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# CNH Tours: Ocean Safari Detailed Itinerary

Pristine and Born of Fire North and West

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Lava flows, Isabela circumnavigation, flightless cormorants, marine life and many iguanas.  
Experiencing 21 different visitor sites.







## 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: SANTA CRUZ HIGHLANDS

PM: PUERTO AYORA / DARWIN RESEARCH STATION

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 Integrity'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 Itabaca 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. We'll stop at a Giant Tortoise reserve where we'll have the chance to spot these ancient animals going about their business in a natural / semi-natural environment (you may see some browsing in farm pastures where the grass is tasty). This is our only chance to see highland forest ecosystems in Galapagos - 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.

We'll continue on to Puerto Ayora for lunch. This is the biggest town in Galapagos (where we lived for 4 years). After lunch, we'll enjoy a guided visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station and the Galápagos National Park headquarters (where we worked) to learn first hand of the conservation and research efforts in the islands. There, you'll see several subspecies of adult tortoises, lots of hatchlings, and learn of the captive breeding programs that are saving several subspecies of tortoises and iguanas from extinction.

At the end of the afternoon, we will board our yacht, Integrity, for dinner and set sail on our Island cruise. We will live aboard the yacht and spend as much time exploring the islands as park rules permit. Each night, we'll travel on to the next destination. Dinner on board.



#### Day 4: Wednesday, Floreana (Charles)

AM: PUNTA CORMORANT, CHAMPION ISLET  
PM: POST OFFICE BAY, ASILO DE LA PAZ, BLACK BEACH

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.

Later in the morning, 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.

We'll disembark at the famous Galapagos "post office", where, during whaling times, a wooden barrel served as a drop off / pick up point for letters to and from sailors working in this part of the world. We'll then head up to the Floreana Highlands to spot giant tortoises and learn about the intriguing history of the early settlers here, the Wittmers, the toothless doctor, the Baronness and her slave lovers. The day ends with a barbecue on board.



## Day 5: Thursday, Isabela Island (Albemarle)

AM PUNTA MORENO

PM: ELIZABETH BAY, LAS MARIELAS

Isabela Island constitutes almost half of the entire surface of the Archipelago. It is nearly 100 miles (160 km) long and offers a remarkable diversity of habitats. Shaped like a seahorse and with volcanoes over 5000 feet (1.5 km) high, it is home to vast mangrove forests, some of which the extremely rare mangrove finch calls home.



When you land on Punta Moreno you understand why the Spanish Bishop that discovered the Islands said: "*It was as if God had decided to rain stones*". When he first set foot on a lava field he struggled to find fresh water and in desperation was reduced to chew on cactus pads to quench his thirst. More than three centuries later a young Naturalist saw beyond the lava. Charles Darwin was amazed by the colonization of plants and the start of life proceeding on this terrain. He thought this process somehow provided clues to the origin of life on our planet. The mystery of mysteries...The pioneer cactus growing over the lava landscape is contrasted with stunning oases. Where lava tunnel roofs have collapsed, brackish water accumulates to give life to greater flamingoes, moorhens, black-necked stilts and Galapagos Martins.

Elizabeth Bay is the only place on Earth where mature tropical mangrove forests and penguins co-exist. The ecosystem is also the residence of spotted eagle rays, sea turtles and a nursery for fish and marine invertebrates. We'll move very slowly in these narrow waterways so that we can take in the full display of life in its undisturbed condition. The Marielas Islets, just outside the bay, are home to many penguins, and visitors can usually observe them both on shore and swimming nearby.



## Day 6: Friday, Isabela / Fernandina (Albemarle / Narborough)

AM: URBINA BAY

PM: PUNTA ESPINOSA

The geologic hotspot under the Galapagos generates intense volcanic activity. The western islands are the youngest and most active of the Archipelago. Located in the center of Isabela, Alcedo Volcano is a reminder of how volatile these Islands are. On the western shoreline of Alcedo lays Urbina Bay. Here, in 1954, more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile (1.3 km) of new shoreline was created overnight by a sudden geological uplifting event. Many coral reef extensions were exposed to air and fish were suddenly left stranded. Evidence is still graphic today. The new land became a perfect nesting terrain for the most beautiful land dragon. The land iguanas of Isabela are the largest in the Galapagos and in Urbina the colorful population offers a great example of the tendency towards gigantism in isolated island ecosystems. The impressive yellow, orange/brown iguanas roam the low lands foraging for the flowers, fruits, leaves and shoots of their favorite plants. Reminding one of the Jurassic Period, when the rains arrive, it is possible to see the land iguanas sharing their habitat with another primitive looking reptile, the giant tortoise.



Only 30,000-100,000 years old, Fernandina is the youngest island of the Archipelago. This immature shield volcano is a newborn in geological terms. Not even in your wildest imagination can you conjure up a better setting to witness the start of life on an island. The whole Island is covered with hostile, sterile lava fields. Life has taken root in only a few places. However, at Punta Espinoza the shoreline is teeming with life. Reptiles, birds and mammals all coexist in this tiny island of life. Marine iguanas, playful sea lions, hard working flightless cormorants, Galapagos penguins, busy Sally light-foot crabs and much more. Don't forget to look around because the Galapagos Hawk, the resident predator, is always on the hunt. The site is a true cradle of evolution. Snorkeling with turtles, iguanas, cormorants and plenty of fish is the best way to refresh after the lava walk.



## Day 7: Saturday, Isabela (Albemarle)

AM: TAGUS COVE

PM: PUNTA VICENTE ROCA

Pirates and whalers in the 19th Century using Tagus Cove for anchorage left their marks on the cliffs of this sunken caldera, a tradition of graffiti that continues to today. A short, steep hike passes Darwin Lake, which sits within a tuff cone and is filled with salt water. This site is an excellent place

for viewing land birds, including Ground and Tree Finches, Galapagos Hawks, Yellow Warblers, Large-billed Flycatchers and even sometimes the Woodpecker Finch. A rare sighting of land iguanas is a treat. A dinghy ride or kayak along the cliffs provides views of geologic features, as well as penguins and other bird species.

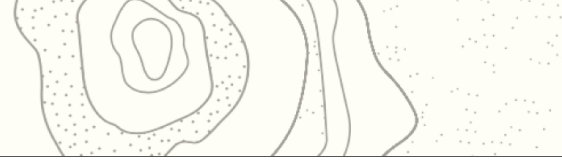
Punta Vicente Roca offers an overwhelming diversity of geological formations. Located on the southwest end of Ecuador Volcano, only a few miles south of latitude 0°, the area is an outstanding example of how the Islands were formed and how the forces of change have transformed the landscape and shaped the wildlife over thousands of years. Vicente Roca is the home of tuff cones and lava dikes and is fertile ground for erosion and the disaster of collapse. We will look at the dramatic structures from our dinghies, as we also enjoy watching the Galapagos penguins, brown noddies, blue-footed boobies and other marine life. When the waters are calm enough, the snorkelling is fascinating. The walls of the tuff cones are full of colorful invertebrates and rich, blooming algae gives us of the opportunity to witness numerous sea turtles feeding.

## Day 8: Sunday, Santiago (James)

AM: PUERTO EGAS, MINA DE SAL

PM: ESPUMILLA BEACH, BUCCANEER COVE

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... A lesser trail will take us inland to a lagoon and long abandoned Salt Mine where flamingos and other birds are found. Charles Darwin spent most of his Galapagos land time near this spot.



Espumilla is a red-sand beach and a sea turtle nesting site, with an inland trail that passes a small lagoon and into the arid zone where it is possible to view many land birds in a beautiful landscape, including Galapagos Hawks. While snorkeling at Buccaneer Cove, you may see sea lions, fur seals, sea turtles, rays, sharks, pelagic fishes, and amazing underwater geologic formations.

## Day 9: Monday, Santa Cruz / North Seymour (Indefatigable/North Seymour)

AM: BLACK TURTLE COVE, BACHAS BEACH

PM: NORTH SEYMOUR ISLAND

Enjoy a quiet and peaceful morning at Bachas' fine, white beach. Two small lagoons just over the dunes sometimes host flamingos. "Bachas" comes from the remains of a barge that ran aground decades ago, leaving just a few rusty spines visible today. In Caleta Tortuga Negra we have a silent skiff ride to see sea turtles feed and mate in the calm waters, and three species of sharks, Spotted rays, egrets, and lava herons. Aboard we celebrate our last night together.

Following a dry landing on North Seymour, 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'll head to the coast and witness good numbers of sea lions and marine iguanas.

## Day 10: Tuesday / Disembarkation

End of "CRUISE ONLY" and "BREEZE" options

You'll have breakfast on board Integrity, then disembark at Baltra Island (the first airport here was built by the US Army during the 2nd world war). Those of you heading back to the mainland will be taken to the airport for your flight, where you will enjoy some check-in assistance and have access to the VIP lounge while waiting for boarding. Unless you've arranged for a trip extension with us, your journey with CNH Tours will end on arrival on the mainland.

Those on the LEISURE option will journey back to Puerto Ayora. You'll make a stop at a local coffee farm on the way there - where you'll have the chance to see what it's like trying to make a living in the highlands. After light refreshments, you'll head off to the Hotel Ikala for two nights. Free afternoon and evening. After 8 very busy days on the Integrity, take this time now to unwind a bit by the hotel pool and find your land legs again. This is a good opportunity to get to know the people side of Galapagos. Farmers, shop keepers, restaurant owners, off-duty guides and crew, 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.



## Day 11: Wednesday / Free Day

### LEISURE OPTION GUESTS

Enjoy a rooftop buffet breakfast at the hotel. 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 the Mainland

### LEISURE OPTION GUESTS

After breakfast, in the company of your naturalist guide, you'll have a private transfer back to Baltra, and board our flight to the mainland. Your trip ends here - unless you've arranged for further extensions with us.