



ARCHIPEL II

GALAPAGOS

ARCHIPEL II - ITINERARY B

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 at 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 – Cormorant Point (Floreana)

The peninsula of Cormorant Point forms the extreme north cape of Floreana, which was formed by a number of smaller volcanic cones, covered by tropical dry forest (palo santo). At the landing beach, you will be welcomed by a small Galapagos sea lion colony. The green sand on this beach contains a high percentage of glassy olivine crystals which have been blown out by the surrounding tuff cones. The 'flour sand' beach on the southern side of the peninsula is formed of even finer white coral sand which feels very smooth on your feet. Parrotfish have pulverised it, grinding the calcareous skeletons of living coral. You can spot schools of stingrays who love the sandy bottom to hide themselves. During the first months of the year, Pacific green turtles come ashore to bury their eggs.

PM – Baroness Lookout & Post Office Bay

Post Office Bay is one out of three nearby visitor's sites on Floreana's northern coast. Bring your postcards and post them in the peculiar barrel on this historic site. The barrel commemorates an improvised mail service that was set-up for communication between British 16th-century whalers and poachers.

Day 3 – Saturday

AM – Gardner Bay (Española)

The striking white beach at Gardner Bay is an important breeding site for Pacific green turtles. However, without doubt its main attraction is the Galapagos sea lion colony. Females stay year-round in this nursery, suckling their pups up to an age of 3 years, although they start to fish at five months. During the breeding and mating season, the colony becomes even bigger.

PM – Suarez Point (Española)

Huge ocean waves crash onto the southern basaltic cliffs of Suarez Point, forming a spectacular blowhole, where the water sprays meters high into the air (depending on the season, the tide and how strong the sea breeze pushes the waves). Take your time for a meditative break in silence on this emblematic viewpoint, and convert this unforgettable moment into a lifetime experience.

Day 4 – Sunday

AM – Pitt Point (San Cristóbal)

Two wind sculptured tuff cones at Pitt Point make up the extreme eastern end of San Cristóbal, and thus, the archipelago as well. These cliffs were the first sight of land when HMS Beagle and Charles Darwin arrived on the 15th of September, 1835. On the small green sand beach, you will be welcomed by a group of barking Galapagos sea lions. This is a bachelor colony, where males usually relax and prepare themselves for fighting and mating.

From the saltbush and spiny shrubs behind the beach, a trail leads up to an area of tropical dry forest vegetation: most of the year there are leafless palo santo trees, yellow cordia shrubs, tiny prickly pear cacti and carpetweed that turns red in the dry season. After the somewhat steep climb through a gully to the clifftop, you can wander around the only colony in Galapagos that is home to all three species of boobies: blue-footed, red-footed and Nazca booby; as well as both species of frigate bird (great and magnificent), famous because of their scarlet balloon-sized pouches during mating season. Frigate birds attack returning boobies and conduct aerial battles rather than fishing for themselves.

PM – Witch Hill (San Cristóbal)

The primary attraction of this site is the coral sand beach, an excellent place to swim and snorkel. Witch Hill is the remains of a tuff cone and one of the first sites visited by Charles Darwin. It has an impressive landscape, where it is often possible to see coastal and migratory birds, including pelicans, blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls; as well as sea lions and marine iguanas. At times, the lagoon is completely dry and deposits of salt can be found at the bottom. The people of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno used to use the lagoon as a salt mine.

Day 5 – Monday

AM – Interpretation Centre (San Cristóbal)

Cerro Colorado Tortoises Protection and Growing Centre, located at approximately 40 minutes by bus to the southeast of the island, was built to improve the status of the population of the island tortoises. The centre includes a large corral, a Visitor Centre, breeding centre and an interpretative trail. Along this trail, it is possible to see different species of native and endemic plants as well as birds like the San Cristóbal mockingbird, yellow warblers, many species of finches and the Galapagos flycatcher. On your visit to Colorado Hill, you will get to discover the amazing and emblematic giant Galapagos tortoises in the tortoise breeding centre, and maybe even get to see one hatch (seasonally)! In addition, you will get to see how much hard work is put into saving the last local giants of San Cristóbal.

Transfer out to San Cristóbal Airport (SCY)

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