



SAN JOSE - ITINERARY A

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

Tuesday to Tuesday (every 14 days)



Our 7-night western itinerary primarily explores the remote and exclusive western islands of Isabela and pristine Fernandina, which are both just recently born out of fire. After going around Isabela in a clockwise direction we will return to the heart of the archipelago for several landings at Santiago and its satellite islets, before finishing on and around Santa Cruz and North Seymour. This cruise itinerary includes two nights of quiet rest at fairly calm anchorage-sites.

Though less frequented than the popular central and south-eastern islands, this quiet west coast is truly exceptional. Become witness and walk a short distance past some bizarre miracles of evolution, such as flightless cormorants, huge marine iguanas and Galapagos penguins close to the equator. Discover how pioneer species conquer barren lava fields and create habitats for new colonist species.

On Santa Cruz you will have a full day to search for the emblematic giant Galapagos tortoises in the lush highlands and to learn more about their successful captured breeding programmes in the Charles Darwin Research Centre. En route you will also have chances to see emblematic and endemic Galapagos land iguanas, whitetip reef sharks, American flamingos and much more. In the overwhelming seabird colony of North Seymour you can observe blue-footed boobies and frigatebirds from nearby, whilst they are courtshipping, mating, breeding, nurturing or learning to fly (depending on the season).

Important notes:

- The itinerary is subject to change in case of force majeure caused by exceptional and natural circumstances.
- Approximate departure and navigation times are just indicative and depend on the sea state and decisions of the captain.
- Although the Galapagos seldom require quests for wildlife, observation of specific species can never be guaranteed.

* Visitor's sites of this route that are unique to our fleet (Galapagos Odyssey | Sailing Catamaran Nemo I | San Jose | Yolita II):

Wall of Tears & Vicente Roca Point (Isabela)

Day 1 – Tuesday

Bachas Beach is a pleasant start to your Galapagos visit, without needing to navigate a long stretch to come into contact with the unique insular nature. Along this beach (north coast Santa Cruz), which is popular breeding ground for the Pacific green turtle, you will take a relaxed stroll to an aquatic bird-rich saline lagoon.

Programme:

AM: This morning you will fly from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Airport.

PM: After being welcomed aboard M/Y San Jose, check-in, lunch and the safety-drill you will have your first wet (bare feet) landing for your first guided stroll.

Before dinner your guide will give the first daily briefing, and the captain and his crew will introduce themselves, and share a welcome toast.

Overnight navigation: At night the anchor will be lifted for the first nightly crossing to Puerto Villamil on Isabela. Depending on the sea state we will navigate about 7 hours in a western direction.

AM: Arrival at Baltra Airport

At Baltra Airport you have to pay your Galapagos National Park entrance fee and your luggage will be inspected. See Getting there for flight and arrival information. In front of the arrival hall you will meet your naturalist guide and fellow passengers, and the airport shuttle will transfer you to the ferry across

the Itabaca Channel. On Santa Cruz you continue by bus through the lush highlands to the harbour of Puerto Ayora. Our inflatable dinghies ('zodiacs') take you the last stretch to the yacht.

PM: Bachas Beach (Santa Cruz)

Strolling along its coastline, blinding white Bachas Beach appears full of intertidal and bird life. But the symmetrical tuff cone-islet of Daphne Major will pull your eyes to the horizon as well. Beware of Galapagos sea lions, marine iguanas, a shark fin or (seasonally) mating Pacific green turtles in the surf! Both quiet beaches have become their preferred nesting site on the main island of Santa Cruz. 'Bachas' refers to the 'minefield of nest holes' in the dunes strip; though others argue that it is a 'Spanglish' mispronunciation of 'barks', referring to two rusty landing vessels that were left on the longer second beach in World War II, when the American US Air Force used BALTRA as a strategic base to defend the Panama Canal.

Sparkling orange-coloured and heavy-armed sally lightfoot crabs play hide and seek with you when you want to photograph them on the dark basaltic rocks. A brackish lagoon in the dunes houses different species of wade and shore birds, including black-necked stilts, white-cheeked pintails (or Bahama ducks) and hunting herons. Migratory aquatic birds that spend winter on the Galapagos, such as whimbrels, also frequent this pond. As soon as water level drops and the lagoon becomes saltier, you might even encounter some American flamingos tirelessly filtering water to catch shrimp and algae!

Day 2 – Wednesday

The first nightly crossing will bring you to Puerto Villamil. In the next few days San Jose will navigate clockwise around Isabela, by far the largest island of the archipelago. Its larger living space seems to mean that evolution is hunting for records over here (although some are disputed). Huge marine iguanas crawl over undisturbed rocky islets just outside the harbour, which also contain a unique tidal channel where whitetip reef sharks rest. Saline lagoons in the wetlands house the largest insular colony of American flamingos and you will visit the tortoise breeding centre and its botanical garden.

Programme:

AM: Before the breakfast buffet (but after a snack) the inflatable dinghies will bring you to the Tintoreras islets. The guided hike follows a rough volcanic rock trail (easy/moderate level) to the unique tidal channel. After breakfast on-board, snorkelling is scheduled for the first time.

PM: After lunch aboard you will visit the local tortoise breeding centre in Puerto Villamil and the surrounding wetlands, with the bizarre historical 'Wall of tears' (national cultural heritage) and where American flamingos live. At the end of the afternoon you will have some free time to explore the village and/or its beach.

Overnight navigation: After dinner the anchor is lifted to navigate around the southern lobe of Isabela to its far western coast (about 7 hours).

Additional options scuba-diving: Isla Tortuga, Cuatro Hermanos or Roca Viuda (advanced).

AM: Whitetip reef shark channel (Isabela/Tintoreras)

Just outside the harbour of Puerto Villamil (Isabela), a group of rocky islets protrude just above sea level. These are remnants of a lava flow that has been demolished by the waves. A collapsed lava tube forms a channel that fills up on high tide, while the entrance is closed on low tide. Marine life gets trapped, including turtles and elegant white-spotted eagle rays or golden rays. In the crystal clear water of this unique site you can also observe whitetip reef sharks (called tintoreras in Spanish; which the islets are named after) resting from their nocturnal hunts. This species of shark is fairly common in the archipelago, and often spotted on the seabed when snorkelling, but here you can see them dry and comfortably from the bank.

Unlike the beaches of Puerto Villamil, tiny plaques along these black rocks offer undisturbed breeding places for marine iguanas. Over here the largest Isabela subspecies (up to 1,5m/5ft tall!) can reproduce successfully and thrive by hundreds. The rocky shoreline with its intertidal life also attracts sally lightfoot crabs, lava herons and occasional Galapagos penguins. Galapagos sea lions occupy the sand beach and complete this stereotypical Galapagos image.

PM: Wetlands (Isabela)

The tempting white sand beach of Puerto Villamil has far more marine iguanas and sally lightfoot crabs than bathing guests. Its overgrown beach wall hides the largest salty lagoon of the Galapagos, which attracts many aquatic birds and wintering shore birds (about Nov-Feb); some have arrived from arctic regions!

This lagoon is part of a swampy coastal zone known as the wetlands, with an old mangrove forest and more salt and brackish ponds in collapsed lava tubes. These lagoons are home to the largest concentration and breeding site of American flamingos in the Galapagos!

PM: Wall of tears (Isabela)

The Wall of Tears (Muro de las Lagrimas) is one of the dark pages in Galapagos history. Until the archipelago was declared a valuable and strictly protected nature paradise, the least inhabitable islands were in use as a penal colony, where many died. The last colony was near Puerto Villamil (1946-1959), where hundreds of banned prisoners were punished to build this bizarre and useless 100m/325ft long wall of lava blocks.

PM: Tortoise breeding centre (Isabela)

In Arnaldo Tupiza breeding centre you can see hundreds of giant Galapagos tortoises of all sizes. Vulnerable hatchlings are not gigantic at all, even smaller than the size of your hand! This project just outside Puerto Villamil was created to rescue the endangered populations of Isabela's both southernmost volcanoes.

From the almost incredible estimations of 250,000 giant tortoises in the 16th century, by the 1970s there were only about 3,000 individuals remaining. One thing becomes clear on your visit: it's hard work to save these fascinating creatures from extinction by reproduction in captivity and repopulation. The good news is that these programmes are successful and have already saved several species from extinction. By 2015 their numbers increased to about 32,000 in all the archipelago.

Don't forget to visit the native botanical garden of this breeding centre. It also attracts colourful songbirds such as yellow warblers, Darwin's finches, Galapagos and vermilion flycatchers. Finally there is no greater counterpart to the cumbersome tortoises than the graceful American flamingos which frequently filter the saline waters of the adjacent lagoon for shrimp and algae. They are joined by a handful of species of aquatic and shore birds, from which some even migrate from Canada and Alaska.

Day 3 – Thursday

On Day 3 and 4 you will explore some of the most remote visitor's sites on the Galapagos. Thanks to major upwellings out off the deep sea (Cromwell Current) the nutrient-rich west coast of Isabela is a magnet for all kinds of marine and birdlife. Bolivar Channel (between Isabela and Fernandina) can be great for whale watching. Perceive how pioneer vegetation progressively converts barren lava fields into lush oases and evergreen mangle forests, and is creating new habitats for specific species.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast and a dry landing (with footwear) a guided hike crosses the crumbling, pitch black lava fields of Moreno Point (moderate level; about 2km/1.25mi). After a snack we either take an inflatable dinghy-ride or go snorkelling for the first time.

PM: At noon we will enter Bolivar Channel to Tagus Cove (navigation time: 3h). Meanwhile you can enjoy the delicious lunch buffet before snorkelling and an island visit at Tagus Cove.

Navigation: At dinner time we will cross to Fernandina, where we will anchor after about 45 min.

AM: Moreno Point (Isabela)

Moreno Point tells the ongoing story of the famous lunatic lava fields of Sullivan Bay (Santiago, along our B-route and B5-route). This once lifeless lava field becomes dotted with tidal pools and filtration lagoons since parts of the crust have broken and fallen into the undermining lava tunnels.

Pioneer life takes advantage; finally the lava cacti get company of two more species of cacti, from which the candelabras can grow up to 7m/23ft tall, and dominate the rest of the shrubby vegetation. Fringes of reed, sea grass and mangrove bushes transform the picturesque lagoons in lush oases. Your pictures get the perfect finishing touch when bright American flamingos forage in the largest lagoon as well. The fresh promising pioneer vegetation seems to have the winning hand; until Sierra Negra volcano spits a new layering cover, and the story starts all over again.

Tidal pools form natural traps and attract scavengers and hunters, such as bright orange sally lightfoot crabs, oystercatchers and herons. During a dinghy-ride along the jagged shoreline, you can spot marine iguanas who wait patiently for their turn at lowest tide to graze weeds on the seabed, and a breeding colony of brown pelicans in the mangroves.

PM: Tagus Cove (Isabela)

Right on the eastern shore of the Bolivar Channel are two tuff cones that contain ultra-saline crater lakes: Tagus Cove and Beagle Crater. Both present spectacular layered cliffs at their sea faces with plenty of nesting places for sea and coastal birds. From the inflatable dinghy you can observe marine iguanas, flightless cormorants, Galapagos penguins and storm petrels. Flocks of blue-footed boobies and brown pelicans plunge dive from considerable altitudes.

Explosive eruptions have blown out a part of the outer rims of both tuff cones, and created their characteristic horseshoe shapes and Tagus Cove. The inner crater rim contains Darwin Lake (though Darwin looked in vain for fresh water in the adjacent crater lake). Traditionally sailors started to write the names of their vessels on the eastern cliffs of Tagus cove. The oldest graffiti dates back from 1836, a year after Darwin's visit.

The hike along the inner crater ridge of Darwin Lake can be somewhat strenuous and hot. You can continue to a great viewpoint on the outer caldera rim, with views to the outstretched lava slopes of Darwin Volcano (1280m/4200ft). This arid inland zone is overgrown with characteristic tropical dry forest vegetation including a special variety of palo santo, Galapagos cotton and yellow cordia (muyuyu). During the hike you can spot different Darwin's finches, flycatchers and Galapagos hawks.

Day 4 – Friday

Without any doubt Espinoza Point belongs to the more exclusive sites of the Galapagos National Park. Strictly protected Fernandina harbours one of the world's most virgin, untouched ecosystems. Today you will become an eyewitness of evolution, which is happening right in front of you! Wonder again about bizarre creatures as the flightless cormorant, marine iguana and Galapagos penguin. Vicente Roca Point is a distinct snorkelling spot in this archipelago, because of its cold water species.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast and a dry landing the guided morning walk (easy/moderate level; about 2km/1.25 mi) runs over the lava tongue of Espinoza Point. After a snack we will bring you to today's snorkelling site.

PM: While having lunch we will cross the Bolivar Channel for the last time to Vicente Roca Point (2 hrs), just at the mouth of Isabela's imaginary seahorse-shape.

Overnight navigation: Before dinner we will start our longest 9 hour's navigation around the north cape of Isabela (Albemarle Point) to Santiago (crossing the equator twice).

AM: Espinoza Point (Fernandina)

Espinoza Point is Fernandina's only terrestrial visitor's site, and one of the few locations where you will find some bizarre outgrowths of natural selection. The figurehead is the emblematic flightless cormorant that lives exclusively in the remote west of the Galapagos, and could be considered as the 'holy grail of evolution'. The cormorant didn't have to fear any terrestrial enemies and lets you approach it very closely. The next generations gradually lost their flying capabilities to become

excellent divers. Together with its neighbour, the Galapagos penguin, these are two of the rarest and most vulnerable bird species in the world, with less than 2000 individuals each.

Besides the endemic wildlife, you will also love the almost unworldly views with the dominating cone of Volcán La Cumbre (= the summit) as a spectacular backdrop. The narrow headland that you walk is the end of a lava tongue that has reached the coast and solidified on contact with the cold seawater. The black rocks are not yet covered by more vegetation than lava cacti and mangroves, but are teeming with hundreds of dragon-like marine iguanas that breed and conglomerate in larger groups than in any other island.

PM: Vicente Roca Point (Isabela)

The impressive cliffs and coves of Vicente Roca Point are an excellent backdrop for a thrilling dinghy ride. While entering a dark cave below a spectacular arch, roaring echoes of the waves will accompany you. Just around the corner the collapsed amphitheatre of Volcan Ecuador offers another impressive view. Just 3 minutes of a degree south of the equator you can encounter a family of endemic Galapagos penguins (!) and flightless cormorants along the shoreline.

These rocks face thousands of km/miles of open ocean and stand right on the edge of the submarine Galapagos platform. The Cromwell Current, an upwelling of nutrient-rich waters from the deep sea, makes this coast a magnet for all kinds of marine and birdlife. Against the higher walls there are numerous seabirds perching and nesting including blue-footed boobies, storm petrels and gulls.

The calmer waters of the coves are well-protected against the ocean swell and are a fairly cold, but distinctive place for snorkelling amongst species of shark, penguins, puffer fish and even sea horses! Pacific sun fishes (mola mola) – weighing 2 metric tonnes, the heaviest bone fish species – sometimes sunbathe on the surface in this corner of the archipelago.

Day 5 – Saturday

At James Bay (Santiago) Charles Darwin spent most of his time on the Galapagos Islands, while HMS Beagle continued mapping the archipelago. A highlight of this pearl necklace of visitor's sites are the outstanding fur seal grottos at the beautiful sculptured coastline of Puerto Egas, together with other coastal landscapes that could well be exotic film sets; not forgetting Bucaneer Cove's crystal-clear snorkelling waters.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast and wet landing (bare feet) at Espumilla Beach a guided walk leads uphill and land inward (easy level; about 2km/1.25 mi). Afterwards you can explore the Galapagos' submarine world, which is even more varied than island life.

PM: At lunchtime we will navigate 12km/7 mi south to Puerto Egas with its famous fur seal grottos, where you will make another, very different guided walk along the coastline (easy level), and can snorkel a second time.

Navigation: After this impressive day we navigate before dinner to nearby Rabida, where you will spend the night floating (about 2 hours).

AM: Espumilla Beach & Buccaneer Cove (Santiago)

Espumilla Beach has been revived as an important breeding site for turtles, as it is no longer suffering from digging wild pigs. The turtles return year after year to bury their eggs into the cinnamon coloured sand dunes. About two months later (roughly from February to August) the eggs hatch all at the same time. The most vulnerable hatchlings will never reach the sea, and form a banquet for predators such as herons, frigatebirds, mockingbirds and ghost crabs.

The beach ridge hides a mangle with two picturesque lagoons on the backside. A colony of American flamingos and aquatic birds used to be its main attraction, but after the climate phenomenon of El Niño, strong sedimentation altered the brackish water environment, and it no longer contains their food...

As often in the Galapagos, different vegetation zones are very close by, providing great scenic contrasts. Upon climbing a hill you will be rewarded with a beautiful view of the transitions from sea into beach into mangrove into dry palo santo forest.

At the nearby Buccaneers Cove we have a great snorkelling opportunity.

PM: Puerto Egas (Santiago)

Dominated by Sugarloaf Hill (395m/1300ft) and named after a former salt mine (1960s), Puerto Egas is the southernmost visitor's site along James Bay. Its masterly sculptured coastline of black basalts and polished multi-coloured ash-layers forms a photogenic scene with collapsed lava tunnels, natural arches, caves and blowholes such as 'Darwin's toilet'.

In a grotto right below a spectacular rock arch at the end of the beach a colony of Galapagos fur seals occupies the shade, sheltering from the equatorial sun. Unlike the more common Galapagos sea lions, this smaller species of seal is no beach lover at all, due to their adorable, but insulating coats. This refuge is the very best place to see these endemic, shy and once heavily hunted marine mammals.

Particularly at low tide Puerto Egas teems with extremely varied intertidal life. Notice how marine iguanas just leave, return cold or warm-up after grazing weeds on the seabed at lowest tide. Ossified night herons and lava herons keep an eye on the tidal pools that are refilled every flood again with small fish, octopuses, star fish, snails, urchins, shells, green algae and many other snacks. Noisy oystercatchers, turnstones, plovers and whimbrels inspect these pools zealously. Hundreds of sally lightfoot crabs seem even brighter orange against the pitch-black rocks (immature are dark-coloured).

Day 6 – Sunday

Add some colour to your photo album and enjoy the flaming brick-red beach and cliffs of Rabida if you're lucky enough to experience an unforgettable sunrise. Stroll through large colonies of Galapagos sea lions and brown pelicans at this remarkable red beach.

You will arrive exactly on time at Chinese Hat to witness how this barren volcano islet gets colonised by pioneer species and begins to sprout! Very close to the equator you will have your first opportunity to meet endangered Galapagos penguins; whilst snorkelling you might even encounter these agile hunters fishing!

Programme:

AM: After breakfast and a 'wet landing' (barefoot) at the remarkable red beach of Rabida two short guided hikes are programmed (easy level; about 0,4+1 km/0.25+0.6 mi). On return you will be picked up by the inflatable dinghies, to prepare you for snorkelling.

PM: Before lunch we navigate about 2 hours to Chinese Hat, another islet just off the coast of Santiago, where you can snorkel again. Learn more about the Galapagos' fascinating geology during the late-afternoon walk on this typical volcano-islet (easy level; about 0,7km/0.5 mi).

Navigation: Late afternoon we navigate for about 6 hours to the sheltered bay of Puerto Ayora, where you can enjoy a fairly quiet sleep.

AM: Rabida

The bay at the northern headland of Rabida holds a distinctive red beach, and is the only weak point in its shoreline, where it is not guarded by a rock barrier with giant prickly pear cacti. Oxidised iron particles give rocks and sand their rusty colour, which becomes even more intense shortly after sunrise and shortly before sunset. Get up early to add some colour to your photo album!

On landing, a large bachelor colony of Galapagos sea lions will usually welcome you loudly. You can walk towards the cliffs at the end. The beach wall holds a shallow green-fringed lagoon; this oasis is most fertile place on the otherwise arid islet, which is overgrown with leaf-dropping palo santo trees. The salty pool attracts all kind of aquatic and wading birds, such as pintails (or Bahama ducks) and sometimes American flamingos (when there aren't better foraging places). Between the evergreen foliage of the surrounding mangrove bushes a dazzling number of species of songbirds hide and breed.

An outstanding attraction is the major breeding colony of brown pelicans (one of the best on the Galapagos). Their dull plumage becomes striking white with chestnut markings and a yellowish crown in the breeding season (seasonal; period shifts on our calendar). Their V-formations fly low above the surface of the sea. Brown pelicans are the only pelicans in the world that plunge-dive, though more superficial than the spectacular rocket-like diving boobies.

PM: Chinese Hat

Chinese Hat is a 52m/170ft high volcanic cone, forming another islet right off the rocky coast of Santiago, where a small colony of Galapagos penguins has settled. Approaching Chinese Hat from the north, you will certainly agree with its name. Because its primordial fire has been extinguished recently, this is an excellent place to learn more about volcanism, lava bombs and lava tunnels. On the beach you can also find curious pillow-type lavas with coral heads on top! These spheres have a submarine origin before being lifted above sea level.

But Chinese Hat does not appear that inhospitable any more than the almost virgin Bartolomé and lunatic Sullivan Bay. You will arrive just in time to witness how this barren islet gets colonised by pioneer species and begins to sprout! Beaches of white coral sand grow, and holes in the eroding lava fields are filled up with lava sand, which enables rooting. Galapagos sea lions and countless marine iguanas contribute to fertilisation. All together this creates more favourable options for newcomers, like saltbush and the discolouring sesuvium carpet. Colonisation of Chinese Hat can occur in a much higher pace than elsewhere, hence Santiago is just a stone's throw away.

Day 7 – Monday

Without any doubt the most-emblematic representatives of the archipelago are the Galapagos giant tortoises. Today is mainly dedicated to these slow, heavy weighted creatures on the central island of Santa Cruz. First you will visit the successful breeding centre at the Charles Darwin Research Station. You will also have the opportunity to look for a wild population in the lush highlands.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast our dinghies will bring you to the touristic pier of Puerto Ayora, from where you will be brought to the Charles Darwin Research Station. Afterwards you can usually spend some free time in the cosy town, before having lunch aboard.

PM: In the afternoon you will return to shore and travel back and forth by private bus to the agricultural zone in the highlands to search for Galapagos giant tortoises in the wild. Dinner aboard.

Overnight navigation: In the middle of the night the anchor will be lifted for navigation to North Seymour (about 4 hrs), where we will arrive shortly before sunrise.

AM: Charles Darwin Research Station (Santa Cruz)

The Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) and the headquarters of the Galapagos National Park Service share the same location on the outskirts of Puerto Ayora. It is from here that biological research and indispensable conservation management of this unique archipelago are directed. The complex houses several interpretation and information centres about the National Park and the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

The most memorable part of your visit will probably be the successful breeding centre and the enclosures with Galapagos giant tortoises; even after the death of its world-famous resident, emphatically called 'Lonesome George' († June 2012; the last known individual of the Pinta subspecies, who sadly failed to reproduce offspring). Most remaining adult giant tortoises in the corals are former pets and many of them are accustomed to human company.

PM: Highlands (Santa Cruz)

Because wild Galapagos giant tortoises don't stop at official National Park boundaries, dozens of them also roam – and even mate – on the adjacent woodlands in the populated agricultural zone of Santa Cruz. Thanks to their concentrations around their favourite muddy pools, these semi-open pastures and moist scalesia-woodlands are the best place for a quick visit. Armed with a rain poncho and (provided) rubber boots you will get good chances to approach wild Galapagos giant tortoises within just a few metres! Their dome-shaped shells characterise the Santa Cruz subspecies.

Most of their long lives is spent slowly and silently, except for a warning hiss, or loud screams during mating, which can be heard from afar in the first half of the year. Subsequently females leave the highlands and descend all the way down to the beaches to dig holes and lay their eggs. It is estimated

that in 2015 about 32,000 tortoises lived in the wild in all the islands, mostly in restricted locations on Isabela.

Day 8 – Tuesday

Your cruise ends on North Seymour. It is one of the most visited sites of the Galapagos, and that is not only because of its convenient proximity to Baltra airport (South Seymour). This tabletop islet is overloaded with most extensive colonies of frigatebirds and blue-footed boobies of the archipelago, and Galapagos land iguanas crawl around there as well!

Programme:

AM: Shortly after your wake-up call you will make a dry landing and a farewell guided walk across the sea bird's colonies of North Seymour. After breakfast aboard it's time say goodbye, leave the yacht and continue to the airport (unless you have booked an extension on the B-route).

AM: North Seymour

The tabletop islet of North Seymour is an uplifted part of the seabed. Between the dry shrubs you might perceive a Galapagos land iguana. North Seymour originally did not have any land iguanas, but in the 1930s an eccentric American millionaire moved the last generation from Baltra, and saved them from starvation caused by competition with introduced goats; the breeding programme at Charles Darwin Research Station then turned into a big success.

You can spot lots of seabirds, such as brown pelicans, red-billed tropicbirds, endemic swallow-tailed gulls and seasonally even Nazca boobies. The main attraction are the archipelago's most extensive breeding colonies of blue-footed boobies and frigatebirds. At the start of the breeding season (shifting on our calendar) adult frigatebird-males blow up their vivid red pouches to impressive football-sized balloons. This is one of the few spots (besides Genovesa and Pitt Point) where you can compare the magnificent and the rarer great frigatebird breeding next to each other. Frigatebirds rather attack returning boobies and conduct aerial battles than fishing themselves and get a wet suit. The even more popular blue-footed boobies show their cute courtship rituals, in which their remarkable feet play an important role.

AM: Transfer to Baltra airport

Assisted by the naturalist guide and some crew members, the dinghy will bring you and your luggage to Baltra, where we take the airport shuttle. Your guide will accompany you to the check-in counters in the departure hall.

We expect you to return home with stunning pictures and unforgettable memories for life!