

Anahi Catamaran - Itinerary B1

DAY 1, Friday

Arrival at Baltra airport

AM: Flight to Galapagos from Quito Airport.

The flight from Quito to the Galapagos takes approximately 2 ½ hours. Upon arrival at Baltra airport, all passengers have to go through an airport inspection (to make sure no foreign plants or animals are introduced to the islands) and pay the park entrance fee of \$100 USD, and the \$10USD for the INGALA transit control card, both mandatory to enter the National Park. After this, our guide will meet us, help us with the luggage and escort us on a short bus ride to the harbor. A small boat, called 'Panga' (dinghy) will transport us to the M/C Anahi, where the crew will welcome us onboard. After departure and lunch, we will proceed to the first visit.

PM: Twin Craters

The Gemelos (twins) are two deep craters located to the side of the road that leads to Puerto Ayora from the other side of the island. This huge holes were probably created in a volcanic explosion or by magma chambers underneath the island's surface.

This is also a good place to see the Galapagos hawk and barn owl of this island and the surrounding forests are filled of birds such as the vermilion flycatcher or the yellow warbler.

Something worth mentioning is the contrast of the vegetation of the highlands with the arid coastal zones.

PM: Santa Cruz Highlands

Santa Cruz possesses many of the different ecosystems present in the archipelago. As we travel through these zones, the dream of many birdwatchers might come true: whether it's the bright red feathers of a

Vermilion flycatcher or one of Darwin's Finch, almost every bird present in the islands can be found here.

Santa Cruz also offers excellent opportunities for viewing the native Galapagos Tortoises in their natural habitat. There are also plenty of other attractions as lava tubes, sinkholes and craters. These eerie formations offer a fascinating walk into the inner, volcanic structure of the island.

DAY 2, Saturday

Isabela Island

AM: Tintoreras

A beautiful place reached by a nice panga ride. "Tintoreras" are small islands in front of the coast of Puerto Villamil.

Here, we find lava herons on the mangrove branches and Galapagos penguins and sea lions often popping out on the shore. White-tipped reef sharks (called tintoreras in Spanish) are also fairly common in this spot, hence the name.

Wall of Tears

The Wall of Tears is a very important historic site in Isabela. Between 1946 and 1959 Isabela Island was a penal colony, and prisoners here were forced to build a wall with huge blocks of lava as a punishment. The wall is 100 meters long and 7 meters high. Because of the arduous labor and harsh conditions in which the prisoners lived and had to work, this site is known as the wall of tears.

A set of stairs provides a good viewpoint of the wall and the surrounding landscape. It's still possible to see the cement foundations of the USA military base that dates from the Second World War.

PM: Sierra Negra Volcano.

Isabela Island is one of the youngest and the largest islands in the Galapagos archipelago. We will do a dry landing in Puerto Villamil, the second smallest town of the Galapagos, with approximately 3,000 habitants. We will head to the highlands, to Sierra Negra slopes, to then do some hiking on uneven terrain to reach Sierra Negra volcano's rim.

Sierra Negra volcano has the second widest crater in the world. From this natural viewpoint, we will have fantastic sights of the truly gigantic crater, the rest of the volcanoes, and Perry Isthmus, a 12 Km wide lava field. From here we can hike to Volcano Chico, to watch the outstanding lava formations, examples of the geological events that have crafted the Galapagos Islands.

DAY 3, Sunday ***Isabela Island***

AM: Punta Moreno

Punta Moreno is located on the north coast of Isabela Island, between the Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul volcanoes. The trail runs along a Pahohoe lava (solidified lava in corrugated or accordion shapes) flow into a complex of coastal lagoons, where we find several species of birds around the mangroves that complete the landscape.

PM: Elizabeth Bay

This is a marine visitor site, so, the excursion is carried out on our panga as there is no landing point. The panga ride starts with a visit to Marielas islets, to see the largest and most important penguin colony of the Galapagos. The ride continues into the cove, which is surrounded by magnificent red mangroves, with their red roots and green leaves.

Here it is possible to observe sea turtles, flightless cormorants, spotted eagle rays, golden rays, brown pelicans, and sea lions. Some days, we have been able to see Galapagos hawks soaring overhead while schools of Pompano and Dorado fish swim below.

DAY 4, Monday ***Isabela Island***

AM: Urbina Bay

South from Tagus Cove but still on the west coast of Isabela we find Urbina Bay. An easy wet landing on a mild sloping beach will take us to a very interesting area that it is a perfect example of the geological activity of the islands. The waters on this site are a good place to see turtles and rays and we will take a short trail that leads to a coral reef, which is evidence of an uplift from the sea floor that occurred in 1954.

From here it's easy to reach the Alcedo and Darwin volcanoes. We will see large and colorful land iguanas and have excellent possibilities of seeing giant Galapagos turtles, flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies, Galapagos penguins, pelicans and marine iguanas.

PM: Tagus Cove

A panga ride along the cliffs will give us a good chance to see the Galapagos penguin, the flightless cormorant and other sea birds. From the landing dock we will walk for about 30 minutes along the trail to reach the top of the cliff, from where we will have a great view of Darwin Lake, an uplifted ultra saline lake, saltier than the sea and other several volcanoes. Look carefully at the inscriptions on the surrounding cliffs of the cove, these has been written or carved by pirates, whalers and buccaneers in past centuries.

DAY 5, Tuesday ***Fernandina and Isabela Islands***

AM: Punta Espinoza

Fernandina is the third largest island in the archipelago and has just one visitor site: Punta Espinoza. This site is located at the northeastern point of the island, just across Tagus Cove, and is a perfect place to see some of the unique species of Galapagos. Marine iguanas join in larger groups than in any other island. They bask around in the sand, swim near the shore, and sometimes, they block the way at the dock. Among the unique species found here is the flightless cormorant, a bird that because of the lack of predators had to adjust its way of survival, enhancing its swimming skills to find food in the ocean. Its wings, tail, and feet progressively adapted for swimming, but lost the ability to fly. Evolution happening right in front of us!

PM: Vicente Roca Point

At Punta Vicente Roca we find the remnants of an ancient volcano that form two turquoise coves with a well protected bay from the ocean swells.

The spot is a popular anchorage area; from here we will do a panga ride along the cliff (the remains of the volcano) or explore a partially sunken cave. Nazca and blue-footed boobies usually sit perched along the cliffs, while flightless cormorants inhabit the shoreline.

The upwelling of coldwater currents in this area of the Galapagos give rise to an abundance of marine life, making of Punta Vicente Roca one of the archipelago's favorite dive spots.

One cove is only accessible from the sea by an underwater passage. The passage opens to the calm waters of the hidden cove, where sea lions lie lazily on the beach after swimming the underwater route.

DAY 6, Wednesday ***Santiago Island***

AM: Puerto Egas.

The excursion in Puerto Egas, with its black sand beaches, is considered one of the more rewarding visits of the Galapagos. In the 1960s, this island was the site of a small salt mining industry (one of the several unsuccessful attempts to create a profitable industry in Galapagos). A hike to the salt crater presents us with a very good opportunity to watch land birds such as finches, doves, and hawks.

A walk along the rugged shoreline while the tide is low will let us see many marine species, like Iguanas basking on the rocks or sea lions laying lazily in the tide pools. At the end of the trail we will find a series of grottoes (sea caves carved on the lava by the waves), where fur seals and night herons are usually resting on the ledges, protected from the sun. For many visitors, this is the only opportunity to see the Galapagos fur seals, once thought to be almost extinct.

PM: Rábida Island

Rábida is a very unique place (only if not compared to Mars!). The red color of its rocks and sand is caused by the ferrous contents of the minerals, which have been oxidized by external factors such as rain, salt water, and sea breeze. A short trail will take us to a coastal lagoon, just behind the beach, filled with land birds such as finches, doves, yellow warblers and mocking birds. This lagoon also hosts a colony of flamingos.

DAY 7, Thursday ***Chinese hat and Bartolomé Island***

AM: Chinese hat

This is a small islet of approximately 1 square km, located just off the southeastern shores of Santiago Island. It is a recent volcanic cone with a shape that resembles Chinese, hat when seen from north side. On the west side we will see lava formations, which were formed under the sea and then raised above the surface, exposing coral heads that were on the lava. This is an excellent opportunity to get a better understanding of the geological features of the islands, such as lava tubes and flows. The landscape is completed by a sea lion colony, lots of marine iguanas, and Galapagos penguins.

PM: Bartolomé Island

A small, barren island located just across from Sullivan Bay (Santiago Island) and with two main visitors' sites. The first one offers us the possibility of climbing to the summit of the island, where we can enjoy a superb view which includes a variety of volcanic formations: lava bombs spatter and cinder cones and lava flows and tubes. The lunar landscape provides one of the most scenic panoramas of the archipelago. The second site gives us a chance to relax on a beautiful beach with great snorkeling opportunities: Multicolor fish penguins and sea turtles can usually be seen at the base of the tall pinnacle rock, which dominates Bartolome's landscape. A short walk to Bartolome's second beach, in which swimming is strictly forbidden, will grant us a good chance to see white-tipped reef sharks swimming along the shoreline.

DAY 8, Friday ***North Seymour – Santa Cruz Islands***

AM: North Seymour

This is an uplifted island that presents a flat landscape strewn with boulders. Here, we also find a large population of magnificent frigate birds and blue-footed boobies nesting and performing their courtship rituals.

Despite the tremendous surf that usually pounds the outer shore, we can also find sea lions hauling out onto the beach and doing bodysurfing.

After the morning excursion we will head back to the airport for the flight to the mainland.