

## Cruise A North – Central (Mon – Thu)

4 days / 3 nights

### Monday – Day 1

#### AM – Baltra Airport

Departing from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Island in a 2:30 hour flight. Upon arrival in the Galapagos, passengers are picked up at the airport by our Natural Guides and taken to a 10-minute bus drive to the pier to board the <sup>MV</sup> Galapagos Legend.

#### PM – Highlands Tortoise Reserve (Santa Cruz Island)

In the central highlands of Santa Cruz Island, we have our best opportunity to interact at close quarters with totally wild, Galapagos giant tortoises. A short walk among these huge, 600lb, reptiles will also offer the chance for more highland species, especially several species of the famed finches.

**Highlights:** Giant tortoises, tree & ground Darwin finches.

**Disembarking:** dry landing

**Physical Condition:** low

**Type of terrain:** flat & muddy

**Activities:** 1 hour 30 min bus ride / 1 hour 30 min visit

### Tuesday -- Day 2

#### AM – El Barranco, Prince Philip's Steps (Genovesa Island)

Riding our dinghy to the far side of the caldera, red-billed tropicbirds display vociferously overhead while Galapagos fur seals can be seen on the shoreline. Once at the top of the rocky stairway we are immediately met by Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, mockingbirds and finches that line our way through a *palo santo* forest until we arrive at an expansive open lava field. Wedge-rumped storm petrels swarm above the lava where we keep our eyes peeled for short-eared owls.

**Highlights:** Dried lava field, red-footed boobies, short-eared owl, Nazca boobies' nesting site.

**Disembarking:** dry landing

**Physical Condition:** medium

**Type of terrain:** rocky

**Activities:** 2-hour hike / 45-min dinghy ride

#### PM – Darwin Bay (Genovesa Island)

From within the flooded caldera of Tower Island we set foot onto a sandy beach to be greeted by swallow-tailed gulls often said to be the most beautiful gull in the world. Our short, flat, trail leads us past stands of mangroves and saltbush on which we have our best possible looks at nesting red-footed boobies and great frigatebirds. At the tidal lagoon we may also see the rarest gull in the world, our very own, endemic lava gull.

**Highlights:** Sandy coral beach, swallow-tailed and lava gulls, mockingbirds, yellow-crowned night herons.

**Disembarking:** wet landing

**Physical Condition:** low

**Type of terrain:** sandy

**Activities:** 45 min kayaking / 45 min glass-bottom boat or 1-hour deep or beach snorkeling / 1 hour 15 min hike

### Wednesday -- Day 3

#### 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:** 2-hour hike / 1-hour beach snorkeling

## PM – Santa Fe Island

After a fabulous snorkel in the turquoise waters of the protected bay we may have enjoyed time with sea lions, turtles, reef sharks and spotted eagle rays. Landing onto a sandy beach we are immediately distracted by the abundant sea lions there with us. We begin a walk past a forest of island-endemic giant *Opuntia* cacti. Here we search for another island-endemic the Santa Fe land iguana, paler than its cousins on other islands. Galapagos hawks and even endemic rice rats are also things to look out for.

**Highlights:** Endemic Santa Fe land iguana, Galapagos hawk, mockingbirds, sea lions.

**Disembarking:** wet landing

**Physical Condition:** medium

**Type of terrain:** rocky

**Activities:** 30 min glass-bottom boat ride / 45 min kayaking / 1-hour hike / 1-hour deep snorkeling

## Thursday -- Day 4

### AM – Bachas Beach (Santa Cruz Island)

Named for some wrecked World War II barges whose ribs are still visible in the sand this visitor site offers a lovely walk along the shore and a visit to a lagoon behind the high tide line with wading birds, marine iguanas and sometimes even flamingoes. The two beaches are also favorite nesting sites for green turtles which often leave tractor-like tracks in the sand.

**Highlights:** One of the main nesting sites of sea turtles, flamingoes, snorkeling to see sharks, rays.

**Disembarking:** wet landing

**Physical condition:** low

**Type of terrain:** sandy

**Activities:** 1-hour hike / beach time

## Baltra Airport

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

