

## **Galapagos Guardians: Galapagos Land, Sea and Underwater Adventures**

Galapagos Islands are a world apart, a must visit for every adventurous traveler, and a treasure for everyone who prizes a very special place where people and animals coexist in harmony.

This fabulous World Heritage site, one of the most famous places on the planet, will transport you back in time. Here you will find not only spectacular wildlife, with a chance to get closer to wild animals than anywhere else on earth, but also a warm, slow-going atmosphere long disappeared from most places on the planet.

There is simply nowhere else like it.

### **Animals, Adventure and Natural History!**

This is land-based tourism in the Galapagos, you will see a side of the islands that most people don't experience. That is because Land-based tourism - a recent concept in the Galapagos – is a new, more exciting and more responsible way to see the islands.

Tropic has been involved with community-based conservation travel since its founding in 1994, and on the Galapagos, the company continues to work with local people to make tourism sustainable and to ensure the preservation of the archipelago's incredible natural heritage.

We are betting on the local people, and on working with them on responsible tourism as the best way to make sure the Galapagos survive intact. So join us, and fun-loving characters like Claudio, Maria de Lourdes, Polo, Bolivar, Lelia, and the many other committed conservationists you'll meet on this voyage.

At the same time you'll see the Islands' truly fantastic wildlife, and get closer to it than you ever imagined.

You'll also have time to explore more of the Islands' extraordinary geography by foot, kayak and mountain bike, as well as time to relax on the beach and enjoy the sun going down over the Pacific.

### **Highlights:**

Visit 3 Galapagos Islands	Bird watching
Galapagos National Park - UNESCO	Surfing
Giant Tortoises Reserve	Family Friendly & Small Groups
Pirate Caves & Lava Tubes	Underwater World
Highlands and beachfront lodges	Support the local people and economy
Santa Cruz, Bartolome & Floreana	Island culture
Exclusive Kayaking & Snorkeling	Scandalous Floreana history
Stand Up Paddle Board (SUP)	Sustainable Tourism

## **THE ADVENTURE BEGINS: YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO THE ISLANDS**

Day 1: Arrival on Baltra, Kayak Itabaca Channel and explore our Giant Tortoise Reserve

Arrival on Baltra: The tiny island of Baltra was a military base during the Second World War and has been the Galapagos' principal airport for many years. The good news is that to protect the local environment, the airport has been rebuilt using the most advanced environmental techniques to reduce emissions and energy use. This is the first ecological airport in the world.

Our adventure begins right after our arrival. We will provide a special VIP lounge for changing and then will transfer you to the Channel to explore the beauty of the Galapagos Islands at their best while kayaking, stand up paddling and snorkeling. The unique turquoise colored waters are home to some of the most amazing wildlife in the Galapagos and will captivate your imagination and encourage you to become a true fan of this paradise.

Stunning wildlife can be seen throughout the paddle including sea lions, blue footed boobies, brown pelicans, lava herons, great blue herons, white-tipped reef sharks and more...we'll see many of them as we kayak over the northern flank of the St. Cruz Island towards the Punta Carrion area.

We'll glide through amazing red mangrove forests, lava rock cliffs and crystal clear water. Ocean (sit on top) kayaks doubles or singles with comfortable seats, paddles and life jackets are provided. A support boat escorts kayakers throughout the ride to ensure safety.

Average paddle lasts between 1 ½ hours to 2 hours depending on the activity of fauna and skills of kayakers.

From Itabaca Channel, we head to the Santa Cruz highlands, where our exclusive giant tortoise reserve and Tented camp is located, perched high on a hillside overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The Galapagos Magic Tented Camp will be our home for the next two nights. The sounds of nature will be our lullaby in the evenings, and we can feast our eyes on the scenic tapestry of mountains and forest surrounding the lodge and fantastic views of the ocean and on a perfect day we can spot Floreana Island in the distance. Giant tortoises will be our companions at the lodge, and starlight will guide us to our rooms after a sumptuous dinner near the crackling fire.

After dinner explore the natural lava tubes on the reserve and enjoy an after dinner glass of wine or beer in our one-of-a-kind Lava Lounge built inside a lava tube! This is a truly special and unique place to relax around the fireplace and share stories from the day's Galapagos adventures!

Accommodations are in individual tree houses or semi-permanent, raised walk-in tents reminiscent of an African safari camp – with very different wildlife! Guests share two bathhouses that have flush toilets and hot showers. (And ensuite tented camp will be completed by August 2016)

Dinner at the Reserve.

Overnight stay at the Galapagos Magic Tented Camp

Meals: Snacks, B, L, D

### **Day 2 - Bartolome Island**

Today after breakfast we will head back to Itabaca Channel to continue our National Park and Marine Reserve exploration.

Our yacht, the Sea Finch, has operated since December 2010 from its base in Puerto Ayora. The Sea Finch carries a total of up to 16 guests, who can enjoy the air-conditioned dining lounge, as well as various outdoor sitting areas with beautiful views of the Islands.

The Sea Finch, built in the United States, was chosen for its solid construction, comfort while navigating, and its fiberglass hull, which makes it a fast-cruising yacht. It has a total length of 18,00 meters and a beam of 5,06 meters.

The Sea Finch will deliver us to Bartolome Island, which offers one of the most dramatic views in the Galapagos Islands. A 600 – meter pathway takes visitors to the highest point of the island, where you will learn from our expert naturalist guide about the volcanic origins of the Galapagos. After the walk, a dingy ride along the coastline will give you the opportunity to see the Galapagos penguin. This curious bird nests amongst fissured lava flows and ventures into the crystal-clear waters of Bartolome to fish.

A wet landing in the main beach of the island will give you the opportunity to enjoy the sandy beach where sea lions rest and a variety of wading birds feed. The area has tranquil waters, offering a great snorkeling experience where you can observe tropical fish, sea stars and perhaps even see penguins under water.

Optional: Charles Darwin Research Station and the Galapagos Capital

For those who are interested, we can make a late visit to the Charles Darwin Research Center, where you will learn about the Darwin Foundation's conservation efforts in the Galapagos National Park. This is where the world famous Lonesome George used to live. We'll also spend some time in town, having a drink and walk along Pt. Ayora's main road with nice little boutiques, etc.

Dinner back at Galapagos Magic Tented Camp.

Overnight stay at the Galapagos Magic Tented Camp

Meals: B, L aboard the Sea Finch, D

### **Day 3 – Floreana Island**

This peaceful island is home to the Galapagos' smallest human population, only 150 people, and is also the least developed and most natural of the four inhabited islands. Once a pirates' lair, Floreana was the first inhabited island in the Galapagos and descendants of the original population still live here amid the mysterious tales and legends that surround their ancestors.

On Floreana, we will be hiking, learning about the fascinating history of the local people, and seeing some of the Galapagos special wildlife (giant tortoises, frigate birds, Darwin's finches, sea lions, and petrels).

We leave Santa Cruz early in the morning for a 2 hour speed boat crossing to Floreana. Upon arrival, we check in at our lodge overlooking the Galapagos' most beautiful and secluded bay. After getting settled, we can walk or paddle (kayaks or SUPs) to nearby Black Beach for some snorkeling.

Lunch is at a local restaurant that is part of a community tourism initiative Tropic has helped develop and has been working with since 2012.

In the afternoon, we embark on the kayaks or SUPs and cross the Bay in front of the lodge to explore La Loberia (a sea lion breeding ground) where we will enjoy more snorkeling and swimming in the warm, calm and bright water with sea turtles, sea lions, spectacular rays and lots of shimmering fishes.

In the afternoon we return to the lodge (you can walk back for 30 min or kayak/SUP back) for a nice warm shower and where we will celebrate another incredible day in the Galapagos with a perfect sunset.

Dinner will be at another local restaurant in the village.

Night Activity (weather permitting): star gazing

Overnight stay in Lava Lodge

Meals: B, L, D

#### **Day 4: Exploring the Floreana Highlands**

After breakfast we leave to explore the Floreana highlands on our open-air bus (chiva) - an unbeatable, historic, and comfortable way to see the island.

On the way, our naturalist guide will point out the wildlife and give us an idea of the colorful history of some of Floreana's first inhabitants, such as the Wittmers (whose descendants still live on the Island), the 'Baroness,' and the pirates that once visited here. They will also tell you about the "Enigma of Floreana," involving the mysterious deaths of several of the Island's inhabitants, a riddle from the 1930's that has never been solved and was featured in the film "The Galapagos Affair."

After driving into the highlands, we reach Asilo de la Paz (Peace Haven) where our hike begins. We walk up to this historic site, explore the pirate caves, and visit the freshwater spring that provides water for the entire Island. Along the way, you can expect to see giant tortoises lumbering around in the vegetation or even on the trail.

We leave Asilo de Paz walking down through a rural area where the local people grow produce for their own consumption. This is a fascinating example of how these island people survived in this remote place and over the years were able to develop an understanding of the local

environment and now work to preserve their unique agricultural knowledge. On our way back to the coast, we will make a stop at a local farm, La Primavera, where you can watch the extraordinary behavior of the frigate birds who 'dance' as they wash their salty wings in the fresh water lake on the farm. With a little bit of luck, we may be able to see males puffing up the red pouches on their chests in an attempt to attract females.

From La Primavera farm, we continue by chiva down towards Cerro Allieri and the best view point in the islands and then to Las Palmas, where the Island's first permanent inhabitant, the eccentric Dr. Ritter, lived and is buried. Arriving in 1926, the German physician believed that with a combination of exercise and the right vegetarian diet he would live to be 150 years old. He didn't, but his story is one of the many strange episodes that still abound on the island. On the way we will see spectacular views of the Floreana shoreline.

For lunch, back at the lodge we will prepare a very special barbecue lunch, featuring the special Cruz family recipes!

After lunch, you can choose to practice your kayak or SUP skills, go snorkeling in La Loberia or simply relax and take in the beautiful Galapagos views from the Lava Lodge.

Dinner will be at a local restaurant in the village

Overnight stay in Lava Lodge

Meals: B, L, D

#### **Day 5: Departure day**

Today we take an early morning speed boat back to Santa Cruz and then transfer by land to Baltra for our flight back home. Or extend your journey in the Galapagos, exploring Isabela or San Cristobal Island or on the mainland, visiting the spectacular peaks of the Andes or the lush jungle of the Amazon region.

Meals: B

#### **Darwin's Fifteen Favorite – all which can be seen on this itinerary!**

1. Blue Footed Boobies
2. Nazca Boobies
3. Flamingos
4. Frigate Birds
5. Galapagos Hawk
6. Land Iguanas
7. Marine Iguanas
8. Penguins
9. Sea Lions
10. Giant Tortoises
11. Medium tree finch
12. White Tip Reef Shark
13. Galapagos Green Sea Turtle
14. Parrot Fish
15. Marbel Ray