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TOURS

Mainland Ecuador &
Galápagos Islands

ITINERARY SOUTH

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

SUNDAY - SUNDAY



DAY 1 – SUNDAY

MORNING FLIGHT TO BALTRA & NORTH SEYMOUR

AM: Upon your arrival at Baltra airport, your guide will be waiting to welcome you and to help you board the transportation for a short transfer to the dock of Baltra island.

PM: This uninhabited island was formed by a seafloor uplift, instead of a volcanic eruption as most of the islands of the Galapagos. North Seymour is among the most popular visitor site due to the many bird colonies present on the island. After disembarking, a trail leads to the inner part through the frigate bird colonies to then lead to the beach, populated by blue-footed boobies, sea lions, and marine iguanas.

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



DAY 2 - MONDAY

LOBOS ISLAND – WITCH HILL & KICKER ROCK

AM: We will start with a dry landing at Lobos island. This visitor site has a trail of 850 meters that crossed almost all of the island. There is a small population of blue-footed boobies and common frigate birds nesting at this site, that is also inhabited by the two species of sea lions present in the archipelago. This is also a great site for snorkeling, as the waters are calm and not so deep, so it's common to see juvenile sea lions, manta rays, and sea turtles. 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: In the afternoon we will navigate to Witch Hill, which is located on the northern coast of San Cristobal Island, this eroded tuff cone is surrounded by a beautiful white powdery sand beach with an abundance of animals. Wildlife includes sea turtles, rays, pelicans, sea lions and various types of boobies. The clear water provides an excellent opportunity for swimming and snorkeling. This was also one of the first places visited by Charles Darwin during his trip in the M/S Beagle.

After this visit we will head to Kicker rock, also known as "León Dormido" (sleeping lion in Spanish) is a huge islet located off the coast of San Cristobal Island. The islet is the remain of a lava cone eroded by the sea, with two vertical rocks rising 500 feet from the ocean, forming a small channel that is navigable by small boats. This natural monument has become a favorite site for cruises due to the many tropicbirds, frigates, and boobies that perch on the rocks. Beneath the sea, the nearly crystal waters offer a brilliant show of colorful tropical fish and invertebrates. Due to the sheer vertical pitch of the rock face, landings are not possible.

DAY 3 - TUESDAY

GARDNER BAY & SUAREZ POINT

AM: We will have a dry landing at Gardner Bay. The beach is home to a large sea lion colony, which are used to the sight of tourists and sometimes will join them in the water. As there is no trail on this site, it's possible to walk along the beach or simply relax and enjoy the unique landscape. The famous Española mockingbirds will most likely be also present, as this clever animal has learned that tourists bring water bottles with them, and will approach tourists in search of the liquid. 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.

PM: In the afternoon we will have a dry landing at Suarez Point. This rocky point is one of the most famous visitor sites of the Galapagos because it sustains one of the most impressive and diverse colonies of seabirds in the archipelago. The trail leads to the coastal line and then climbs to the inner part of the island, where visitors walk among the colonies of Blue-footed boobies and albatrosses. The trail ends in "el Soplador" a blowhole where seawater is squeezed by the pressure of the waves through a fracture in the rocks and is expelled up to 50-75 feet into the air.



DAY 4 - WEDNESDAY

CORMORANT POINT – CHAMPION ISLET & POST OFFICE BAY

AM: We will spend this day visiting Floreana Island's most famous highlights. We will have a wet landing on the shore of Cormorant Point. This impressive site consists of 2 beaches and a brackish lagoon with great possibilities to see flamingos. The trail that connects the beaches and the lagoon passes between two tuff lava cones that give the area a special atmosphere. There are various species of shorebirds to observe besides flamingos; the most frequent are common stilts, white-checked pintail ducks, herons and other migratory birds. This site is also famous for the difference between the two beaches: "The Green Beach" (due to its high percentage of olivine crystals in the sand) and the "Flour Sand Beach" which is made up of coral.

Other activities included on this day include a panga ride to Champion Point and kayaking at the Baroness' Viewpoint.

PM: In the afternoon we will visit Post Office Bay. This visitor site was a strategic stop for whalers and pirates during their long trips during the 18th century. Galapagos was a strategic stop for whalers and pirates during their long trips. As these trips could last many years, a group of whalers decided to create an unofficial post system with a wooden barrel: ships that were bound to return would stop at the bay and pick the post with the same destination as the ship. This tradition is still kept to this day. Visitors to post office bay browse through the

letters and take the ones near their home addresses to be hand deliver. Make sure to bring a postcard on your visit to post office bay and be part of this century-old tradition.

DAY 5 - THURSDAY

SANTA CRUZ HIGHLANDS & CHARLES DARWIN 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 6 - FRIDAY

SOUTH PLAZAS & SANTA FE

AM: We will have a dry landing on one of the oldest docks of the archipelago on colorful Plaza Sur, home to vibrant green prickly pears, deep red Sesuvium, and coppery-orange land iguanas. Impressive seaward cliffs make the perfect perching spot for a variety of coastal birds. This is also a great place to observe the sea lion adult and pups swimming along the shores.

PM: After a wet landing on Santa Fe, we will encounter a white beach where sea lions are usually resting. We will be looking for the endemic species of land iguana, which is larger with a deeper shade of yellow than land iguanas on other islands. The biggest prickly pear cacti in the Galapagos are also found here.

DAY 7 - SATURDAY

BARTOLOME & CHINESE HAT

AM: We will have a dry landing on Bartolome, followed by a mild climb up a set of wooden steps to reach the summit of a spatter cone for a breathtaking panorama of the island's iconic Pinnacle Rock and views of neighboring Santiago, and other central islands in the distance. Afterward, we will visit the white sand beach used as a nesting site by sea turtles, followed by snorkeling in the waters of Bartolome Island, where it is not unusual to spot Galapagos penguins.

PM: We will have a wet lading at Chinese Hat. This islet is located near Santiago Island and gets its name from its shape, which resembles a Chinese hat. The islet has a volcanic origin and was formed in one of the many eruptions of Santiago, and was then separated from the main Island by the sea water erosion. The trail starts on the beautiful beach for the islet to then ascend a bit through the lava fields and formations, which are very new in geological terms. This is a very good place to see how the pioneer vegetation starts to grow directly from the lava, preparing the soil for other plant species. The beach is populated by Sally Lightfoot crabs, American Oystercatcher, marine iguanas and a colony of endemic Galapagos sea lions.



DAY 8 – SUNDAY

MOSQUERA & 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.