



## LAND BASED PROGRAM 8D/7N

We offer many day tours where guests can visit neighboring islands in the Galapagos. Combining a stay in our hotel, along with a few days on tour gives the flexibility of spending some free time in town, or using a full day to explore surrounding areas, all with their specialized vegetation and landscape, and diversity in animals.

All tours begin in the morning and guests are picked up at the hotel. Lunch is provided on board the daily tour boats, and you arrive back at the hotel in the late afternoon.

A few of our sample day tours:

### **DESCRIPTION:**

#### **DAY 1 – TRANSFER IN – VISIT CHARLES DARWIN STATION**

Transfer from the airport hotel to the Charles Darwin Research Station.

Your flight will land on Baltra Island where our guide will be waiting to accompany you from the airport to our hotel in Puerto Ayora. The journey takes approximately 1 hour, and requires several changes before arriving at the Itabaca channel, where onward transport to Puerto Ayora will be waiting.

During the journey, you will make a stop at the “Crateres Gemelos” (Twin Craters) which are found on either side of the road leading to Puerto Ayora. These impressive formations were formed when underground magma chambers collapsed, leaving two large craters. The craters lie within lush Scalesia cloud forest, a high-altitude plant species that is endemic to the Galapagos. This area is also home to the Carpenter Finch, which uses tools to search for food. There may also be opportunities to see the Pajaro Brujo (Vermillion Flycatcher), a small red-breasted bird.

In the afternoon, your guide will lead a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station, which was home of the famous hundred-year-old tortoise. Solitary George came from Pinta Island and died in June 2012.

The Station has a visitor center where you will learn about the history of the islands, as well as various enclosures with information detailing conservation programs for the wildlife of the Galapagos.

#### **DAY 2 – DAY TRIP NAVIGATION (FD) BARTOLOME**

The trip to this island sets off from Puerto Ayora early in the morning at 6:00. You will transfer to the Itabaca channel, where the boat crew will be waiting. The journey to Bartolome takes approximately 2 hours.

During the trip, you may be accompanied by schools of dolphins jumping alongside the yacht. On arrival at the island, disembarkation from the boat is dry. You will take a short walk and climb the steps leading up to the famous Roca del Pinaculo viewpoint (Pinnacle Rock), one of the most iconic views of the Galapagos. As you climb the steps, you will gradually become immersed in the fantastic volcanic landscape where dozens of red stone craters are spread over the island giving the appearance of a moonscape.

In the afternoon, after lunch on board the boat, with a bit of luck you will be able to observe the small colonies of Galapagos Penguins (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) that nest in the area. You will then have the opportunity to snorkel with the Penguins as well as Sea Turtles and Starfish. The island has two beaches which are connected by dunes and are popular with nesting Sea Turtles. The beaches provide the perfect location for observing Tiger Sharks.

You will return to the hotel at around 16:00.

### **DAY 3 – DAY TRIP NAVIGATION (FD) SEYMOUR**

You will be picked up from the hotel at 08h00 and taken to the channel of Itabaca, where the staff of your boat will be waiting for you. The trip will take around one hour and close to your arrival you will be able to spot grey shapes from the *Bursera Graveolens* trees that almost never carry any leaves. Seymour was created many million years ago due to the elevation of tectonic plates and the island has a flat shape with many small cliffs that serve as home for the local seabirds. Swallow-tailed gulls and frigate birds overfly the island, frigate males showing their big red throat pouches to find their mate. Meanwhile along the path, many blue footed boobies will be nesting or executing their mating ritual in which they dance and whistle in a very unique way. It is also common to see these birds flying near the coasts looking for food and dive into the water at high speed, a stunt that they are only able to perform due to a special waterproof protection on their wings. Seymour is probably the island which best resumes the known Galapagos species, as you will also be able to see sea lions, sea and land iguanas, pelicans, royal frigate birds and many others.

You will be returning to the hotel at around 16h00, allowing you to relax in the hotel or enjoy a walk through town before dinner time.

### **DAY 4 – DAY TRIP NAVIGATION (FD) PLAZAS SOUTH OR SANTA FE**

#### **PLAZAS SOUTH ISLAND**

You will be picked up at 08h00 and be taken to the Channel of Itabaca where the staff of your boat will be expecting you. The trip will take around 90 minutes until you arrive at the dock of Plazas South, a small island of only 13 hectare, but with such a big diversity in fauna and flora that it is known as one of the favorite places for visitors. The landing will be made in between Plazas South and North, second of which is not allowed visitors and only used for scientific purpose. You will be greeted by turquoise water that contrasts perfectly with the black color of the volcanic rocks of the islands. Big colonies of sea lions lie on the shores, their males always aware of any intruder. Impressive opuntias grow near the coast and a big carpet of sea-purslanes covers almost the whole island and turns it red during the dry season. In between land and sea iguanas will be resting and taking a sun bath. The cohabitation of these two species has created a hybrid species that can be seen on Plazas South. Additionally, the island is perfect for spotting sea birds, such as masked boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, lava gulls and frigate birds. You will be back at the hotel at around 16h00.

Or alternative option is:

#### **SANTA FE ISLAND**

This tour leaves at 8h00 and you might board the boat in Puerto Ayora or the Channel of Itabaca, depending on the yacht you will be taking that day. The trip to Santa Fe takes about 2 hours. This island is the home to several land iguana species, as well as one endemic type of this specie, the *Conolophus Pallidus*, that only inhabits Santa Fe and has a pale yellow color and is of a bigger size than other land iguanas. You can also find four different types of endemic rodents, but being night active, they will probably not show themselves during the tour. Nevertheless, they are of great importance for the proper function of the food chain. Several studies talk about Santa Fe as one of the oldest islands of the archipel, being over 3 million years old. The turquoise water around the island is perfect for snorkeling and known as one of the best spots for this activity with a high probability of seeing sea turtles, sea lions, tropical fish and squids.

You will return to the hotel at around 17h00.

## **DAY 5 – DAY TRIP NAVIGATION (FD) FLOREANA**

At 7h00 in the morning a speed boat will be waiting for you on the docks of Puerto Ayora. The trip will take 2 hours until you arrive in Puerto Velasco Ibarra, a small village that reminds you of the first colonies of the Galapagos. Floreana is famous for its mystery stories evolving around its first inhabitants, Doctor Ritter and Dora Strauch and the Wittmer family. One of the spots to visit is the “Cave of the Pirates” which is located near a fresh water fountain and served as only source of fresh water for the families that lived there and was called the Asylum of Peace by the Wittmers. The incredible stories of these inhabitants come to life during your trip, which is also the perfect opportunity to spot birds, such as the medium tree finch, endemic to this island, the vermilion flycatcher and the Maria canary bird. Once you arrive in town, you will visit the breeding center for Galapagos Tortoises and will have lunch in a small restaurant nearby. In the afternoon you will be taken to the “Lobería” to see colonies of sea lions and to do some snorkeling in one of the best places for this activity. You will be back in Puerto Ayora by 17h00.

## **DAY 6 – DAY TRIP NAVIGATION (FD) ISABELA**

At 7h00 the speed boat will be expecting you on the main dock of Puerto Ayora. The trip takes approximately 2 hours until you arrive at Puerto Villamil, the only populated center on the island of Isabela. The first visit will take you to the “Planchonales”, a place where you can observe big lava formations due to recent volcanic eruptions and where fauna and flora are yet to be born. The trip continues to the hill “Orchillas”, from where you can enjoy a beautiful view over the port and the wetlands. The Beach of Love is a small resting spot on this tour, which also allows you to spot blue-footed boobies, sea iguanas and tropical birds.

You will take your lunch at a small restaurant in town and your last stop will be the interpretation center where you will learn more about the work that the National Park Galapagos has done in favor of conservation of species. You will be back at the hotel at around 17h00.

## **DAY 7 – TORTUGA BAY & HIGHLANDS OF SANTA CRUZ**

Your guide will pick you up at 8h00 and start the tour to Tortuga Bay. Don't forget to take sun protection and water, as you will start with a one hour walk to the beach. During this walk you will spot different types of finches and cactus throughout the whole path. Tortuga Bay has been given its name by the many sea turtles that nest on this beach. The beach is split into the so called wild beach and the calm beach and you will be able to walk along the shore and see sea iguanas that contrast with the beautiful landscape of white sand. It is not recommendable to go swimming on the wild beach as it is known for its strong currents, but once you reach the calm beach you can go for a swim and enjoy the calm water surrounded by mangroves.

You will return the same way to the hotel and have your lunch there.

In the afternoon the trip will continue to the highlands of Santa Cruz, the home to the biggest tortoise population on the Archipel. During the trip you might experience a slight change of the weather conditions, as this area is colder and humid. Many private properties are located in the highlands and are used for agriculture and cattling and the protection of endemic species of the area. This place is perfect for spotting birds, the neotropic cormorant, the paint-billed crake, the Galapagos crake or the vermilion flycatcher. Before returning you will experience an exciting hike through the lava tunnels that originated due to the cooling of lava on the surface.

At around 16h00 you will be back in the hotel.

## **DAY 8 – HOTEL – AIRPORT TRANSFER**

According to your flight itinerary the hotel reception will inform you of your time of departure from the hotel. You will be taken by our staff to the airport.

### **IMPORTANT:**

1. The order of the sites is always subject to change.
2. The description of each site is subject to change according to National Park regulations, natural events, strong weather or sea conditions, etc.