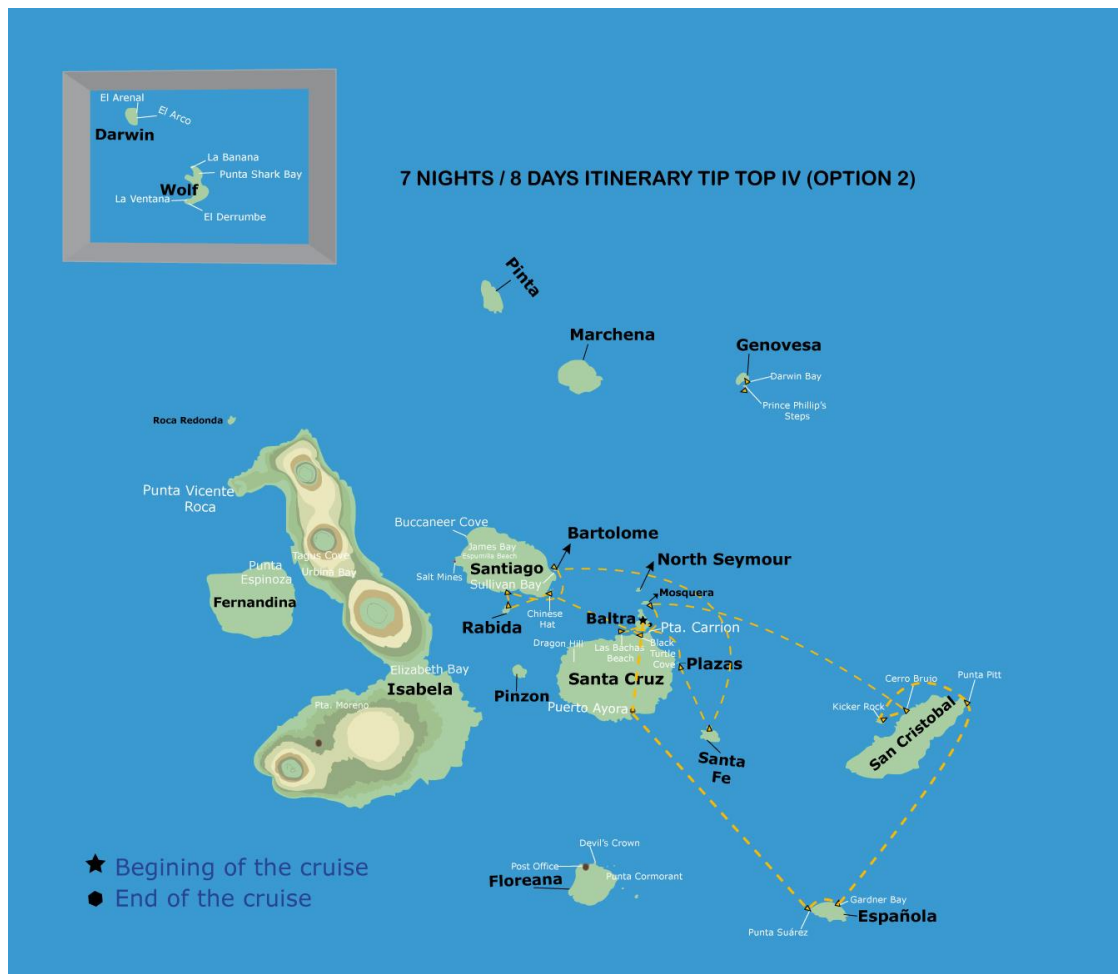




Tip Top IV

The Tip Top IV is owned by the Wittmer family, one of the oldest in the Galapagos, which has a great reputation for good food, good service and a very helpful crew. The company has become a leader in Galapagos for attaining international certification for its environmental and safety practices. This is the yacht we sometimes charter for our escorted group trips. A steel-hulled Motor Yacht, the Tip Top IV was built in 2006 and is very spacious, light and comfortable, with three decks including a roomy sundeck, well-stocked bar, library and dining room and carpeted throughout. The yacht has been awarded the SmartVoyager qualification for sound environmental practices.





Day 1 Arrive Baltra

You will be met at the airport by your guide and team from the Tip Top IV. From here you will travel with your guide across to Santa Cruz Island, where you travel down across the highlands of Santa Cruz and down to the town of Puerto Ayora and the Charles Darwin Station which is your first stop on your program.

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 (1.2 mi. / 2km.)

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: Dry landing

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



Day 2 Española (Hood)

This island is one of the highlights of any visit to Galapagos. Española 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. Española's Marine Iguanas are unlike other Galapagos Marine Iguanas thanks to their bright colouring.

Española 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 Española 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 is 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 (1.2 mi / 2 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 3 San Cristobal – Punta Pitt

Located in the northwest of the island, this is a large eroded tuff cone with dramatic volcanic scenery and is home to a large colony of Sea lions, as well as a few Red-footed Boobies, Blue-footed Boobies and Nazca Boobies.

Activities: Uphill hike (0.9 / 1.5 km), dinghy ride, snorkelling, kayaking.

Difficulty: Moderate/difficult

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights & Animals: Wonderful landscape, sea lion colony, three possible species of Boobies. Snorkel: tropical fish, sea lions.



San Cristobal - Leon Dormido Sometimes called Kicker Rock, Leon Dormido is a huge rock formation near the coast of San Cristobal, an eroded cinder cone with two vertical rocks rising over 150 meters from the ocean, and a favourite spot for tropicbirds along with Great and Magnificent Frigatebirds. You will visit this site by boat and it is a great spot for snorkelling.

Activities: Snorkelling & dinghy ride

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: No landing

Highlights: Deep water snorkelling: Sharks, tropical fish, turtles, Manta Rays, hammerhead shark, spectacular rock formations, sea birds: Blue-footed Boobies, Nazca Boobies & frigatebirds.



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-tailed Gulls as well as Marine Iguanas and sea lions. The beauty of this dramatic area can also be explored from the dinghy, 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.

Day 4 Mosquera

This tiny islet, nestled between Baltra and North Seymour islands is a beautiful long narrow beach with a large population of Galapagos Sea Lions. As with other areas in Galapagos this area has been geologically uplifted.

Activities: Wet landing. Short walk along the beach (0.5 Mi). Snorkel.

Difficulty: Easy

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights & Animals: Galapagos Sea lion colony, Lava Gulls, Herons.



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 sing 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

Day 5 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 6 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 (0.9 mi / 1.5 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.



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.

Santa Fe

This is the oldest of the Galapagos islands. Its paradisiacal bay offers great possibilities to swim and snorkel in crystal clear waters. A hike inland offers a great chance to see a species of Land Iguanas (*Conolophus pallidus*) which is endemic to Santa Fe Island. In the same area you'll also see a forest of Giant Prickly Pear Cactus. After your visit you can swim and snorkel both inside and outside the bay.

Activities: Hiking, Snorkel

Difficulty: Moderate

Type of Landing: Wet landing

Highlights: Santa Fe Land Iguanas, Sea lion colony, Galapagos Hawks, Mockingbirds, Giant Prickly Pear Cactus (the tallest in Galapagos). Snorkel: Sea lions, Reef Sharks, Parrotfish, Surgeonfish.



South Plaza

This is the best island for observing Land Iguanas, along with Cactus Finches, tropicbirds and sea lions. One of your first stops will be through a small “forest” of Prickly Pear Cactus. The walk along the sea cliffs is a wonderful experience, with Galapagos Shearwaters and Red-billed Tropicbirds gliding by. Towards the end of the walk is a bachelor sea lion colony, with a battle-scarred collection of old bulls in various states of recuperation or total retirement!

Activities: Hike (0.8 mi / 1.2 km)

Difficulty: Moderate

Type of Landing: Dry landing

Highlights & Animals: Land Iguanas, Sea lion colony, Galapagos Shearwaters, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Nazca Boobies, amazing landscape with cliffs

Day 8

Santa Cruz - Bachas Beach

This morning your visit will have an earlier departure and will be shorter than other visits as you will head from here to the airport to take flights back to mainland Ecuador.



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

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