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TOURS

Mainland Ecuador &
Galápagos Islands

ITINERARY NORTH

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

SUNDAY - SUNDAY



DAY 1 – SUNDAY

MORNING FLIGHT TO BALTRA & BACHAS BEACH

PM: After arriving at Baltra airport, we will be greeted by our naturalist guide to then board the Nemo III and have lunch. Following our meal, we will head to Bachas beach. The name Bachas comes from the local pronunciation of 'barges,' two of which were left by the American army on these shores after World War II. This visitor site has a delightful, long beach perfect for swimming or for taking a stroll to observe the wildlife. Behind the beach, there is a saltwater lagoon where is usual to find great blue herons and small waders such as sanderlings. The beach is a nesting area for green sea turtles, which leave tracks in the sand after burying their eggs, especially from November to February.

The day ends with dinner and a briefing for the next day's activities on board the yacht.



DAY 2 - MONDAY

EL BARRANCO & DARWIN BAY

AM: After a dry landing at El Barranco, we will climb to the edge of a cliff where frigatebirds, masked boobies, and red-footed boobies make their nests. The trail will take us to the inner part of the island, populated by *palo santo* trees and cacti. We will be seeking out the impressive red-billed tropicbird amidst Galapagos storm petrels and the endemic short-eared owl.

PM: We travel to Genovesa Island and for a wet landing on Darwin Bay, a unique site with a beautiful beach, lined with red mangroves and soft-haired prickly pear cacti, where red-footed boobies and great frigatebirds perch tamely.

DAY 3 - TUESDAY

SULLIVAN BAY & DRAGON HILL

AM: We will have a dry landing in Santiago Island's Sullivan Bay, where we will walk over a recent lava flow with fresh pahoehoe lava formations, lava bubbles containing crystallized minerals, and pioneer plant fossils. Along the shoreline, we may find Galapagos penguins and herons going after small fish.

After this visit we will start our navigation to Santa Cruz Island.

PM: In the afternoon, we navigate a short distance to Cerro Dragon on Santa Cruz's northwestern shore with a dry landing to visit a saltwater lagoon, home to greater flamingos, black-necked stilts, and white-cheeked pintails. Further inland we will find a fantastic land iguana nesting site.



DAY 4 - WEDNESDAY

SANTA CRUZ HIGHLANDS & DARWIN RESEARCH STATION

AM: We will spend this day visiting Santa Cruz Island's most famous highlights. We will have a dry landing at the dock of Puerto Ayora to then board our transportation and head to the island's highlands. This area, in contrast to the coastal region, has lush vegetation and forest due to the humidity in the higher regions.

We will visit one of the ranches of the area where it is possible to see giant tortoises in their natural habitat. As these animals migrate from the coastal area to the highlands and back, the chosen ranch will depend on the presence of the tortoises since they roam free and change locations. This is also a good place to see the ground finch of the Island, which populates these forests where it is also possible to see the yellow warbler.

PM: After lunch we will head back to Puerto Ayora for our second visit of the day, the Charles Darwin Station. Here, we will see tortoises from different islands. The animals are found in large semi natural pens for their protection, but also to ensure an easy view for the visitors. The pens are divided according to four different stages: eggs, neonates, juveniles (held here until they are mature enough to be "repatriated"), and adults.

DAY 5 - THURSDAY

PUNTA MORENO & URBINA BAY

AM: Punta Moreno is located on the north coast of Isabela Island. This site features a trail of approximately 2100 meters that takes visitors through the extensive lava field to then reach the tidal pools and lagoons, populated by flamingos and Galapagos ducks and the mangrove trees, used by other bird species, as the finches. The path leads then back to the coast, where is possible to do a panga ride along the rocky shore to observe the wildlife.

PM: After a wet landing on Urbina bay we will start our walk and wildlife observation. This visitor site is quite unique, as it was formed during a recent seafloor uplift that exposed six kilometers of coral reef and coral heads above sea level, making possible for visitors to walk on was used to be a coral bed. The trail will take us along the dry vegetation of the island, populated by land iguanas and many bird species, including flightless cormorants and pelicans.



DAY 6 - FRIDAY

PUNTA ESPINOZA & TAGUS COVE

AM: Our first visit will start with a wet landing at Punta Espinosa. Located at the northeast side of Fernandina island, in the western tip of the archipelago, this visitor site is one of the world's most pristine and best-preserved ecosystems. The landscape is dominated by the presence of the shield volcano known as "La Cumbre," one of the youngest in the Galapagos. The trail on Punta Espinosa takes visitors along the coastline and the lava formations, populated by sea lions, flightless cormorant, penguins, lava lizards and marine iguanas.

PM: After lunch we will navigate to Isabela Island to visit Tagus Cove. This cove was frequently used by pirates and whalers as an anchoring site in the 19th century, many of which painted the names on their ships on cliffs along the shore. A trail leads from the cove to the top of a nearby hill, where visitors can enjoy beautiful landscapes formed by the tuff lava hills that make the island and the nearby Darwin lake, usually populated by flamingoes. During the hike is possible to observe the local fauna: yellow warblers, mockingbirds, finches and the Galapagos hawk.

DAY 7 - SATURDAY

PUERTO EGAS & BUCCANEER'S COVE

AM: Also known as James Bay, this visitor site gets its name from the salt mining company that was started by Mr. Hector Egas in the 1960s, but the costs of bringing the salt to the mainland were too high, and the company closed after a couple of years. Today, Puerto Egas is a popular visitor site, with a trail that lets visitor walk along the beach and then to the nearby lava field, where fur sea lions hide from the sun in the natural grottos, sharing the space with the Galapagos hawk, lava lizards, and marine iguanas. Puerto Egas is also a very good place for snorkeling or swimming directly from the beautiful Espumilla beach.

PM: Our visit to Buccaneer's cove will be via panga ride, this visitor site has a rich history, as it was used by whalers and pirates (hence the name) that stopped here to resupply fresh water from the highlands of the island and food. Nowadays, this visitor site, populated by pelicans, herons, brown noddies, swallow-tailed gulls, boobies, sea lions and fur seals, is known for its rock formations and as a great spot for kayaking or snorkeling.



DAY 8 – SUNDAY

DAPHNE & DEPARTURE

AM: This is our last day on the islands. After breakfast we will head to Daphne Major and Daphne Minor, two volcanic islands located to the north of Santa Cruz. Landing is not allowed in either of the islands, as the tuff cones are too fragile and would be damaged by visits. Since landings are not possible, the visits consist of a circumnavigation to the islands to observe the absurdly abundant birdlife that gathers here: Galapagos martins, great blue herons, red-billed tropicbirds, blue-footed boobies, masked boobies, finches and short-eared owls, among other, can be spotted around Daphne major and minor.

After this visit, we will continue our way to Baltra airport for the departing flight to mainland Ecuador.