
CNH Tours: Active Galapagos Detailed Itinerary

Oceanic Forces And Island Diversity

Visiting 13 different islands (by land and/or snorkel); swimming with sea-lions and spotting sharks, all three booby species, pristine wilderness beaches, waved albatross (Apr - Nov), great landscape diversity, warmer waters.





Day 1: Sunday, Quito Arrival

Mansion del Angel check-in. Free evening for those arriving earlier.

Day 2: Monday, Colonial City Tour

After breakfast at the hotel, you'll get the chance to visit Quito's historic centre. The government of Ecuador and the City government have invested a lot over the past decade and transformed to old city centre into a delightful place to discover history and architecture, along with the opportunity to see Ecuadorians out and about in town. Historic Quito was inscribed onto the World Heritage list at the same time as Galapagos, in 1978 (see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/2> for more details). If the morning's sky is particularly clear, we will arrange for a trip on the cable car up to Pichincha volcano, where you should be able to enjoy breathtaking views of the Quito valley below and surrounding snow capped volcanoes. Lunch is provided in a tasty local restaurant. You'll be back at the hotel in time for a quiet late afternoon. Free evening - local restaurants abound

Day 3: Tuesday, Santa Cruz (Indefatigable)

AM: BALTRA AIRPORT

PM: SANTA CRUZ HIGHLANDS

Up early this morning. Please dress comfortably/appropriately as you will be taken on your first excursion on arrival in the islands. Consider bringing a small backpack with essentials you may need such as sunblock, insect repellent, a hat, rainwear, a water bottle (you will board the M/Y Samba at the end of the day). After a quick breakfast you'll head off to the airport. You might want to consider having a little snack at the Quito airport, or buying a little something on arrival in Galapagos to tide you over until lunch.

At the Quito airport, you'll take your bags through the bio-control inspection - please don't bring any organic matter to the islands (fruit etc...). The flight usually stops in Guayaquil, before heading off to Galapagos. Total transit time is about 2.5 hours. Upon arrival at Baltra Airport, you will pay your US\$100 National Park Entrance Fee. Your hand luggage will then be checked by the local Inspection and Quarantine staff again to ensure you have no organic matter. Exiting the arrival area, you will be met by the Samba's naturalist guide, who will assist you with the collection your luggage.

The journey will have you take a short bus ride to the narrow channel that separates Baltra island and Santa Cruz island. Keep your eyes open for some land iguanas on Baltra - these had disappeared soon after the establishment of the World War II military base there, but have been painstakingly re-introduced since, and are now doing very well - particularly after the successful eradication of wild cats, which liked to dine on baby iguanas!



After the 3 minute ferry ride, we'll head up to the Highlands of Santa Cruz. At 1800 feet (550 metres), stopping at El Chato II for a highlands lunch. El Chato II (a private reserve) is a good place for a visit to the native



highland forests - home of many Darwin's finches, mocking birds, vermillion flycatcher and a wonderful diversity of indigenous plants - including the peculiar looking scalesia trees, resembling giant broccoli. You'll also encounter the iconic giant tortoises and have the chance to walk among them. We'll continue on to Puerto Ayora, the biggest town in Galapagos where you'll have a chance to stroll around for about 45 minutes. At the end of the afternoon, you'll embark on the Samba, settle in and get underway. Dinner on board.



Day 4: Wednesday, Floreana (Charles)

AM: PUNTA CORMORANT

PM: CHAMPION

Following a four-hour navigation from Puerto Ayora (at night) we will do a wet landing on a volcanic olivine beach. Punta Cormorant lies on the northern shore of Floreana and consists of fundamental habitat for greater flamingos and sea turtles.

On one side, the point is partially flooded with a brackish lagoon where flamingos nest and feed. Whimbrels, herons and stilts are other common shore and migratory birds found here. On the other side, sea turtles use every corner of a white sand beach to lay their eggs. We often see stingrays and reef sharks from the shore, along with basking turtles if we're lucky.

After lunch we sail for 25 minutes to do a dinghy ride and snorkel at Champion Islet. This small piece of land is one of two places where the Floreana mocking bird survives after its extinction on the big Island. While trying to find the rare bird from our dinghies, we will enjoy a beautiful landscape full of fairy tale cactus and terracotta rock formations. Soon sea lions will invite us to enjoy the water. The snorkeling around the island is extraordinary, with lots of fish, rays, sharks and playful Galapagos sea lions.

Day 5: Thursday, Española (Hood)

AM: PUNTA SUAREZ

PM: GARDNER BAY & GARDNER ISLAND

Hood is the oldest Galapagos Island, the Queen. Her Majesty has travelled 100 miles (160 km) away from the volcanic hotspot over which she was originally created; she sets an example of splendor and wisdom. When landing on her western tip, Punta Suárez, you'll be amazed at the most colourful marine iguanas in Galapagos, at the plentiful sea lions leisurely wandering around you, at blue-footed boobies and Sally light-foot crabs coating the rocks with their brilliant colours. The long walk leads you to one of the finest illustrations of ancient sea bird colonies on the planet. The endless cliff shaped by strong wave action and the force of the wind is the home of the only tropical albatross on Earth. This mythical elegant glider shares the precipice with many others sea birds like the tropicbirds, the swallow tailed gull and the Nazca booby.

Depending on weather conditions, either at the end of the morning or early in the afternoon, we'll snorkel or kayak around Gardner Island. Its calm waters and attractive landscape give you a great experience above and below the water line. Located on the north coast of Española Gardner Bay beckons with its tranquil snow white sand beach. The fine grains of sand make perfect terrain for a soft walk and a late afternoon "zen" time by the sea... though you won't be alone, sea lions and Hood mockingbirds will keep us company. The mockingbirds here have the reputation for a certain cockiness. So, don't drop your camera lens cap - they may make off with it!



Day 6: Friday, San Cristobal (Chatham)

AM: PUNTA PITT

PM: ISLA LOBOS

On **Punta Pitt** we do a wet landing late in the afternoon to climb a tuff cone and enjoy the sunset. This is the point in Galapagos that is closest to mainland South America. Nazca boobies, red-footed boobies, frigate birds and storm petrel nest in the area. The ochre color beach is perfect for a relaxing plunge after the walk and great for picture taking.

We navigate by a dramatic tuff cone formation, **Kicker Rock**. The eroded structure has vertical walls of over 450 feet and has great numbers of sea birds nesting and resting on it. We will circumnavigate the rock to admire its magnitude.

Lobos Island, located in the vicinity of the larger San Cristóbal Island, was named after the large colonies of sea lions that practically fill the entire area of the island. In addition to sea lions, there is also a small population of blue-footed boobies and common frigatebirds who nest around the saltbushes. This site also presents great opportunities for snorkeling, as the waters passing between Lobos Island and San Cristobal are calm and filled with marine life.

Day 7: Saturday, Santa Fe & Plazas

AM: SANTA FE

PM: SOUTH PLAZA

A more picturesque inlet could not have been created by the world's best artist. The white sand floor of the seabed of

Barrington Bay reflects the light, turning the calm waters turquoise. A small forest of gigantic prickly pear cactus grows on a peninsula that keeps the bay sheltered. Conditions are ideal for a large sea lion colony. Santa Fe is an ancient extinct volcano and it has been isolated from other islands long enough to have an endemic land dragon. Paler in color than its relatives, the Barrington land iguana has a primitive morphology. Galapagos Hawks, mocking birds, finches and endemic rice rats provide company to this yellowish monster.



A two-hour navigation north will take us to **South Plaza**. The dry landing transports you to a brilliant combination of life and colors. Land iguanas wandering through bright red carpet weed, Swallow tailed gulls nesting around the overhang tops and red-billed tropicbirds and shearwaters flying with dancing displays. Mind the pirates of the sky; they will strike if you drop your guard. This 13 acre (5 hectare) island is one of the best spots in the archipelago to see land iguanas and swallow-tailed gulls, both indigenous to the Galapagos. There are iguana nests scattered all over the hill. The sheer cliffs of the southern shore are a perfect bird habitat, making it an unparalleled bird observatory especially for swallow-tailed gulls, Audubon shearwaters, and red-billed tropicbirds. You'll also have the chance to spot the only marine - land iguana hybrids in the islands. Evolution in the making?

If we have enough time and good weather we will swim or snorkel in **Punta Carrion**. A great way to end an active day!



Day 8: Sunday, Sombrero Chino & Bartolome

AM: SOMBRERO CHINO

PM: BARTOLOME

Named for its distinctive profile, Sombrero Chino (Chinese hat) is separated from Santiago island by a light-blue-green lagoon.

The island is the classic example of a place with a volcanic origin: The “land” is made of a few adjacent craters and very old, fragile pahoehoe lava flows. As a result, vegetation is just starting to take hold. Colourful carpetweed plants are scattered here and there.

The trail on the island runs from the landing site on the northern white-sand beach — where you may see penguins, sea lions and Sally Lightfoot crabs — to the rocky shore of the western part of the island. Here, you'll enter a primeval world of volcanic rubble, sharp outcroppings, and lava formations. Marine iguanas wallow in tide pools and relish a spray of mist as the waves crash against the nearby rocks. From the top of the island, Galapagos hawks monitor their kingdom.

The lava fields here will break beneath your feet and are so fragile that the Galápagos National Park has deemed this site to be sensitive to the impact of tourism. Only small boats are allowed to make a stop.

Because of the regulations, Sombrero Chino is one of the least visited sites in the Galápagos. This island is an unparalleled place *within* a unique archipelago. There is an opportunity to go snorkeling in the lagoon.

Bartolome Island offers an explosive volcanic landscape. You'll be climbing the longest staircase in Galapagos - taking up over 270 feet (80 metres) to admire the dramatic spatter cones and the expansive view of Pinnacle Rock that distinguishes Galapagos from other oceanic archipelagoes. It's from this vantage point that one of the most iconic pictures of Galapagos is taken - with Pinnacle Rock in the background. Later, enjoy some down time on magical golden beaches where sea turtles nest (December to March), and/or go for a swim or snorkle near (or with!) penguins, sharks, giant rays and to explore the sunken lava tubes.

Day 9: Monday, Rabida & Santiago Islands

AM: RABIDA

PM: JAMES BAY (Santiago Island)

Galapagos offers a diversity of geological formations without boundaries. The island of **Rábida** has lavas rich in iron and after millions of years of exposure to air they have turned it red. The rusted volcanic material has eroded to form a beautiful crimson sand beach, lovely for a walk. The protected shore provides excellent conditions for wildlife. Brown pelicans use the nearby saltbushes as a resting and nesting area. Hawks and mocking birds are common visitors of the lowlands. Furthermore, you'll find that snorkeling off the beach can be very exciting as sharks, rays and many colorful fish are often visible.

Following a two-hour sail northwest we will do a wet landing at **Puerto Egas** also known as **James Bay**. The magical shorelines of the west of James Island are a combination of tuff cone, lava flows and organic sand. A rocky coast with a very gentle slope is used by a great number of shore birds and reptiles. Oystercatchers,



whimbrels, sanderlings, turnstones, tattlers and other waders are mixed with marine iguanas and bright painted crabs to feed by the rich littoral zone. Grand, partially collapsed lava tunnels house a Galapagos fur sea lion colony. The snorkel can be one of the best in the archipelago. Sea turtles feeding, parrot fishes, damsel fishes, white tipped reef sharks and many more... Charles Darwin spent most of his Galapagos land time near this spot.



Day 10: Tuesday, North Seymour & Baltra Airport

AM: NORTH SEYMOUR
PM: SANTA CRUZ AND PUERTO AYORA

Following a dry landing at sunrise we will walk amongst the largest blue-footed booby colony of the Islands. If breeding, you will enjoy their dancing and singing to find a mate. Not far from the dancers we'll spot great and magnificent frigate birds

nesting. The males inflate their pouches to attract the ladies that fly above them. Swallow tailed gulls and tropicbirds decorate the large basaltic walls of the island.

We will be back on board for breakfast at 8:00 and we have to be ready to check out at 9:00.

After 8 very busy days on the Samba, take the time now to unwind a bit, find your land legs again and get to know the people side of Galapagos. Farmers, shop keepers, restaurant owners, mothers and fathers, children in school uniforms all trying to get by on this remote archipelago, so far from the rest of the world. These next two days will give you a chance to mingle, to see what life is all about in Galapagos - where we lived for 4 years.

Those of you staying on with the full CNH Tours Active Galapagos trip will take the trip over the Puerto Ayora and check into your comfortable, well-located hotel. You'll have a free afternoon to explore this quirky town at your leisure. Why not see if you can catch a game of "Ecuavolley"?

Day 11: Wednesday, Puerto Ayora Exploration

You'll have a full day to do what you want - here is [a list of options](#) and you'll have the services of a guide to help you out. You may want to just mosey around town - poke your head into different shops, check out the activity at the main pier, stop for a coffee or a cold drink, and spend a bit of time sourcing a suitable establishment for lunch. Join the group for a farewell to Galapagos dinner in the evening.

Day 12: Thursday, Back To Quito

We'll take an early morning bus back to Baltra, and board our flight to Quito. We should be arriving by late afternoon. Your trip ends here, unless you've arranged some fascinating extensions with us...