

SANTA CRUZ

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.

MONDAY

Baltra Island

Morning arrival to Baltra Island by TAME flight and immediate transfer to the dock to board the M/V Santa Cruz. Welcome introductory briefing and lunch.

Las Bachas (Santa Cruz Island)

After WWII, US military barges were beached and abandoned here. Locals referred to the beach as the barges beach, a name that morphed to "bachas". Today it is an important nesting area for the east Pacific green sea turtle. Located on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island, it is a glorious white beach, with several brackish lagoons only a few steps away from the sea. These lagoons are the feeding grounds of various wading birds, from stilts to flamingos. Briefing and dinner.

Tuesday

Buccaneer Cove (James Island)

After breakfast, enjoy a coastal exploration along the impressive cliffs of Buccaneer's 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 Island)

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 a colony of fur-sea lions. Opportunity for snorkeling and swimming from the beach after the walk, or a ride on the glass-bottom boat. Briefing and dinner.

Wednesday

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

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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.

Bartolomé Island

Disembark at Bartolomé Island (dry landing) for a hike to the summit. A great way to start the day! This is a steep climb aided by a wooden staircase with handrails; the view from the top is worth the effort. Dinghy ride around colossal Pinnacle Rock, then time to enjoy the beach (wet landing) and some snorkelling, possibly with Galápagos penguins, or else a ride in the glass-bottom boat for great views of the underwater world. Briefing and dinner.

Thursday

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. Briefing and dinner.

Friday

Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (San Cristóbal (Chatham) Island)

After breakfast, optional departure to see the breeding programme of giant tortoises at Cerro Colorado. Learn about his endangered species, and its promising recovery. This site is 45 minutes by bus, on the south shore of San Cristóbal Island. Return to town and transfer to the 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.

