

MONSERRAT GALAPAGOS CRUISE ITINERARY D+A

8d/7n Thu-Thu



DAY 1: BALTRA ISLAND / SANTA CRUZ ISLAND (THURSDAY)

Baltra

Transfer to the boat to meet the guide and get on board.

Santa Cruz Highlands Excursion (PM) (2h-3h)

Visit the highlands of Santa Cruz and see the Galápagos giant tortoise in its natural surroundings. Explore the area and its incredible underground lava tunnels – some are more than 1km (.6 mi) long! Wander along the volcanic tubes and keep an eye out for the (mainly) nocturnal barn owls that sometimes roost here.

DAY 2: DRAGON HILL / CHINESE HAT (FRIDAY)

Dragon Hill (AM) (1h-3h)

Visit Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill) for some prime birdwatching. Take a short walk from the beach to a hypersalinic (saltier than the ocean) lagoon frequented by pink flamingos, common stilts, pintail ducks, and other species of birds. Pass through a Scalesia tree forest; endemic to the area, there are only 400 specimens of Scalesia trees left in the world.

Chinese Hat Visit (PM) (1h-2h)

Explore Chinese Hat's beautiful landscape and spectacular white-coral sand beach followed by snorkeling with sea lions and penguins and swimming opportunities in the cove.

Snorkelling (Chinese Hat) (PM) (45m-1h)

Snorkel right from the white-coral sand beach and come face to face with playful sea lions and large schools of tropical fish. Keep an eye out for marine iguanas and penguins too!

DAY 3: EL BARRANCO / DARWIN BAY (SATURDAY)

Today we will be visiting the beautiful and remote Genovesa Island. This northern island, famous for its red-footed colony, is a paradise for bird lovers. It is estimated that about 200,00 Red-footed boobies live on this island.

Prince Phillips's Steps (AM) (2h)

El Barranco or Prince Phillips's Steps as otherwise known, was named after a visit by the British Monarch in 1964. El Barranco's steep 81-foot stairway leads up to a high cliff-face that opens out onto the plateau surrounding Darwin Bay. Here an amazing view can be appreciated. Once at the top of the stairway we will meet Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, mockingbirds, and finches along the way of a palo santo trail. It will also be possible to see wedge-rumped storm petrels swarm and short-eared owls.

Darwin Bay (PM) (1 ½h)

Darwin bay was formed by the collapse of the flooded caldera of Tower Island, another name used for Genovesa. After landing at a small sand and coral beach, it easy to realize why this island is a bird lover paradise. Among the bird species found here, the most common are swallow-tailed and lava gulls, mockingbirds, yellow-crowned night herons, lava herons, Galapagos doves and yellow warblers. We will continue on a short and flat trail to encounter redfooted booby and great frigatebird nests. We will visit a tidal lagoon where sea lions swim playfully ending our path on a cliff with magnificent views of this remote part of the Galapagos.

DAY 4: BLACK TURTLE COVE / BACHAS BEACH (SUNDAY)

Black Turtle Cove Excursion (AM)

Explore the mangroves by panga to find rich marine wildlife between the fresh and salt waters. Keep any eye out for manta rays and sea turtles in this tranquil ecosystem. Whitetip reef sharks can also be seen gliding by.

Bachas Beach Landing (PM) (2h)

Head to Bachas Beach where the sand is made of decomposed coral, making it soft and white, and a favourite site for nesting sea turtles. Spot abundant Sally Lightfoot crabs on the lava rocks along the water's edge -- these crabs will eat anything they can get their claws on! Trek to see a wide range of wildlife, including flamingos, hermit crabs, black necked stilts, and sea lions.

Snorkelling (AM) (45m-1h)

Go snorkelling or swimming right off the white sand beach of Las Bachas. Spot all sorts of marine wildlife in its shallow waters and tidal pools. Bachas is also one of the most important beaches for the green turtle as a nesting site.

DAY 5: TAGUS COVE / URBINA BAY (MONDAY)

Tagus Cove (AM)

Tagus Cove is located on the Northwestern coast of Isabela. It is a historical site visited by Charles Darwin in 1835, where graffiti has been carved into the rock walls by visitors over the past centuries. This spot has been frequented by whalers and pirates since the 1800s that used the area as anchorage. The name of the site dates back to 1814 when it was visited by a British ship, The Tagus, which had anchored there in search of giant tortoises to be used as food supply on the boat.

Here, we will admire a variety of seabirds, such as blue-footed booby, brown noddy, terns, flightless cormorant and Galapagos penguins depending on the season. Occasionally you might see woodpecker finches, the Galapagos hawk, the yellow warbler or a large-billed flycatcher. After a dry landing one, we can climb up the trail to visit Darwin 's Lake. The lake is located on the slopes of Darwin Volcano and is, surprisingly, a salt water lake above sea level. Our naturalist guide will tell you what are the different scientific theories for this occurrence. Meanwhile, in our snorkeling there are chances to see sharks, turtles and sea stars. You may also see various different types of colorful fish.

Urbina Bay (PM)

Urbina Bay is a fascinating visitor site that came to be as the shallow sea bottom uplifted in 1954 showing a large coral reef sticking up above sea level. Because of this, Urbina Bay is one of the newest features in the Galapagos. This visitor site is located at west of Isabela and provides spectacular views of the Alcedo volcano. The long trail starts on the beach where a wet landing is made. In this location, you will likely see wild Galapagos Giant Tortoises and Galapagos Land Iguanas. As the trail circles back towards the shore line you'll come across colonies of the unique Galapagos Flightless Cormorant which lost its ability to

fly. This is also a great spot for snorkeling, as you can come close to a Galapagos Penguin Colony and see Galapagos Marine Iguanas feeding underwater.

DAY 6: ESPINOZA POINT / VICENTE ROCA POINT (TUESDAY)

Espinoza Point (AM)

Espinoza Point on Fernandina Island is one of the most pristine islands in the world, with none of man's introduced species to date. From here we can see the island of Isabela across the Bolívar Channel, an area that boasts some of the highest diversity of endemic sea fauna in the Galapagos. Fernandina is the youngest of the Galapagos Islands and a visitor favorite.

When landing, check out the tidal pools where there is abundance of sea life, including small fish and mollusks. If we are lucky, a sea turtle or ray may be trapped in the pools. A little further ahead we will pass through some marine iguana burrows and sea lion colonies. The trail continues to where several flightless cormorants have their nests. This remarkable bird is only found in western Galapagos, and experts estimate that they may only be a few hundred individuals in total.

Vicente Roca Point (PM)

Vicente Roca Point has great deep-water snorkeling at one of the richest marine havens on Earth (Bolivar Channel). Vicente Roca Point is renowned for its Galápagos green turtles, which are very numerous on the bay. Although the spot is known for its high concentration of green turtles, sharks and rays can also be observed when underwater visibility is good. We take a dinghy ride along the coast to observe a great diversity of sea and coastal birds; Nazca and blue-footed boobies, noddies, brown pelicans, penguins, flightless cormorants. The upwelling of coldwater currents in this part of the Galapagos gives rise to an abundance of marine life. Our snorkeling will take us along the cliffs and offers the chance of exploring two shallow underwater caves with rich marine wildlife.

DAY 7: PUERTO EGAS / BUCCANNER COVE (WEDNESDAY)

Morning excursion to Puerto Egas to see the salt crater as well as a dark sand beach and tidal pools. Continue to Playa Espumilla, one of the most idyllic beaches in the Galápagos Islands, which boasts thick mangroves and flamingo and sea turtle nesting sites. Head to Buccaneer Cove to witness the towering cliff wall rock formations.

Santiago Island has seen its share of human activity from whalers and pirates over the years, and despite the introduction of goats to the island many years ago, the wildlife of Santiago has otherwise flourished and provides outstanding viewing opportunities. The island boasts marine iguanas, sea lions, fur seals, land and sea turtles, among others. Enjoy great wildlife viewing both on land and in the water.

Puerto Egas Visit (AM)

Explore the spectacular shoreline of Puerto Egas, also known as James Bay. Spot a great number of shore birds and reptiles – the beach area is home to a plethora of wildlife.

Snorkelling (Puerto Egas) (AM)

Puerto Egas (45m-1h)

Grab a snorkel and jump into the water right off the beach to explore Puerto Egas' interesting underwater world. Keep your eyes peeled for rays, turtles, and reefsharks while snorkelling. After, visit the large tidal pool area – marine iguanas and Sally Lightfoot crabs are everywhere.

Playa Espumilla Excursion (PM)

Head to Playa Espumilla, one of the most idyllic beaches in the Galápagos Islands, which has thick mangroves and sea turtle nesting sites.

Buccaneer Cove Visit (PM)

Jump into the panga and cruise alongside high cliffs and rock formations on this visit to Buccaneer Cove, which was a favourite hideout for pirates looking to stock up their boats with food and water. Spot sea lions relaxing on the beach and sea birds nesting in the cove – there's lots to see at this site.

DAY 8 NORTH SEYMOUR / BALTRA AIRPORT (THURSDAY)

North Seymour Island Visit (AM)

Have an amazing wildlife experience visiting North Seymour Island – this island is teeming with life! Follow trails to see all the action (you may need to give way to a passing sea lion or marine iguana while walking). See blue-footed booby nests where mating pairs perform their courtship dance. Head to a rocky shore to see flocks of pelicans having lunch in a dive bomb feeding frenzy, then turn inland to a large nesting site of magnificent frigate birds. These huge, dark acrobats have two-metre (6.5 ft) wingspans, and males, with their puffed-up scarlet throat sacks, sit precariously perched in low bushes to watch over their equally large chicks. Top off the excursion with a snorkel among sea lions and rays.

Baltra

Disembark at Baltra for flight back to Ecuador mainland.