



## Athala – 8 day with Espanola

One of only a small handful of yachts offering true 5 star facilities in Galapagos, this is a beautiful vessel which is very spacious, light and airy. With a capacity for 16 guests, Athala offers all the amenities of being on a larger vessel, but all the intimacy and benefits of being on a smaller vessel. Each of the rooms is spacious with picture windows. Service on board is excellent, with an administrator on board to ensure the smooth running of operations.

The itinerary includes a great variety of islands from almost all regions of the archipelago – as it is a faster and smoother yacht than most, it is able to do this. You will experience a very good selection of Galapagos wildlife, fascinating geological scenery, some great snorkelling opportunities (with sea lions in particular). One of the highlights is the beautiful island of Espanola, where from April through December it is home to the Waved Albatross.



## Day 1

**Baltra** Arrive at Baltra meet your crew and board your yacht The Athala.

### Chinese Hat or Sombrero Chino

Located just off the southeast tip of James Island, this island owes its name to its shape. A truly beautiful island, surrounded by crystal clear waters, this is great location for Sea Lions. Perhaps more than any other site, this islet gives you a sense of Galapagos volcanic origins as the beautiful white beach gives way to an almost primeval landscape of volcanic rubble.

**Activities:** Hiking 0.4 mi. Snorkelling & Kayak.

**Difficulty:** Easy/Moderate

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Walk along the shore visiting a small colony of Galapagos Sea Lions. Penguins. Snorkel: Penguins, Reef sharks, Parrotfish, Puffers.



## Day 2

**Santa Cruz – Cerro Dragon or Dragon Hill** After a dry landing, the walk will take you along the edge of a salt water lagoon behind the beach where you can often see Flamingos, Pintail Ducks, Common Stilts and other bird species. A short walk inland, offers a great view of the bay and a nesting site for Land Iguanas, many of which were repatriated back to Cerro Dragon by the Charles Darwin Research Station, after their near-extinction due to feral dogs and cats.

**Activities:** Hiking 1.5 mi. Snorkelling

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Type of Landing:** Dry landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Coastal lagoon with variety of water birds: Herons, Stilts, Pintail Ducks, Oystercatchers, Flamingos. Giant Cactus, Land Iguanas, Darwin Finches, Mockingbirds. Snorkel: Parrotfish, Puffers, Snappers, Sea Turtles.

**Rabida** A red sandy beach with Sea Lions and nesting Brown Pelicans, which some afford a rare glimpse of chick feeding. There is a short walk inland which offers great views of the beach and lagoon. Years ago Flamingos were regularly seen at the salty lagoon, but nowadays this is a rare sight. Geologically Rabida is said to have the most diversified volcanic rocks of all the islands. It also provides a great opportunity to snorkel with Sea Lions and has a great diversity of near-shore and pelagic fish.

**Activities:** Wet landing. Hiking 0.5 mi. Kayak and Snorkelling

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Red sand beach, coastal lagoon, Galapagos Sea Lions, Seasonal colony of Brown Pelicans, Galapagos Hawk. Snorkel: Sea Lions, Butterflyfish, Parrotfish, Eels.



### Day 3 - Isabela

*Measuring over 1800 square miles, and accounting for over half the land surface area in Galapagos, at about 80 miles in length, the seahorse shaped Isabela Island is the largest in the Galapagos. Isabela is formed from six separate volcanoes (Alcedo, Cerro Azul, Darwin, Ecuador, Sierra Negra and Wolf). Being the largest islands, it has many visitor sites, covering a large diversity of ecosystems, from barren lava flows to evergreen lush forests.*

**Puerto Villamil** A small town on the southeast coast of Isabela. Various sites can be visited from here (detailed below) and next to the town are a number of lagoons where Flamingos Stilts and migratory shore birds are usually seen. The town enjoys one of the most beautiful coral-sand beaches in the islands.

### Isabela – (Villamil) – Tortoise Breeding Centre

The Galapagos has 11 different species of Giant Tortoise of which five species are endemic to Isabela. A new breeding facility, built just outside of town by the Galapagos National Park Service is helping to increase the populations of these iconic endangered reptiles. Thanks to this breeding centre and the one located at the Charles Darwin Station in Santa Cruz, the populations of Tortoises, which were on a severe decline until the 80's, is now recovering and has reached over 30.000 throughout the islands.

**Activities:** Hike (1 mi / 1,6 km)

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Dry Landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Wetlands, salt and brackish lagoons on the way to the Breeding centre. Flamingos, Stilts, adult and baby Giant tortoises.

**The Wetlands & The Wall of Tears** The wetlands of Isabela Island are located just outside of Puerto Villamil. The Wetlands consist of lagoons, swamps and mangroves and are home to a variety of unique bird species such as Common Stilts, Whimbrels, White cheeked pintail ducks, Gallinules and other shore birds. The Wetlands can easily be reached on foot or bicycle via beautiful trails that wind through the swamps.

Ecuador established a penal colony in Isabela between 1945 and 1959. During this period, prisoners shipped from the mainland were treated brutally and forced to build a wall, stone by stone, in isolation, only to be asked to tear it down again and start over. This now historical site towering at 65 feet (25m) took the lives of hundreds during its construction and remains as a vivid reminder of a dark past.

**Activities:** Hike (5 mi / 7 km) Biking

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Type of Landing:** Dry Landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Reef Sharks, Flamingos, Herons, coves, large mangrove trees, coastal lagoons, Marine Iguanas, Giant Tortoises.



## Day 4

**Floreana - Post Office Bay** The famous Post Office Bay is where people leave their mail to be picked up and delivered by others in the “post office” barrel—a time-honoured tradition begun by whalers more than two hundreds of years ago.

**Activities:** Short hike (less than 0.2 mi / 0.3km), lava tunnel & snorkelling

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights:** Barrel Post Office, lava tunnel inland (difficult access), nice sandy beach

**Floreana - Punta Cormorant** At Punta Cormorant you will walk on an olivine beach (a mineral known for its olive-green quality, that is found in meteorites, the moon and mars as well as on earth), visit a large lagoon where Great Flamingos sometimes nest, and walk over to Flour Beach, a beautiful white sandy beach to look for Green Sea Turtle nests.

**Activities:** Hike (1.2 mi/2km)

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights and Animals:** An easy walk along a coastal lagoon where Flamingos are often found, along with Stilts and Ducks. White sand beach.



**Day 5 San Cristobal – Cerro Brujo** This striking eroded tuff cone was one of the first sites visited by Charles Darwin. It has a beautiful coral sand beach where you can take a leisurely walk (depending on time of year) visited by Brown Pelicans, Blue-footed Boobies, and Swallow Tail Gulls as well as Marine Iguanas and Sea Lions. The beauty of this dramatic area can also be explored from the dingy, exploring caves and looking for sea birds.



**Activities:** Hike along the beach (1 mi / 1.6 km), dinghy ride, snorkelling & kayaking

**Difficulty:** Easy walk along the beach

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Beautiful rock formations, Sea Lions, shore birds, Land birds: Finches and Mockingbirds, snorkelling: Sea Lions, nice tropical fish, anemones.



**San Cristobal - Isla Lobos** A perfect place to swim with playful Sea Lions and snorkel. This basalt island outcropping lives up to its name of “Sea Lion Island”. As well as the Sea Lion colony on the beach it is also a nesting place for Blue-footed Boobies.

**Activities:** Hike (0.5 mi / 0.8 km), dinghy ride, snorkelling

**Difficulty:** Short but difficult walk.

**Type of Landing:** Dry landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Sea lion colony, shore birds, seasonal nesting Frigatebirds, Darwin finches. Snorkelling: Sea lions, fish.

## Day 6

**Santa Cruz - Charles Darwin Research Station** The Charles Darwin Research Station offers a great chance to learn about the work being done to conserve and protect the islands wildlife. For some visitors (depending on the time of year) this is the only time to see Giant Tortoises and certainly the closest range opportunity. It is also a great chance to see the Tortoise Rearing Centre.

**Activities:** Walking

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Dry landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Giant Tortoises, Land and Marine Iguanas, Mockingbirds, Darwin Finches.



**Santa Cruz – Highlands** The highlands of Santa Cruz are home to fascinating geological features, like lava tubes and the twin sinkhole craters of Los Gemelos, which are home to some 300 different fern species as well as a forest of Scalesias, a relative of sunflowers. This is an excellent area to look for some elusive endemics like the Woodpecker Finch (one of only a few bird species in the world to use tools), Small Tree Finch, Vegetarian Finch and Galapagos Rail. The highlands of Santa Cruz are one of the best places to see Giant Tortoises in the wild.

**Activities:** Hike (0.9 mi / 1 ½ km)

**Difficulty:** Easy /moderate

**Highlights & Animals:** Pitt craters, Scalesia Forest, Darwin finches, Warblers, Flycatchers.

## Day 7

**Española (Hood)** This island is one of the highlights of any visit to Galapagos. Espanola is the southernmost island in the Galapagos, and is also one of the oldest. Numerous Sea Lions are seen here, plus hundreds of Marine Iguanas basking on the rocks. Espanola's Marine Iguanas are unlike other Galapagos Marine Iguanas thanks to their bright colouring. Espanola is home to thousands of nesting seabirds all year, including Blue-footed Boobies, Nazca Boobies and Frigatebirds. Between late March and December the Waved Albatross, perhaps the most spectacular of Galapagos birds, returns to Espanola by the thousands to perform their amazing mating dance and produce the next generation. Almost the entire population breeds on this island during this time, and they spend the rest of the year at sea.

**Punta Suárez** Regarding the amount of wildlife, this one of the best trails in the whole islands. Despite the difficult terrain, the walk is an absolute marvel, as from the beginning to the end you will see large quantities of Sea Lions, Marine Iguanas, Blue-footed and Nazca boobies, gulls, Galapagos Hawks and during most of the year, Waved Albatross. There are spectacular views of flying birds from the cliffs.

**Activities:** Hike (1.9 mi / 3 km)

**Difficulty:** Difficult, rocky terrain.

**Type of Landing:** Dry Landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Española Mockingbird, Nazca Boobies, Waved Albatross, Red-billed tropicbirds, lava lizards, Galapagos Hawk, Blue-footed Boobies, blow hole, amazing landscape.



**Gardner Bay** This beautiful bay is nestled between Gardner islet and the beautiful coral sand beach in Española. You will visit a spectacular white sand beach, home to one of the largest Sea Lion colonies in the islands, where you can also see endemic Española Mockingbirds and with some luck, Galapagos Hawks.

**Activities:** Snorkelling and kayaking. Short hike along the beach (0.6 mi / 1km)

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** Wet landing

**Highlights & Animals:** White sandy beach, Sea Lion colony, Mockingbirds Galapagos Hawks. Snorkelling: colourful fish, Sea Lion nursery.





## Day 8

**Daphne Major** A panoramic trip around this small islet which is located between Santa Cruz and Santiago Island, which has spectacular bird watching as well as being a scientific research site. A select handful of scientists have studied for decades the evolution of finches on this island and this islet has become famous after many publications how evolution works in real time. No landing here allowed as it is very fragile, but you can see them from the vantage points on the yachts decks.

**Activities:** No landing. Boat tour around island.

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Type of Landing:** No landing

**Highlights & Animals:** Nazca Boobies, Tropicbirds, Frigatebirds, great scenery. Snorkel



After this final visit, you will be transferred to Baltra's airport for your flight back to the mainland, or you could continue your Galapagos adventure with a stay in one of the inhabited islands.

**Please note:** *Itineraries are unlikely to change significantly but are subject to change. Weather, wildlife breeding, instructions from the Galapagos National Park, specific abilities and interests of passengers as well as operational matters may cause your guide or captain to change the times or nature of your visits. Your guide will always endeavour to have the best itinerary for you within these constraints.*



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