

# NEMO II: SOUTH ITINERARY - 8 DAYS

## DAY 1

### SUNDAY

AM

#### BALTRA

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

PM

#### BACHAS

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.

## DAY 2

### MONDAY

AM

#### SOUTH PLAZAS ISLAND

The beautiful landscapes of South Plazas are formed by the channel of turquoise waters that contrast against the white sand and black lava shoreline. Past the shoreline, the island is covered by the colorful scarlet sesuvium and the bright green prickly-pear cacti. Here it is easy to observe the yellow and grey land iguanas waiting for the fruit of the cacti to fall.

Visitors can also observe sea lion colonies, frigates, swallow-tailed gulls, and shearwaters.

PM

#### SANTA FE ISLAND

Santa Fe island has a beautiful and calm bay and a white sand beach, which is home to a large colony of sea lions. A trail will take us to the inner part of the island where we will observe the endemic land iguana (present only on this island) lounging around the giant prickly pear cacti. The visit ends with some snorkeling in the bay to observe the imposing marine life present in the island's waters.

## DAY 3

### TUESDAY

AM

#### SAN CRISTOBAL – WITCH HILL – LEON DORMIDO

Located on the northern coast of San Cristobal Island, Witch Hill is an eroded tuff cone 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.

#### 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.



**PM**

#### **LOBOS ISLAND**

Lobos Island is located near San Cristobal, in the southern part of the Archipelago. 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.

### **DAY 4**

#### **WEDNESDAY**

**AM**

#### **ESPAÑOLA - 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.

**PM**

#### **GARDNER BAY**

Gardner Bay, on the eastern side of Española Island, has an ample and beautiful white sand beach perfect for swimming or snorkeling. The beach is home to a large sea lion colony, which are used to the sight of tourist 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 tourist in search of the liquid.

### **DAY 5**

#### **THURSDAY**

**AM**

#### **SANTA CRUZ HIGHLANDS**

The highlands of Santa Cruz have incredible zones of vegetation, dominated by the endemic Scalesia tree. The Highlands of Santa Cruz also present one of the best opportunities to see the giant tortoises in their natural habitat, as these animals are in constant migration from the beach, where they nest, to the highlands, where there are enough nutrients thanks to the lush and green vegetation. The highlands are also a great place to observe the Islands' birdlife, because many species, including the endemic short-ear owl, inhabit this area.



**PM**

### **CHARLES DARWIN STATION**

The Fausto Llerena Tortoise Breeding Center, located in the same premises as the Charles Darwin scientific station is one of the most visited sites of the Galapagos and the only place where it is possible to see many different species of Giant tortoises at the same time. 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**

**AM**

### **FLOREANA ISLAND: CORMORANT POINT, CHAMPION ISLET**

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.

**PM**

### **DARWIN BAY**

Darwin Bay and its coral sand beach, are home to many species of birds, making it one of the favorite spots in the archipelago for birdwatching. Right behind the beach, there are saltbushes and mangrove trees shared by many species: red-footed and masked boobies, wandering tattlers, lava gulls, whimbrels, Yellow-crowned, and black-crowned lava herons, and yellow warblers populate the area.

Although the trail is not so long, it lets visitors get a firsthand impression of the bird populations and the behavior and interactions between the many species that concentrate here.

### **EL BARRANCO**

El Barranco, also known as Principe Philip steps, is located in the southern part of Darwin Bay on Genovesa Island. The trail, with a length of 1.5 km, passes along the cacti and holy stick forests that are populated by the many bird species of the island. The trail also allows visitors to walk in the youngest part of the island, where the fragile lava and the erosion have created many cavities in the cliffs that are used as nesting sites by the storm petrels. This site is also one of the best places in the Galapagos to observe the endemic short-ear owl, the natural predator of the storm petrels. This visit also includes a panga ride along the cliffs of the island to observe the birdlife and the fur sea lions that share these cliffs with the birds.

### **CHAMPION ISLET**

Champion is a small islet located off the coast of Floreana Island and was named after Andrew Champion, a famous whaler. This site is a great place for snorkeling and diving, the only permitted activities as landing is not possible. This is also a great place for dolphin observation.



## POST OFFICE BAY

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 delivered. Make sure to bring a postcard on your visit to post office bay and be part of this century-old tradition.

## DAY 7

### SATURDAY

#### AM

#### CHINESE HAT

This islet, located near Santiago Island, 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.

#### PM

#### BARTOLOME ISLAND

Bartolome Island and its nearby Pinnacle rock, a pointy rock of lava that emerges from the water, are probably the most photographed landscape of Galapagos. The island is an extinct volcano with different formations and red and orange colors, making a unique landscape. A trail and a wooden staircase lead to an impressive natural viewpoint, from where it is possible to see the nearby Santiago Island and Sullivan Bay. This site also has a small beach used for swimming and snorkel and is a very good place to see the Galapagos penguins.

## DAY 8

### SUNDAY

#### AM

#### BLACK TURTLE COVE

Black Turtle Cove is located on the north coast of Santa Cruz Island. This popular visitor site consists of an inlet surrounded by mangrove trees from 2 different species. Landing is not possible on the site since the cove is only accessible with a dinghy. The clear and calm waters of the cove offer a haven for the marine life and many birds: Black-tip and white-tip reef sharks, sea turtles, different species of rays are often found in this cove.

#### BALTRA BAY

Once on Baltra Island, you will take the short transfer to the airport for your flight back to mainland Ecuador. The airport has many souvenir shops and restaurants for last minute shopping or to enjoy a meal before the flight.