



## 6 DAY CRUISE - CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ISLANDS

**Starting day: Wednesday**

**Ending Day: Monday**

**Islands to be visited:**

**- Santa Cruz - South Plaza - Santa Fe - San Cristobal - Española - Floreana -**

A journey filled with discoveries lays ahead of you. Uncover the mysteries of “The Enchanted Islands” alongside expert naturalist guides and share the excitement of discovering a lost paradise, where dragons walk the lands and sirens swim freely in the turquoise waters of the Pacific Ocean.

We will visit one of the best snorkeling sites the archipelago has to offer and explore its oldest islands, home of one of the most magnificent marine birds in the Islands, the waved albatross.

## Day 1 WEDNESDAY

*Arrival and visit to one of the treasures of the island, the Santa Cruz's highlands.*

### **AM: Baltra Island - Arrival**

**Landing type: Dry landing, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.**

**Possible activities: Walking.**

Our flight will take us to the small island of Baltra. Formerly a military base, Baltra's runway was reconditioned to serve as a civilian airport and the gateway to this small paradise in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Upon arrival, we clear the Galapagos National Park checkpoint. Customs agents check passports and the transit control card, after check in, we enter the islands (if you have not previously paid your Galapagos entrance fee you will be asked to pay on spot, payments are cash only: \$100 USD for adults and \$50 USD for children under 12 years of age). Please consult rates may change without notice from the Galapagos authorities.

We are welcomed by our naturalist guide and staff at the airport's exit, *please remember to collect your luggage from the belt.*

### **PM: Santa Cruz Island - Highlands**

**Landing type: Dry landing.**

**Possible activities: Walking, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.**

The Galapagos Islands are filled with surprises and the highlands of Santa Cruz are one of them. The presence of the now extinct volcanic cones, that once gave birth to the island, have created unique and complex ecosystems among them, the cloud forest of the highlands. Hidden in the mist, this exuberant forest is the home of giant Galapagos tortoises, colorful birds, and hundreds of plants that give a unique touch of green to the slopes of the now extinct volcanoes. We will hike with our guide, discovering this buoyant habitat, and then we will head to the town of Puerto Ayora where we board our yacht and continue our adventure.

Meals included: Lunch & Dinner

**Day 2 THURSDAY**

*On our second day of discovery we walk among dragons over lava fields, on an island that seems to be lost in time, to the era when dinosaurs ruled the earth.*

**AM: South Plaza Island**

**Landing type: Dry landing, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.**

**Possible activities: Walking.**

Our morning visit takes us to South Plaza island, covered by sesuvium plants; this island seems to change its color depending on the season, from an intense green and yellow to a bright red in the dry season. This Island is perfect to take some amazing photos. During our hike, we look for yellow and red land iguanas. Easily recognizable for their unique skin pigmentations, these reptiles have adapted to survive in this island and make you feel as if you were walking among creatures lost in time. We can also see here a large colony of sea lions and marine birds that have made this colorful island their home.

After hiking, we get back on board and prepare for lunch.

**PM: Santa Fe Island**

**Landing type: Dry landing.**

**Possible activities: Walking ,comfortable walking shoes are recommended, kayaking, panga ride, snorkeling.**

Santa Fe island might be one of the smallest in the archipelago, but don't let the small surface of this island deceive you; Santa Fe has one of the highest counts of endemic species, such as: the Santa Fe land iguana, the rice mouse, and the lizard of Santa Fe, to name a few. The high endemism on the island is due to the fact that Santa Fe is one of the oldest in the archipelago. With no options to migrate, the animals that arrived at the ancient island were forced to adapt to this unique habitat, thus creating populations of new species that settled in hundreds of years ago.

During our hike, we can see some of these unique species and also take photos of the beautiful forest that has grown on its surface. Composed mostly of cacti, palo santo trees, and opuntias, Santa Fe presents the perfect opportunity to take breathtaking photos.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Day 3 FRIDAY**

*Mysterious islands that seem to appear and disappear at their own whim in the dense mist of the Pacific Ocean, the “Encantadas” - as they were called by the Spanish explorers - are the home of imps and sirens. Fairy tales created a magic place that will come to life during your cruise of the Galapagos Islands.*

**AM: San Cristobal Island- Isla Lobos****Landing type: Dry landing.****Possible activities: Hiking, comfortable walking shoes are recommended, snorkeling.**

Sirens and nymphs that dwell in the sea, this is how early visitors described the playful and beautiful sea lions that made these islands their home. Our morning visit takes us to one of the largest colonies of these curious mammals. Here we are able to see playful pups basking in the sun and playing in the shallow shores of the bay. Snorkeling here is the best opportunity to swim alongside these cheerful animals and enjoy their company while schools of fish dance near us and rays swim by.

A refreshing activity to start a day full of discoveries.

**PM: San Cristobal Island- La Galapaguera****Landing type: Dry landing.****Possible activities: Walking, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.**

During the XVII and part of the XVIII century, the Galapagos island was a popular hideout for pirates and buccaneers that used its resources to resupply their ship holds. A popular source of meat at the time were the Galapagos tortoises; their capability to survive without food or drink for extended periods of time made this one of the most valued goods that the island had to offer. But the extensive hunt of this animal destroyed entire populations and even drove some of them to extinction. In the present, huge efforts have been undertaken in order to ensure the survival of this species, one of them is the creation of Galapagueras. Nurseries created specifically for Galapagos tortoises where they are taking care of since they are small eggs, until they are in conditions to be released in the wild.

We visit the Galapaguera of San Cristobal, where we are able to see these peaceful giants during all their live stages. From small eggs, no larger than a chicken's, to cute hatchlings that require lots of care, to the amazing adult Galapagos tortoise that can weigh up to 400 pounds. We learn more about the efforts undertaken to preserve these animals and the persons in charge of this noble task.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Day 4 SATURDAY**

*Idyllic beaches of white sand bordered by turquoise waters, and kissed by the equatorial sun, Española surely is a piece of heaven on Earth.*

**AM: Española Island - Gardner Bay**

**Landing type: Wet landing.**

**Possible activities: Short hike, snorkeling, kayaking, panga ride.**

As we learned from our previous visit to Santa Fe island, the age of an island plays an important role in how life develops on said island, and Española is no exception. Located east from the hotspot that gave birth to the archipelago, erosion from winds and tides have created a unique habitat where life has flourished into hundreds of shapes and forms.

We disembark at Gardner Bay, welcomed by bright white sand and crystal clear waters, home to sea lions and marine iguanas that rest peacefully in front of us, it is a beach that is truly postcard-worthy. A tranquil bay invites us to do some snorkeling and discover the lush life of the rich Pacific Ocean.

A dinghy ride takes us to the Osborn Islet, a small rocky formation that has become the favorite nesting place for many marine birds, such as blue footed boobies and lava gulls.

**PM: Española Island- Suarez Point**

**Landing type: Dry landing.**

**Possible activities: Hiking, good shoes are required.**

A large colony of marine iguanas greet visitors at the dock of Punta Suarez. Marine iguanas are the only ones that are able to dive in order to feed from the algae that grows in the volcanic walls of the islands. Their peculiar appearance earned them the name “imps of darkness” as it was recorded in Darwin's journal. Despite the unflattering name that marine iguanas received, they are one of the most interesting species of the Galapagos.

We continue exploring the island using the path that leads to a wonderful lookout point over a small cliff, from here we can see a very unusual formation, a blowhole. Capable of elevating water columns a few feet over the cliff, this blowhole is one of the many attractions in Española and certainly a fun spectacle for all to enjoy.

But this might not be the most eye-catching feature, since Española is also home to an incredibly special bird, the waved albatross. With a wingspan of over 6.5 ft., the waved albatross is the most magnificent bird to colonize this island, and Española is their only nesting site. During mating season, an intricate courtship dance takes place that will join pairs for life, since albatrosses are a monogamous species.

Truly a visit that will forever be remembered

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## Day 5 SUNDAY

*Floreana, from green sandy beaches to turquoise waters and bright pink flamingos a festival of colors awaits to be discovered.*

### **AM: Floreana Island - Cormorant Point, Devil's Crown**

**Landing type: Wet landing.**

**Possible activities: Hiking, panga ride, snorkeling.**

Our morning visit takes us to the green beach of Punta Cormorant. A high concentration of olivine crystals gives the beach its distinctive coloration. A short walk along the beach brings us to a trail that leads to a saltwater lagoon. Here, bright pink flamingos can be found feeding from the various crustaceans that live in these waters, and whose pigmentation gives the bright colors to the feathers of these gracious birds.

After enjoying the sight of the lagoon and its illustrious visitors, we will head to what is considered the best place for snorkeling in the entire archipelago, the Devil's Crown. A pointy rock formation that bulges over the calm ocean and forms a circular shape gave this place its name. Despite the curious and intimidating name, a magical underwater world awaits you here. Don't miss this incredible opportunity to swim with some of the most beautiful creatures in what is one of the most important marine reserves on the globe.

### **PM: Floreana Island- Post Office Bay, Baroness Lookout**

**Landing type: Wet landing.**

**Possible activities: Hiking, kayaking, panga ride, snorkeling.**

To end a day of exciting adventures, we visit Post Office Bay. Once the most effective way of communicating with loved ones back home, Post Office Bay was the home of a very unorthodox postal office that allowed sailors and whalers during the 18th century to send news of their voyages to their homelands. This ingenious method consisted of a simple wood barrel where sailors would deposit their letters and rely on the goodwill and camaraderie of fellow sailors returning back home to deliver the mail. No stamps or fees were required and the system depended on trust and the kindness of strangers.

To this date this tradition continues among fellow sailors; letters and postcards are left inside a wooden barrel, waiting to be picked up by a kind stranger that is willing to deliver the letter to its destination. Be part of this quaint tradition and leave a letter or a postcard for a loved one back home, and if you can, take one or two letters with you to their final destination. Help to keep this tradition based on trust and fellowship alive.

Before you set sail to our next destination, remember to ask your guide to tell you a bit about the human history on the island. We are sure you will enjoy the peculiar history of the man and women that colonized this picturesque place.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## Day 6 MONDAY

*Galapagos is a natural laboratory where life has tested its own amazing capability to adapt and conquer even the most inhospitable conditions. A capability so remarkable that it inspired Darwin to write The Theory of Evolution and defy the beliefs of the scientific community, changing forever how we will understand life on Earth.*

**AM: Santa Cruz Island- Charles Darwin Research Station, Baltra Airport**

**Landing type: Dry landing.**

**Possible activities: Walking, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.**

One of the most important figures to arrive on the islands was Charles Darwin on board the HMS Beagle in 1835. It is impossible to mention the Galapagos Islands without relating them with Darwin and its famous book "The Origin of Species" and his Theory of Evolution. A theory that, since it was published, inspired scientists from different places and periods in history to visit and preserve the islands that marveled Darwin so many years ago.

In 1964, in order to support the scientific community's efforts to preserve and understand this complex ecosystem, the Charles Darwin Station was inaugurated, thus providing proper equipment and laboratories that would allow botanists, geologists, and biologists to study the intricate secrets that the "Enchanted Islands" hide. On our visit, we will be able to know more about the different projects carried out by the foundation and we will also be able to visit the Galapaguera of Santa Cruz. In the station a number of Galapagos species are bred so we will be able to see some of them in their adult stages.

We take an overland transfer by coach to Baltra Island Airport in order to take our flight back to mainland Quito or Guayaquil and then home.

At the airport, the guide and a member of the crew will assist you during the check-in process and accompany you to the security gates, they will say goodbye and wish you a safe trip back home.

Please remember to show your transit control card when requested.

Meals included: Breakfast.