



**GALAPAGOS NATURAL HISTORY EXTRAVAGANZA:
THE NORTHWESTERN ISLANDS**

20 - 30 JANUARY 2019



Red-footed Booby is likely to be seen on this trip.

Just 483 years ago the first man stepped on the Galapagos Islands and marveled at this living laboratory. Today we continue to be awestruck by this constantly changing archipelago. As the Nazca Plate moves and new islands are formed evolution is illustrated up close and personal. Visiting the Galapagos Archipelago is a dream of all naturalists.

During this tour we will have the opportunity to explore the northwestern islands. From Quito we will fly to the island of Baltra. We then will make our way to our home for the next eight days, the “The Beagle” (appropriately named!), a spacious and luxuriously-designed motor sailing yacht with teak decks, wide open and shaded sun decks, a fully stocked bar, and a library. The abundant marine life that visits these waters year-round, the **Marine Iguanas** that rule the rocky coastlines and also three species of land iguanas, and the unique group of birds that dwell here either as residents or as endemics make it not difficult to understand why this trip is a must for birders and natural history buffs.

Some of the Galapagos specials that we hope to find on this trip include **Galapagos Penguin, Galapagos Shearwater, Wedge-rumped and Elliot’s Storm Petrels, Magnificent Frigatebird, Nazca, Red-footed, and Blue-footed Boobies, Lava Heron, Galapagos Hawk, Lava Gull, Galapagos Martin, Galapagos Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Galapagos Mockingbird, Vegetarian Finch, Woodpecker Finch, Espanola and Common Cactus Finches, Green Warbler-Finch, Large and Small Tree Finches, Small and Medium Ground Finches, and Mangrove Finch.**

Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Quito

After arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito you will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Hotel San Jose de Puembo, Quito

Day 2. Buffer day in Quito

This buffer day allows a little wiggle room for late flights. A day in Quito visiting the Quito Botanical Gardens, lunch at Itchimbia Park, and a walk around the Old Town are included for those interested.

Overnight: Hotel San Jose de Puembo, Quito

Day 3. Isla Baltra and Isla Santa Cruz

Today we will fly to the Galapagos. On arrival at Seymour Airport on the tiny island of Baltra off Isla Santa Cruz you will be met by The Beagle’s naturalist guide, who will assist you with your luggage collection and accompany you on a short bus ride to the harbor on Isla Santa Cruz to board The Beagle. We will be on the lookout for **Galapagos Mockingbird, Galapagos Dove, Woodpecker Finch, Vegetarian Finch, Yellow Warbler, Large and Small Tree Finches, and Small and Medium Ground Finches**, which surprisingly seem to be almost there to welcome us.

After a light lunch The Beagle will navigate to Las Bachas, located on the northern side of Santa Cruz Island. Las Bachas is a white sand beach that is a major nesting site for **Green Turtle**. The

name Las Bachas (“potholes”) refers to the indentations left in the sand by laying turtles or departing hatchlings. On the shore there are **Marine Iguanas**, and in the lagoon area **American Flamingo**, **Black-necked Stilt**, and **Wandering Tattler** are common. **Magnificent Frigatebirds** may be seen flying overhead as they harass smaller seabirds for food. You are welcome to swim from the beach.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 4. Isla Genovesa

After a dry landing you climb up the fairly steep Prince Philip’s Steps that take you onto a lava rock trail leading you through Palo Santo forest, which is full of nesting birds, including **Great Frigatebird**, **Swallow-tailed Gull**, **Lava Gull**, **Yellow-crowned Night Heron**, and **Red-footed Booby**. **Genovesa Ground Finch**, **Grey Warbler-Finch**, and **Large Ground Finch** can often be spotted along the trail. There’s also a good chance of seeing the Galapagos subspecies of **Short-eared Owl** at this site, which predated on **Wedge-rumped** and **Band-rumped Storm Petrels**.

After lunch and a snorkel along the amazing cliffsides you visit the beach area of Darwin Bay, which was formed from the collapse of a caldera and is home to **Genovesa Cactus Finch**, **Nazca Booby**, **Great Frigatebird**, **Swallow-tailed** and **Lava Gulls**, and **Large Ground Finch**.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 5. Isla Santiago

After a wet landing at James Bay onto a black beach an easy stroll takes you along the coastline to observe tidal pools, marine birds, iguanas, and **Galapagos Sea Lions**, while migratory birds are often present in this area. This is also a good place to observe **Galapagos Hawk**, **Galapagos Dove**, and **Lava Gull**. The trail ends at the **Galapagos Fur Seal** grottos, and, being nocturnal feeders, the fur seals sleep in and around the grottos during the day. **Green Warbler-Finch**, **Vegetarian Finch**, and **Sharp-beaked Ground Finch** (difficult) as well as **Galapagos Lava Lizard** may all be seen here too. Along the shore of Puerto Egas, a black lava beach, you will find a variety of marine life, such as **Marine Iguanas** basking in the sun and **Sally Lightfoot Crabs** abounding in the small tidal pools, and you can often see **Lava Heron** here too.

After lunch The Beagle will start navigating to the west side of Isabela Island.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 6. Isla Isabela and Isla Fernandina

Punta Vicente Roca on Isabela Island offers a dinghy ride, excellent for marine life, to a snorkeling area, where underwater wildlife takes full advantage of the nutrient-rich Cromwell Current upwellings in the area. Here we hope to encounter **Galapagos Penguin**, **Brown Noddy**, **Flightless Cormorant**, and **Elliot’s Storm Petrel**, as well as **Marine Iguana**.

Fernandina Island, visited in the afternoon, is the youngest island of the archipelago. As you disembark at Punta Espinoza you must be careful not to step on the **Marine Iguanas** piled up together to retain body heat. This site is rich in wildlife, including **Sharp-beaked Ground Finch**, **Mangrove Finch**, **Galapagos Shearwater**, **Paint-billed Crake**, and hopefully **Galapagos Crake**. It is extraordinary to watch **Galapagos Sea Lions**, **Flightless Cormorants**, **Galapagos Penguins**, **Lava Herons**, **Sally Lightfoot Crabs**, and many more all living side by side on this small point with its mangrove forest.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 7. Isla Isabela

The 30-minute hike at Tagus Cove takes you to the top of a cliff to view the volcanic landscapes of Darwin Volcano and Darwin Lake, the latter an uplifted ultra-saline lake saltier than the sea. Historically used as an anchorage site by pirates and whalers, this site is again an excellent place for marine and land birds.

Located to the southwest of Alcedo Volcano, Urbina Bay was uplifted in 1954 from the seabed, leaving coral heads appearing out of the water. There is a large colony of **Common Land Iguanas**, which has grown since the feral dogs and goats have been controlled through Project Isabela. The population of land iguanas here on Isabela is the largest in the Galapagos. The colorful colony of yellow, orange/brown iguanas roam the lowlands, looking for flowers, fruits, leaves, and shoots of their favorite plants. If the rains arrive it is possible to see **Alcedo Volcano Giant Tortoise** sharing the land. Urbina is a miniature reminder of Jurassic time. **Galapagos Dove**, **Yellow Warbler**, and **Common Cactus Finch** are often spotted here as well, alongside the more common **Galapagos Mockingbird** and **Medium Ground Finch** and the **Ecuadorian Hermit Crab**, one of the smallest species of land hermit crabs.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 8. Isla Isabela

Elizabeth Bay is a marine site, so we will use the dinghy to navigate around Mariela Rocks, where there is an important colony of **Galapagos Penguins**. The dinghy ride takes you into a cove surrounded by red mangroves. Here in these quiet lagoons there may be **Green Turtle**, **Spotted Eagle Ray**, and **Golden Cownose Ray**, as well as **Brown Pelican** and **Flightless Cormorant**.

In the afternoon a lava walk takes you to a series of lagoons, where we have the opportunity to see **Lava Gull** and possibly **Common Cactus Finch**. After a while we will make our way down to explore Punta Moreno, a desolate and pristine landscape of impressive black lava flows that allow good views of Alcedo and Sierra Azul volcanoes and give you the possibility of seeing **Galapagos Martin**. Lagoons are often visited by **American Flamingo**, **Blue footed** and **Red-footed Boobies**, **Common Gallinule**, and **Wandering Tattler**.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 9. Isla Isabela

After breakfast we'll head for the Sierra Negra shield volcano, the second-largest volcanic crater in the world. It is located in the southern part of Isabela Island. Transportation is available to the end of the road, followed by a 45-minute walk on a trail to the top of the volcano, from where the caldera can be viewed. Many avian species can be spotted along this trail, including **Galapagos Dove**, **Flightless Cormorant**, **Galapagos Martin**, **Galapagos Flycatcher**, **Small Ground Finch**, **Small Tree Finch**, **Vegetarian Finch**, **Common Cactus Finch**, **Green Warbler-Finch**, **Woodpecker Finch**, and **Yellow Warbler**, along with **Vermilion Flycatcher** and **Galapagos Crane**.

Upon returning from the hike we'll visit the Arnaldo Tupiza Breeding Center to see giant tortoises. In this breeding center five species of giant tortoise have been bred in captivity.

Lunch is served upon return to The Beagle, and afterwards those who wish can go swimming in one of the Coves of Puerto Villamil.

In the afternoon the boat will begin traveling toward Puerto Ayora.

Overnight: The Beagle

Day 10. Isla Santa Cruz

In the morning we will make our way by bus to Seymour Airport on Baltra Island. On the way we will be able to see the Twin Craters (los Gemelos in Spanish) on Santa Cruz. These are not actual craters caused by impact but are sinkholes created when the volcanic roof of empty magma chambers collapsed due to tectonic shifts and erosion. From the airport we will fly back to Quito, where we will transfer to our hotel.

Overnight: San Jose de Puembo, Quito

Day 11. Departure

You will be transferred to Mariscal Sucre International Airport for your flights home.

Please note that the itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Duration: 11 days
Group Size: 2 – 10
Date: 20 – 30 January 2019
Start: Quito
End: Quito

Price: US\$7,100 per person sharing assuming 4-10 participants, US\$9,900 per person sharing if only 2-3 participants, plus US\$640 for the domestic flights, which we will buy for you.

Single supplement: US\$2,724

Price includes:

Accommodation
All meals
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Tolls

Price excludes:

Flights
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts
Alcoholic drinks
Personal insurance
Gratuities
Medical attention
Laundry