



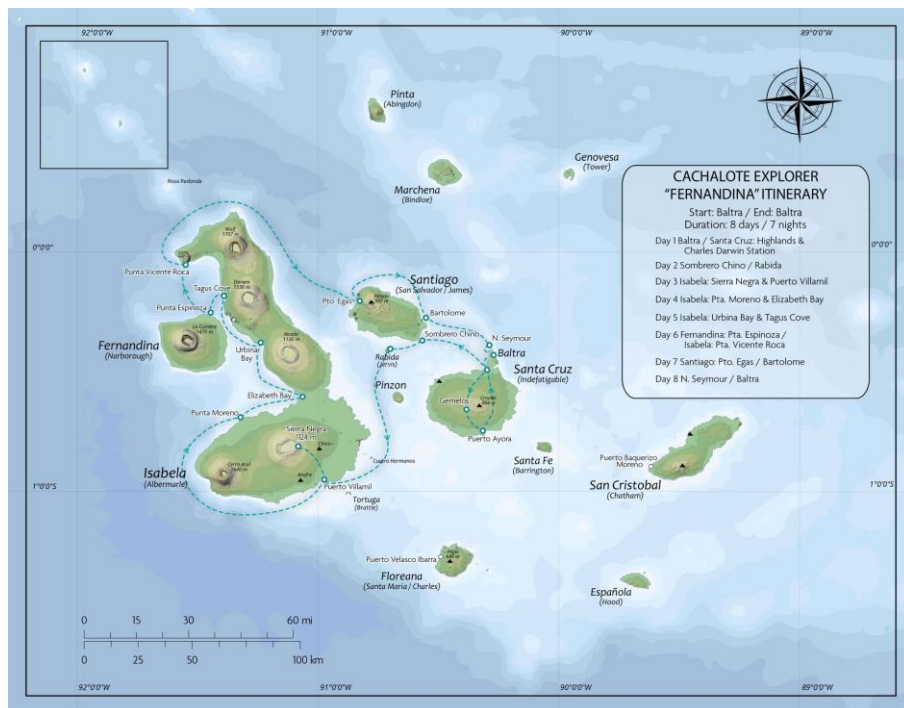
Cachalote Explorer

8 Days West – Fernandina



A charming and comfortable First-Class yacht Cachalote Explorer was originally a fishing boat built in 1988 in Vancouver, Canada. Converted to a passenger yacht back in 2017 Cachalote was brought to Galapagos the following year and has been a firm favourite of ours since then! With a capacity of up to 16 guests it is operated by a very good local company with a fantastic itinerary and works with excellent naturalist guides. Crew are very friendly and helpful. Eight cabins all with air conditioning, private bathrooms and hot showers. Built for the rough waters of the Canadian West Coast this will provide a smoother than normal ride for boats of this size in Galapagos.





Your Itinerary

The western islands have a pristine untouched quality, which is most evident as you sail along the western coast of Isabela and through the narrow Bolivar Channel separating the Island from Fernandina. The western islands receive a double dose of upwelling (from both the Humboldt and Cromwell Currents) and as a result there is cool nutrient rich water, which makes for abundant marine life, in the form of Penguins, Flightless Cormorants, Marine Iguanas and Whales... not to mention the sea birds, sea lions and the other amazing Galapagos wildlife which thrive here. Going on deck at night and seeing the numerous large bioluminescent particles is quite an experience.

Day 1 Arrival to the airport in Baltra,

Once you have entered Galapagos and paid your Galapagos National Park entrance fee and collected your luggage, as you exit the airport you will be met by your guide and the crew from the Cachalote

Over the next glorious 8 days you will visit the following islands and visitor sites:

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: Pit craters, Scalesia Forest, Darwin finches, Warblers, Flycatchers.



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. Another chance to see Giant Tortoises and certainly the closest range opportunity (for most people although with your first afternoon you would most likely have enjoyed lots of close encounters with them!). It is also a great chance to see the Tortoise Rearing Centre.

Activities: Walking (1.2 mi/2 km)

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: Dry landing

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

Day 2 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 a 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 (0.3 mi. / 0.4km) Snorkelling & Kayaking.

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.



Rabida

A red sandy beach with Sea lions and nesting Brown Pelicans, which sometimes 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.

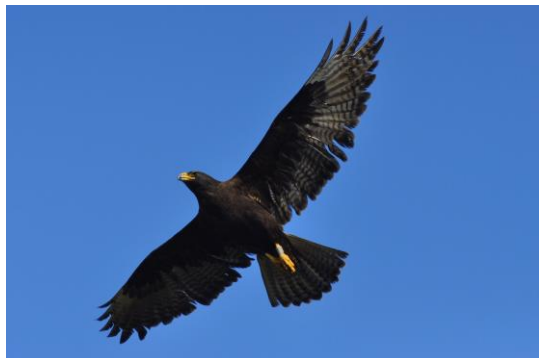


Activities: Wet landing. Hiking (0.5 mi / 0.8 km) Kayaking and Snorkelling

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 island, it has many visitor sites, covering a large diversity of ecosystems, from barren lava flows to evergreen lush forests.

Sierra Negra Volcano

This volcano on Isabela Island has one of the largest caldera's in the world measuring over 6 miles across. After a 30 min drive from the town, you will hike for 1 hour to get to the rim of the caldera. Along the way you will usually see Vermillion Flycatchers, Galapagos Martins, and Galapagos Hawk. All along the way you will be rewarded with incredible panoramic views of Sierra Negra.

Activities: Hiking.

Difficulty: Moderate/Difficult

Type of Landing: Dry landing

Highlights & Animals: Large caldera, stunning views, Darwin finches, Galapagos hawks.



Puerto Villamil

The yacht is moored today in the bay of 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

One of your visits today will be to the 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.



Your additional visit today is either Tintoreras or Wetlands depending on conditions and timings.

Las Tintoreras or Shark Reef Canal

Optional early morning visit - 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.



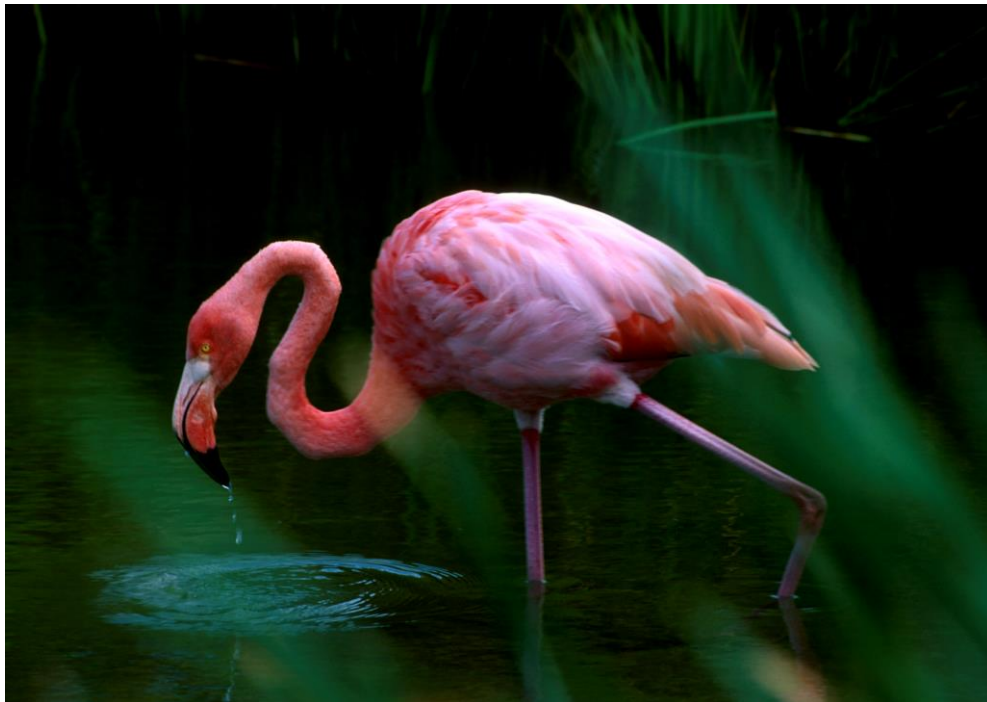
The Wetlands

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 Black-necked Stilts, Whimbrels, White-cheeked Pintail Ducks, gallinules, and other shore birds.

Activities: Hike (various short trails, each less than 1mi / 1.6 km)

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 Isabela - Punta Moreno

With dramatic seascapes and one of the best sunrise areas in the Galapagos, the visit to this site begins with a dinghy ride along the beautiful rocky shores where shore birds, penguins, cormorants and herons can be spotted. The barren lava fields host a surprising amount of wildlife due to the presence of many sink holes with are home to Flamingos, Stilts and Pintail Ducks.

Activities: Hike (1.3 mi / 2.1 km) Snorkelling, dinghy ride

Difficulty: Moderate/Difficult

Type of Landing: Dry landing

Highlights & Animals: Flamingos, Gallinules, Pintail ducks, Sea turtles, Reef sharks, Penguins.



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.

Day 5 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. Since 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



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 (1.1 mi / 1.8 km), 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 6 Punta Espinosa (Fernandina Island)

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.



Vicente Roca Point (Isabela)

Beautiful volcanic scenery, amazing lava intrusions and huge sea cliff make this place one of the most scenic in the Galapagos. Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies sit along the cliffs whilst Flightless Cormorants stay along the shoreline and if you are lucky you will see Penguins in the water. The upwelling of cold-water currents has created an abundance of marine life here, making for great snorkelling.



Activities: Dinghy ride, snorkel.

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: No landing

Highlights & Animals: Spectacular landscapes, Sea Turtles, Blue-footed Boobies, Nazca Boobies, Penguins, Flightless Cormorants. Snorkel: Sea turtles, Penguins, Gorgonians and other invertebrates.



Day 7 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 / 2 km)

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.



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 pioneer 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 (0.5 mi / 0.8 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



Day 8

You will have an early start this morning, and the visit will be a relatively short one as the yacht must then return to Baltra where the cruise will end in time for guests to take their connecting flight back to mainland Ecuador.

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: Walk

Difficulty: Moderate/difficult

Type of Landing: Dry landing

Highlights & Animals: Land & Marine Iguanas, Frigatebirds, Blue-footed Boobies, Sea Lions, sea birds.

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.*

