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Ship Collection

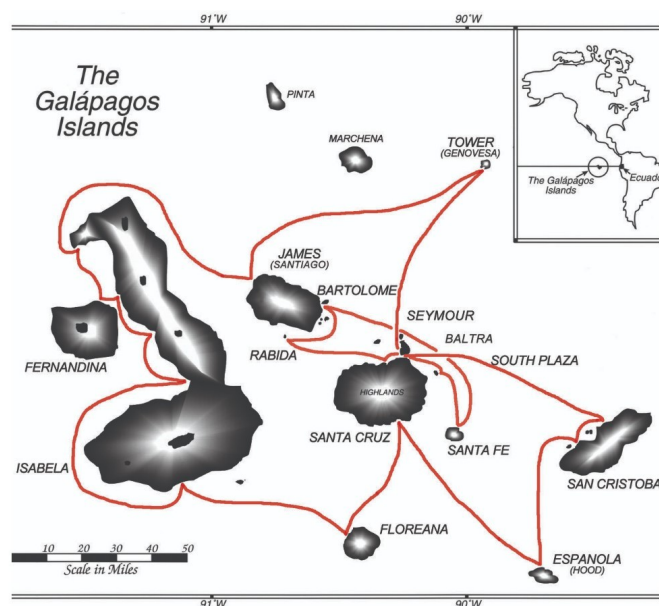
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IN-DEPTH GALAPAGOS 18 DAY EXPEDITION

While both of our programs have a very strong Natural History focus, this trip spends 15 days aboard the yacht, allowing you to visit significantly more inner islands, and allowing for a maximum of wildlife observation.



ITINERARY

Day 1: QUITO

On arrival at Quito's airport (typically in the evening), you will be met and transferred directly to the centrally located HOTEL MERCURE ALAMEDA where we will spend the night.

Day 2: QUITO

Today is a free day in Quito, with a wide range of half-day, full-day and multi-day expeditions – see EXPLORE ECUADOR, for options. Lunch and dinner on your own. Overnight Quito.

Day 3: BALTRA

A very early morning flight will take you from the High Andes, to another world; the Galapagos Islands. Upon landing on Baltra



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Island we will be will be transferred to the yacht, which will be waiting for the group in the nearby harbor. This afternoon you will begin your island explorations.

Day 3: NORTH SEYMOUR

On arrival in Galapagos we will immediately transfer to the yacht waiting at the nearby harbor. This afternoon we will begin our program of shore excursions with a visit to the island of NORTH SEYMOUR. In addition to being a major nesting area for the blue-footed booby, North Seymour is home to the largest colony of magnificent frigatebirds in the Galápagos. Both marine and land iguanas are found in good numbers here, and sea lions often surf the rocky shore break.

Day 4: TOWER

TOWER – Located in the northeast portion of the Galápagos, Tower is an outpost for many sea birds (as is Española to the south - perhaps this is why they are our two favorite islands). Depending on conditions we often will have a chance to snorkel and kayak within the bay. • Darwin Bay is an anchorage within a caldera, with surrounding cliffs forming the inner portion of the rim. Along the small beach there is a forest of salt bush where adjacent colonies of great frigatebirds and red-footed boobies nest. There are two endemic gull species found in Galápagos; lava gulls and swallow-tailed gulls – both frequently nest here. Tidepools are a favorite haunt of herons. • A visit to Prince Philip's Steps begins with a panga ride along the cliffs, watching for red-billed tropicbirds and the occasional fur seal, while squadrons of frigatebirds fly overhead in their endless piratical pursuits. On shore dwarf palo santo trees are home to a colony of red-footed boobies, while Nazca Boobies nest below on the ground. Along the lava fields storm petrels fly overhead in great numbers, while short-eared owls hunt for them among the lava

cracks.

Day 5: SANTIAGO

SANTIAGO – James Bay/Puerto Egas is home to Fur Seal Grotto - not only a beautiful site, but this is your only chance to get close to the endemic fur seals. Some of the best tide-pooling is also here, drawing a wonderful variety of shorebirds and seabirds, with yellow-crowned night herons and American Oystercatchers being the most commonly seen. Inland you might have a chance to see painted locusts, grasshoppers, and possibly even the Galápagos snake. Galápagos flycatchers and Galápagos hawks are also common on the inland trail. The snorkeling here is in shallower water, getting you closer to the smaller sea life. • Playa Espumilla is a golden sandy beach where sea turtles nest, and ghost crabs and wading birds abound. Beyond the mangroves that frame the beach lie saline lagoons; further in you can find some of the 10 finches that inhabit Santiago, along with the vermilion and broad-billed flycatchers. • Following our hike we will explore Buccaneer Cove from the yacht. This is one of the places where Charles Darwin went ashore - a site historically used by sailors to clean ships, hunt meat, and collect firewood and water. Impressive tuff cliffs frame the southern cove, while eroded cinder to the north has been carved by time into fanciful shapes.

Day 6: ISABELA & FERNANDINA

ISABELA – The cold waters approaching Punta Vicente Roca offer some of the best opportunities for whales and dolphins. Zodiac cruise and snorkel here and you may be rewarded with mola mola, penguins and turtles. • FERNANDINA - This is the youngest of the Galápagos Islands. Punta Espinosa is a wonderful visitor site, with the largest colony of marine iguanas in the islands, in addition to flightless cormorants, Galápagos



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Penguins, herons and Galápagos Hawks. For endemic flora the island is home to some of the best stands of Lava Cactus. This is often the best place to see marine iguanas in the water as they feed on the barely submerged rocks along the shore.

Day 7: ISABELA

ISABELA – Tagus Cove is a natural harbor featuring steep cliffs replete with graffiti from ship's crews dating as far back as 1836 carved into the face. The cliffs are populated by marine iguanas, penguins, crabs, sea lions, and in the crevices outside the bay, brown noddy terns and the occasional Galápagos Martin. Ground and tree finches, hawks, yellow warblers, large-billed flycatchers and perhaps the woodpecker finch can be viewed along the way. • Elizabeth Bay is a mangrove inlet explored by zodiac, with an amazing concentration of green sea turtles and rays. The neighboring Marielas Islets are home to the largest colony of Galápagos Penguins, with penguins often seen in the water at Elizabeth Bay.

Day 8: ISABELA

ISABELA - Urvina Bay was the site of a dramatic volcanic uplift in 1954, where 4 miles of coastline suddenly rose nearly 15 feet, with the coastline driven three quarters of a mile farther out to sea. The marine remnants and giant coral heads are a stark reminder. Inland land iguanas, and an occasional tortoise, are often found here. Along the shore flightless cormorants and brown pelicans typically nest. We might have a chance to snorkel along the rocky bay. • Situated against a backdrop of 3 volcanos, Punta Moreno features views of Isabela's Sierra Negra & Cerro Azul, and Fernandina's Le Cumbre. The trail traverses sharp Pahoehoe lava to verdant interior and coastal brackish lagoons. You'll find all 3 types of cactus colonizing this relatively recent lava flow. The shoreline features Blue-footed Boobies and

nesting flightless cormorants while the lagoons are home to white-cheeked pintail ducks and flamingos feeding on abundant brine shrimp.

Day 9: FLOREANA

FLOREANA – Punta Cormorant is one of the most interesting landings in Galápagos, on an olivine beach, with an emphasis on unique plant life and shore birds. A large brackish lagoon is home to flamingos, pintail ducks, and commons stilts. Flour Sand Beach here is a favorite nesting beach for the Green Sea Turtle. Offshore Champion Islet offers great snorkeling as well as a chance to spot the endemic Charles Mockingbird from the zodiacs. • Post Office Bay is one of the most historically famous sites - be sure to bring a postcard or two ashore with you to "mail" from the barrel that has been in use by passing sailors for decades. • Black Beach & the Highlands are outside the national park lands, yet quite rewarding. Much of the early human history of the Galápagos, and especially the Wittmer family, played out in the highlands of Floreana. A visit to the highlands is also your only opportunity in the archipelago to search for the endemic medium tree finch. The village here is home to about 60 people, with the seaside Wittmer hotel featuring an exhibit of early photographs from sailing expeditions and explorers to call on the island.

Day 10: SANTA CRUZ

SANTA CRUZ - A trip to the Highlands (by mini-bus) traverses all 7 vegetation zones of the Galápagos. In addition to two enormous pit craters, other volcanic formations include some of the largest known lava tunnels in the Galápagos. Not surprisingly, the lush highland vegetation is home to a variety of land birds, including vermilion flycatchers, Galápagos Flycatchers, woodpecker finches, dark-billed cuckoos, and Barn



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Owls. Tortoises are often seen in the wild here. · Puerto Ayora is the scientific heart of Galápagos, including the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) and Galápagos National Park tortoise center, as well as the primary population center. This will be the only opportunity to see the rare Galapagos saddleback tortoises.

Day 11: ESPANOLA

ESPANOLA - Punta Suarez is a paradise for birders, with waved albatross, Nazca Boobies, blue-footed boobies, Galápagos Hawks, Galápagos Doves, and also marine iguanas (the most colorful in the islands) all vying for center stage. · Gardner Bay is a tranquil white sandy beach known for sea lions (often numbering in the hundreds), lava lizards, finches, yellow warblers, & Hood Mockingbirds, to name just a few. · Gardner or Tortuga Rocks offer great snorkeling, as well as the occasional chance to kayak.

Day 12: SAN CRISTOBAL

SAN CRISTOBAL - This is the easternmost island in the archipelago (and also the provincial capital). · Punta Pitt is a coastal tuff formation that serves as a nesting site for many sea birds, including blue-footed, Nazca & red-footed boobies (the only site where all 3 species might be seen together), frigatebirds, swallow-tailed gulls, and storm petrels. · Cerro Brujo is a very striking, eroded tuff cone. One of the first places visited by Charles Darwin, the beautiful white coralline sand beach and lagoon are home to brown pelicans, blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls, plus a variety of shore birds. Stroll the beach and you will soon realize that you are being watched by hundreds of shy ghost crabs. San Cristóbal is also home to the endemic Chatham Mockingbird. · Kicker Rock is a similarly eroded tuff cone, this time rising almost 500 feet from the

ocean. The yacht will cruise around Kicker Rock as the sunlight plays off the contours of the cliffs and formation (complete with blue-footed boobies, Nazca Boobies, and frigatebirds).

Day 13: MOSQUERA & SANTA CRUZ

MOSQUERA - This is a tiny islet, really more of a long, narrow sand spit, with a huge population of sea lions. Additional occupants include Sally Lightfoot Crabs and lava lizards, plus a wonderful variety of birdlife flying over. · Following our morning landing we will snorkel in the area - most likely off the coast of NORTH SEYMOUR. Wondering about the difference between routings? On our classic 11-day trip you would fly to Quito mid-day on Day 13. SANTA CRUZ - Black Turtle Cove is a tranquil mangrove-surrounded series of coves and inlets. Exploring by panga (zodiac) we often see mating green sea turtles, plus rays and white-tipped reef sharks. The mangroves are nesting area for herons and pelicans, while blue-footed boobies often feed in the area.

Day 14: SOMBRERO CHINO & RABIDA

SOMBRERO CHINO · Perhaps more than any visitor site, here the volcanic origins of the Galápagos are conveyed. The shoreline is a wonderful snorkeling area with numerous coves and grottos filled with life. RABIDA · This is one of the best snorkeling sites in the islands. The red sand beach makes a striking backdrop for the ever-present sea lions. Just inland a salt-water lagoon often has a few flamingos, while yellow warblers are in the salt bush, and brown pelicans nest in the mangroves. The higher elevations of the island host palo santo trees and cactus.

Day 15: SANTIAGO & BARTOLOME

SANTIAGO - Sullivan Bay offers a rare look at a recently-formed lava field, with fantastical Pahoehoe formations in every



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imaginable shape. If we're lucky snorkeling along the shore we might be accompanied by penguins. · BARTOLOME - One of the most popular visitor sites for the panoramic views (gained by climbing 360-plus wooden stairs). The view is educational as well as inspiring; the volcanic features include lava formations such as spatter cones, cinder cones, tuff cones, hornitos, and more. There are also wonderful examples of pioneering plants and some beautiful stands of endemic lava cactus. The shoreline around Pinnacle Rock might be your best chance to snorkel with penguins, while the underwater ledges frequently shelter sleeping reef sharks.

Day 16: SANTA FE & SOUTH PLAZA

SANTA FE - This island is home to a unique species of land iguana; some of these iguanas can be 5 feet long! The stands of giant prickly pear cactus here are specially adapted to a larger size as a form of protection against the iguanas. Santa Fe is also your best chance at seeing the endemic rice rat. Snorkeling and kayaking round out the possibilities here. · SOUTH PLAZA is a geologically uplifted island vegetated with the distinctive red mats of sesuvium, along with prickly pear cactus - both being the food base for the land iguanas. Marine iguanas are also common here, with the very occasional hybrid being found. A walk along the breezy sea cliffs is wonderful, with swallow-tailed gulls, shearwaters, and red-billed tropicbirds in flight. A colony of bachelor sea lions makes one cove their retirement home.

Day 17: SANTA CRUZ & BALTRA

(morning): SANTA CRUZ - Las Bachas are two white sand beaches on the north shore, backed by a small brackish lagoon where flamingos and coastal birds are occasionally seen. A sunrise visit here might reveal the tracks of sea turtles returning to the sea as this is a favorite nesting area. · BALTRA - Transfer

to the airport for your mid-morning return flight to Quito. (afternoon): On arrival (late afternoon) in Quito, we will be transferred directly to the HOTEL MERCURE ALAMEDA where we will spend the night. We will have a group Farewell Dinner in Quito this evening. [B, L, D]

Day 18: QUITO

Transfer to the airport for your return flight home. Or, if you prefer, remain on in Ecuador for a few days exploring the High Andes, Amazon Basin, or tropical cloud forests...[B]

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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YOUR SHIP: TIP TOP IV

YOUR SHIP:	Tip Top IV
VESSEL TYPE:	Motor Yacht
LENGTH:	27 metres
PASSENGER CAPACITY:	16
BUILT/REFURBISHED:	2006

The 125 ft, steel-hulled, TIP TOP IV was built in Guayaquil, Ecuador in 2006. She is owned, and occasionally still captained by Rolf Wittmer - the first person born in the Galapagos Islands. The interior is very spacious and attractive, and features a library/conference room, and a spacious dining room. Cabins, Bar and lounge are fully carpeted for your comfort. A beautiful teak floored sun deck and dinning room creates a delightful place for resting and relaxing on board. There are extensive outside viewing (both sun and shade) areas. Cabins There are 10 air-conditioned double cabins (4 on the bridge deck and 6 on the lower deck). All cabins, six in the Lower Deck and four in the upper deck have two single lower berths that may be transformed in a king size bed and the cabins in the lower deck can be transformed in familiar suites by interconnecting doors. Onboard equipment Special equipment on board includes basic snorkeling gear to loan as well as 8 double kayaks. Staff and Crew With our highly trained professional crew on board, twin main engines, twin electric generators, twin Radars, Eco-sounders and GPS, Reverse Osmosis Water Maker, all the coastguard required safety equipment and twelve knot cruising speed, the Tip Top IV ensure safe cruising around the Galapagos

Islands. Our Captain, Multilingual guide, Engineer, International cook, Barman, waitress and two sailors will be at your service. Our relatively numerous crew on board will ensure the best personal service to all of



our guests.

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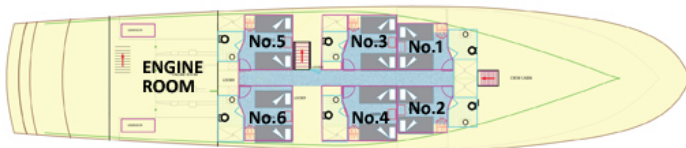
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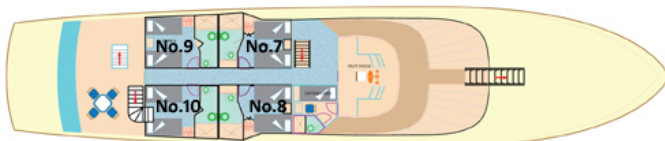
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