

GALAPAGOS DARWINS DISCOVERIES



Day 1 : Arrive Quito

Upon arrival in Quito airport transfer to your hotel and time to relax from the flight.

Day 2 : Quito City Tour

After breakfast start your panoramic tour of Quito with the banking and financial areas and La Mariscal neighborhood. Continue to the historic centre where El Panecillo, the San Francisco Church, La Ronda, and Plaza de la Independencia Independence Square is located. Walk through the colonial streets, pass the Cathedral, the Government Palace and La Compañía Church.

Day 3 : Quito - Galapagos Cruise

In the morning transfer to the airport for your domestic flight to Galapagos Island. Upon arrival in Galapagos Baltra airport transfer to board your cruise. Your first visit is to the Charles Darwin Research Station. From here the indispensable conservation management and biological research of this unique archipelago and its surrounding waters are directed. This complex houses several interpretation and information centres about the National Park and the Galapagos Marine Reserve. The most memorable part of this visit might be the successful breeding centre and the enclosures with Galapagos giant tortoises.

Day 4 : Galapagos Cruise

In the morning visit the White Tipped Reef Shark Canal. The jagged black formations, dotted with mangrove and candelabra-cactus, are the remnants of a lava stream that has ended up in the ocean. The collapsed lava tube forms a channel that fills-up on high tide, while the entrance is closed on low tide. Marine life gets trapped, including spectacular white tip reef sharks. Continue to Sierra Negra, the 3rd highest volcano on Isabela. A hike through the cloud forests takes you to a viewpoint at the rim, offering fantastic views into the impressive caldera which is the largest of the archipelago. In the afternoon visit Puerto Villamil, home to marine iguanas and Sally lightfoot crabs. Its overgrown beach wall hides the largest coastal lagoon of the Galapagos, attracting lots of aquatic birds and wintering shore birds; some come from arctic regions.

Day 5 : Galapagos Cruise

In the morning visit Moreno Point. Fringes of reed, sea grass and mangrove bushes surround the picturesque lagoons that have been transformed into lush oases. Your photos

get the perfect finishing touch when the bright American flamingos and aquatic birds come to forage in the largest lagoon as well. In the wet season the fresh, promising greens become even more intense and contrast strongly with the dead, pitch-black lava. In the afternoon explore Elizabeth Bay and visit to the Marielas Islets in the mouth of the bay, with the mangles in its innermost heart. This is an excellent place to spot marine iguanas and Galapagos penguins, which tend to stay in the front row at the base of the cliffs. On to Elizabeth Bay where graceful Pacific green turtles swim slowly, sometimes popping their heads above the surface to breathe.

Day 6 : Galapagos Cruise

In the morning visit Fernandina, it harbours one of the world's most virgin, untouched ecosystems, and is therefore very well protected. Espinoza Point is Fernandina's only terrestrial visitor's site and has breathtaking almost unworldly views with the dominating cone of Volcán La Cumbre. In the afternoon make your way to Tagus Cove and Beagle Crater. Both present spectacular layered cliffs at their sea faces, providing numerous nesting places for sea and coastal birds. You can observe marine iguanas, flightless cormorants, Galapagos penguins and storm petrels. It is impressive to see flocks of blue-footed boobies and brown pelicans plunge diving from considerable altitudes.

Day 7 : Galapagos Cruise

In the morning visit Espumilla at the northern end of James Bay, on the western coast of Santiago. This beach has been revived as an important breeding site for turtles, they return year after year to bury their eggs in the sand dunes. The beach ridge hides a mangle with two picturesque lagoons on the backside. In the afternoon explore Puerto Egas, the southernmost pearl in the necklace of visitor's sites along James Bay. Here right below a spectacular rock arch in a grotto, a colony of Galapagos fur seals occupies the shade. Unlike the more common Galapagos sea lion, these smaller species of seal are no beach lovers, due to their insulating coats. This is the best place throughout the archipelago to see these endemic, shy and once heavily hunted marine mammals.

Day 8 : Galapagos Departure

In the morning visit Isla Lobos before your transfer to San Cristobal airport to take the flight back to the continent for your international return flight.

