

Small Ship Adventure Co.

Specialising in Small Ship Cruising Worldwide



ULTIMATE GALÁPAGOS

Aboard the Isabella II

June 21 - July 3, 2012

ITINERARY

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Depart to Guayaquil, Ecuador

Depart on your flight to Guayaquil. Transfer to our hotel for the night.

Friday, June 22

Guayaquil / Baltra, Galápagos Islands / Santa Cruz / Embark Isabela II

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight to Baltra Island, then transfer to nearby Santa Cruz Island. Here, we visit the highlands' Tortoise Reserve, containing one of the largest giant tortoise populations in the Galápagos. After lunch we continue to the Charles Darwin Research Station. Learn about conservation efforts and view the tortoises and land iguanas being raised for reintroduction. This afternoon we embark the Isabela II.

Saturday, June 23

Floreana Island

This morning visit Post Office Bay and view one of the oldest working sea-mail drops. Zodiacs take us to nearby islets to observe rays, sea lions, and sea turtles, followed by a short walk to a lookout for panoramic views of Floreana. At Punta Cormorant we may see American flamingos, black-necked stilts, and white-cheeked pintail ducks in a brackish lagoon. Our hike takes us to a fine coral-sand beach where green sea turtles nest. A highlight of our day is the chance to swim and snorkel with friendly and frolicking sea lions.

Sunday, June 24**Española (Hood) Island**

Today visit Punta Suárez to see the largest birds in the Galápagos Islands, the waved albatross. Virtually the entire population of 12,000 pairs of albatross nests here from April to December. Other wildlife includes red-billed tropicbirds, blue-footed and Nazca boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, and marine iguanas. We reposition to stroll along the beautiful white-sand beach of Gardner Bay where we hope to find Hood Island mockingbirds and lava lizards, Galápagos hawks, and three species of Darwin's finches. We enjoy another opportunity to snorkel this afternoon.

Monday, June 25**San Cristóbal Island**

San Cristóbal was the first island Charles Darwin visited when he arrived in the Galápagos. First known as Chatham Island, it was later named in honor of Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón). Punta Pitt is the only place in the Galápagos where three species of boobies and two species of frigates can be found nesting in the same area—blue-footed, Nazca, and red-footed boobies as well as great and magnificent frigatebirds. In the afternoon walk along the beautiful beach of Cerro Brujo as we search for species endemic to this island, including San Cristóbal mockingbirds and lava lizards. The sheltered bay is frequented by sea lions and rays.

Tuesday, June 26**San Cristóbal Island**

Disembark on the southwest side of the island at the town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno to visit the Interpretive Center, which will give us a greater understanding of the Galápagos' uniqueness. After lunch board coaches to Cerro Colorado to visit a Galápagos tortoise breeding center.

Wednesday, June 27**Genovesa (Tower) Island**

We cross the equator overnight, arriving at Genovesa Island. Entering Darwin Bay, formed by the caldera of a partially eroded volcano, a short Zodiac tour along the coastline takes us to Prince Philip's Steps, where we may find red-footed boobies nesting in palo santo trees. Nazca boobies nest on the ground, along with wedge-rumped storm-petrels and short-eared owls. We also search for the four species of finches that live here. Afterward, we swim and snorkel along the cliffs of this colossal harbor. Later land on a sandy beach and pass swallow-tailed gulls as we walk by a forest of salt bush and mangrove where colonies of great frigatebirds and red-footed boobies nest.

Thursday, June 28**Santiago (James) Island**

This morning we arrive at Espumilla Beach, a large coffee-colored sand beach located at the north end of the island. A short walk inland takes us through a mangrove forest to a brackish lagoon where flocks of pink flamingos and white-cheeked pintails can be seen. Once back on the beach we have a chance to swim or snorkel. After a short lunch cruise, we arrive at Puerto Egas and hike along a coastal trail to a nearby fur seal grotto. Along the shore we may spot great blue herons, striated herons, oystercatchers, and yellow-crowned night herons as they feed. At low tide it is possible to see colorful Sally lightfoot crabs and marine iguanas grazing on sea lettuce.

Friday, June 29**Fernandina Island / Isabela Island**

The cool waters of the Cromwell Current upwell around Isabela and Fernandina and these nutrient-rich waters provide great feeding sources for whales and dolphins. In the morning explore Punta Espinosa on Fernandina, the youngest island of the Galápagos. Here we observe the largest colony of marine iguanas in the Galápagos, flightless cormorants, and moonscape-like lava fields. This is one of the largest, most pristine islands in the world with no introduced species to date. On the western shore of Isabela, we stop at secluded Tagus Cove, which was once a favorite anchorage for pirates and whalers. An uphill hike through the forest takes us to Darwin Lake, a crater filled with salt water.

Saturday, June 30**Isabela Island**

South from Tagus Cove we find a gentle sloping beach on Urbina (Urvina) Bay. A short trail leads to a coral reef, evidence of uplift from the sea which occurred in 1954. Here we may find land and marine iguanas, giant Galápagos tortoises, flightless cormorants, and Galápagos penguins. We then cruise north along the Bolívar Channel, accompanied by impressive views of Isabela's rugged coast, to Punta Vicente Roca. Be on the lookout here for more cormorants, penguins, blue-footed boobies, turtles, and perhaps, the amazing mola mola.

Sunday, July 1**Rábida & Santa Cruz Islands**

Though small, Rábida contains a great variety of rock and lava types. Wildlife found here includes Galápagos hawks, pelicans, and sea lions. Our next stop is Cerro Dragon (Dragon Hill) on the northwest side of Santa Cruz Island. Aptly named, this site is one of the best places to see land iguanas. The trail continues through palo santo trees and cacti forests and ends at a saltwater lagoon, where we may see various species of birds—white-cheeked pintail ducks, Galápagos mockingbirds, flamingos, finches, Galápagos flycatchers, and more.

Monday, July 2**Baltra Island / Disembark / Guayaquil**

This morning enjoy time at leisure before we disembark the Isabela II for your flight back to Guayaquil. On arrival we transfer to our hotel. This afternoon there is free time to relax before our farewell dinner and overnight.

Tuesday, July 3**Guayaquil**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for independent flights homeward.