

ECUADOR - ABSOLUTE GALAPAGOS CRUISE | GRAND DAPHNE

DAY 3: Isla Floreana

Discover the quirky maritime history of Post Office Bay, home of the oldest postal system in the Americas. Take the opportunity to post a letter in the historic post office barrel from 1793 which is still used today. Galapagos visitors can leave letters and postcards to be collected by the next passing boat. Snorkelling and a lovely panga ride are also included in this outing. Afterwards, head ashore at Punta Cormorant where the sand is made up of fine olivine crystal (a glassy volcanic mineral that gives the beach an olive-green colour). This is the best place to see Galapagos sea lions. Keep an eye out for pink flamingos and other waterbirds wading in the lagoons, including pintails and stilts. The moderate 2-kilometre walk continues to a white-flour sandy beach, which is an Eastern Pacific green turtle nesting site. Young diamond stingrays are commonly found in the shore line. Enjoy the view of the turquoise crystalline ocean. Just offshore, the famous Devil's Crown is an old eroded volcanic cone and a popular roosting site for seabirds such as boobies, pelicans and frigates. Red-billed tropicbirds can also be seen nesting in the rocky crevices. The centre of the cone is an outstanding spot and many people find this one of the best snorkelling experiences of their trip. You might see rays, sharks, sea lions and turtles.



TRIP CODE

ECTSABG

DEPARTURE

Selected Tuesdays

DURATION

17 Days

LOCATIONS

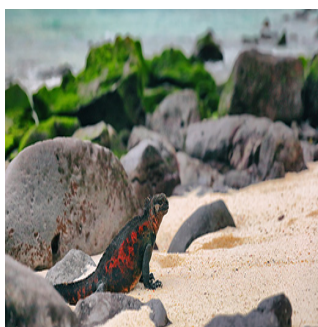
Ecuador, Galapagos Islands,
South America



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DAY 4: Isla Española

Sail overnight and wake up on the island of Española, the spectacular southernmost island of the Galapagos. Because of its remote location, this island has a large population of endemic fauna. It is the breeding site for nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of waved albatrosses and also home to colonies of blue-footed and masked boobies. Trails from the golden beaches, where sea lions bathe and marine iguanas make their way towards the water, lead you right through the middle of booby colonies, and Galapagos doves and mockingbirds are also often seen. Land at Punta Suarez, one of the most attractive locations in the Galapagos, home to a large and varied wildlife population. A walk along its rocky trails (approximately 3 km) takes you to a clifftop viewpoint that affords magical panoramas. Boobies line the rocky shoreline below, while frigate birds can be seen overhead. Enormous male sea lions lounge nearby, and albatross use the cliffs as their 'runway', getting airborne on the southeast winds. If you're lucky you might spot the elaborate courtship rituals performed by albatrosses before the female chooses her lifelong mate. Next, head to Gardner Bay, one of the most beautiful beaches of the Galapagos Islands. It's full of sea lions and hooded mockingbirds. Enjoy a walk (approximately 1 km) along the beach, and do some snorkelling which could be great for playing with sea lion pups and many fish. The rocks off the coast provide particularly great snorkelling, with reef sharks, turtles and many species of tropical fish (such as surgeon and angelfish). Small white-tipped reef sharks are also often spotted resting under the rocks.



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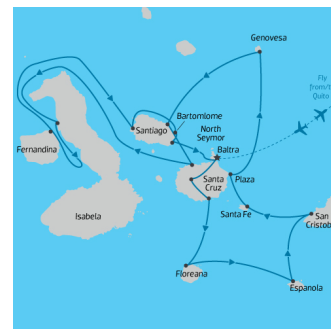
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DAY 5: Isla San Cristobal

Shake off any early morning doziness with a trip to Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock). This basalt crater rises 150 metres above the water and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel. Cruise around kicker rock as nesting seabirds flank the boat, tropicbirds soar overhead and sea lions lounge by the water. Next, spend some time snorkelling at Cerro Brujo, providing opportunities to see Galapagos sharks and sea turtles. Or perhaps enjoy the beautiful beach with a leisurely walk to photograph the interesting sea lions who can often be seen at this location. Later, sail to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on the island of San Cristobal. Some passengers will be leaving and others joining the group today, so you have some free time to explore the town of San Cristobal. In the afternoon you will visit the San Cristobal Interpretation Centre, which brings the history and geography of the archipelago to life, from its volcanic origins to the present day. If there's time, your guide may be able to organise an optional visit to the highlands of San Cristobal, for a chance to see giant tortoises in the wild. The price of this optional activity depends on the number of passengers attending. Relaxing on the beach is a great option for those who don't wish to partake in this excursion.



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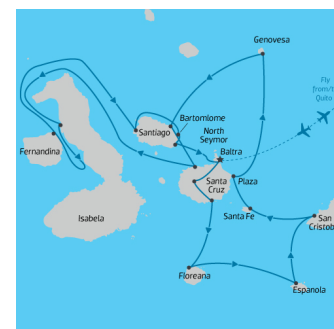
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DAY 6: Isla Santa Fe - Isla Plaza Sur

Isla Santa Fe is home to more sea lions, and these ones are very eager for swimming partners! It's a lovely place to take a dip, offers a dense concentration of wildlife, and is a fantastic place to see many of the stars of the Galapagos in one relatively small area. Expect to see Galapagos hawks, land iguanas, a variety of finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, sea lions, marine turtles, frigatebirds, Galapagos doves and lava lizards. This stunning island boasts one of the most attractive coves in the whole archipelago. The jade-green waters are ideal for snorkelling. Take a hike along the coast into the Opuntia forest (approximately 1.5 hours). From here you can see Santa Fe's trees – the largest in the Galapagos – along with a forest of giant cacti and palo santo trees. The trail can be a little rocky, so mind your step. Once back at the beach, you'll have time for a snorkel. Playful sea lion pups and fluorescent fish make for nice company. Afterwards, continue to Plaza Sur (South Plaza), a small, picturesque island. Take a walk (approximately 1.5 hours), getting close to sea lions and passing one of the Galapagos' largest land iguana populations which rest among cacti, volcanic landscapes dotted with brightly coloured sea-purslanes. The southern cliffs are great for spotting tropicbirds and swallow-tailed gulls, as well as 'the Gentlemen's Club' – a gathering of male sea lions. Today there may be an extra stop along the way to Plaza Sur to restock the provisions for the boat. Later tonight, set sail for Isla Genovesa.



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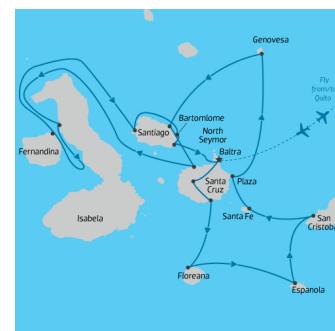
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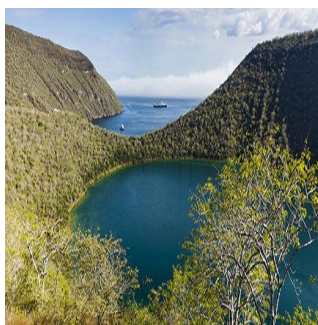
DAY 10: Isla Rabida - Isla Isabela

Today you will sail from Las Bachas to Isla Rabida, known for its spectacular red sand beaches, caused by the high content of iron in the sand which rusts to form the unusual shade. Follow a trail from the shore along to a lagoon which is one of the best spots in the Galapagos to view flamingos. Keep an eye out for nesting pelicans, pintail ducks, marine iguanas and sea lions – all are commonly sighted on the island. Check out a vast opuntia cactus forest, hinting at the previous habitation of land iguanas, Galapagos hawks, mockingbirds, doves, finches and lava lizards. You may like to take the chance to go snorkelling and seek out sea stars, damsels, gobbies and surgeon fish. In the afternoon, head to Albemarle on the northeast side of Isabela Island. Covered in mangroves, the bay is home to sea turtles, sea lions, penguins and flightless cormorants who feed on the algae and fish here. Take a walk inland and discover the remains of an old radar base from World War II and pass by pahoehoe and lava formations. Another fantastic location for snorkelling, you may like to have a look beneath the water's surface in search of sea turtles and flightless cormorants.



DAY 11: Isla Isabela

Sail overnight from Isla Santiago around to the western shores of Isla Isabela. Wake up near Tagus Cove, where pirates and whalers used to collect tortoises for their travels. Enjoy a short visit here (approximately 2 hours), perhaps snorkelling or checking out the graffiti on the walls (the oldest of which is from 1836). Witness flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies, a variety of waterfowl and the most northerly penguins in the world. You will walk to a lookout point for a stunning view of the north of Isabela Island and Volcan Wolf (Wolf Volcano). Today you will also visit Bahia Urbina on the west of Isabela Island, Urbina Bay has a wide variety of plant life which changes depending on the season. You will be able to observe the beautiful color of the plants which attracts many different insects. The site also features a short trek inland, where giant tortoises can be spotted amongst the bushes in their natural habitat. You may also see land iguanas which often nest in the middle of the trail where their distinctive, textured and yellowish skin can be observed from up close. Flycatchers, Darwin's finches and mockingbirds are common on the ground and in the trees.

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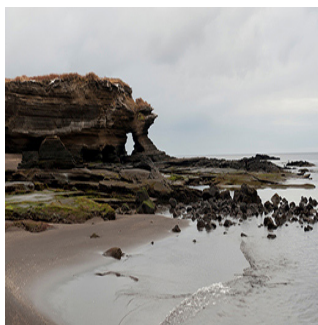
DAY 12: Isla Fernandina - Isla Isabela

Today we visit Punta Espinosa that is a narrow ledge of lava and sand extending from the base of La Cumbre volcano. Take a walk around the beautiful peninsula, which boasts such wildlife and plant life as lava cacti, marine iguanas, barking sea lions, tiny penguins and Sally Lightfoot crabs. Keep a lookout for that marvelous Galapagos predator hunting from the treetops: the Galapagos hawk. Top-notch snorkeling opportunities await in the clear waters, and turtles and sea lions can be seen swimming around and feeding on the shore. This is also a great spot to see flightless cormorants drying their atrophied wings on the rocks. In the afternoon head to Punta Vicente Roca, this site allowed for panga rides to observe the abundant wildlife and offers one of the best snorkeling spots of the Archipelago. The snorkeling “route” takes us along the cliffs and offers the not so common chance of exploring two shallow underwater caves. The primitive and unaggressive bullhead shark, known locally as the Port Jackson shark, is often seen here sharing its space with red-lipped batfish, frogfishes, Pacific seahorses, the endemic Camotillo, schools of barracuda and brown-striped snappers. Sponges, corals, and other marine invertebrates are also abundant in the area.



DAY 13: Isla Santiago

Sail this morning to Puerto Egas, a black-sand beach on the west side of James Bay, northwest of Isla Santiago, home to incredible volcanic tuff formations. Take a stroll along the beach with the native marine iguanas, pelicans, finches, mockingbirds, oystercatchers, Galapagos sea lions and Galapagos fur seals. You can see the amazing tidal pools, formed from ancient lava flow, providing a home for sponges, snails, hermit crabs, barnacles and fish. You might also end up snorkelling with a Galapagos fur seal – they’re always looking for a friend! In the afternoon travel to the northwest side of Santiago Island where you’ll find Caleta Bucanero, named after the pirates and buccaneers who once found shelter in the bay. Here you’ll have the chance to go snorkelling and take a dinghy ride to look for blue-footed boobies, pelicans and nocturnal seagulls nesting in the cliffs.



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DAY 16: Baltra - Quito

Flights to the mainland from Galapagos depart mid-morning, so it's an early start for your last morning on the islands. You will visit the Santa Cruz Highlands for a second time. Travel through the agricultural region and into the misty forests where you can see the unique *Scalesia* cloud forest and experience seeing the dome-shaped giant tortoises in the wild once again. Take in the serene atmosphere of the highlands and it's wildlife and then it's time to bid farewell to the archipelago and head to the airport for your mid-morning flight back to Quito for the last night of the tour. This flight takes approximately 2.5 hours with a transit in Guayaquil. Upon arrival at Quito Airport, at about 4pm, you'll be transferred back to your hotel for an overnight stay. A local Intrepid representative might stop by the hotel this evening to get your feedback on the trip.



DAY 17: Quito

There are no activities planned for the final day so we are able to depart our accommodation at any time. If you have not spent time here before, we recommend you stay on a few days as there are many fascinating things to do in and around Quito, such as the Cotopaxi volcano, the Cloud Forest, hot springs, the Equatorial Monument or perhaps city tour of the fascinating Old Town. Please speak to our customer service representative about any optional activities that might be of interest. They can also assist you in booking a departure transfer to the airport.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Accommodation | Cabin on board ship & hotel |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|



A single supplement surcharge applies and is subject to availability. Please contact us for more information.

Notes

Please note kayaking and other water based activities are subject to weather conditions.

* Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather conditions and government regulations.

Price Dependent upon

Seasonality, fuel surcharges, currency fluctuations and availability at time of booking.

SUSTAINABILITY

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