

Itinerary: Galapagos Conservancy Expedition, January 2016



Day 1: January 27, 2016

Arrive in Quito, Ecuador and stay at the **Rincon de Puembo**.

January 28-30: Baltra Airport and Santa Cruz Island

In the morning, we'll fly to Baltra Island in Galapagos! We'll spend two days exploring the varied ecology of Santa Cruz Island, while staying at the **Galapagos Safari Camp** in the lush highlands. During the course of our stay, we will hike in the moist highlands, visit giant tortoises in their natural habitat, visit the **Charles Darwin Research Station**, stroll through the bustling town of Puerto Ayora, and explore lava tubes. We'll visit a few Galapagos Conservancy project sites to see conservation efforts in action and learn more about how humans interact with the environment. We'll have time to shop, dine well, and relax. The days will also include special visits and meals with Station scientists and others involved in Galapagos conservation.

In the afternoon of Day 4, we will board our yacht, **Integrity**, for dinner and set sail on our Island cruise.* We will live aboard the yacht and spend as much time exploring the islands as park rules permit. Each night, we'll travel on to the next destination.

January 31: Floreana Island

AM Punta Cormorant and Champion Island — We'll see flamingos wade in a large lagoon by a green olivine sand beach, and take a short hike to Flour beach where sea turtles nest and rays frolic off shore. Then, we'll snorkel around Champion Island and hope to catch a glimpse of the rare Floreana mockingbird.

PM Post Office Bay, Asilo de Paz, Black Beach — First we'll stop at the wooden barrel that has served as a "post office" since the 18th century, followed by exploration of the Floreana Highlands and Wittmer Caves, and the day will end with a barbecue onboard *Integrity*.

February 1: Southwestern Isabela Island

AM Punta Moreno — At the base of Cerro Azul, this site is dotted with numerous lagoons containing a wide variety of life, including flamingos, paint-billed crakes, white-cheeked pintails, and common gallinules.

PM Elizabeth Bay and Las Marielas — Visitors on dinghies will see rays, flightless cormorants, penguins, pelicans, lava herons, sea turtles, and other species here. The Marielas Islets, just outside the bay, are home to many penguins, and visitors can usually observe them both on shore and swimming nearby.

February 2: Western Isabela and Fernandina Islands

AM Urbina Bay (Isabela) — This site is very unique in that it is the result of an uplift of the island in 1954, when a 6 km

stretch of coral reef was raised up 5m, stranding coral heads above sea level with the new coastline more than a km away.

PM Punta Espinosa (Fernandina) — This volcanic peninsula on the most pristine island of Galapagos is inhabited by marine iguanas, flightless cormorants, and pioneering plants.

February 3: Northwestern Isabela Island

AM Tagus Cove — A short, steep hike passes Darwin Lake, which sits within a tuff cone and is filled with salt water. This site is an excellent place for viewing landbirds, including ground and tree finches, hawks, yellow warblers, large-billed flycatchers and even sometimes the woodpecker finch. A dinghy ride along the cliffs provides views of geologic features, as well as penguins and other bird species.

PM Punta Vicente Roca — The large cave and geological formations here are very impressive and provide a beautiful backdrop for nesting birds, including Blue-footed and Nazca boobies, gulls, storm petrels, and Brown Noddy Terns. Swim among dozens and dozens of sea turtles while snorkelling.

February 4: Santiago Island

AM Puerto Egas and Mina de Sal — The trail meanders along the coast to the fur seal grottoes, passing large marine iguanas, several crab species, lava lizards, and wading birds.

PM Espumilla Beach and Buccaneer Cove — This beach is a sea turtle nesting site, with an inland trail that passes a small lagoon and into the arid zone where it is possible to view many land birds in a beautiful landscape. While snorkeling at the cove, you may see sea lions, fur seals, sea turtles, rays, sharks, pelagic fishes, and amazing underwater geologic formations.

February 5: North Seymour and Santa Cruz Islands

AM The trail at North Seymour heads inland where we will see the largest colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds in Galapagos, Blue-footed Boobies, and occasionally land iguanas. We then head along the coast where we will have ample opportunity to observe sea lions and marine iguanas.

PM Caleta Tortuga Negra, Bachas Beach — Enjoy a quiet and peaceful ending to your adventure at this mangrove-sheltered cove and white sand beach. Sea turtles feed and mate in the calm waters, and three species of sharks, Spotted rays, egrets, and lava herons can often be seen.

February 6-7: Baltra Island to Quito, Ecuador

We'll have breakfast on board *Integrity*, then disembark at Baltra Island and fly back to Quito. Your afternoon and evening are free for city exploration. Enjoy your final overnight stay at **Hotel Colon**. You'll depart for home on the 12th day, or continue with your own adventures in Ecuador.



* Itinerary may change under orders from the Galapagos National Park Service.