

# ISABELA II

## Southern 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.

### **Friday**

#### **El Chato (Santa Cruz Island)**

Arrival by plane to Baltra Island and transfer overland Santa Cruz Island and the town of Puerto Ayora. En route make a stop in the green hilly highlands of Santa Cruz to visit El Chato Reserve, one of the best places in the islands to see giant tortoises in their natural habitat. The tortoises are easy to spot, lumbering around, eating grass and leaves and wallowing in the small pools that are common in the reserve. You may also spot some highland birds, like cattle egrets, mockingbirds, finches or flycatchers. There are several lava tunnels in the reserve, a great place to spot the barn owl. There is also a small lagoon covered in red algae where gallinules and Galápagos pintails can be found. Continue on to Puerto Ayora and Finca Bay Eco Hotel for lunch.

#### **Charles Darwin Research Station**

After lunch visit the Charles Darwin Research Station and the 'rearing in captivity' programme for the giant tortoises. Here, guests witness the efforts and results of all the field work done in the name of science. An impressive giant prickly-pear cactus forest and many land birds can be also seen. Then, a stroll along the main street of Puerto Ayora allows guests to get a feel for local Galapagueños life while browsing the many handicraft and souvenir shops. Embarkation, cabin assignments and introductory briefing. Briefing and dinner.

### **Saturday**

#### **Asilo de la Paz [Baroness Cove] & Post office Bay (Floreana Island)**

Morning disembarkation at Puerto Velasco Ibarra (dry landing) and a bus ride to the highlands of Floreana Island. At Asilo de la Paz the hike is primarily of historical interest for guests. It goes past a cave allegedly once used by the first inhabitant of Galápagos – the Irishman Patrick Watkins - and also visits the freshwater spring which served as a source of water for early settlers. Near Asilo de la Paz the National Park Service has built a corral with giant tortoises; however, these are specimens from other islands, as the Floreana Island subspecies of giant tortoise is extinct. Here birdwatchers can spot the medium tree finch (endemic to the highlands of Floreana). Then, a wet landing at the historic barrel that served as a post office in the archipelago, to learn about the human

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side of the islands, its early inhabitants and the adventures of pirates and whalers. Back on board for lunch.

### **Punta Cormoran (Cormorant Point, Floreana Island)**

Disembark at Punta Cormorant (wet landing) at an olivine-crystal beach for an easy walk that includes a brackish water lagoon where bird species like greater flamingos, pintail ducks, common stilts, herons, sandpipers, and others may be observed. This outing also includes a white-sand beach where sea turtles come out at night to nest (from December to May). Possibility of snorkelling from the beach; a ride in our glass-bottom boat; or for advanced snorkelers, a panga ride to "The Devil's crown", if conditions permit. Briefing and dinner.

### **Sunday**

### **Punta Suárez (Española (Hood) Island)**

Morning outing at Punta Suárez (dry landing) for an exciting walk on lava/boulder terrain to visit its unique sea bird colonies, including waved albatrosses (April - December), Nazca boobies, blue-footed boobies, swallow-tail gulls, as well as a view of the Galápagos famous "blow-hole". Among its land birds, the Hood island mockingbird, and three species of Darwin's finches are common highlights. Also, look for red-green-black marine iguanas. Back on board for lunch.

### **Gardner Bay (Española Island)**

In the afternoon, disembark (wet landing) at a white coral beach for a short walk to observe the sea lions, mockingbirds, finches or enjoy the beach. There is great snorkelling in this area, or a ride aboard the glass-bottom boat. Briefing and dinner.

### **Monday**

### **Punta Pitt (San Cristóbal Island)**

Morning disembarkation (wet landing) on the northeastern side of the island. Pitt Point is an eroded tuff cone; the trail that ascends from the beach provides spectacular views of the shoreline. This is the only site in the Galápagos where the three species of boobies can be found together, as well as the two frigate species, plus a colony of bachelor sea lions along the beach. After the walk, if conditions are favourable, there is a chance to swim from the beach. Lunch on board.

### **Cerro Brujo (San Cristóbal Island)**

A dinghy ride along the shores of tuff-stone layers takes guests to **Cerro Brujo's** white coraline beach (wet landing). The beach is a large expanse, great for walking, with rewarding birdwatching with good views of seabirds like blue-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, herons, frigate birds, and more shore birds. Also, look out for Galápagos sea lions. Highlights ashore include the Chatham (San Cristóbal) mockingbird, Chatham lava lizard; both species are endemic to this island, and seen nowhere else in the Galápagos. These are the same shores that Charles Darwin walked upon, back in September 1835, as San Cristóbal was the first island where he set foot in the Galápagos. Evening Cocktail, briefing and dinner.

### **Tuesday Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (San Cristóbal (Chatham) Island)**

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

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### **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

