



Grand Daphne



GRAND DAPHNE 8 DAYS ITINERARY

Day

Activities

1

ARRIVAL TO BALTRA & SANTA CRUZ ISLAND: BACHAS BEACH

A US\$20 per person transit card is payable on departure at Quito Airport and a US\$100 per person national park entry fee is payable on arrival on the islands. Please have cash on hand for these transactions as credit cards can be time consuming.

On arrival to the Galapagos islands you are met at the arrival's hall by your naturalist guide and then transferred to the cruise, the Grand Daphne, anchored at Itabaca Channel. To get here you take the local bus from the airport to the dock. The guide will give you the ticket for this, and once you are at the dock, you reach the boat via dinghy. Once on board you will be assigned your cabin, meet the crew members and get to know your naturalist guide and fellow travelers over a delicious lunch.

Afterwards, you head to Santa Cruz island and see the sandy, white beaches of Las Bachas which are a nesting site for the Pacific green turtle, and marine iguanas are also commonly seen. The sand here is particularly white and soft as it is made of decomposed coral. The rocks provide great snorkelling and are the perfect habitat for the Sally Lightfoot crabs, which are plentiful on the island. A saltwater lagoon near to the beach is home to flamingo and whimbrel, and also look out for great blue herons. Remnants of a floating pier can still be sighted, and it is a testimony to the US presence in the Galapagos during World War II.



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NORTH SEYMOUR ISLAND & BARTOLOME ISLAND

We take an active excursion to North Seymour Island, probably one of the Galapagos' most visited islands of the Archipelago. On North Seymour the highlight will be seeing the blue-footed boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, both species of frigate birds (great frigate birds and magnificent frigate birds), land iguanas, marine iguanas, Galapagos sea lions and endemic incense trees. The magnificent frigate bird, a large black bird with a long wingspan and a hooked beak, is extremely fast and has excellent vision.

Frigate birds are known for the large red pouch on their necks. During mating season the males throw back their heads, inflate the pouch (sometimes to the size of a soccer ball) and shake trying to capture the attention of female frigates. Boobies and frigates have an interesting relationship. They share the same nesting area on North Seymour with blue-footed boobies nesting on the ground while the frigate birds nests just above them in the saltbushes. A solid walk is followed by snorkelling, where we will find a great variety of fish, and possibly white-tipped reef sharks, rays and sea lions.

After lunch you head to Bartolome Island, one of the most spectacular volcanic landscapes in the Galapagos, full of parasitic spatter cones, lava flows, Galapagos penguins and lava lizards. Bartolomé is a relatively new island in the archipelago and walking shoes are required as we will climb over 360 wooden steps to the summit, where the scenery is spectacular and we have a great view of Pinnacle Rock – one of the most photographed sites in the Galapagos. It is an abrupt jag of rock protruding from the earth like a tooth, while nearby two golden bays back on to each other. Here we can hike to the top of a once-active volcano and enjoy superb views across to Sullivan Bay on nearby Santiago Island. If we are in luck we might catch a glance of the Galapagos hawk here. We will also have the opportunity to go snorkelling with plenty of tropical fish, starfish and hopefully also penguins, white-tipped reef sharks and rays.



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SANTIAGO ISLAND: EGAS PORT, ESPUMILLA BEACH & BUCANEER COVE

You continue heading west, and today you visit the west side of Santiago Island. Egas Port is a black sand beach located on the west side of James Bay and northwest of Santiago Island. Here we will see amazing volcanic tuff formations and the walk along the beach provides many opportunities for encounters with the locals such as marine iguanas, pelicans, finches, mockingbirds, oystercatchers, Galapagos sea lions and most importantly the Galapagos fur seals. We can also see amazing tidal pools formed from ancient lava flow and home to sponges, snails, hermit crabs, barnacles and fish. Snorkeling with the seals always offer the possibility of thrilling and fun encounters.

After lunch you visit Espumilla Beach, on the northern coast of Santiago Island in James Bay, is one of the most idyllic locations in the Galapagos Islands and is an important nesting site for marine turtles. With large waves, it is also often a favorite amongst beach lovers. Potentially we will see Galapagos hawks up close, ghost crabs, blue-footed boobies (often plunging for fish) and brown pelicans. It is also well known for its palo santo forest and some extraordinary lava formations.

We then go to view the spectacular geology of volcanic ash (tuff) of Buccaneer Cove. Here we can find remains of objects used by pirates in centuries past, hence the name Buccaneer Cove. A place of local legends and stories, it is where Darwin camped for nine days while making his study of the islands and their wildlife. If conditions are favourable, we can enjoy some further snorkelling.



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ISABELA ISLAND: TAGUS COVE & FERNANDINA ISLAND: ESPINOSA POINT

We finally reach the 2 westerns islands in the Galapagos, Isabela and Fernandina. Tagus Cove was a place of anchorage for pirates and whalers who collected turtles for their trip. Approximately a two-hour visit where we can snorkel, check out ancient graffiti on its walls, observe flightless cormorants, penguins, blue-footed boobies and a variety of waterfowl. The walk leads to a high point where we take in a spectacular panoramic view of the north of Isabela Island and the Wolf volcano.

In the afternoon you head across Channel Bolivar to Fernandina Island. Be on the lookout as Channel Bolivar is considered one of the best locations in the Archipelago to spot dolphins, whales and sharks.

Isla Fernandina's north-east tip, Espinosa Point, is a narrow ledge of lava and sand where visitors can see lava cacti and flightless cormorants among the stark volcanic landscape. Fernandina Island is the youngest of all the islands in Galapagos, and it is actually over the hotspot that created them. If you are lucky you can even see the volcano La Cumbre erupting. Fernandina combines different ecosystems and you can spot different wildlife all living together, from the endemic flightless cormorant, to the sea lions, sea turtles, Galapagos Hawk and the biggest colony of marine iguanas in the Galapagos. It is definitely something spectacular.



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ISABELA ISLAND: MORENO POINT & ELIZABETH BAY

Today we head back to the archipelago's largest island – Isabela. The island is located in one of the youngest geological areas in the world, having been formed less than a million years ago.

We spend the morning at Moreno Point on the southwest coast. This coastline has some of the most beautiful blue lagoons and rocky terrain in the Galapagos, with a backdrop of three active volcanoes, flamingos and incredible lava formations. Get ready for a great walk on top of the black lava field, with the majestic view of Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul in the background. Depending of the season we can see brown pelicans nesting on top of the mangroves, lava and candelabra cactus. Lava lizards are also frequently seen. We walk by brackish water lagoons covered with several different plants, where pink flamingos, ducks and black neck stilts can be seen resting. Then back on board and off to do some snorkeling!

After lunch you head to the unique Elizabeth Bay, an incredible biodiversity sanctuary located on the west coast of Isabela Island. We take a 'panga' ride out on the bay, so have your binoculars and cameras ready to photograph the second smallest penguins in the world (Galapagos penguin) and blue-footed boobies perched on the islets or flying overhead and looking to dive for their next meal. We head towards the mangrove forest, which is quite unique in Galapagos. Here, we may see sea turtles, sea lions, penguins, lava herons, rays and plenty of colourful fish including pompanos, dorados and mullets.



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ISABELA ISLAND: TINTORERAS, WETLANDS

Overnight we navigate around Isabela and reach its east side, which is completely different from the west part. First, we visit Las Tintoreras, a little peninsula at the entrance of Isabela Island's port. From the viewing walkway we can look down into this narrow channel to see a colony of white-tipped reef sharks swimming and sleeping, and the occasional playful sea lion among them! Blue-footed boobies and penguins, marine iguanas and crabs also make their home here, and the waters provide further opportunities to swim with turtles.

We enjoy a nice long walk on a gravel path through lava flows and see plenty of marine iguanas. The natives of the islands call white reef sharks 'tintoreras', hence the name of this spectacular site.

In the afternoon we visit the wetlands of Isabela, also called Flamingos pool. They are reached on a complex trail which winds around for 6 km long. Here we find a variety of flora and fauna as well as spectacular scenery.



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SANTA CRUZ ISLAND: DRAGON HILL & CARRION POINT

We then set sail for Cerro Dragon (Dragon Hill), on Santa Cruz's north coast. From our dry landing we walk to a brackish lagoon frequented by lagoon birds including stilts, pintail ducks, sandpipers, sanderlings and occasionally flamingos. Further inland, the trail offers a beautiful view of the bay and the western area of the archipelago. This area is a nesting site for land iguanas, which are constantly monitored and assisted by the Charles Darwin Research Station. The arid-zone vegetation makes for a rewarding location for birdwatching, with Darwin's finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, the endemic Galapagos flycatcher and yellow warblers all regulars here. The path can be challenging but we'll be well rewarded with a spectacular view of the bay!

In the afternoon, you will visit Carrion Point, located in north-eastern Santa Cruz. This is a shallow and protected cove, ideal for snorkeling and swimming. Wildlife is plentiful; keep your eyes peeled for blue-footed boobies, Galapagos herons, great blue herons and underwater swim among rays and white-tipped reef sharks.



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SANTA CRUZ ISLAND: HIGHLANDS & BALTRA AIRPORT

As flights to the mainland from Galapagos depart mid-morning, it is an early start for our last morning on the islands. Depending on the time of our flight, our time spent on this final excursion could be limited.

You'll visit the Highlands of Santa Cruz for our last Galapagos adventure. Beginning in Puerto Ayora, in the south of the island, we travel across Santa Cruz through the agricultural region and into the misty forests where we can see the unique Scalesia cloud forest, and a beautiful scenery with dome-shaped giant tortoises living and roaming in the wild, different species of Darwin finches and possibly the world famous woodpecker and warbler finches, as well as vermilion flycatchers.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end and we say farewell to the Galapagos Islands. We head to the airport for our mid-morning flight back to Quito or Guayaquil.



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IMPORTANT NOTE: The itinerary description is for reference use only. Visitor sites, activities and wildlife sightings may change without prior notice.



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Inclusions:

- ✓ Meals: From lunch on day 1, until breakfast on the final day
- ✓ Accommodation with private bathroom
- ✓ Excursions as listed in the itinerary, with a certified naturalist bilingual guide (Spanish/English)
- ✓ Snorkel equipment *Depending on the cruise
- ✓ Drinking water, tea, coffee, snacks.
- ✓ Bus ticket Baltra Airport / Itabaca Channel - \$ 5 pp * Depending on the cruise

Exclusions:

- ✗ Entrance fees Galapagos: Galapagos National Park \$100pp (subject to change). Galapagos transit control card \$20pp (subject to change), Isabel docking fee \$15pp *Depending on cruise. Santa Cruz Highland Tortoises ranch \$5 * depending on the cruise. Bus ticket Baltra Airport / Itabaca Channel - \$5 * depending on the cruise
- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Quito/Guayaquil - Galapagos - Quito/Guayaquil
- ✗ Airport transfers in Quito or Guayaquil
- ✗ Singles supplement *Depending on the cruise
- ✗ Alcoholic beverages & colas (there is a bar on board)
- ✗ Tips for guides and crew
- ✗ Any other personal expenses.



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