoon: Gardner Bay

As you make your way around the island you'll pass by El Soplador, a giant blowhole that explodes to heights reaching 25 feet. In the nearby tide pools you can often find lounging sea lions enjoying the blowhole's misty spray. Following lunch on board the yacht, you'll visit Garner Bay, a great place for sunbathing, swimming and snorkeling. Lionfish, Flycatchers, and Galapagos Hawks will keep you company as you relax under the rays of the evening sun. Dinner on the yacht completes your day.

DAY 8 - SUNDAY

In the morning: Isla Lobos

On your 8th day of visiting the Galapagos you'll arrive early in the morning to San Cristobal, the capital of the Galapagos. The first site will be Isla Lobos, a very small islet made of volcanic rocks that gets its name from the colony of Sea Lions (Lobo de Mar in Spanish) that live there. Here you can observe the behavior and interaction of Sea Lions living in a small community.

In the afternoon: Interpretation Center

In the afternoon will be the visit to the Interpretation Center in Puerto Baquerizo, the local branch of the Galapagos National Park Service, where your guide will explain the formation of the islands, how the flora and fauna arrived and were established in Galapagos, as well as visit the corrals where there are several species of giant tortoises under the care of the National Park Service. For those of you arriving on that day, you will go from the airport straight back to the boat to show you to your accommodations.

DAY 9 - MONDAY

In the morning: Santa Fe Island

After breakfast on the yacht, you'll continue to Santa Fe Island. Upon arrival to the island, you'll be treated to a noisy welcome from the local Sea Lion colony. Following your naturalist guide on the island paths you'll reach Santa Fe's main attraction, a towering forest of giant cacti. Scattered around the cacti trees you'll see a number of the island's indigenous sun-seekers: marine and land iguanas, the rainbow-streaked lava lizards and, if you're lucky, land tortoises - the namesakes of the islands. After the walk you'll dive into the salty sea and snorkel in the company of Sea Lions, Lion Fish and Sea Turtles. Finally, you'll return to the yacht for lunch.

In the afternoon: South Plazas

After lunch we'll navigate to Plazas Island, where a large colony of Sea Lions lounge daily in the equatorial sun. Plaza also boasts excellent examples of typical Galapagos native flora such as the towering cacti "trees"

that form the principal diet for both the Land Iguanas and the Cactus Finch. Other birds that may flutter by include Lava Gulls, Yellow Warblers and Red-Billed Tropicbirds.

DAY 10 - TUESDAY

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Return to the boat. Dinner.

DAY 11 - WEDNESDAY

In the morning: Sierra Negra Volcano

Your first visit in the morning will take place to Volcan Sierra Negra, will be a walk around 30 minutes to the lap of this famous volcano at Isabela Island. Volcan Sierra Negra is a large shield volcano at the South eastern end of Isabela Island in the Galapagos that rises to an altitude of 1124m. Also is considered one of the oldest Volcano at the Islands.

In the afternoon: Humedales

In the afternoon after lunch, you will go to visit the humedales, which is a mangrove area with small brackish water lagoons that create the perfect environment for a small type of shrimp that serves as the food for the island's flamingos.

Back on board and night navigation to your next site.

DAY 12 - THURSDAY

In the morning: Moreno Point

After night navigation you'll arrive to Punta Moreno on the west coast of Isabela, a dry landing on a lava field. The vegetation found in this area is sparse and concentrated mainly in the mangrove area and around the lakes. It should be noted that the three kinds of cacti are found here.

The main attractions at Punta Moreno are the coastal lagoons amid black lava flows where there are several species of birds. Here you'll have a panoramic view of three of the most active volcanoes in the Galapagos, which are Sierra Negra, Cerro Azul of Isabela Island and La Cumbre of Fernandina Island.

In the afternoon: Elizabeth Bay

After lunch on board you'll continue on your way to Elizabeth bay, located on Isabela Island's west shore, which is an excellent spot for observing marine life. You'll motor past a few islands where you can usually see Galapagos Penguins; this is one of the best areas to take their photos. A colony of these magnificent birds inhabit a rocky islet at the entrance to Elizabeth Bay.

We'll let our boat drift through a small passage lined with mangroves and eventually emerge into an enclosed cove. We'll turn the motor off and look in the sheltered waters for Marine Turtles, Rays, Flightless Cormorants, Sea Lions, and, circling overhead, Galapagos Hawks.

DAY 13 - FRIDAY

In the morning: Espinoza Point

Punta Espinoza is a narrow ledge of lava and sand that extends from the base of the volcano to the sea. There is a vivid description from Captain Benjamin Morrell who witnessed and recorded an eruption of Fernandina in the 1820's that probably gave rise to the Point. In 1975, there was an uprising, about 90 cm, which is why the pier built for landing can only be used during high tide.

Punta Espinoza is a place famous for its large colonies of Marine Iguanas as well as being the habitat of unique species like the Flightless Cormorant, the Galapagos Penguin, the Galapagos Hawk, and the Galapagos Snake, among others. It's an ideal place to observe the lava cactus (*Brachycerus Nesioticus*), which grow on young lava and survive with little water.

In the afternoon: Vicente Roca Point

Back on board for lunch and a short navigation to Punta Vicente Roca.

During lunch time, we will start to navigate to Punta Vicente Roca on the northern tip of Isabela island, after a couple of hours we will arrive to this visitors place, the activity for the afternoon is snorkelling, Punta Vicente roca is home to sea lions, fur seals, penguins, turtles, flightless cormorants, so there is always the opportunity to find any of these animals in the water. The snorkel takes place along a wall of volcanic ash called tuff stone featuring amazing underwater volcanic formations including a small cave where in season it is possible to see sea turtles. After snorkeling we will come back on board and continue on our way to James island.

DAY 14 - SATURDAY

In the morning: Egas Port

James Bay is a black sand beach located on the west side of James Bay and northwest of Santiago Island. South of the beach is Sugarloaf Volcano, which has deposits of volcanic tuff, the same that helped the formation of the black sand beach. El Cráter is just north of this site, it has a saltwater lagoon, which during the summer dry season becomes a salt mine. Between 1928 and 1930 was the first exploitation of salt; but the efforts did not last long. Then again in 1964 a new attempt was made that lasted for some time.

In the afternoon: Rabida Island

After lunch on board we'll navigate to our next destination, Rabida

Rábida Island consists of a red sand beach, a coastal lagoon behind the beach, and a loop trail. The approximate distance of the trail is 1.1 kilometers. The color of the rocks and sand on the beach is due to the very porous volcanic material, which with the help of environmental factors (rain, salt water and sea breeze), has acted as an oxidizing agent.

The main attraction of this spot is the red sand beach and scenery, aside from the vegetation of the arid zone and the presence of native and endemic species.

DAY 15 - SUNDAY

In the morning: North Seymour

After an early breakfast you'll disembark at North Seymour Island. Here you will see Frigate Birds, the clownish Blue-Footed Booby, and of course the ubiquitous Sea Lions. With luck you'll witness the striking courtship display of the male Frigate Bird, in which he inflates a red balloon-like sac below his throat and struts his stuff for all of the young females. Seymour North, Plaza Sur, Plaza Norte, Baltra, northeastern Santa Cruz, Santa Fe and part of Española, were all formed by uprisings of underwater volcanic lavas. They were part of a volcanic lava table deposited in sheet form along cracks located on the ocean floor. The uprisings occurred sporadically and lasted more than a million years to reach its current level.

All marine fossils found in the archipelago are found in these islands and the best example is the North Channel side of Baltra. The fossils date from the Pleistocene, and specifically in the case of Baltra, one can say that these volcanic tables were close to the surface about a million years ago.

Return to the boat & sail to Baltra Island to catch your plane back to the mainland.

Rate includes:

- All meals (breakfast - lunch - dinner) water with meals.
- Accommodation in double cabins.
- Transfers from the airport to the yacht and vice versa in Galapagos.
- Excursions in the islands with English Speaking Naturalist Guide.
- **Air ticket.**

Rate does not include:

- Galapagos National Park Entrance Fee: USD 100.00 per person.
- Migratory Control Card: USD 20.00 per person.
- Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.
- Snorkelling equipment for rent on board and wetsuit.
- Tips.

Note:

- Rates per person in U.S. Dollars.
- Single occupancy supplement 80% or 100%.
- The route of the ship and the itinerary are subject to change and can vary depending on the regulations and policies of the Galapagos National Park, weather, seasonal changes, safety, etc.

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Quito - Ecuador - South America