

ISABELA II

Northern Galapagos Itinerary



Itinerary is a guide only. Our route and programme varies according to National Park policies and regulations, weather conditions, seasonal changes, safety reasons and the wildlife we encounter.

Tuesday

Tortoise Reserve at Cerro Colorado (San Cristóbal Island)

Arrival by plane to San Cristóbal Island and transfer to La Pinta Yacht for cabin assignment, introductory briefing and lunch. After lunch disembark at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (dry landing) for a 45-minute bus ride to the highlands of San Cristóbal. Here, the National Park service has created a site to preserve and re-establish the population of giant tortoises of San Cristóbal Island, affected due to hunting by early colonizers. Hike through a transition forest, where terrestrial birds such as finches, mockingbirds, doves can be seen. Take the bus back to the town. Lunch on board.

Galapaguera Cerro Colorado (San Cristóbal Island)

After lunch, dry landing at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, and a 40-minute bus ride to the south shore of the island, passing the historical highlands of San Cristóbal island. At Cerro Colorado, visit the breeding centre of the highly endangered giant tortoises in the midst of a fantastic deciduous forest, home to dozens of bird species and the endemic San Cristóbal lava lizard. Back on board late afternoon for a welcome cocktail, briefing and dinner

Wednesday

Prince Philip's Steps (Tower/Genovesa Island)

The morning starts with a very interesting panga ride along the cliffs and then disembark (dry landing) on rocks for a steep climb (90 feet) up some stairs. Once at the top of the stairs, the land is flat, allowing for a stimulating walk of about a mile to the other side of this small island, observing large colonies of masked boobies, frigate birds and storm petrels. Those not wishing to disembark can enjoy a longer panga ride along the cliffs (depending on weather conditions). Lunch on board.

Darwin Bay (Tower/Genovesa Island)

In the afternoon, a wet landing for an easy stroll observing thousands of birds, mainly frigate birds, red footed and masked boobies, gulls, herons, finches and mockingbirds. Optional walk over sharp lava and uneven terrain for dramatic views, or else return to the beach to enjoy swimming and snorkelling at this beautiful natural harbour. The more adventurous can snorkel along the cliffs or paddle sea kayaks. Briefing and dinner.

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Thursday

Buccaneer Cove (James/Santiago Island)

After breakfast, enjoy a coastal exploration along the impressive cliffs of Buccaneer Cove. Learn about the history of Santiago Island, its relevance for the whalers, pirates and early researchers, including Darwin's epic voyage in 1835, and the conservation projects aimed at eradicating feral species (a fence stretched along the rocky outcrop is visible to save native plants from the once existing enormous goat population). Today the island is free of feral goats, and the cove is home to a large number of marine birds, sea lions and inter-tidal organisms. Enjoy fantastic natural formations such as the "Elephant Rock", "The Bishop" and an impressive natural cave. This is a great site for snorkelling too! Lunch on board.

Puerto Egas (James/Santiago Island)

A wet landing for a mid-length walk. Most of the landscape is tuff-stone layers and lava flows. This is a great opportunity to see land and marine birds. At low tide, marine iguanas graze upon the algae beds and there is also a colony of fur-sea lions which can be observed up-close. Opportunity for snorkelling and swimming from the beach after the walk, or a ride on the glass-bottom boat. Briefing and dinner.

Friday

Punta Espinoza (Fernandina Island)

The morning brings us to the youngest island of the archipelago, Fernandina. Disembark (dry landing) for a one-mile walk. Punta Espinoza has an amazing combination of barrenness with lots of wildlife. Having no introduced mammals, Fernandina has a very unique environment with the highest density of marine iguanas, sharing their space with sea lions, sally-light foot crabs, hawks, penguins and the flightless cormorant. Lunch on board.

Tagus Cove (Isabela Island)

On the northwest of Isabela, secluded Tagus Cove provided a favourite anchorage for pirates and whalers over the centuries. Old graffiti is still found on its walls. The vegetation in the area includes the fragrant palo santo trees. These white-barked trees are leafless and look dead most of the year. They leaf and spring back to life in the wet season. An uphill hike takes guests to the back of Darwin Crater, filled with salt water. The view at the end of the trail is worth the climb. Darwin is one of Isabela's six volcanoes, a remarkable contrast to the lower islands to the east of the archipelago. Possibilities to swim, snorkel or ride kayaks. There is no beach in the area, so these activities are done from the pangas. Briefing and dinner.

Saturday

Urbina Bay (Isabela Island)

After breakfast (wet landing) disembark at Urbina Bay, located at the foot of volcanoes Alcedo and Darwin, west of Isabela Island, the result of an uplifting of the ocean in 1954. Here you can find corals, shells, and many other calcareous organisms exposed above water. This area is also home to large and very colourful Galápagos land iguanas, giant tortoises (occasionally); a good spot to observe Darwin's finches. Along the shoreline, after the hike, guests may encounter flightless cormorants and see penguins while snorkelling in this beautiful cove. Lunch on board.

Punta Vicente Roca (Isabela Island)

Depending on the conditions of the ocean, it will be possible to schedule a snorkelling outing along the cliffs of partly-sunken Ecuador Volcano, on the northern tip of Isabela Island. Since there is no landing site at this location, the coastal exploration is by

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dinghy, while the naturalist guide explains the dramatic geology of the area with remains of lava flows and tuff stone layers. This is the nesting place for flightless cormorants, the only existing marine birds in the world other than penguins that have changed their condition of flying birds to diving birds. Wildlife here also includes sea lions, Galápagos fur seals, Galápagos penguins, blue-footed and Nazca boobies and noddy terns. This area has a very rich marine life, and is seasonally visited by green sea turtles. Briefing and dinner.

Sunday

Rábida Island (Jervis)

Disembark at Rábida Island (wet landing) on a red-coloured beach, due to the unusually high content of iron in the volcanic material. A gratifying stroll along the beach of this small island (1.9 sq. mi.) allows the observation of a large colony of sea lions, marine iguanas, mockingbirds, yellow warblers and several species of Darwin's finches. Very close to the beach, hidden behind a strip of green saltbush, is a salt pond where at times greater flamingos migrate. This is a great place to snorkel from the beach, both for beginners as well as for experienced snorkelers, due to the unique combination of underwater species and submarine landscapes. During navigation to our next island, dolphins are often spotted. Lunch on board.

Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill) (Santa Cruz Island)

The north shore of Santa Cruz hosts Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill). Dry landing and a walk that includes a brackish water lagoon frequented by lagoon birds, including stilts, pintail ducks, sandpipers, sanderlings, and more. Further inland, the trail offers a beautiful view of the bay and the western islands of the archipelago. This area is a natural nesting site for land iguanas, constantly monitored and assisted by the Charles Darwin Research Station. The arid-zone vegetation can be a rewarding location for bird watching, where Darwin's finches, Galápagos mockingbirds, the endemic Galápagos flycatcher, and yellow warblers are regular sightings. Tonight our expedition plan will reveal the interesting sites of the day ahead.

Monday

Baltra Island

After breakfast, departure to the port and airport to take the flight back to the mainland

IMPORTANT NOTES:

The itineraries and program are subject to change without prior notice, due mainly to adjustments in the policies and regulations of the Galápagos National Park, weather conditions, seasonal changes and safety reasons.



Dry landing: guests step from the dinghy onto rocks or a dock.

Wet landing: as the dinghy edges onto a sandy beach, guests step into knee-deep water and wade ashore





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