



ARCHIPEL II

GALAPAGOS

ARCHIPEL II - ITINERARY A

5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS

Thursday to Monday



Day 1 – Thursday

AM - Arrival at Baltra Airport (GPS)

Upon arrival at Baltra Airport, travellers pass through an airport inspection point to make sure that no foreign plants or animals are introduced to the islands, and to pay the park entrance fee of \$100 (unless it has been prepaid). A guide will meet you, help you collect your luggage, and escort you on a short bus ride to the harbour.

PM - Highlands (Santa Cruz)

The road to the highlands leaves from Bellavista, a small village located a 15-minute drive from Puerto Ayora, and passes through the agricultural zone, near the National Park boundary, the Miconia Zone, and then goes to the Fern and Sedge zone. With clear weather, this area boasts beautiful scenes of rolling hills and extinct volcanic cones covered with grass and lush greenery all year round. Here you will visit the Twin Craters, which are two pit craters, as well as a local ranch where we can observe the giant tortoise of Santa Cruz Island in its natural habitat.

Day 2 – Friday

AM - Tintoreras Islet

“Tintoreras” are small islands in front of the Puerto Villamil coast. As well as herons on the lookout on mangrove branches, Galapagos Penguins and sea lions often pop out on the shore. White-tipped reef sharks (in Spanish: Tintoreras) are common on the archipelago and are very commonly found resting in the shallow waters.

PM - Arnaldo Tupiza Breeding Centre

In the Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Centre you can see hundreds of giant Galapagos tortoises of all sizes. Vulnerable hatchlings are not gigantic at all, even smaller than the size of your hand! This project just outside Puerto Villamil was created to rescue the endangered populations of Isabela’s both southernmost volcanoes. From the almost incredible estimations of 250,000 giant tortoises in the 16th century, by the 1970s there were only about 3,000 individuals remaining. One thing becomes clear on your visit: it’s hard work to save these creatures from extinction by reproduction in captivity and repopulation. The good news is that these programmes are successful and have already saved several species from extinction so far.

By 2015 their number increased to about 32,000 in all the archipelago. Don’t forget to visit the native botanical garden of this breeding centre. It also attracts colourful songbirds such as yellow warblers, Darwin’s finches, Galapagos and vermilion flycatchers. Finally there is no greater counterpart to the cumbersome tortoises than the graceful American flamingos which frequently filter the saline waters of the adjacent lagoon for shrimp and algae. They are joined by a handful of species of aquatic and shore birds, from which some even migrate from Canada and Alaska.

Day 3 – Saturday

AM – Moreno Point (Isabela)

Moreno Point is located on the north coast of Isabela Island between the volcanos Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul. The trail runs along a solidified lava flow called “Pahohoe”, into a complex of coastal lagoons. Its main attraction are several species of birds, which are found around the lakes and mangroves.

PM – Elizabeth Bay (Isabela)

This is a marine visitor site, so the excursion has no landing point. Your zodiac ride starts with a visit to the Marielas islets where the largest and most important penguin colony reside in the Galapagos Islands. The excursion continues into the cove that is surrounded by red mangroves where you can admire their red roots and green leaves. Here, you are able to observe sea turtles, flightless cormorants, spotted eagle rays, golden rays, brown pelicans and sea lions. Frequent visitors have been able to see Galapagos hawks soaring overhead whilst schools of pompano and dorado fish swim down below.

Day 4 – Sunday

AM – Tagus Cove (Isabela)

A tour along the cliffs will give visitors a good chance of seeing the Galapagos penguin, the flightless cormorant and other seabirds. From the landing dock, it is about a 30-minute hike along the trail up to the top of the cliff from where you can view Darwin Lake, an uplifted lake saltier than the sea. You can also see several volcanoes from this location. Look carefully at the graffiti on the surrounding cliffs of the cove, done by pirates, whalers and buccaneers in past centuries!

PM – Espinoza Point (Fernandina)

Fernandina is the third largest island on the archipelago and has a single visitor site: Punta Espinoza, located at the northeastern tip of the island. Here, marine iguanas conglomerate in larger groups than on any other island. They bask around in the sand, swim near the shore and sometimes block the way at the landing dock. Among the unique species found here, we can find the flightless cormorant.

Day 5 – Monday

AM – Bachas Beach (Santa Cruz)

These two small beaches are found to the west of Turtle Cove. Their sand is made of decomposed coral, which makes it white and soft, and a favourite nesting site for sea turtles. Behind one of the beaches there is a small blackish water lagoon, where it is occasionally possible to observe flamingos and other coastal birds, such as black-necked stilts and whimbrels. The other beach is longer, but it has two old barges that were abandoned during World War II, when USA used Baltra Island as a strategic point to protect the Panama Channel.

Transfer out to Seymour Ecological Airport (GPS)

Assisted by the naturalist guide and some crewmembers, the dinghy will bring you and your luggage to the Seymour Ecological Airport, where we will take the shuttle back to the airport.