



Galaxy 8 Days D

Galaxy is a beautiful motor yacht, launched in 2007, excellent crew, good food and very spacious and comfortable interiors. Run by a local company with a very good reputation and has first rate naturalists on board it has been one of our favourite yachts in recent years. The yacht is relatively fast, which means less time navigating than slower yachts. The cabins are all spacious with comfortable lower beds and in general very good value for the quality of service and comfort afforded.

In this cruise, you visit the western part of Galapagos with their pristine untouched quality, including Isabella and the Island of Fernandina as well as some of the central islands. A great mixture of Galapagos wildlife, in particular marine life, in the form of Penguins, Flightless Cormorants and Marine Iguanas as well as bird life and sea lions in the central islands. Fascinating geological landscapes and excellent snorkelling.



Day 1 **Baltra** Arrival at the airport in Galapagos.

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

Type of Landing:

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



Day 2

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.

Las Tintoreras or Shark Reef Canal Located on the other side of a small bay with completely calm turquoise waters, Las Tintoreras is a great place to see Sea Lions, Sea Turtles and Marine Iguanas as well as other Galapagos wildlife. This site gets its name thanks to a large lava crevice where, at low tide, white-tipped Reef Sharks are found resting or swimming. Most of the trail is lava, except for a white sand beach which is home to a small colony of Sea Lions and a nesting site for Marine Iguanas.

Activities: Hike (1 mi / 1,6 km) Snorkel, Dinghy ride

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: Dry Landing

Highlights & Animals: Reef sharks, Penguins, Marine Iguanas, Sea Lions, Herons.

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 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 3 Elizabeth Bay Located on the west coast of the Isabela, no landings are permitted here, but it makes for a beautiful dinghy ride. This is one of the best areas to see Galapagos Penguins as they prefer the cooler waters found on western Isabela. Flightless Cormorants and Marine Iguanas are common and often seen basking in the sun on rocks along the shore. As you then enter a narrow cove lined with large Red Mangrove trees, you will see Marine Turtles, Rays and shore birds.

Activities: Two-hour dinghy ride

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: No landing

Highlights & Animals: Mangrove forest, Sea Turtles, Penguins, Rays, Herons, Sea Lions.



Urbina Bay In 1954, almost 4 miles of coastal seabed dramatically uplifted about 15 ft exposing the sea floor and killing thousands of fish and turtles. This then, vegetation has largely colonized the area but many signs of the uplifting can still be observed. This area is now a nesting site for Land Iguanas and occasionally, giant tortoises coming from the moist uplands. This is a good trail to see Darwin finches and it is not rare to see Galapagos Hawks

Activities: Snorkelling, dinghy ride & hike, 2 trails: short (0.6 mi / 1 km), long (1.9 mi / 3km)

Difficulty: Easy (short trail) / Difficult (long trail)

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights & Animals: Land Iguanas (the biggest in Galapagos), Hawks, uplifted coral reef, Giant Tortoises. Snorkelling: Turtles, Rays, tropical fish



Day 4

Punta Espinosa Punta Espinosa, is a truly spectacular visitor site and a real highlight for any visitor to the Galapagos. A narrow strip of land extending out from the base of the Fernandina Volcano, it is home to the largest colonies of Marine Iguanas in the Galapagos. You will also have the chance to see Flightless Cormorants here, sea lions, and Galapagos Hawks often perch on the mangrove trees looking for prey. Along the coast, tidal pools provide a perfect environment for invertebrates and shorebirds, such as Oystercatchers, Plovers, Turnstones and Whimbrels.

Activities: Hike of approx (1.2 mi / 2 km). Snorkel.

Difficulty: Moderate

Type of Landing: Dry but sometimes slippery at low tide

Highlights & Animals: Sea Lion colony, Flightless Cormorant, vast numbers of Marine Iguanas, Sea Turtles, Sally-lightfoot Crabs, shorebirds, Herons. Snorkel: Penguins, Marine Iguanas feeding underwater, Cormorants, Sea turtles.



Tagus Cove The walk will take you up the slopes of the Darwin Volcano, along the edge of a salt water lagoon to a small hill from which you will see spectacular views of the northern lava fields of Isabela. Most of the fauna will be observed during a dinghy ride along the coast, with dramatic colours and beautiful tuff formations, Blue-footed Boobies, Penguins, Marine Iguanas, Pelicans and shorebirds.

Activities: Long uphill hike, Snorkelling, dinghy ride, Kayak.

Difficulty: Moderate

Type of Landing: Dry landing

Highlights & Animals: Darwin Finches, lowland native vegetation, beautiful landscapes, Penguins, Flightless Cormorants, Blue-footed boobies, Darwin Volcano & Lake



Day 5 James – (Santiago) - James Bay (Puerto Egas) This was the island where Charles Darwin spent the majority of his land visits in Galapagos. At James Bay, the Fur Seal Grottos provide great chances to get close views of both Fur Seals and Galapagos Sea Lions in a series of rocky pools. This visit also provides some of the best opportunities for tide-pooling in the Galapagos, and chances to see shore birds such as Plovers, Sandpipers, Herons and Oystercatchers. The snorkel from the beach is excellent.

Activities: Snorkelling, hike (1.2 mi / 2km)

Difficulty: Easy / moderate

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights: Galapagos Fur seals, Galapagos Sea Lions, tidal pools and “grottos”, Galapagos Hawk, Oystercatchers, Marine Iguanas, finches. Snorkelling: Reef Sharks, Turtles, Rays, nice underwater formations.

James (Santiago) – Playa Espumilla This tawny beach is a favourite nesting ground of Green Sea Turtles. There is a trail going inland with some very large Palo Santo trees where a number of land birds can be seen, including the Vermillion Flycatcher, the Galapagos Dove, Darwin Finches and Galapagos Mockingbirds. The beautiful sandy beach is a great place to swim and has some great mangrove areas.

Activities: Hiking (1 mi- 1,6km), Snorkelling and swimming at the beach

Difficulty: Easy / Moderate

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights: Lowland Forest, Galapagos Hawk, Darwin Finches. Snorkelling

Day 6 Santa Cruz - Black Turtle Cove (Caleta Tortuga Negra) A beautiful mangrove lagoon on the north shore of Santa Cruz Island. The yacht anchors just outside the cove and you will enter on a dinghy, paddling through the calm waters of the lagoon, which is a resting site for Green Sea Turtles. A wonderfully quiet journey, through a beautiful and unique habitat. With good luck as well as Marine Turtles you will see different types of Sharks and schools of Golden and Eagle Rays swimming just below the surface, whilst Yellow Warblers singing from above.

Activities: Boat tour in a lagoon, wildlife observation.

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: No landing

Highlights & Animals: Lagoon surrounded by mangroves. Sharks, Rays, Sea Turtles, Pelicans and Blue-footed boobies



Santiago – Sullivan Bay This site is of great geological interest and is located southeast of Santiago Island. Sullivan Bay offers a rare look at a recently formed lava-field. Located on the eastern coast of James Island, just across from Bartolome, this lava field is thought to have been created in eruptions that took place around 1890.

Activities: Hike (1.3 mi / 2 km) swimming and snorkelling

Difficulty: Moderate.

Type of Landing: Dry landing at the rocky shore and a wet landing at the white sand beach

Highlights & Animals: Pahoehoe lava flows, which has hardened in accordion-style formation. Small glass-like bubbles of lava can be found, called “hornitos”. Penguins in the coastline.

Day 7

Bartolome

Home to one of the most iconic scenery shots of Galapagos, this small island is located off the eastern shore of Santiago Island. The striking volcanic landscape looks almost lunar and provides a great introduction to the volcanic origins of the islands, with spatter cones and cinder cones some of which are eroded shaping striking formations like Pinnacle Rock. On the way to the top of Bartolome you will observe good examples of pioneering plants, including some beautiful strands of lava cactus. At sea level, this is a great place for swimming and snorkelling, if you are lucky with Galapagos Penguins.

Activities: Dinghy ride & snorkelling. Hike uphill (1.2 mi / 2 km)
Difficulty: Moderate/ difficult. Walk up to the top of volcano 114 meters, 375 wooden steps.
Type of Landing: Dry and wet landing
Highlights & Animals: Pinnacle rock, panoramic view, moonlike landscape, Penguins, pioneer plants, lava cactus. Snorkelling: Penguins, Reef Sharks, Rays great colourful fish.



Santa Cruz - Bachas Beach A beautiful white sandy beach punctuated by lava formations. The wonderfully soft sand here makes it a favourite site for nesting Sea Turtles. Here you will also see White Mangroves, one of the four mangrove species found in the Galapagos. There is a small coastal lagoon behind the sand dunes where Flamingos, Stilts, Pintail ducks and other water birds are regularly seen.

Activities: Walking along the beach, swimming, snorkelling. **Difficulty:** Easy
Type of Landing: Wet landing
Highlights & Animals: World War II remnants, Sally Lightfoot crabs, Hermit Crabs, Black Necked Stilts, Whimbrels, Flamingos, Sea Turtles

Day 8 North Seymour A great variety of Galapagos wildlife is provided in the loop trail on this small island. The highlight of your visit here will be the largest colony of Magnificent and Great Frigatebirds in the Galapagos as well as a colony of Blue-footed Boobies. In addition there are Sea lions, Marine Iguanas, Lava Lizards, Swallow-Tailed Gulls, and a few secretive, but very large Land Iguanas.

Activities: Hiking(1.5 mi/2.2 km), Snorkelling & dinghy ride
Difficulty: Moderate/difficult
Type of Landing: Dry landing
Highlights & Animals: Land & Marine Iguanas, Frigatebirds, Blue-footed Boobies, Sea Lions, sea birds. Snorkelling: Rays, Reef Shark, fish, Garden Eels



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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