

Cruise D South (Thu – Mon)

5 days / 4 nights

Thursday -- Day 1

AM – San Cristobal Airport

Departing from Quito or Guayaquil to San Cristobal 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 ^{M/V} Galapagos Legend.

PM – Interpretation Center (San Cristobal Island)

The interpretation center is full of interesting information and offers the perfect overview to the formation of Galapagos, its significance in the world, threats and conservation efforts.

Highlights: Learn about the history of the islands, San Cristobal mockingbirds.

Disembarking: dry landing

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: flat path

Activities: 1 hour hike / 1 hour visit

Friday -- Day 2

AM – Gardner Bay, Gardner & Osborn islets (Española Island)

One of the most stunning beaches in all of Galapagos. The long, white, sandy beach, lapped by turquoise waters is home to a colony of Galapagos sea lions, indifferent to the humans that walk amongst them. The Hood mockingbirds, endemic to this particular island, will be eager to inspect the visitors and satisfy their innate curiosity. Darwin's finches may also join the throng including the reclusive warbler finch. We can also snorkel here from the beach, in the shallows of the bay.

Highlights: Hood mockingbird, sea lions, marine turtles, marine wildlife.

Disembarking: wet landing

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: sandy

Activities: 1-hour hike / 1 hour 45 min beach snorkeling / 30 min kayaking / 30 min glass-bottom boat

PM – Punta Suarez (Española Island)

One of the highlight visits of the trip. Punta Suarez seems to have everything - a naturalist's paradise. A slew of marine iguanas and sea lions greet us at the landing site from where our walk continues with close encounters of boobies, endemic lizards, gulls and even a dramatic blow hole. The oldest extant island in the archipelago it is our only opportunity to commune with the endemic waved albatross during their breeding season between April and December. With luck, we can watch their complex courtship display.

Highlights: Large colony of waved albatross, Nazca & Blue-footed boobies, marine iguanas, viewpoint from the blowhole.

Disembarking: dry landing

Physical Condition: high

Type of terrain: rocky

Activities: 2 hour 15 min hike

Saturday -- Day 3:

AM – Post Office (Floreana Island)

A very short walk from the beach leads us to the famous Post Office Barrel. Claimed to have been first setup in 1793 by Captain James Colnett it remains the oldest functioning 'post office' in the Pacific. The system was that whalers and fur sealers would leave addressed letters in the barrel to be picked up by homeward bound colleagues. In the spirit of maintaining tradition visitors today will often take letters and hand-deliver them in their home countries.

Highlights: Darwin finches, green Pacific turtles, historical place since 1793.

Disembarking: wet landing

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: sandy & rocky

Activities: 45 min dinghy ride / 45 min visit / 1 hour 15 min beach snorkeling / 30 min kayaking

PM – Punta Cormoran / Devil's Crown (Floreana Island)

On arriving, the observant visitor will notice that olivine, a volcanic crystal, has proffered a subtle green hue on the dark beach. Our walk takes us past island-endemic *Scalesia* plants to a large, shallow, lagoon often inhabited by a variable number of shockingly pink greater flamingoes. We continue through a forest of *palo santo* trees to arrive at a powdery white beach, a nesting area of green turtles. As we paddle barefoot in the shallow water we will spot diamond stingrays and white-tipped reef sharks. This coral-sand beach marks the end of our trail, and we head back to the olivine beach we landed on, to swim or snorkel amongst sea turtles, reef fish, sea lions and, on a good day, white-tipped reef sharks. A small colony of penguins resides on Floreana and can sometimes be observed as well.

One of the favorite snorkeling sites in the islands. Devil's Crown, an eroded volcanic cone, is home to an abundance of fish and marine animals. We will swim with big schools of yellow-tailed surgeonfish, salemas and creole fish and with luck may spot turtles, spotted eagle rays, parrotfish, and even hammerhead sharks! The jagged 'crown' is a roosting area for boobies, noddies, tropicbirds, and frigates.

Highlights: White & black mangrove, flamingoes, sea lions and sea turtles. / Sting rays, white-tipped shark, and colorful fish.

Disembarking: wet landing

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: sandy & flat

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

Sunday -- Day 4

AM – Charles Darwin Research Station & Highlands Tortoise Reserve (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. 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, 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: 2 hour bus ride round trip / 2 hour 30 min hike and visit

PM – Ballena Bay or Eden Islet (Santa Cruz)

The perfect spot to enjoy our water activities of snorkeling, kayaking or the glass-bottom boat. Expect to see lots of fish species including king angelfish, surgeonfish, parrotfish, damsels, rays and sharks.

Highlights: Nice beach for swimming, marine iguanas, seabirds, nesting area for sea turtles / Marine wildlife.

Disembarking: –

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: –

Activities: 1-hour deep snorkeling or kayaking / 45 min dinghy ride

Day 5: Monday

AM – Punta Carrion (Santa Cruz Island)

Dinghy ride at the entry of the Itabaca Channel in a lagoon with turquoise water, where we can observe sharks, blue footed boobies, and different kinds of fish.

Highlights: Circumnavigation, various species of fish and sharks.

Disembarking: –

Physical Condition: low

Type of terrain: –

Activities: 1-hour dinghy ride

Baltra Island Airport

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