

THE GALAPAGOS

Detailed Itinerary

DAY 1, Thursday - Depart for Ecuador

Depart for Ecuador. Arrive in Guayaquil and transfer to your hotel. Balance of the day is at leisure

Overnight: Guayaquil

DAY 2, Friday - Galapagos Islands, Baltra, Santa Cruz

Embark this morning on a journey to the Galapagos Archipelago of volcanic islands, five million years in the making. Your flight from Guayaquil takes you to Baltra Airport; you'll be met by your naturalist guides and transferred by boat to Santa Cruz Island. Here, you visit the Giant Tortoise Reserve and see their natural habitat - a once in a lifetime experience! Tortoises can be seen grazing on the vegetation, wallowing in muddy banks or in the small red ponds. The area is teeming with wildlife - woodpecker finches, mockingbirds, flycatchers, as well as ducks, herons, and gallinules. After a stop for lunch, on to Puerto Ayora, the most developed town in the Galapagos Islands, where you board the Finch Panga that takes you to Finch Bay, an eco-friendly resort-hotel in a private seaside location surrounded by mangroves, your home for the next three nights. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy the hotel's pool, natural spa, white coral beach or admire the view from the comfort of your hammock. Tonight, savor dinner highlighted by local delicacies

Overnight: Galapagos

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3, Saturday - Cerro Mesa Preserve, Charles Darwin Research Station

Cross Academy Bay to the highlands of Santa Cruz. Arrive at Cerro Mesa, a private preserve with a native and endemic forest, splendid birding area, a natural path of migrating giant tortoises and impressive volcanic formations. Explore the natural surroundings and the spectacular vistas. You may encounter giant tortoises, herons, gallinules and some of the rare Darwin finches. Continue on your walk down the path to the coast and the amazing white sandy beach. Time for a soothing dip in the waters, or perhaps a small trip on a tandem or a sit-on-top kayak. Enjoy the scenery and the provided box lunch under the shade of the halophytic trees. In the afternoon, after freshening up, visit the Charles Darwin Research Station; gain insight into the huge efforts being made by scientists, guides, rangers and park managers to preserve this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, you can also meet some tortoise celebrities like Diego (the world's most famous tortoise after 100-year-old Lonesome George died in recent years) and some friendly creeping land iguanas. Dinner tonight is at the hotel

Overnight: Galapagos

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4, Sunday - North Seymour Island

You'll be transported on your yacht, The Sea Lion, to North Seymour Island, lifted from the ocean floor by a seismic event. Cliffs that are only a few feet high form the shoreline, where swallow-tailed gulls sit perched on ledges and a tiny forest of silver-grey Palo Santo trees stand just above the landing. This island is teeming with life! You might have to give right-of-way to a passing sea lion or a marine iguana. Along the way, perhaps you may see the famous Galapagos blue-footed booby nesting beside the trail or spot flocks of pelicans in a feeding frenzy. Keep on the lookout for the magnificent frigate bird, with its puffed-up scarlet throat sack, perched in low bushes watching over their chicks. After your enlightening walking excursion, you return to Finch Bay for leisure time. Enjoy dinner at the hotel

Overnight: Galapagos

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5, Monday - Port of Baltra, Flight to Quito

Depart the Finch Bay Hotel. On your way to Baltra, stop at the Twin Pit Craters to view the great depressions of volcanic material formed by a long process of the sinking ground, and the exceptional view of Scalesia trees, ferns, mosses and orchids. Then, proceed to the airport for the flight to Quito through Guayaquil. Arrive late afternoon in this historic city in the high Andes at the base of the Pichincha Volcano; transfer to the hotel. Evening is at leisure in Quito

Overnight: Quito

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6, Tuesday - Historic Quito City Tour

Depart from your hotel in the morning to begin your tour of historic Quito. Start by visiting the Plaza Grande, where you see a large monument dedicated to the independence fighters from 1809. Admire the numerous historic buildings such as the Carondelet Palace, the Metropolitan Cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace, and the Municipal Palace, all of which reside around the plaza. Continue on to visit the Metropolitan Cultural Center to gain a new appreciation for Ecuadorian culture and its rich history. Finally, visit the Compania of Jesus Church and the San Francisco Church, the former of which is one of UNESCO's 100 most important World Heritage Site Monuments in the world. Balance of the day is at leisure

Overnight: Quito

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7, Wednesday - Depart Ecuador

Transfer to the airport for your departure flight