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# CNH Tours: Ocean Safari Detailed Itinerary

## Island Diversity

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Visiting 11 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: Thursday, Quito Arrival

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

## Day 2: Friday, 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 the 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: Saturday, Santa Cruz (Indefatigable)

AM: 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 Integrity 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 of 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 best chance to see highland forest ecosystems in Galapagos - home of many Darwin's finches, mocking birds, vermilion 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: Sunday, Española (Hood)

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!

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.

Española 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.



### Day 5: Monday, San Cristobal (Chatham)

AM: PUNTA PITT  
PM: CERRO BRUJO

On Punta Pitt we do a wet landing late in the afternoon to climb a tuff cone and enjoy the sunset. The site provides the best opportunity to observe the geology of a tuff cone, as we hike through the collapsed walls of this ancient volcanic formation. 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 soothing ochre coloured beach is perfect for a relaxing plunge after the walk and great for picture taking.



A short panga ride along the cliffs of Cerro Brujo will be followed by a visit to the lovely coral sand beach, frequented by waders and migrant birds. Guests will enjoy a leisurely evening sunset cruise as INTEGRITY navigates to the following day's activities.

## Day 6: Tuesday, Santa Fe / South 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?



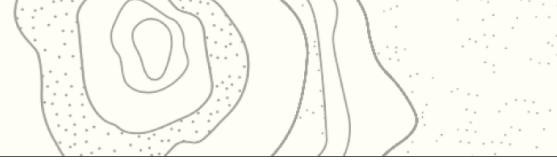
## Day 7: Wednesday, Genovesa (Tower)

AM: DARWIN BEACH

PM: PRINCE PHILIPP'S STEPS

After an overnight navigation from South Plazas Island to Genovesa Island, you'll awaken to the cacophony of one of the largest tropical sea bird colonies on the planet. Disembarking at Darwin Bay, the first thing you'll notice are the cliff tops, decorated with frigate birds, red-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, swallow tailed gulls, tropic birds and many other pelagic animals. Staring up the trail, the red-footed boobies are spotted displaying for potential mates as they collect nesting material and male great frigate birds are seen inflating their gular sacs hoping to attract a mate while others play their favorite game: piracy. Darwin's finches, Galapagos doves and mocking birds stroll the area foraging for seeds and insects. The red mangroves, cactus and saltbushes contrast with the blue sky and the dark basaltic walls.

Following lunch, you'll climb Prince Philip's Steps. The steep ascent takes you 100 feet above sea level. At the summit, you may encounter the elegant silhouette of the red billed tropic bird and the aerobatic Galapagos shearwater. Both interact with the precipice on fast approaches. The lava rock trail leads you through the endemic dwarf incense tree (palo santo) forest, where we'll encounter nesting red-footed "lancers" and many of



their gannet-like relatives, the Nazcas, loudly claiming the earthen floor as their residence. The Palo Santo forest is dormant most of the year, and awakens only in the rainy season to infuse the air with its refreshing aroma. As you leave the forest, your breath may be taken away by the panoramic view of thousands of storm petrels flying erratically beyond the lava flows. This is the perfect scenario for the island's top predator to make a successful kill. The short-eared owl, known elsewhere around the world as a nocturnal predator, hunts in bright daylight in Genovesa. More cat than owl, it waits patiently outside lava tunnels and crevasses to capture the storm petrels as they leave their tunnel homes after feeding their young.

Snorkeling at Genovesa offers a view of a wide variety of tropical fish.

## Day 8: Thursday, Santiago and Bartolome

At Sullivan Bay, walk across a recent lava flow and view its beautiful structural characteristics. Formed in the second half of the 19th Century, the flow is too young for much plant or animal life. It is the lava itself and the contrasting black pahoehoe flow and the reddish-yellow tuff cones that are the stars of this visit. The colors and shapes of the lava are fantastic for photos. Charles Darwin spent most of his exploration time in Galapagos near here.

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: Friday, Rábida and Sombrero Chino

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.

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.

## | Day 10: Saturday / 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: Sunday / 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: Monday / 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.