

# Beyond Darwin's Footsteps

---

*Grace Itinerary Starting In Puerto Ayora*

*7 Night / 8 Day Safari-Style Yacht Adventures*

*From Tuesday To Tuesday*



# Welcome to Galapagos | Safari-Style Cruises

---



Set along the equator, some 600 miles off the South American coast of Ecuador is a crown jewel of the natural world. The Galapagos Islands live up to our dreams of a sheltered place far removed from the usual concerns. The skies are typically sunny, and the sea breezes create that perfect air temperature that instantly relaxes the body. The ocean is an ever inviting blue, matched by long sandy beaches of coral white, terracotta red, volcanic black and looking-glass green. There are crystal coves and quite mangrove lagoons.

But what will make your visit here truly exceptional are the many opportunities for close encounters with wildlife. The islands and surrounding waters are quite literally teeming with exotic and curious creatures that have never learned to fear humans. This translates into a series of daily peak experiences including snorkeling with playful sea lions, tracking giant tortoise in the wild and trading stares with unconcerned iguanas. Bird life is abundant, varied and fearless. You may have to give way as a blue footed booby crosses your path, or have the opportunity to observe a Galapagos hawk perched just a few steps away, as a waved albatross launches itself off a cliff on a journey that will encompass thousands of miles.

The environment beneath the ocean surface is extraordinary, with large tropical and cold water fish found swimming together. Pacific green sea turtles, Galapagos penguins and rays are underwater passers-by, while dolphins, whales and whale sharks frequent the archipelago. Young Charles Darwin, fresh from university, visited here in 1835 during the voyage of the HMS Beagle. Darwin maintained that the Galapagos was the source of his ideas and research for *On the Origin of Species*. Many of the discoveries he came upon are still in evidence, including a volcanic wonderland of sculpted lava flows, giant lava tubes and inviting inlets shaped by eruption and erosion.

The Galapagos seas tend to be calm, making travel by yacht the ideal and only way to experience the full spectrum the islands have to offer. In contrast, only a handful of park visitor sites are accessible by day boats where you will

spend most of your day getting to and from your destination. Our live aboard yachts navigate to the next destination at night while you sleep so you wake up refreshed with each day's island adventure right out your doorstep. You'll enjoy two landings each full day in the National Park along with snorkeling outings and opportunities for sea kayaking and panga rides, all led by your top notch National Park Guide.

Grace is an authentic classic adventure yacht for those seeking to explore the Galapagos in true style. Her history includes distinguished service in the British Navy during WWII and a pedigree that lays claim to ownership by tycoons, industrialists and royalty. Her comfortable and tastefully designed cabins offer full ensuite bathrooms. There are three levels on which to relax outdoors and under shade while inside, the yacht is fully air conditioned. The main saloon, where your guide will give presentations on the each day's activities, provides a relaxing environment with a full entertainment center. An onboard boutique carries both necessities and souvenirs. Grace provides fine onboard dining in both her dining room and al fresco on the rear deck. At sunset, happy hour is a highlight atop the sky lounge bar and is often accompanied by leaping dolphins and rays. Did we mention the yacht's sundeck and sizable Jacuzzi to warm up in after snorkeling?

*"...in that little world within itself...we seem to be brought somewhat near to that great fact - that mystery of mysteries - the first appearance of new beings on this earth."*  
- Charles Darwin

# Itinerary in Brief

## Beyond Darwin's Footsteps | Tue-Tue |

### Day 1 | Tuesday

a.m. | Arrive to Baltra Island Airport

p.m. | Santa Cruz Island: Charles Darwin Research Station (Breeding Center) & Highlands (Tortoises Reserve) |w|

### Day 2 | Wednesday

a.m. | Floreana Island: Post Office Bay |w|s|k|pb|

p.m. | Floreana Island: Punta Cormorant, Champion or Devil's Crown |w|s|p|

### Day 3 | Thursday

a.m. | Española Island: Punta Suarez |w|

p.m. | Española Island: Gardner Bay |w|s|k|p|pb|

### Day 4 | Friday

a.m. | San Cristobal Island: Punta Pitt |w|s|k|p|

p.m. | San Cristobal Island: Lobos Island & Kicker Rock |w|s|p|

### Day 5 | Saturday

a.m. | Santa Fe Island |w|s|k|p|pb|

p.m. | South Plazas Island |w|

### Day 6 | Sunday

a.m. | North Seymour Island |w|s|p|

p.m. | Santiago Island: Bartolome |w|s|p|

### Day 7 | Monday

a.m. | Santiago Island: Chinese Hat |w|s|k|p|pb|

p.m. | Santa Cruz Island: Dragon Hill |w|s|

### Day 8 | Tuesday

a.m. | Santa Cruz Island: Black Turtle Cove |p|

p.m. | Baltra Island Airport

### Activities Legend:

-  |w| = Walks & Hikes
-  |s| = Snorkeling
-  |k| = Kayaking
-  |pb| = Paddle Boarding
-  |p| = Panga (Dinghy) Rides



# Tortoises and The Darwn Station

## Day 1 | Tuesday

a.m. | Baltra Island / Highlands

p.m. | Santa Cruz Island: Puerto Ayora and Darwin Station

ACTIVITIES:



You'll need to rise early this morning to catch your flight to the Galapagos. All our flights to the Galapagos originate in Quito and stop briefly in the port city of Guayaquil to take on passengers before heading on to the islands. For this itinerary you will be landing on the island of Baltra. After passing through Galapagos National Park inspection your National Park Guide will be there to greet you holding a sign with the name of your yacht on it and will accompany you on the short bus ride to the Itabaca channel.

Once we cross the Itabaca channel, we will visit Los Gemelos. The terrestrial world of the tortoise and underworld of the lava tubes meet at Los Gemelos (the twins). These two large sinkholes craters were formed by collapsed lava tubes. The contrast between the marine desert coast and verdant Lost World look of the highlands is most striking here and you can easily encounter rain even when sun is shining a half an hour away at the coast.

Los Gemelos are surrounded by a Scalesia forest. Scalesia is endemic to Galapagos and many endemic and native species call the forest home. This is an excellent place to view some of Darwin's famous finches along with the elusive and dazzling vermillion flycatcher.

A highlight of any trip to the archipelago is a visit to the Santa Cruz Highlands, where the sparse, dry coastal vegetation transitions to lush wet fields and forests overgrown with moss and lichens. Our afternoon destination is the Wild Tortoise Reserve where we will have chances to track and view these friendly ancient creatures in their natural setting. This extends to the adjacent pasturelands, where farmers give tortoise safe quarter in exchange for allowing paying visitors to see them.

We will then board your home while in Galapagos, the Grace Yacht. In the late afternoon, we can visit Puerto Ayora, home to both the Galapagos National Park Service Headquarters and Charles Darwin Research Station, the center of the great restorative efforts taking place in the park, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Here we visit the Giant Tortoise Breeding & Rearing Program run by the research station, which began by rescuing the remaining 14 tortoises on the island of Española in 1970.

This program has restored the population of animals there to over 1,000 today. You will see many of these animals, with their sweet ET necks and faces; from hatchlings to juveniles to large, distinguished individuals. This is where famed tortoise, Lonesome George, lived out his last days as the last of his particular race of tortoise.

We'll enjoy our first Pacific sunset aboard the Grace yacht by celebrating happy hour atop her sky lounge where drinks are available daily along with hors d'oeuvres. A little later we gather in the main salon for a presentation by our guide on the next day's activities and visitor sites, before sitting down to dinner. We spend a bit more time in port this evening before setting sail for the island of Floreana.



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Fly to Baltra in the Galapagos Islands and board Grace

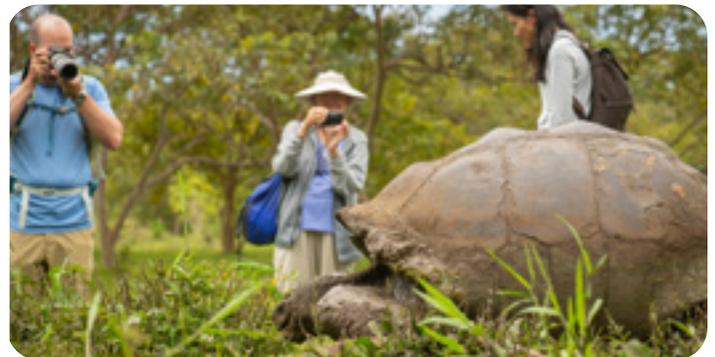
**Type of Landing:** N/A

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Puerto Ayora & Darwin Station

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Activities:** Hikes

 **Meals:** Lunch & Dinner



# The Baroness & the Devil's Crown

## Day 2 | Wednesday

a.m. | Floreana Island: Post Office Bay

p.m. | Floreana Island: Punta Cormorant & Champion Islet

Floreana has had a colorful history: Pirates, whalers, convicts and a small band of somewhat peculiar colonists—a self proclaimed Baroness among them—who chose a Robinson Crusoe existence that ended in death and mystery. Today roughly a hundred Ecuadorians inhabit the island. In 1793 British whalers set up a barrel as the island's post office, to send letters home on passing ships. The tradition continues to this day, simply by dropping a post card into the barrel without a stamp. The catch is you must take a post card from the barrel and see that it gets to the right place. That is how the system began and continues to this day. Some claim it works better than the official Ecuadorian post office. You'll have a chance to continue the traditions by sending your own card and picking up others.

Continuing a bit farther inland at Post Office Bay you will have the opportunity to enter the underworld of Floreana in the form of a lava tube. The lava tube descends fairly deep into the earth back toward the ocean, where you can swim in a subterranean grotto beneath the tide. Bring a good waterproof flashlight. Snorkeling or Paddle Boarding in Post Office Bay offers choice encounters with waiting sea turtles and tropical fish.

We return to the Grace for lunch and a siesta. Our next landing is further along the shore to the northeast. On route we pass within view of Baroness Point in an area of mangrove lined lagoons. Eloise Wehrborn de Wagner-Bosquet, the self proclaimed Baroness (of Floreana) frequented this overlook, but we will leave the rest of her intriguing story to your Galapagos guide.

Punta Cormorant offers two highly contrasting beaches; the strand where we land is composed of volcanic olivine crystals, giving it a greenish tint that glitters in the sun. From here you'll notice the small cinder cone that forms the point. Our landing is just to the west of the cinder cone where a trail crosses the neck of an isthmus to a beach of very fine white sand known as Flour Beach. Flour Beach was formed by the erosion of coral skeletons. Between the two beaches, in a basin formed by the surrounding volcanic cones, is a hypersaline lagoon frequented by flamingoes, pintails, stilts and other wading birds. We stop at the lagoon and then continue on the trail to Four Beach. Be careful not to wade into the tide with bare feet! If you stand at the edge of the water and look into the tidal area you will soon notice that the silty surf is rife with rays. Sea turtles also surf the waves off the beach. We return to our yacht and set out to our snorkeling destination as we don wetsuits while making our way around Punta Cormorant.

Not far from the north shore of Floreana is the tiny islet known as Champion. Champion is considered one of the top snorkeling sites the Galapagos offering

### ACTIVITIES:



prime underwater sea lion interactions. Dolphins are frequently seen near the shore along with humpback whales who like the bay off Flour Beach. As you swim with the sea lions you will be surrounded by an assortment of tropical fish including yellowtail grunts, amberjacks and schools of king angel. You may spot sleepy white-tipped reef sharks hugging the bottom. Sea turtles glide by, while torpedo-like Galapagos penguins can also be encountered in the waters off Champion.

Alternatively we may snorkel at Devil's Crown which is located some 250 meters (700 ft) north of Punta Cormorant. The crown is an old submerged volcanic cone that has been worn down by waves. Devil's Crown is home to a myriad of marine species including several species of corals, sea urchins, and many other creatures including a great number of fish species, making this place one of the best snorkeling sites in the Galapagos. The eroded crater walls form a popular roosting site for seabirds including boobies and pelicans. The snorkeling begins outside the crater to the southeast, where a swift current will take you for a ride along the north side of the crown and right into the middle. Relax, enjoy the ride and let the current do the work. After the ride keep your eyes open for spotted eagle rays and golden rays that like to swim near the crown. Once back aboard the Grace you'll want to soak in the warm Jacuzzi after peeling off your wetsuit and then retire for hors d'oeuvres and drinks to enjoy the sunset.



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Post Office Bay

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Snorkeling, Kayaking & Paddle Boarding

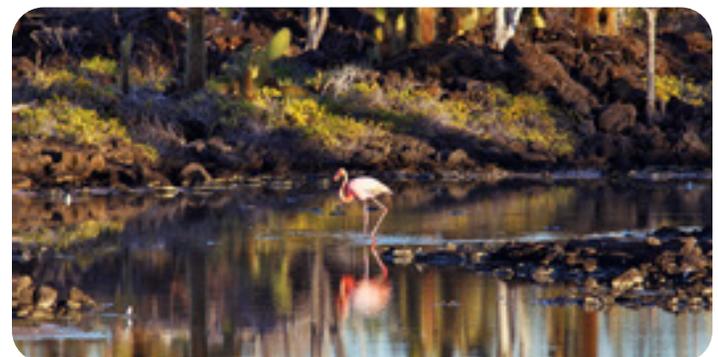
 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Punta Cormorant & Champion

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Moderate

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes & Snorkeling.



# The Perfect Beach & Blowhole

## Day 3 - Thursday

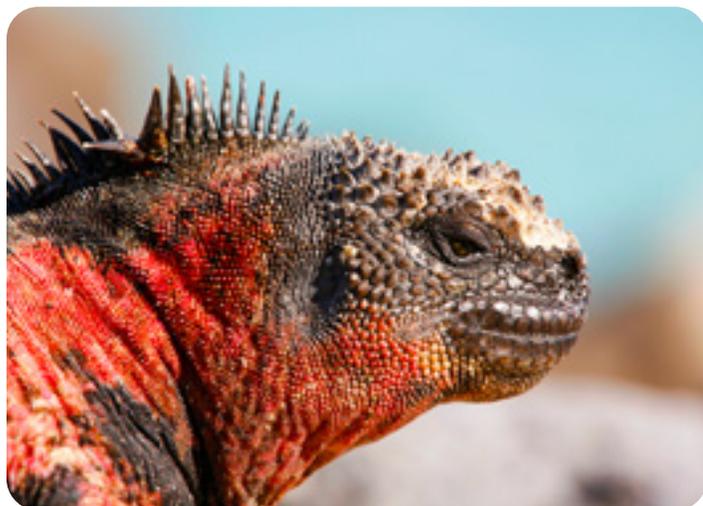
a.m. | Española Island: Punta Suarez

p.m. | Española Island: Gardner Bay & Gardner Islet

Hood is the southernmost island of the archipelago, and is one of the most popular due to the breathtaking variation and sheer number of fauna that greet visitors along with well known Gardner Bay. The giant tortoise was reintroduced to Hood in the 1970's and counts as one of the park's great success stories. They reside in an off-limits area, but don't worry—the famous giant tortoise awaits you on other islands!

The quantity and variety of wildlife at Punta Suarez is remarkable. Sea lions surf the waves beyond the breakwater landing, and tiny pups are known to greet your toes upon arrival. A few steps inland is a colorful variety of marine iguana in the Galapagos. They bear distinctive red and black markings, some with a flash of turquoise running down their spine. They nap in communal piles or cling to the rocks for warmth. The trail then takes us beside the western edge of the island where masked boobies (also known as Nazca boobies) nest along the cliffs edge. The trail descends to a rocky beach before rising to an open area where you may see a large gathering of nesting blue-foot boobies. Galapagos doves, cactus finch and mocking birds forage nearby, unconcerned by human presence. Both lava and swallow-tailed gulls, with their red ringed eyes, sit atop the cliffs in company with marine iguanas.

The trail continues to the high cliff edge of the southern shore; below, a shelf of black lava reaches out into the surf where a blowhole shoots a periodic geyser of salt water into the air. Further east along the cliff is the Albatross Airport where waved albatross line up to launch their great winged bodies from the cliffs, soaring out over the dramatic shoreline of crashing waves and driven spray. These are the largest birds you will see in the Galapagos with wingspans up to 2.25 m or 7.4 ft. They are the only species of albatross exclusive to the tropics. In the trees set back from the cliff is one of only two places in the world where the waved albatross nests. The 12,000 pairs that inhabit Hood Island comprise all but a tiny fraction of the world's population of this species. Lucky visitors can watch courtship 'fencing' done with great yellow beaks. Large, fluffy, perfectly camouflaged chicks adorn nests on the ground nearby. The Albatross lay their eggs from April through June though they can be seen fencing long after that. Eggs take two months to hatch. Hungry chicks can eat up to 2 kg (4.4 lb) a day which keeps their parents busy. By December the chicks are fully grown and ready to set out on their own in January. Pairs mate for life.



ACTIVITIES:

On the northeastern shore of Hood, Gardner Bay offers a magnificent long white sandy beach, where colonies of sea lions laze in the sun, sea turtles swim offshore and inquisitive mockingbirds boldly investigate new arrivals. You will be lured from the powdery white sand into the turquoise water for a swim, but just a little further off-shore the snorkeling by Gardner Island offers peak encounters with playful young sea lions and schools of surprisingly large tropical fish, including yellow tailed surgeonfish, king angelfish and bump-head parrot fish. The young sea lions like to snack and play along Gardner Island's sea cliff. They dart up from the depths, playfully show off their skills and then disappear. Sleepy white-tipped reef sharks can also be seen napping on the bottom. Gardner Bay and Islet also offer inviting waters for those interested in kayaking or paddle boarding. For all who visit here, Española is a highlight of the Galapagos.



## Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Punta Suarez

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Difficult

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes.

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Gardner Bay, Gardner Islet

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Snorkeling, Kayaking & Paddle Boarding

 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



# Tortoises & Lavatubes

## Day 4 - Friday

a.m. | San Cristobal Island: Punta Pitt

p.m. | San Cristobal Island: Lobos Island  
& Kicker Rock

Punta Pitt is located at the east end of San Cristóbal Island. The trail includes an olivine beach approximately 90 meters and a trail that ascends to the top of a volcanic tuff hill passing through several natural viewpoints. Punta Pitt is composed of volcanic tuff substrate.

This is the only site in the Galapagos Islands, where you can watch the three species of boobies and two species of frigates nesting in the same area. This is due to its geographic location, an abundance of food so there is hardly any competition between them. The blue footed boobies nest in the interior of Punta Pitt, red-footed boobies nest on bushes and masked boobies nest in the cliffs. Sealions can also be found in the area.

San Cristobal was the first island Darwin visited when he arrived in 1835. He reported encountering a pair of giant tortoises feeding on cactus during that outing.

To the southeast of Kicker Rock lies Isla Lobos. The tiny island is separated from much larger San Cristobal by a narrow channel and little bay. This basalt island outcropping lives up to its name of Sea Lion Island, and is home to a noisy population of frolicking and barking beasts. It is also a nesting place for blue-footed boobies and an excellent spot for snorkeling with sea lions. After walking the trail for some baby sea lion and booby watching amidst the sands beneath the salt bushes we have a real treat in store. We change into our snorkeling gear for some swimming with sea lions! The sea lions like to dart past, and then swim up to you to blow bubbles at your mask. On occasion they have been known to leap over, and then dive in front of unsuspecting snorkelers.

Following our snorkeling outing you will discover that the best place to warm up from your dip is in the Grace's Jacuzzi. Heading up the coast from Isla Lobos we will have a chance to visit Leon Dormido, also known as Kicker Rock, a spectacular formation that rises 152 meters (500 feet) out of the Pacific. It takes the form of a sleeping lion, hence it's Spanish name. From another angle one can see that the rock is split forming a colossal table and, piercing the sea, a great chisel ready for etching. We will circumnavigate the rock formation which is an ancient and eroded volcanic lava tuff cone in search for birds, and possibly, hammerhead sharks.

### ACTIVITIES:



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Punta Pitt

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Panga Ride, Kayaking & Snorkeling

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Lobos Island & Kicker Rock

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Panga Ride & Snorkeling

 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



# A Pair of Island Gems

## Day 5 - Saturday

a.m. | Santa Fe Island

p.m. | South Plaza Island

### ACTIVITIES:



Santa Fe offers one of the more beautiful and sheltered coves in the islands. Its turquoise lagoon is protected by a peninsula of tiny islets forming an ideal anchorage. The island lies southeast of Santa Cruz Island within sight of Puerto Ayora. Geologically it is one of the oldest islands in the archipelago and for many years was thought to be a product of an uplift event. Through satellite imagery it has been possible to determine the island's volcanic origins.

A wet landing on a sandy white beach brings us into contact with one of many sea lion colonies. Bulls contend for the right of being beach master, while smaller males mask as females to make stealthy mating moves. Galapagos hawks are sometimes easily approached, perched atop salt bushes. An ascending trail leads toward the cliffs, where a dense thicket stands to the inland side of the island. The cliff side provides an expansive view of the ocean. You will be struck by the forest of giant prickly pear cactus found here that live up to their name, with tree-sized trunks! These are the largest of their kind in the Galapagos.

At the top of the trail our goal is to spot one of the large species of land iguana endemic to Santa Fe. Beige to chocolate brown in color with dragon-like spines, these big iguanas truly resemble dinosaurs. An indigenous species of rice rat also inhabits the thicket, and lucky hikers may spot harmless Galapagos snakes. After the hike, there is nothing more inviting than snorkeling or paddle boarding in the calm waters of the bay where sea lions play, sea turtles swim and tropical fish hide amidst the islets that form the natural reef. Santa Fe offers a more advanced kayaking route along its northern shore that ends at sea caves and is subject to conditions.

South Plaza Island lies just a few hundred meters off the east coast of Santa Cruz Island. South Plaza is one of the smallest yet richest islands in the archipelago. Just over 400 feet wide, it was formed by lava upwelling from the bottom of the ocean. Our landing is in the channel between North and South Plaza, where the island tilts toward the water. South Plaza is known for its lush and diverse flora. A grove of luminescent green prickly-pear cacti, a ground cover of red sesuvium, the turquoise waters of the channel and fiery sally lightfoot crabs combine to create a colorful palate of an island to explore. One of the big attractions here are the friendly yellow land iguanas waiting for lunch to drop from a cactus in the form of a prickly pear. We follow a trail up the tilt of the island to cliffs that look out over the ocean. Swallow-tailed gulls with red banded eyes nest atop the overlook where you may spot marine life such as manta rays. South Plaza has a very healthy population of sea lions including a colony of bachelors that sit atop the cliff. They unintentionally polish the surrounding rocks with the oil from their fur. We may see red-billed tropic birds, Nazca and blue-footed boobies catching rides on the wind currents.



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Santa Fe (Barrington)

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Moderate

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Snorkeling, Panga Ride, Kayaking & Paddle Boarding

p.m. | **Afternoon:** South Plaza Island

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes

 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



# Pinnacle & Microcosm

## Day 6 - Sunday

a.m. | North Seymour Island

p.m. | Bartolomé Island

### ACTIVITIES:



North Seymour Island was lifted from the ocean floor by a seismic event, and its origins as a seabed give the island its low, flat profile. Cliffs only a few meters high form much of the shoreline, where swallow-tailed gulls sit perched in ledges. A tiny forest of silver-grey Palo Santo trees stand just above the landing, usually without leaves, waiting for the rain to bring them into bloom. This island is teeming with life! You might have to give way to a passing sea lion or marine iguana. Blue-footed boobies nest on either side of the trail where mating pairs perform their courtship dance. You are likely to see fluffy white chicks peeking out from beneath their protective mothers. The trail follows the eastern shore along the beach. You may be fortunate to witness flocks of brown pelicans and blue-footed boobies hunting schools of fish. The boobies, which look so comical on land, are ideally adapted as dive bombers and easily pierce the water, zeroing in on their targeted prey. Frigate birds with wingspans of up to 5 feet soar overhead and all around. They were named for the way that the trim of their wings in flight are reminiscent of the square rigged sailing warship. Not coincidentally frigate birds are also called Man O' War birds and they live up to that name in a literal way when they target boobies, pelicans and other birds to steal their catch. Because the frigates are pelagic, they lack the ability to take off from the water, so they do better at snatching fish from the surface or simply stealing them. They also target marine iguanas and young baby sea turtles. The trail turns east and inland to reveal the nesting stronghold of the frigates. Here you can see males with large, bright red, inflated throat sacks known as gular pouches, all done in an effort to attract females. Your guide will point out the difference between the Magnificent, or Man O' War frigates and their Great frigate bird cousins. Large puff-ball frigate bird chicks inhabit nests, waiting for their parents to return with a meal. Even at this young age they possess long hooked beaks and act defiant when they feel threatened. You will also get a closer look at the feathers of the proud parents and notice their iridescent quality and deep green tinge.

Another inhabitant along the trail is the yellow land iguana. The species was originally introduced to the North Seymour in 1932 by Captain Alan Hancock and his crew from Baltra with the aim of rescuing the creatures from the poor conditions left by goats and other feral animals. The iguanas colonized the island without problem. The original colony disappeared from Baltra when it became a US military base in WWII. In 1980 Charles Darwin Station began a breeding program using some of the animals found on Seymour and successfully reintroduced their prodigy to both islands. Today the population on Seymour is roughly 600 and on Baltra 1,500.

Our snorkeling site at North Seymour also attracts scuba divers. You have a chance to see many types of rays here including marble rays, golden eagle rays, spotted eagle rays, sting rays and even manta rays. Dormitories of white-tipped reef sharks sleep on the bottom while schools of king angelfish and yellow tailed surgeonfish swarm the rocky shoreline passing the occasional parrot and damselfish. Some of the rocks are actually well disguised scorpion fish. Large schools of tightly packed blue and gold snappers, grunts and jacks are usually found plying these waters. Sea lions pay visits from both Seymour and nearby Mosquera Island as sea turtles and the occasional hammerhead shark can be seen down in the depths. Creole fish, the color of red salsa, hieroglyphic hawkfish, with neon-like etchings on their flanks and spotfin burrfish, which look a bit like a swimming shoe box with a cartoon face also inhabit the region. Bartolomé is famous for Pinnacle Rock, a towering spearheaded obelisk that rises from the ocean's edge and is the best known landmark in the Galapagos, which served as a back drop in the film Master & Commander. Galapagos penguins the only species of penguin found north of the equator walk precariously along narrow volcanic ledges at its base. Sea lions snooze on rocky platforms, ready to slide into the water to play with passing snorkelers. Below

the surface, shoals of tropical fish dodge in and out of the rocks past urchins, sea stars and anemones. A perfectly crescent sandy beach lies just to the east of the pinnacle and across a narrow isthmus another beach mirrors this one to the south. Sea turtles use both beaches and another to the west of the Pinnacle as nesting sites and can sometimes be seen wading back out into the shallow water near the shore, or resting in the sand recovering from the arduous task of digging nests, laying eggs and covering them over.

Penguins like to rest atop the nearby rocks by our next landing site, about a quarter mile east along the shore. Here the submerged walls of a tiny volcanic crater give the impression of a large fountain pool. This dry landing no wet feet! is the entrance to a 600-meter (2000-foot) pathway complete with stairs and boardwalks leading to Bartolome's summit. The route is not difficult and presents an open textbook of the islands' volcanic origins; a site left untouched after its last eruption, where small cones stand in various stages of erosion and lava tubes form bobsled-like runs down from the summit. At the top you will be rewarded with spectacular views of Santiago Island and Sullivan Bay to the west, and far below, Pinnacle Rock and our beach, where the crystal turquoise waters of the bay cradle your yacht. Our next landing site is a short distance away to the southeast.

This evening will be especially relaxed and you can have a long lingering soak in the Jacuzzi. The Grace yacht can stay anchored where she is tonight as we are already within sight of our morning's landing site across the channel just to the south. The view east toward the tiny twin table mountain islands of Daphne Major and Daphne Minor is particularly inviting with the sun setting behind them.



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** North Seymour Island

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Moderate

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes,

Snorkeling & Panga Ride

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Bartolome Island

**Type of Landing:** Dry

**Level of Walk:** Moderate

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes &

Snorkeling.

 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



# Penguins & Grottos

## Day 7 - Monday

a.m. | Chinese Hat Islet

p.m. | Santa Cruz Island: Dragon Hill

Tiny Sombrero Chino (Chinese Hat) Island is named for the resemblance its shape has to a traditional Chinese Coolie's hat. Today's visitor site is off limits to larger groups and day boats, making Sombrero Chino, along with Daphne Major, one of the least visited sites in the central islands. The island lies just off the southeastern tip of the large nearby island of Santiago; separated by a narrow channel which makes for very calm, protected waters. Our landing site is a tiny crescent shaped cove with sandy white beach cradled between black lava rocks and the crystal turquoise waters of the channel. A sea lion colony likes to rest on the warm white sands, while the rockier sections of the coast are alive with fiery colored sally lightfoot crabs. Marine iguanas sun themselves atop the rocks after foraging for algae in the channel. American oyster catchers stalk the tide pools stabbing at shellfish with their bright orange beaks. A quarter mile (400 meter) trail sets off into the island's volcanic interior to explore its rock formations, including excellent examples of pahoehoe lava resembling black rock ropes. The area is inhabited by ground hugging red sesuvim plants and curious lava lizards.

Back at the cove you will not only have another opportunity to snorkel with sea lions, but rockier sections of the coastline are inhabited by Galapagos penguins that dart past unsuspecting snorkelers. You'll also have a chance to see the penguins during a panga ride. Galapagos penguins are the only species of penguin you'll find living north of the nearby equator. Paddlers will have the opportunity to kayak or paddle board here in the areas that are not off limits (indicated by National Park Signs).

In the early afternoon we set out to Dragon Hill. There be dragons in the Galapagos in the form of bright yellow land iguanas that inhabit the northeastern shore of Santa Cruz Island. The large spines on their backs make them look even more like their legendary cousins. All they lack are wings. In the 1900's their ancestors were once moved to nearby Venezia Islet to protect them from the feral dogs that once roamed Santa Cruz. When the dogs were removed the colony was returned and today they thrive around the hill that is named in their honor, Cerro Dragon. The lava flows that reach out from the shore from Cerro Dragon form black reefs that make for excellent snorkeling at high tide.

As we make our dry landing keep your eyes open for yellow warblers that stand out against the black lava. We head up the beach to a trail that takes us to a hyper saline lagoon. This is a seasonal haunt for pink flamingos. As we make our way from the coast toward the top of Dragon Hill you'll notice the transition from intertidal vegetation like mangroves to dry zone vegetation

### ACTIVITIES:



including Palo Santo cactus and the silvery leafed Palo Santo trees. Keep your eyes open for the famous Darwin's Finches. Also known as Galapagos finches, they were first collected by Charles Darwin and make a group of about 15 species that are found nowhere else. Ironically they are not related to true finches.

While we walk through the Scalesia forests that ring the hill, keep your eyes open for the dragons. Endemic cactus finch and woodpecker finch perch overhead. The loop trail heads inland and up the hill. The rough terrain makes this hike a bit challenging, but the view back toward the bay is rewarding. The real reward, of course, is the dragons hiding in the thicket which you are sure to spot. Back at the beach you may be lucky enough to see one of Santa Cruz Island's fearless Galapagos hawks perched atop the lava surveying the surroundings.



### Activities

a.m. | **Morning:** Chinese Hat Islet

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes, Snorkeling, Panga Ride, Kayaking & Paddle Boarding

p.m. | **Afternoon:** Dragon Hill

**Type of Landing:** Wet

**Level of Walk:** Easy

**Other Activities:** Nature Hikes & Snorkeling

 **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



# Farewell to Darwin's Archipelago

## Day 8 - Tuesday

a.m. | Black Turtle Cove / Baltra & Flight Home

ACTIVITIES:



This last morning of our voyage through the Galapagos we visit Black Turtle Cove. Located on the northern shore of Santa Cruz, the cove is a living illustration of how mangroves alter the marine environment to create a rich and unique habitat. Four species of mangrove crowd from the shore out into the lagoon, which stretches almost a mile inland. As we drift through the quiet waters in our dinghy, we are likely to see spotted eagle rays and cow nosed or golden rays, which swim in a diamond formation. White-tipped reef sharks can be seen beneath the boat and Pacific green sea turtles come to the surface for air and to mate. Sea birds, including brown pelicans, blue herons and lava herons, come to feed in the cove which has also been declared a "Turtle Sanctuary".

It's time to begin your journey home as we set sail for nearby the Baltra Island. During WWII the island was a US Air Force base and one can still see the remnants of the old foundations left behind from that era once ashore. It doesn't take long for the Grace to navigate north along Baltra's western shore to the island's port. Don't worry about your bags, your guide will instruct you on how to prepare your luggage and have it ready for pick up in your cabin. Our crew will see to transporting your luggage ashore where you will reunite with it at the airport. All you need to do is take along your carryon luggage in the panga for the short crossing to shore. Once there a bus will pick us up for the 5 minute drive to the airport. Your guide will be there to make sure you are checked in on the proper flight. This is your last chance to purchase souvenirs in the Galapagos and the airport offers an assortment of shops where you can purchase everything from baseball caps and t-shirts to animal figurines, jewelry and much more; all with a Galapagos theme. There is one final check point before you enter the waiting area from which you will board your flight. Almost all flights to the mainland stop in Guayaquil and continue on to Quito so make sure you know where to get off the plane. We say farewell to the Galapagos as you begin your journey home, or on to other destinations like the Ecuadorian highlands, Amazon or nearby Peru.

## Note on Galapagos Itineraries

To lessen the environmental impact on visitor sites, The Galapagos National Park has decided that vessels permitted to operate within the park cannot revisit the same site within 14 days. As a result our yachts now repeat the same itinerary every two weeks (instead of every week). We split our two week long itineraries in half with the result that we now operate two different 8 days / 7 nights voyages from Tuesday to Tuesday. We therefore alternate itineraries every other week. Both itineraries are excellent and guests visiting the islands will be pleased with either choice. While there are always tradeoffs of what one can and cannot see during a weeklong trip through the Galapagos, you can now see almost everything by doing back to back itineraries aboard the Grace.



## Activities

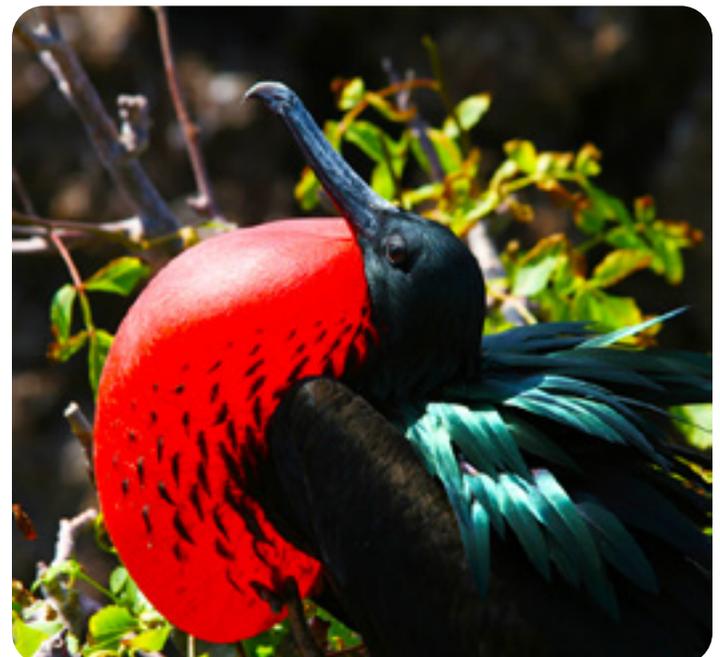
a.m. | **Morning:** Black Turtle Cove

**Late Morning:** Return to Mainland Ecuador

**Type of Landing:** N/A

**Other Activities:** Panga Ride

 **Meals:** Breakfast





Traveller Made®

ILTM

Pure  
LIFE EXPERIENCES

EMOTIONS

