



ITINERARY B
8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS
Monday to Monday
 (every 14 days)



Our 7-night eastern itinerary visits the most popular sites of the southern and eastern Galapagos, where you will keep going from one surprise to the next. This route combines the spectacular seabird colonies of Española, the largest *American flamingo* colonies of Isabela and Floreana with the highly appreciated and not to be missed South Plaza. This varied route is characterised by relatively shorter nightly navigations and even two nights of quiet rest at fairly calm anchorage-sites.

Walk at a short distance past *blue-footed boobies*, *Nazca boobies* and *waved albatrosses*, whilst they are courtshipping, mating, breeding, nurturing or learning to fly (depending the season). Española is the sole option for those eager to admire synchronous courtship dances of the only tropical *albatross* in the world. Other not to be missed highlights of this cruise include Santa Fe and

South Plaza, where characteristic *Galapagos land iguanas* crawl below bizarre *giant prickly pear cacti*. Mind your step when strolling around, because you may tread on one of them!

These almost extinguished volcano islands in the south-west are geologically the oldest, where evolution has had enough time to create various endemic species. En route you can observe *marine iguanas*, *whitetip reef sharks* and – if lucky – even *Galapagos penguins*. On Santa Cruz you will have a full day to quest for emblematic *giant Galapagos tortoises* in the lush forests and to learn more on their successful captured breeding programmes in the Charles Darwin Research Centre. Striking coral sand beaches at azure bays are favourite places for large colonies of *Galapagos sea lions*.

For many, Devil's Crown is the Galapagos deep water snorkelling site number one, and one of the very highlights of their cruise. Besides that this route also offers plenty possibilities for optional scuba diving.

Important notes:

- Itinerary is subject to change in case of force majeure caused by exceptional and natural circumstances.
 - Approximate departure and navigation times are just indicative and depend on the sea conditions and decisions of the captain.
 - Although the Galapagos seldom require you to seek out wildlife, observation of specific species can never be guaranteed.
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Day 1 – Monday

Bachas Beach is a pleasant start to your Galapagos visit, without having to navigate a long stretch to get first contact with the unique insular nature. Along this beach (north coast Santa Cruz), which is popular breeding ground for the Pacific green turtle, you will take a relaxed stroll to an aquatic bird-rich saline lagoon.

Programme:

AM: This morning you will fly from Quito or Guayaquil to Baltra Airport.

PM: After being welcomed aboard Sailing Catamaran Nemo I, check-in, lunch buffet and the safety-drill you will make your first wet landing (bare feet) at Bachas Beach, followed by an easy stroll along the waterline of this coral sand beach. Filled with impressions you will return on-board for dinner.

Navigation: At dinner time we will lift the anchor and sail about 7 hrs – depending on the sea conditions – south-west to Isabela.

AM: Arrival at Baltra Airport

At Baltra Airport you will have to pay your Galapagos National Park entrance fee and your luggage will be inspected. See [Getting there](#) for flight and arrival information.

In front of the arrival hall you will meet your naturalist guide and fellow passengers, and be transferred to the landing dock by airport shuttle. Our inflatable dinghy brings you the last stretch to the yacht.

PM: Bachas Beach (Santa Cruz)

Strolling along its coastline, blinding white Bachas Beach appears full of intertidal and birdlife, but the symmetrical tuff cone-islet of Daphne Major will pull your eyes to the horizon as well. Look out

for *Galapagos sea lions*, *marine iguanas*, a shark fin or (seasonally) mating *Pacific green turtles* in the surf! Both quiet beaches have become their preferred nesting site on the main island of Santa Cruz. 'Bachas' refers to the 'minefield of nest holes' in the dunes strip; though others argue that it is a 'Spanglish' mispronunciation of 'barks', referring to two rusty landing vessels that were left on the longer second beach in World War II, when the American US Air Force used BALTRA as a strategic base to defend the Panama Canal.

Sparkling orange-coloured and heavy-armed *sally lightfoot crabs* play hide and seek with you when you want to photograph them on the dark basaltic rocks. A brackish lagoon in the dunes houses different species of *wade* and *shore birds*, including *black-necked stilts*, *white-cheeked pintails* (or *Bahama ducks*) and hunting *herons*. Migratory aquatic birds that spend winter in the Galapagos, such as *whimbrels*, also frequent this pond. As soon as water level drops and the lagoon becomes saltier, you might even encounter some *American flamingos* tirelessly filtering water to catch *shrimp* and *algae*!

Day 2 – Tuesday

The first overnight crossing will bring you to Puerto Villamil on Isabela. Over the next few days Nemo I will navigate clockwise around this island, by far the largest of the archipelago. Its larger living space seems to mean that evolution is hunting for records over here (although some are disputed).

Huge *marine iguanas* crawl over undisturbed rocky islets just outside the harbour, which also contain a unique tidal channel where *whitetip reef sharks* rest. Saline lagoons in the wetlands house the largest insular colony of *American flamingos* and you will visit the botanical garden of another tortoise breeding centre with native species.

Programme:

AM: Before breakfast (we provide a snack) the inflatable dinghies will bring you to the Tintoreras islets for a guided hike to the tidal channel, following a rough volcanic rock trail (easy/moderate level). After breakfast you can enjoy a great snorkelling opportunity.

PM: After lunch you will have free time to enjoy Puerto Villamil and its striking beach, before revisiting the local tortoise breeding centre and the surrounding wetlands.

Overnight navigation: After dinner the anchor is lifted for navigating around the southern lobe of Isabela, clockwise to its westernmost coast (about 6 hours).

Additional options scuba-diving: Isla Tortuga, Cuatro Hermanos or Roca Viuda (advanced).

AM: Whitetip reef shark channel (Isabela/Tintoreras)

Just outside the harbour of Puerto Villamil (Isabela), a group of rocky islets protrude just above sea level. These are remnants of a lava flow that is demolished by the waves. A collapsed lava tube forms a channel that fills up on high tide, while the entrance is closed on low tide. Marine life gets trapped, including *turtles* and elegant *white-spotted eagle rays* or *golden rays*. In the crystal-clear water of this unique site you can also observe *whitetip reef sharks* (called *tintoreras* in Spanish; which the islets are named after) resting from their nocturnal hunts. This species of *shark* is fairly common in the archipelago, and often spotted on the seabed when snorkelling, but here you can see them from a dry and comfortable viewpoint on the bank.

Unlike the beaches of Puerto Villamil, tiny plaques along these black rocks offer undisturbed breeding places for *marine iguanas*. Over here the largest Isabela subspecies (up to 1.5m/5ft tall!) can reproduce successfully and thrive by hundreds. The rocky shoreline with its intertidal life also attracts *sally lightfoot crabs*, *lava herons* and occasional *Galapagos penguins*. *Galapagos sea lions* occupy the sand beach and complete this stereotypical Galapagos image.

PM: Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Centre (Isabela)

In Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Centre you can see hundreds of *giant Galapagos tortoises* of all sizes. Vulnerable hatchlings are not gigantic at all, even smaller than the size of your hand! This project just outside Puerto Villamil was created to rescue the endangered populations of Isabela's both southernmost volcanoes.

From the almost incredible estimations of 250,000 *giant tortoises* in the 16th century, by the 1970s there were only about 3,000 individuals remaining. One thing becomes clear on your visit: it's hard work to save these queer creatures from extinction by reproduction in captivity and repopulation. The good news is that these programmes are successful and have already saved several species from extinction. By 2015 their number increased to about 32,000 in all the archipelago.

Don't forget to visit the native botanical garden of this breeding centre. It also attracts colourful *songbirds* such as *yellow warblers*, *Darwin's finches*, *Galapagos* and *vermillion flycatchers*. Finally there is no greater counterpart to the cumbersome *tortoises* than the graceful *American flamingos* which frequently filter the saline waters of the adjacent lagoon for *shrimp* and *algae*. They are joined by a handful of species of *aquatic* and *shore birds*, from which some even migrate from Canada and Alaska.

PM: Wetlands & Beach

The tempting white sand beach of Puerto Villamil has far more *marine iguanas* and *sally lightfoot crabs* than bathing guests. Its overgrown beach wall hides the largest salty lagoon of the Galapagos, which attracts lots of *aquatic birds* and wintering *shore birds* (about Nov-Feb); some have arrived from arctic regions!

This lagoon is part of a swampy coastal zone known as the wetlands, with an old mangrove forest, and more salt and brackish ponds in collapsed lava tubes. These *lagoons* are home to the largest concentration and breeding site of *American flamingos* in the Galapagos!

Day 3 – Wednesday

At midnight Sailing Catamaran Nemo I will drop the anchor at the north cape of Floreana (Cormorant Point), where American flamingos forage and breed. For many, Devil's Crown is the Galapagos' number one deep water snorkelling site, and one of the very highlights of their cruise. Historical Post Office Bay seems to be located nearly at the end of the world.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast, a wet landing at the greeny beach of Cormorant Point and walk to a powdery coral sand beach on the other side of the peninsula (easy level; about 1.5km/1mi). En route you can observe the *American flamingo* lagoon from different viewpoints.

It's then time for fantastic deep-water snorkelling around Devil's Crown (though sometimes stronger currents). If this is not your thing then you can opt for birdwatching or take a dinghy-ride.

PM: Post your holiday greetings in the historical barrel at Post Office Bay, one of three nearby visitor's sites on Floreana's north coast (short displacement, wet landing) and relax.

Overnight navigation: Around midnight the Catamaran Nemo I, will navigate about 5 hours east to Española.

Additional options scuba-diving: choice out of 9 nearby diving sites (All levels)

AM: Cormorant Point (Floreana)

The peninsula of Cormorant Point forms the extreme north cape of Floreana, which is pockmarked by several smaller volcanic cones and covered by tropical dry forest (predominantly *palo santo*). Please don't expect to spot the *flightless cormorant* at Cormorant Point. This emblematic example of evolution lives exclusively in the remote west of the Galapagos on Fernandina and Isabela ([Route A](#)). Instead, its salty lagoon is one of the best places on the Galapagos to observe a breeding colony of *American flamingos*. However, when breeding is done and the lagoon dries up, these exotic birds tend to be on the move to look for *shrimps* and *algae* from other saline lakes.

At the landing beach you will be welcomed by a small *Galapagos sea lion*-colony. The green sand contains a high percentage of glassy olivine crystals that have been blown out by the surrounding tuff cones. The 'flour sand' beach on the south side of the peninsula feels very smooth on your feet; this is pulverised by *parrotfish*. Schools of *sting rays* in the surf love using this powdery sand to hide themselves, and *Pacific green turtles* come ashore to bury their eggs in it at night (first months of the year). Next morning you can notice their tracks from the dunes, or you might even catch an exhausted, delayed one, crawling back to the sea.

AM: Devil's Crown (Floreana)

The jagged crater rim of Devil's Crown just protrudes sea level and is beaten by the waves. The inner walls of the crater rim are coated with coral formations and protected against the surf. The depth and very transparent waters of this deep-water snorkelling site gives you a sensation of flying once you plunge into this huge tropical aquarium. You will swim amidst schools of thousands of brightly coloured tropical fish, including *yellowtail surgeon fish*, *king angelfish* and many other species. On the seabed you can distinguish resting *whitetip reef sharks*, different species of *ray* and *starfishes*. A *Pacific green turtle* or *Galapagos sea lion* might swim by, and don't be afraid when you encounter *scalloped hammerhead sharks*!

Above sea level the dramatic decor of the jagged crater rim provides living space for numerous *coastal birds*, including *lava gulls*, *blue-footed* and *Nazca boobies*, *brown pelicans*, and *red-billed tropicbirds*. The opposite land head of Floreana is a nesting place for *magnificent frigatebirds*, where you could also head for during an alternative dinghy-ride.

PM: Post Office Bay (Floreana)

Bring your unstamped postcards and post them in the peculiar barrel on this historic site. Together with James Bay (Santiago) this used to be a popular base to complement stocks. The present barrel commemorates the improvised mail service between British 16th-century whalers and poachers. Returning vessels also picked up letters for home delivery. Finally this post box became the termination of the flourishing British whaling industry in this region (Moby Dick), because it let the American frigate USS Essex easily locate and hijack British whalers during the Anglo-American War (1812-1815).

Day 4 – Thursday

The next island, *Española*, is located in the south-easternmost corner of the archipelago. As one of its crown jewels, this birdwatcher's and photographer's paradise offers all that you might expect from the Galapagos. Walk just a few metres past waved albatrosses, booby colonies, sunbathing marine iguanas and Galapagos sea lions and feel as though you're in the middle of an exciting nature documentary! Several endemic species give you the opportunity to become an eyewitness of evolution.

Programme:

AM: Before breakfast (we provide a snack) you will make a 'dry landing' at Suarez Point. During a longer guided walk (moderate level; 4km/2.5 mi/about 2 hours) you will pass awakening seabird colonies on top of the cliffs (some short scrambling passages; avoidable depths). Back on-board you will enjoy a well-deserved breakfast and will navigate about an hour. Next you can plunge into the alluring turquoise-coloured Gardner Bay for snorkelling.

PM: After lunch and a 'wet landing' (bare feet) on the wide sand beach you can stroll along the sea lions colony (easy level), or enjoy a moment of reflection, relaxation, or rolling with sea lions in the surf.

Overnight navigation: After dinner we will navigate 5hrs north and anchor just before midnight in the sheltered harbour of Puerto Ayora, where you can enjoy a quiet floating sleep.

AM: Suarez Point (Española)

Huge ocean waves crash onto the southern basaltic cliffs of Suarez Point, and form a spectacular blowhole, where a fountain of seawater sprays metres/feet high into the air (depending on the tide and how strongly the sea breeze pushes the waves). Take a silent meditative break at this emblematic viewpoint to convert this unforgettable moment into a lifetime experience.

Waved albatrosses spend most of their lives soaring far out at sea and just come to *Española* (March-December) to breed and nurture their huge chicks. This spectacular seabird is the only tropic albatross (critically endangered species). Besides some strayed individuals on *Isla de La Plata* (off the Ecuadorian coast) it only breeds on *Española*, where you can witness its synchronous courtship dances, which include bowing, whistling and even a stylised form of 'sword fighting' with their bills (especially in October)!

Suarez Point is also an important breeding site for *Nazca* and *blue-footed boobies*, *swallow-tailed gulls* and *red-billed tropicbirds*. *Blue-footed boobies* don't breed in the middle of the trail. Especially during the food-abundant garúa-season (2nd half of the year) you can admire amusing courtship dances, mating, breeding, emerging from the eggs, nurturing or first flight attempts.

Española marine iguanas become bright red with a turquoise-coloured crest and legs at the start of the breeding season (starting from Christmas). *Hood lava lizards* are the largest of the 7 endemic species in the islands, as well as endemic *mockingbirds*, which have turned to carnivorous behaviour!

PM: Gardner Bay (Española)

Make your first 'dive' into the alluring turquoise-coloured Gardner Bay, and admire colourful reef fish, snorkel alongside a *Pacific green turtle*, or find yourself in the middle of playful *Galapagos sea lions*.

The striking white coral sand beach is an important breeding site for *Pacific green turtles*, but without doubt its main attraction is the *Galapagos sea lion* colony. Females stay all year round in this nursery, suckling their pups up to an age of 3 years, although they already start to learn how to fish after 5 months. During the breeding- and mating season the colony becomes even more populous. The strongest bachelors and elder males return from their secluded bases and start again to conquer and

defend their part of the 1300m/4250ft long beach. Pregnant females choose the best territory to give birth, and will mate again with their landlord within a month.

Day 5 – Friday

Without any doubt the most emblematic representatives of the archipelago are the Galapagos giant tortoises. Today is mainly dedicated to these slow creatures on the central island of Santa Cruz. First you will have the opportunity to search for a wild population in El Chato Tortoise Reserve in the lush highlands, and afterwards you will visit the successful breeding centre at the Charles Darwin Research Station. There is also free time to relax in cosy Puerto Ayora.

Programme:

AM: B Route: After breakfast you will travel by inflatable dinghy and private bus from the harbour of Puerto Ayora into the highlands. In the Chato Reserve or agricultural zone you can see *Galapagos giant tortoises* in the wild before continuing to the airport.

B5 Route: After an early breakfast it's time to say goodbye and to leave the yacht. The dinghies will bring you to the pier of Puerto Ayora, where you can visit the Charles Darwin Research Station before continuing to the airport.

PM: After a lunch buffet and the safety-drill you will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station as an introduction to the Galapagos and get some free time to stroll through the cosy town of Puerto Ayora.

B4 Route: After welcome, check-in, lunch, and the safety-drill you will visit the Charles Darwin Research Station as an introduction to the Galapagos and have some free time to stroll through the cosy town of Puerto Ayora.

Overnight navigation: Shortly before midnight the anchor will be lifted for this route's longest navigation to easternmost Pitt Point, about 8 hours in an eastern direction.

AM: Highlands: El Chato Reserve (Santa Cruz)

Santa Cruz offers excellent opportunities for viewing wild *Galapagos giant tortoises*, roaming through pastures in the agricultural zone and in the transition zone of El Chato Tortoise Reserve. The pond in the native forest reserve is the most authentic setting, but sometimes also requires an adventurous quest for these silent heavyweights. You have to listen carefully for the sound of heavy footsteps and of shrubs being slowly crushed. Most of their long lives is spent slowly and silently, except for a warning hiss, or loud screams during mating, which can be heard from afar in the first half of the year. Subsequently females leave the highlands and descend all the way down to the beaches to dig holes and lay their eggs. It is estimated that in 2015 about 32,000 *tortoises* lived in the wild on all the islands, mostly on restricted locations of Isabela. You will certainly also appreciate the native *scalesia* forest, overgrown with *lichens*, *ferns*, and other *epiphytes*; plus chances to spot endemic *Darwin's finches*, *vermillion flycatchers*, *yellow warblers*, and less common birds like *short-eared owls*, *Galapagos rails* and *paint-billed crakes*.

PM: Charles Darwin Research Station (Santa Cruz)

The Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) and the headquarters of the Galapagos National Park Service share the same location on the outskirts of Puerto Ayora. From here biological research and indispensable conservation management of this unique archipelago are directed. The complex houses a number of interpretation and information centres about the National Park and the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

The most memorable part of your visit will probably be the successful breeding centre and the enclosures with *Galapagos giant tortoises*; even after the death of its world-famous resident, 'Lonesome George' († June 2012; the last known individual of the *Pinta subspecies*, who sadly failed to reproduce offspring). Most remaining adult *giant tortoises* in the corals are former pets and many of them are accustomed to human company.

Day 6 – Saturday

The longest nocturnal passage of this route will bring you to Pitt Point, the extreme eastern cape of San Cristóbal (and of the entire archipelago). On top of these eroded cliffs you can find *blue-footed*, *red-footed* and *Nazca boobies* breeding together, and also *frigate birds* with bright red, balloon-sized pouches in the mating season! You will land in the middle of a bachelor's colony of *Galapagos sea lions*, and stroll along a cute nursery colony at the scenic beach below Witch Hill in the afternoon.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast you will make a wet landing at Pitt Point, from where you will hike to the cliff-top seabird colonies (and back). After that snorkelling is scheduled.

PM: During lunch we will navigate along the shore of San Cristóbal to Witch Hill, where a lot of activities can be undertaken: a dinghy-ride, sea kayaking, snorkelling and a beach stroll.

Overnight navigation: This evening we will sail to Santa Fe (4 hrs west), where you can enjoy a comfortable night rest in a sheltered bay.

AM: Pitt Point (San Cristóbal)

Two wind sculptured tuff cones at Pitt Point constitute the easternmost point of San Cristóbal, and thus of the archipelago as well. These cliffs were the first sight of land when HMS Beagle and Charles Darwin arrived on September 15th 1835. On the small green sand beach, you will be welcomed by a cacophony of barking *Galapagos sea lions*. This is a bachelor colony, where males usually recuperate from and prepare themselves for fighting and mating.

From *saltbush* and spiny shrubs behind the beach, a trail leads up to an area of tropical dry forest vegetation - most of the year leafless *palo santo* trees, *yellow cordia* shrubs, tiny *prickly pear cacti* and *carpetweed* - that turns red in the dry season. After the pretty steep climb through a gully to the cliff-top, you can wander around the only colony in the Galapagos that is home to all three species of booby: *blue-footed*, *red-footed* and *Nazca booby*; as well as both species of *frigatebird* (*great* and *magnificent*), famous because of their scarlet balloon-sized pouches during mating season. *Frigatebirds* tend to attack returning *boobies* and conduct aerial battles rather than fishing themselves and getting wet.

PM: Witch Hill (San Cristóbal)

To scout out the dangerous reefs, HMS Beagle's Captain FitzRoy climbed to the top of the obvious tuff-cone that overlooks this scenic bay in 1835. Nowadays it is called Witch Hill and no longer the main attraction of this site, but part of its romantic coastal panorama. Let your eyes travel from the volcanic cone, over the turquoise bay to the razor-sharp contours of Kicker Rock at the horizon, one of the photogenic landmarks of the Galapagos.

You can walk about 1km/0.6mi along the romantic, crescent-shaped beach and feel the soft and powdery white coral sand under your feet (it is pulverised by *parrot fish*, that destruct living coral reefs). Enjoy the *Galapagos sea lion* rookery with its cute babies, or study the rich intertidal birdlife (mainly *brown pelicans*, *blue-footed boobies* and *swallow-tailed gulls*). Behind the beach and the narrow stretch of dunes, there is a dark lava tongue with several saline lakes that used to be a local

salt mine (necessary for the conservation of fish). This is home to some *coastal* and *wading* birds such as the *great blue heron*.

Day 7 – Sunday

Heading back towards the heart of the archipelago you will visit two of the most popular sites: the extraordinary Santa Fe and not to be missed South Plaza. Below the bizarre *giant prickly pear cacti* you will encounter characteristic *land iguanas*. Although this 'Jurassic islet' is different to every other site in the National Park, at the same time it is so typically Galapagos with its sharp contrasts, amazing diversity and stunning concentration of wildlife. While sailing along Santa Cruz we will look out for *whales*.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast you will enjoy a guided walk from the beach of Santa Fe (wet landing). Your guide decides whether to follow the easy shorter circuit, or a strenuous longer hike inland (moderate level; about 3km/2mi). Don't forget to retain strength for excellent swimming or snorkelling opportunities afterwards in the crystal-clear azure waters of Barrington Bay.

PM: Around lunchtime we will proceed to South Plaza (about 2 hrs northwest), possibly escorted by *bottle nose dolphins*. You will take an unforgettable guided walk on this Jurassic islet (easy level; about 1.25 km/0.75 mi; avoidable depths on the cliff-edge).

Navigation: While navigating to Black Turtle Cove (2 hrs, before dinner and sunset) we will have some great *whale* watching opportunities. After dinner you can enjoy a relatively quiet floating sleep.

Additional options scuba-diving: Gordon Rocks (Expert/Advanced) or Santa Fe (All levels).

AM: Barrington Bay (Santa Fe)

Practically every animal on Santa Fe is unique; endemic to the Galapagos, or even to this island alone and extremely vulnerable! This extraordinary island is a remnant of probably the most ancient volcano of the Galapagos, and gave evolution enough time and isolation to create its wonders.

Your experience starts before even anchoring, when the contours of its bizarre *giant prickly pear cactus (opuntia)* forests become distinguishable. These largest *cacti* of the islands have extremely thick trunks indeed, and can grow over 10m/33ft tall! You will land right in the middle of a *Galapagos sea lion* colony on the beach. From their outlooks at the beach ridge, surprisingly fearless *Galapagos hawks* are ready to snatch away a *lava lizard*; not worrying that even these are unique...

Almost every visitor of Santa Fe becomes eager to get a glimpse of the rare *Barrington land iguana*. But this pale endemic version is not as easy to spot as its modelling counterparts on South Plaza. This one is more of a quest to find (rather untypical to the Galapagos); other times it surprises you by waiting for you next to the trail. Whether you spot it or not, you will keep going from one surprise to the next.

While snorkelling in the azure coloured Barrington Bay between tropical *reef fish*, maybe a curious *Galapagos sea lion* will be willing to play with you!

PM: South Plaza

The south of both Plaza islets is the best place to encounter endemic *Galapagos land iguanas*. Watch your step and don't stumble over one of them whilst distracted by the equally bizarre *giant prickly pear cactus-trees*! These *iguanas* are not only ugly as Darwin pronounced, but also very patient and photogenic models with strikingly saffron colours. Overpopulation and severe food competition have affected their smaller size. It is incredible to see how *cactus* spines don't harm them while chewing

pads, flowers and fruits. Also look out for some unique hybrids between a male *marine iguana* and a female *land iguana*.

Arriving at the upper rim, you get to know the other, wild and windy face of South Plaza that provides a complete different habitat. About 20m/75ft downwards impressively droning waves splash against the foot of massive cliffs. Being talented rock climbers, sun basking *marine iguanas* have escaped the cool shadows of the wall. Clouds of *petrels*, *storm petrels*, *shearwaters* and *brown noddies* make spectacular flights and sometimes appear to walk on the waves. Take your binoculars and don't miss the *red-billed tropicbird* with its graceful long tail and spectacular mating fights. These cliffs are also a nesting place for the endemic *swallow-tailed gull*, most beautiful *gull* in the world. Its neatly lined eyes are perfectly adapted for its exceptional nightly fishing habits.

Day 8 – Monday

Even at the very end of your cruise the Galapagos keep surprising. On this last morning you will explore the evergreen mangle forest of Black Turtle Cove, and feel as if you are in the Amazon rainforest instead of at the north coast of Santa Cruz. These lagoons and adventurous creeks are teeming with *marine* and *birdlife*, and (seasonally) with mating *turtles* and *sharks*.

Programme:

AM: Shortly after your wake-up call and a snack you will leave for this farewell dinghy-ride. After breakfast it's time to say goodbye, leave the yacht and continue to the airport (unless you have booked an extension on the [A-route](#)).

AM: Black Turtle Cove (Santa Cruz)

The ancient mangle at Black Turtle Cove has grown out to forest proportions and forms the backdrop for a distinct adventure. You might even feel as though you are in the Amazon rainforest instead of close to the sea; though on a closer look vegetation mainly exists of *red mangroves* with characteristic aerial roots that let them survive in salty and brackish water. We will explore the calm emerald lagoon by inflatable dinghy and enter the surrounding shallow creeks of these salt-water marshes. The outboard engine is sometimes turned off, so that you can enjoy the ambience at its fullest. You have to keep your eyes peeled when looking around and staring into the crystal-clear waters to observe all the life that is flying and swimming around.

You can spot silently hunting lava herons on the banks and brown pelicans nesting on top of the mangroves. Various species of ray and shark come to this nutritious cradle to give birth; *scalloped hammerhead sharks* come back to the place where they were born and their babies tend to be close to the surface. *Pacific green turtles* (*black turtles* was their former name) visit this cove in their reproduction season (November-January); if you're lucky you can catch them mating on the surface! Afterwards their eggs are deposited on coral sand beaches along this north-western coastline of Santa Cruz.

AM: Transfer to Baltra airport

Assisted by the naturalist guide and some crew members, the dinghy will bring you and your luggage to Baltra, where we take the airport shuttle. Your guide will accompany you to the check-in counters in the departure hall.

We expect you to return home with stunning pictures and unforgettable lifelong memories!