

Cruise A North-Central (Sun–Wed) 4days / 3 nights

Sunday – Day 1

AM – Baltra Airport

Departing from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Island in a 2:30-hour flight. Upon arrival, passengers are picked up at the airport by our naturalist guides and taken on a ten-minute bus drive to the pier to board the **Coral I** or **Coral II**.

PM – Charles Darwin Research Station (Santa Cruz Island)

Once home to the famous Lonesome George, the last tortoise of the Pinta race, the breeding and relocation center is named in honor of his long-time guardian. The center is set in the Galapagos National Park Service where various interpretative buildings are available to visit. The grounds, with large stands of native vegetation, are one of the better places to spot some of the seldom seen Darwin's finches such as the woodpecker, cactus and vegetarian finches.

Highlights: Giant tortoises, Darwin finches, prickly-pear cactus, Interpretation Center. / Giant tortoises, lava tubes, scalesia forest, Chato Reserve.

Disembarking: dry landing

Physical condition: low

Type of terrain: flat

Activities: 1 hour 45 min bus ride round trip / 1 hour 30 min hike and visit

Monday – Day 2

AM – Dragon Hill (Santa Cruz Island)

Arriving to a small lava dock our first encounters are with marine iguanas that blend-in perfectly to the dark rock. As we walk past large prickly pear cacti we arrive to one end of a long, sickle-shaped, beach with Dragon Hill standing in the distance. Our walk takes us on a circular path, past a shallow lake where flamingoes frequently come to feed. Waders such as stilts, turnstones and sandpipers work the muddy edges frenetically looking for food as we continue inland to a dry, forested habitat where land iguanas nest and burrow.

Highlights: Dry vegetation zone, endemic land iguana, Darwin finches, mockingbirds.

Disembarking: dry landing

Physical condition: medium

Type of terrain: rocky

Activities: 1 hour 45 min hike / 45 min beach or deep-water snorkeling

PM – Bartolome Island

Considered the most iconic landscape of the entire archipelago the view from the top of Bartolome Island, overlooking the famous Pinnacle Rock and the austere Santiago Island beyond, is well worth the climb up the wooden boardwalk. This volcanic scene has often been likened to a lunar landscape. Our subsequent snorkel here might put us face to face with Galapagos penguins, white-tipped reef sharks and playful sea lions.

Highlights: Landscape, Pinnacle Rock, penguins, blue-footed boobies.

Disembarking: dry landing

Physical condition: medium

Type of terrain: wooden path of 372 stairs.

Activities: 1 hour hike / 45 min beach snorkeling

Tuesday – Day 3

AM – Rabida Island

Lying at the heart of the archipelago this dramatic island, with its distinctive red-sand beach, is home to sea lions, mockingbirds, finches, endemic Galapagos doves and vermilion flycatchers. A walk takes us through a forest of *palo santo* and cacti to a beautiful overview of the bay. Snorkeling here can be excellent, often with large schools of black-striped salemas, sea lions and the ubiquitous turtles.

Highlights: Incredible landscape, Brown pelicans, nesting spots of seabirds, red sandy beach.

Disembarking: wet landing

Physical condition: low

Type of terrain: sandy & grabble

Activities: 1 hour 30 min hike / 1 hour beach snorkeling / 1 hour dinghy ride

PM – Buccaneers Cove & Espumilla Beach (Santiago Island)

This is an amazing location, featuring the remains of an eroded shoreline that is home to seabirds, fur seals and the playful sea lions. Its different shapes have been made throughout a process caused by erosion of the waves and the wind. *Espumilla* Beach is a white-sandy beach in James Bay and is a popular place among visitors. There are mangroves and a *small palo santo* forest that lead to salty-water lagoons that are home to wading birds like flamingos. In the upper dunes are a nesting site for sea turtles. A good place to snorkel to see rays.

Highlights: Eroded shoreline home to seabirds, fur seals and sea lions.

Disembarking: wet landing

Physical condition: low

Type of terrain: white sand

Activities: 1 hour hike / 45 min beach snorkeling

Wednesday – Day 4

AM – Black Turtle Cove (Santa Cruz Island)

Here, we can find four species of mangrove in the extensive tidal lagoon system that stretches for almost a mile inland. During our dinghy ride through the labyrinth we will spot many turtles, herons of several species, sharks and rays. The experience is otherworldly and seems to transport us back to the beginning of time.

Highlights: Four species of mangrove, declared a “Turtle Sanctuary.”

Disembarking: –

Physical condition: low

Type of terrain: –

Activities: 1 hour dinghy ride

Baltra Airport

After the visit, passengers will be transferred to the airport to their return flight to Guayaquil or Quito.

