



# Grand Daphne



# GRAND DAPHNE 8 DAYS ITINERARY

Day

Activities

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## ARRIVAL TO BALTRA & SANTA CRUZ: HIGHLANDS

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 in the Galapagos, you collect your luggage and meet the cruise guide at the arrival's hall. First you need to take the bus from the airport to the dock. Our guide will provide you the ticket for this. On arrival to the dock you will then take the Ferry to cross the Itabaca Channel and get from Baltra to Santa Cruz Island. We then head to the Highlands of Santa Cruz for our first Galapagos adventure.

Beginning at the coast in the northern part 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, dome-shaped giant tortoises in the wild, different species of Darwin finches and possibly the world famous woodpecker and warbler finches, as well as vermilion flycatchers. Today we will enjoy lunch in the highlands.

This afternoon we travel to Puerto Ayora, where we are then transferred to our boat, the Grand Daphne. Once on board, you will be assigned your cabin, meet the crew members and get to know better our guide and the group.



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## FLOREANA ISLAND: POST OFFICE BAY, CORMORANT POINT AND DEVIL'S CROWN

Discover the quirky maritime history of Post Office Bay, which has the oldest postal system in the Americas. Steeped in history, in 1793 a post office barrel was erected for mariners to post their mail and assist in delivery of mail to the United States and Europe.

It was simple, a sailor leaves a letter with its destination and to whom it goes and take a letter from another sailor if he is going to that letter's destination. This custom continues today with Galapagos visitors leaving letters and postcards to be collected by the next passing boat. Send one of your own and check if there are any you can deliver back home. Snorkeling and enjoying a panga ride are activities also included in this outing.

We go ashore at Punta Cormorant where the sand is made up of fine olivine crystals, a glassy volcanic mineral, giving the beach an olive-green color. It is the best place to see Galapagos sea lions. Today is also one of our finest opportunities to see pink flamingos and other water birds wading in the lagoons, including pintails and stilts. The walk continues to a white flour sandy beach to an Eastern Pacific green turtle nesting site. Young diamond stingrays are commonly found in the shoreline and enjoy the view of the turquoise crystalline ocean.

Just offshore, the famous Devil's Crown is an old eroded volcanic cone and a popular roosting site for seabirds such as boobies, pelicans and frigates. Red-billed tropicbirds can also be seen nesting in the rocky crevices. The center of the cone is an outstanding snorkeling spot and many people find this one of the best snorkeling experiences of their trip. We might see rays, sharks, sea lions and turtles.



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## ESPAÑOLA ISLAND: SUAREZ POINT & GARDNER BAY

Today we cruise to the island of Española – the southernmost island of the Galapagos and one of the most spectacular ones. Because of its remote location this island has a large population of endemic fauna. It is the breeding site for nearly all of the world's 12,000 pairs of waved albatrosses and also home to colonies of blue-footed and masked boobies. Trails from the golden beaches, where sea lions bathe and marine iguanas make their way towards the water, lead us right through the middle of booby colonies, and Galapagos doves and mockingbirds are also often seen.

We land in Suarez Point, one of the most attractive locations in the Galapagos and home to large and varied wildlife population – a walk along its trails takes us to a cliff top viewpoint, where we gain a magical panorama. Keep in mind that the terrain is uneven, so it is recommended to use appropriate footwear. Boobies line the rocky shoreline beneath us, while frigate birds may be seen overhead; nearby enormous male sea lions can be seen lounging and albatross use the cliffs as their 'runway', helping become airborne by the southeast winds that blow across this part of the island. If we're lucky we'll see the elaborate courtship rituals performed by albatrosses before the female chooses her lifelong mate. You may see marine iguanas throughout many of the islands in Galapagos, but none like the marine iguanas in Española, also called "Christmas marine iguanas", with a red and green variation combined with its black color, it makes them unique and only possible to see here.

We then head to Gardner Bay which is considered by many as one of the most beautiful beaches in the Galapagos Islands and full of sea lions and hooded mockingbirds. Enjoy the beach and do some snorkeling which could be great for playing with sea lion pups and lots of different type of fish. The rocks off the coast provide excellent snorkeling opportunities, with reef sharks, turtles and many species of tropical fish, including surgeon and angelfish, often seen. The small white-tipped reef sharks are also often spotted resting under the rocks.



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## SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND: KICKER ROCK & INTERPRETATION CENTER

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.

- 4** Kicker Rock (Leon Dormido) is the magnificent basalt remains of a crater in the middle of the sea, the shape resembling a sleeping lion. The rock rises 150 meters above the surface and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel. We cruise through the channel, with nesting seabirds on either side of the boat, tropic birds overhead, marine iguanas in the water and resting on the rocks and many sea lions also present. Snorkeling give us the opportunity to see Galapagos sharks, and with some luck even hammer head sharks among sea turtles and an incredible biodiversity of invertebrates on the wall.

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 Guayaquil or Quito.



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## SANTA FE ISLAND & SOUTH PLAZAS ISLAND

Santa Fe is home to one of the biggest colonies of sea lions, and these ones are very eager for swimming partners! It's a lovely place to take a dip, as it offers a dense concentration of wildlife, and it is a fantastic place to see many of the Galapagos residents in one relatively small area.

Expect to see Galapagos hawks, land iguanas, a variety of finches, Galapagos mockingbirds, sea lions, marine turtles, frigate birds, Galapagos doves and lava lizards. It's a naturally beautiful island as well with one of the most attractive coves in the archipelago and the jade-green waters are ideal for snorkeling. Our trail follows the coast into the opuntia forest, where we see Santa Fe's trees – the largest in the Galapagos. Hiking into the island you can see a forest of giant cacti and Palo Santo trees. Once back at the beach we have free time to snorkel in the jade green water. Playful sea lion pups and fluorescent fish make for fascinating company.

In the afternoon, after lunch, you sail towards a small island, Plaza Sur (or South Plaza) is nonetheless a place of great beauty where we get close to sea lions and on to trails past one of the Galapagos' largest land iguana populations, resting amid cacti and volcanic landscapes colored bright red and green by sea-purslanes. The island's rugged southern cliffs are excellent places to spot tropicbirds and swallow-tailed gulls, as well as 'the Gentlemen's Club' – a gathering of male sea lions either too young or too old to be 'beach masters'!



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## GENOVESA ISLAND: PRINCE PHILIP'S STEPS & DARWIN BAY

It takes us an overnight sail to reach Genovesa Island, the archipelago's north-eastern outpost, but it is undeniably worth the voyage. Dolphins are often spotted in the waters around Genovesa while the island itself is one of abundant beauty, with varying landscapes and wonderful wildlife. It is also a paradise for all bird lovers, with all three kinds of boobies, including the rare red-footed booby, and of course the blue footed booby and Nazca booby, as well as numerous other species such as tropicbirds and frigate birds.

Walking the steep path known as Prince Philip's Steps get us into the heart of the seabird rookeries, with birds overhead and nesting among the cliffs. On the island's rocky plains we look out for storm petrels. Genovesa is the only place in the world where they can be seen flying during the day. Afterwards, cool off with a snorkel!

Darwin Beach is another superb site with large breeding colonies of seabirds and frigates and other birds such as lava herons, swallow-tailed gulls, mockingbirds and, hopefully, vampire finches. During the walk we will pass by tide pools with playful sea lions and diamond stingrays. The island's magnificent marine life also makes for spectacular snorkeling and with the chance of encountering manta rays, sharks, turtles and moray eels along with many types of fishes.



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## SANTIAGO ISLAND: SULLIVAN BAY & RABIDA ISLAND

Sailing back to the center of the Archipelago, you reach the eastern part of Santiago Island's also known as James Island. You will visit Sullivan Bay, where we take a walk on Pahoehoe lava that was created by an eruption that occurred in 1897 and witness the plants that have grown on the site since that last eruption. Hopefully we may see some marine iguanas, Sally Lightfoot crabs, sea lions, finches, turtles, sharks and penguins. On our walk here, our guide will recount to us the geological history of the islands.

After lunch you head to Rabida Island, which is famously is known for its gorgeous red sandy beach (due to the rusting of iron) and is one of the most striking islands in the entire archipelago. From the shore, the trail leads through to what is one of the finest lagoons in the Galapagos for viewing flamingos. Rabida is also a wonderful place to spot nesting pelicans. Elsewhere, pintail ducks, marine iguanas and sea lions are all present. Here we will find great opuntia cactus forest which suggests previous existence of land iguanas as well as possibly Galapagos hawks, mockingbirds, doves, finches and lava lizards. There is also an opportunity for snorkeling in a place where sea stars, damsels, gobbies and surgeon fish are numerous.



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## SANTA CRUZ ISLAND: BLACK TURTLE COVE & 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.

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The boat will be anchored near Itabaca Channel, from where we take a panga ride to explore Caleta Tortuga Negra (Black Turtle Cove) – a red mangrove wetland on the north shore of Isla Santa Cruz. We paddle among the cove's peaceful waters to experience the underwater riches of these waters. It's a breeding area for green turtles, so it is not uncommon to see them mating. There is also abundant bird life, such as the yellow warbler and lava heron. It is also a nursery for golden cow-nose rays, eagle rays and Galapagos sharks.

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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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