

Itinerary 5 Days B



Wednesday - Day 1: Isla Santa Cruz

Welcome to the Galapagos!

Today you will be meeting other travellers arriving from Quito or Guayaquil at Baltra Airport.

You will be met in the arrival hall of the airport by a National Park Guide, and transferred to the catamaran 'M.Y Grand Queen (look out for 'Queen Beatriz' signs) by a transfer guide and transferred to our catamaran - 'M.C. Queen Beatriz', anchored on the other side of Santa Cruz Island. Our transfer guide will take you on an airport public bus for a short distance (10 minute drive) to where you board a public ferry across the Itabaca Channel. The ferry crossing takes only 7 minutes.

(Please note that all public transportation costs are included). Once you reach Santa Cruz Island, a private bus you board a private bus for a 45-minute drive to Puerto Ayora, the main port of the island. Here, there will be two dinghies to transport you and your fellow travelers to the 'MC. Queen Beatriz'. Once on board, cabins will be assigned and you get to meet our crew members and get to know your naturalist guide while enjoying a delicious lunch.

After lunch you embark on your first excursion and head into the highlands of Santa Cruz for a total change of scenery. Beginning at the coast you travel across Santa Cruz through the agricultural region and into the misty forests, where you can see the unique scalesia cloud forest and spend time observing giant tortoises in their natural habitat. Look out for the abundant bird life including different species of Darwin finches, woodpeckers, warbler finches and vermilion flycatchers.

Included Activities

- Santa Cruz Highlands

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Thursday - North Seymour /Day 2: Isla Mosquera

Today you will take a morning excursion to North Seymour. The trail on North Seymour crosses the inland through the island and then explores the rocky coast. Along the way the trail passes colonies of blue footed boobies and frigate birds. 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. Sharing the same nesting area on North Seymour, blue-footed boobies nest on the ground making their nests from the twigs of the palo santos trees, while the frigate birds nests just above them in the saltbushes.

After lunch you will visit the small sandy island of Mosquera, it's a relaxing,

picturesque stop. Along the rocks and in the tide pool, sally lightfoot crabs (red lava crabs) scamper back and forth, skipping across small pools of water in search of food. These crabs with their bright red shell tops and blue under shells are stunning against the black lava.

Included Activities

- Isla Mosquera Beach
- Isla North Seymour Walk and Snorkel

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Friday - Day 3: Tortuga Negra & Cerro Dragon

Today you will take a morning excursion to Caleta Tortuga Negra (Black Turtle Cove) - a red mangrove wetland on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island. You will paddle among the cove's peaceful waters, for your first taste of the underwater riches of this region – it's a wonderful place to see green turtle and is a nursery for rays and Galapagos sharks.

There is also abundant birdlife, such as the yellow warbler and lava heron. This is also a breeding area for turtles, so it is not uncommon to see them mating. Go for a walk on Cerro Dragón (Dragon Hill) this afternoon, this is one of the best places to see land iguanas in the islands. You'll walk along the trail from the beach, and along with the land iguanas, other sightings include marine iguanas, flamingos and Sally Lightfoot crabs.

Included Activities

- Black Turtle Cove Visit
- Cerro Dragon

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

- Dinner

Saturday - Day 4: ISLA RABIDA

Rabida, also known as 'Jervis' is a tiny island sitting roughly five kilometres south of Santiago and is one of the most striking of the archipelago. Introduced species were eradicated in 1971, meaning that the indigenous wildlife has now been returned to a state of splendid isolation. Additionally, volcanic activity here has produced vivid, fantastical colours, not least the beaches of red sand and cliffs of scarlet.

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. Sombrero Chino is a small islet located near the south-east coast of Santiago. It's shaped like a Chinese hat (Sombrero Chino) when seen from afar, and is geologically fascinating, with many lava tubes leading from the cone to the coast.

Included Activities

- Sombrero Chino
- Isla Rabida Snorkelling

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Sunday - Day 5: Isla Santa Cruz

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.

Today you will take an early morning excursion to Las Bachas, which was so named after the barges abandoned by the American Navy here in the 1940s. The sandy, white beaches of Las Bachas on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island 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 look out too for great blue herons. This is your final excursion before you return to the airport in Baltra for your flight back to Quito.

As you will be leaving the boat this morning, please remember that if you have enjoyed the services provided by your guide and crew, a tip would be very much appreciated by them. As a guideline we recommend each passenger consider US\$15 per day for the crew and US\$10 per day for your guide. You can leave tips in envelopes that are placed in your cabin on the last day of your journey. Upon arrival in Quito Airport you will be transferred back to your hotel for an overnight stay.

Included Activities

- Bachas Beach Visit

Meals Included

- Breakfast