



ITINERARY A (2017)
8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS
MONDAY TO MONDAY
 (EVERY 14 DAYS)



Our 7-night western route is a mini-expedition to the largest *seabird* colonies and some of the most remote corners of the Galapagos; outer islands often belong to the more exclusive places. This adventurous route contains longer nightly navigation stretches (but Sailing Catamaran Nemo I is faster than average, and you will also have two relatively quiet floating nights).

After visiting North Seymour and Genovesa, you will navigate around the by far largest island Isabela, and pass by pristine Fernandina, which are both just recently born out of fire. On its way back Nemo I will anchor at Santiago's James Bay (*fur seal* grottos and great snorkelling) and sail round the *seabird* laden volcano islet of Daphne Major.

Though less frequented than the popular central and south-eastern islands, the volcanic north offers the most dramatic landscapes and reveals the first chapter of evolution, and the desolate west is truly exceptional. Become witness of some bizarre miracles of evolution, such

as *flightless cormorants*, huge *marine iguanas* and *Galapagos penguins* close to the equator. During a climb to the rim of the huge caldera of Sierra Negra and on the volcano islets of Bartolomé and Chinese Hat you will be impressed by the volcanic forces that still create the islands. Discover how pioneer species conquer barren lava fields and create habitats for new colonist species.

Walk at a very short distance past *frigatebirds*, *blue-footed boobies*, *red-footed* and *Nazca boobies* whilst courtshipping, mating, breeding, nurturing or learning to fly (depending on the season). Furthermore, en route you will have chances to see emblematic and endemic *Galapagos land iguanas*, *American flamingos* and exciting *whale* watching!

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

North Seymour is the perfect start to your Galapagos visit, without having to navigate a long stretch to get first contact with the unique insular nature. It is one of the most visited sites. This tabletop islet is overloaded with most extensive colonies of *frigatebirds* and *blue-footed boobies* in the archipelago, and there are also *Galapagos land iguanas* crawling around there!

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 and the safety-drill you will make your first landing at North Seymour for a guided walk through the large *seabird*'s colonies, following a circular loop (easy level; 2km/1.25 mi/about 2hrs). Before dinner your naturalist guide will give the first daily briefing, and the captain and his crew will present and share a welcome toast.

Navigation: About midnight we will lift the anchor and sail to Genovesa. Depending on sea conditions we will navigate about 5:30 hrs north.

AM: Arrival at Baltra Airport

At Baltra Airport you 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: North Seymour

The tabletop islet of North Seymour is an uplifted part of the seabed. Between the dry shrubs you might spot a *Galapagos land iguana*. North Seymour originally did have any *land iguanas*, but in the 1930s an eccentric American millionaire moved the last generation from Baltra, and saved them from

starvation caused by competition with introduced goats; the breeding programme at Charles Darwin Research Station that followed turned into a big success.

You can spot lots of seabirds, such as *brown pelicans*, *red-billed tropicbirds*, endemic *swallow-tailed gulls* and seasonally even *Nazca boobies*, but the main attraction are the archipelago's most extensive breeding colonies of *blue-footed boobies* and *frigatebirds*. At the start of the breeding season (shifting on our calendar) adult *frigatebird*-males blow up their vivid red pouches to impressive football-sized balloons. This is one of the few spots (besides Genovesa and Pitt Point) where you can compare the *magnificent* and the rarer *great frigatebird* breeding next to each other. *Frigatebirds* tend to attack returning *boobies* and conduct aerial battles rather than fishing themselves and getting wet. The even more popular *blue-footed boobies* show their cute courtship rituals, in which their remarkable feet play an important role.

Day 2 – Tuesday

As one of the outer islands and most exclusive places on the Galapagos, Genovesa is well worth last night's longer navigation. All impressions will be nearly too much for a single day! Hundreds of thousands of seabirds perch and nest on the cliffs around its flooded crater. Not only because of its historical English name (Tower) Genovesa has a royal touch. Follow in the footsteps of Prince Philip – Galapagos lover for many years and patron of the Charles Darwin Foundation – and visit this favourite birding spot with largest breeding colonies of red-footed and Nazca boobies, and look for a remarkable short-eared owl that hunts on foot!

Programme:

AM: Today's full programme includes two longer walks, snorkelling and optional sea kayaking. After an early breakfast and a wet landing at the sheltered beach of Darwin Bay you will go for a guided walk (moderate level; about 3km/2mi). Enjoy a snack aboard before snorkelling (alternatively: sea kayaking).

PM: Around lunch-time we will sail to nearby Prince Philip's Steps, close to the entrance of the broken caldera. There you will take a guided walk through cliff top seabird colonies (moderate level; about 3km/2mi).

Overnight navigation: Nemo I will lift the anchor shortly after dinner, and navigate about 5 hours, heading back south in the direction of Santiago (and anchoring at Bartolomé).

AM: Darwin Bay (Genovesa)

Genovesa's horseshoe shaped wall is unmistakable proof that we have anchored inside the partly collapsed and submerged caldera of a submarine volcano! The visitor's site named Darwin Bay is located at the very rear. This compact site shows the extremely varied coastal ecosystems of the Galapagos in miniature. The trail starts from the coral sand beach and subsequently passes a zone with *saltbushes* and *mangroves*, then crosses tidal creeks and barren lava formations, dry shrub lands, and finally turns on the ridge of some cliffs.

In this extremely varied and peaceful ambience, every single species has occupied its own ecological niche (preferred habitat) without disturbing others. *Whimbrels* and *wandering tattlers* forage actively along the surf, next to resting *Galapagos sea lions*. *Hérons* wait motionlessly at the tidal pools. Impressive *frigatebirds* (both *great* and *magnificent* species) and *red-footed boobies* nest in the *mangroves*, where you can also listen to vocalists such as *yellow warblers*, *Darwin's finches* and *Galapagos mockingbirds*. What's unique is that two subpopulations of the same species *large cactus finch* have different singing tunes.

Tropicbirds, Nazca boobies, storm petrels, endemic lava- and swallow-tailed gulls soar along the cliffs. When you already have seen *marine iguanas* elsewhere, the small *Genovesa* species might not look too impressive, but consider that these are virtually the only reptiles that succeeded to reach and survive on this remote, upstream island (and have become endemic to this island).

PM: Prince Phillip's Steps (Genovesa)

Before landing you will take a dinghy-ride along the eastern arm of the caldera. On approach, the 25m/80ft high walls become overwhelming, and will give you a better impression of the dimensions of this crater. Sometimes a *Galapagos fur seal* will be resting on one of the shaded ledges. Although there are also *seabirds*, the real spectacle will take place on top and on the outside of the rim, which provide better perching and nesting places.

You will therefore you have to hike and overcome the steep stairs from the landing dock to a bush of *palo santo* shrubs on top. Tropical dry forest vegetation appears dead during most months of the year, but just drops its leaves to prevent drying out by evaporation. It's a threatened ecosystem. *Red-footed boobies* with different plumages gratefully use these scarce nesting-places; different to their blue-footed relatives 'red feet' they don't nest on the rocky ground.

At the seaside of the rim, the bushes open up and you can enjoy wide views, a strong sea breeze and the amazing flying skills of countless *seabirds*. Following the exposed rim you will first pass a colony of *Nazca boobies* and finally reach the extensive *storm petrel* nesting places, where you might be lucky enough to spot how the well-camouflaged *short-eared owl* hunts for them on foot!

Day 3 – Wednesday

Just out of the coast of Santiago, Sailing Catamaran Nemo I will anchor at two volcanoes islets: Bartolomé (recently born out of fire) and Chinese Hat. You will arrive just in time at Chinese Hat to witness how this barren volcano islet gets colonised by pioneer species and begins to sprout! Enjoy the famous wild romantic panorama of Bartolomé. Very close to the equator you will have your first opportunities to meet endangered *Galapagos penguins*; whilst snorkelling you might even encounter these agile hunters fishing!

Programme:

AM: Today's full programme is largely dedicated to volcanism. Wake up during an early morning dinghy-ride along the barren shoreline. After breakfast it is not yet too hot to climb the stairs of Bartolomé's Summit Trail, which is rewarded with panoramic views (guided walk, moderate level; about 800m/0.5 mi; 114m/375ft altitude difference). Next you can refresh and explore the fantastic shallow water snorkelling spot at the foot of Pinnacle Rock (alternative: walking around or relaxing on the beach).

PM: During lunch Nemo I navigates to Chinese Hat (about 1hr), where you can snorkel again. Learn more about the Galapagos' fascinating geology during the late-afternoon walk on this typical volcano-islet (easy level; about 0.7km/0.5 mi).

Navigation: While sailing to Puerto Ayora (Santa Cruz, about 7hr) you will have dinner. We will anchor in the sheltered harbour just after midnight, where you can enjoy a fairly quiet sleep.

Additional options scuba-diving: Bartolomé or Cousin Rocks (both advanced)

AM: Bartolomé

The wild romantic volcano islet of Bartolomé is among the youngest of the islands, and on a geological scale just recently born out of fire. Although tiny (only 120ha/300ac) and at first sight lifeless, Bartolomé offers some of the wildest landscapes and best panoramas on the entire archipelago. To enjoy the postcard view of the idyllic 'Pinnacle Bay' you have to climb the stairs to the viewpoint on top of the island (114m/375ft). Suddenly enter a dramatic world of threatening (though extinguished) nearby spatter cones, craters, and lightweight lava droplets that have been spewed out by fiery fountains. The Summit Trail is also ideal for witnessing how scanty pioneer vegetation such as *lava cactus* struggles to take root in the bare virgin lava fields.

From the summit you suddenly face a second, paradisiacal world; Galapagos' landmark 'Pinnacle Rock' towers prominently over an isthmus with crescent sand beaches on each side, and dunes with evergreen *mangrove* bushes in-between.

Underwater, a third, completely distinctive world opens up to you, resembling a tropical aquarium. Its shallow, clear and warm waters are ideal for snorkelling between *coral-grinding parrot fish*, shoals of *surgeonfish*, harmless *whitetip reef sharks* and *Pacific green turtles*. If you are lucky you might even catch the sight of fishing *Galapagos penguins*.

PM: Chinese Hat

Chinese Hat is a 52m/170ft high volcanic cone, forming another islet right off the rocky coast of Santiago, where a small colony of *Galapagos penguins* has settled. Approaching Chinese Hat from the north, you will certainly agree with its name. Because its primordial fire has been extinguished recently, this is an excellent place to learn more about volcanism, lava bombs and lava tunnels. On the beach you can also find curious pillow-type lavas with *coral heads* on top! These spheres have a submarine origin before being lifted above sea level.

But Chinese Hat does not appear any more inhospitable than the almost virgin Bartolomé and lunatic Sullivan Bay. You arrive exactly on time to witness how this barren islet gets colonised by pioneer species and begins to sprout! Beaches of white coral sand grow, and holes in the eroding lava fields are filled up with lava sand, which enables rooting. *Galapagos sea lions* and countless *marine iguanas* contribute to fertilisation. This all together create more favourable options for newcomers, like *saltbush* and the discolouring *sesuvium* carpet. Colonisation of Chinese Hat can occur in a much higher pace than elsewhere, hence Santiago is just a stone's throw away.

Day 4 – Thursday

Last night's crossing has brought you to Puerto Ayora. 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: A 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 a 'tortoise farm' in the agricultural zone) you can see *Galapagos giant tortoises* in the wild before continuing to the airport.

A4 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 a 'tortoise farm' in the highlands before continuing to the airport.

PM: After 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.

A5 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 get some free time to stroll through the cosy town of Puerto Ayora.

Overnight navigation: Before dinner the anchor will be lifted for this route's longest navigation to Moreno Point on Isabela, about 12 hours in a southwestern 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 challenge to search 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 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 several 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 5 – Friday

Over the next few days SC Nemo I will navigate clockwise around Isabela, by far the largest island of the archipelago. Its larger living space seems to mean that evolution is hunting for records over here (although some are disputed). Explore some of the most remote visitor's sites on the Galapagos, offshore rocks with a small colony of *Galapagos penguins*, and penetrate the sheltered creeks of Galapagos' highest mangle in the estuary. Perceive how *pioneer vegetation* progressively converts barren lava fields into lush oases and evergreen *mangle* forests, and is creating new habitats for specific species.

Thanks to major upwellings out off the deep sea (Cromwell Current) the nutrient-rich west

coast of Isabela is a magnet for all kinds of marine and birdlife. Bolivar Channel (between Isabela and Fernandina) can be great for *whale* watching.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast first we take an inflatable dinghy-ride along the shoreline, followed by a 'dry landing' (with footwear) and a guided hike that crosses the crumbling, pitch black lava fields of Moreno Point (moderate level; about 2km/1.25mi). After a snack snorkelling is scheduled.

PM: At noon we will sail for 2 hours to Elizabeth Bay. Meanwhile you can enjoy lunch and a siesta. On arrival a long dinghy-ride is scheduled to both the offshore rocks and sheltered mangles.

Navigation: Before dinner we will continue to Espinoza Point (Fernandina, about 4hrs), while actively looking for *whales*. You will be able to enjoy a relatively quiet floating night.

AM: Moreno Point (Isabela)

Moreno Point tells the continuing story of the famous lunatic lava fields of Sullivan Bay (actually not visited by Catamaran Nemo). This once lifeless lava field becomes dotted with tidal pools and filtration lagoons since parts of the crust have broken and fallen into the undermining lava tunnels.

Pioneer life takes advantage; finally the *lava cacti* get company of two more species of *cacti*, from which the *candelabras* can grow up to 7m/23ft tall, and dominate the rest of the shrubby vegetation. Fringes of *reed*, *sea grass* and *mangrove bushes* transform the picturesque lagoons into lush oases. Your pictures get the perfect finishing touch when bright *American flamingos* forage in the largest lagoon as well. The fresh promising pioneer vegetation seems on the winning hand; just until Sierra Negra volcano spits a new layering cover, and the story starts all over again.

Tidal pools form natural traps and attract scavengers and hunters, such as bright orange *sally lightfoot crabs*, *oystercatchers* and *herons*. During a dinghy-ride along the jagged shoreline, you can spot *marine iguanas* that wait patiently for their turn at lowest tide to graze weeds on the seabed, and a breeding colony of *brown pelicans* in the mangroves.

PM: Marielas Islets & Elizabeth Bay (Isabela)

Although there is no landing point, Elizabeth Bay offers two in one! A prolonged ride by inflatable dinghy combines the Marielas Islets in the mouth of the bay, with the mangles in its innermost heart.

The Marielas islets are an excellent place to spot *marine iguanas* and small family groups of *Galapagos penguins* in the front row of the cliffs. The endangered *Galapagos penguin* is the rarest *penguin* species worldwide (just some 1500 birds over all the archipelago; please don't expect vast colonies like in Antarctic regions). Lofty *palo santo*-trees on top of the cliffs provide *magnificent frigatebirds* with a lookout to rob returning *blue-footed boobies*.

Next the dinghy will turn landwards and enter the calm estuary. Whilst exploring lagoons and shallow creeks, the outboard engine can be turned off, to enjoy the sounds of nature. *Brown pelicans* are the only *pelicans* in the world that plunge-dive, though more superficial than the spectacular rocket like diving *blue-footed boobies*. *Lava herons* and *great blue herons* prefer to wait patiently for what comes along. *Pacific green turtles* swim gracefully around, popping up their heads to breathe (mating season: December-January). You might also encounter *spotted eagle rays* or *sharks*, looking for protected inlets to give birth and leave their young alone. This highest mangrove forest of the Galapagos consists of *red mangroves* (with their characteristic prop roots) as well as *black*, *white* and *button mangroves*.

Day 6 – Saturday

Without any doubt Espinoza Point belongs to the more exclusive sites of the Galapagos National Park. Fernandina harbours one of the world's most virgin, untouched ecosystems. Today you will become an eyewitness of evolution, which is happening right in front of you! Wonder again about bizarre creatures such as the *flightless cormorant*, *marine iguana* and *Galapagos penguin*.

Before leaving the remote west, Isabela will present you with the latest geological curiosity and the largest *Galapagos land* and *marine iguanas*. While crossing the Bolivar Channel to Urbina Bay, you will have great *whale* watching opportunities again!

Programme:

AM: After breakfast and a dry landing the guided morning walk (easy/moderate level; about 2km/1.25 mi) runs over the lava tongue of Espinoza Point. After a snack we will bring you to today's snorkelling site.

PM: While having lunch we will cross the Bolivar Channel for the last time, back to Isabela's west coast. At the geologic interesting site of Urbina Bay you will take a second guided walk, and you can snorkel as well.

Overnight navigation: Before dinner we will start our 10 hour's navigation around the north cape of Isabela to Santiago (crossing the equator twice).

AM: Espinosa Point (Fernandina)

Espinoza Point is Fernandina's only terrestrial visitor's site, and one of the few locations where you will find some bizarre outgrowths of natural selection. The figurehead is the emblematic *flightless cormorant* that lives exclusively in the remote west of the Galapagos, and could be considered as the 'holy grail of evolution'. The *cormorant* didn't have to fear terrestrial enemies and lets you approach it very closely. The next generations gradually lost their flying capabilities to become excellent divers. Together with its neighbour, the *Galapagos penguin*, these are two of the rarest and most vulnerable bird species in the world, with less than 2000 individuals each.

Besides the endemic wildlife, you will also love the almost unworldly views with the dominating cone of Volcán La Cumbre (= the summit) as a spectacular backdrop. The narrow headland that you walk is the end of a lava tongue that has reached the coast and solidified on contact with the cold seawater. The black rocks are not yet covered by more vegetation than lava cacti and mangroves, but are teeming with hundreds of dragon-like *marine iguanas* that breed and conglomerate in larger groups than on any other island.

PM: Urbina Bay (Isabela)

Urbina Bay presents you with Isabela's latest geological curiosity. In 1954 tectonic forces lifted the former seabed several metres above sea level and formed the present coastal plain. The tilted seabed ran dry at once and 6km/3.75mi of coastline was shifted outward. Pretty far inland you can find marine remnants, such as fish bones, shells, scales from *lobsters*, *urchins* and *corals*.

Far behind you will reach the original coastline and the typical *palo santo*-bush from the arid zone. This very wide beach provides ample nesting places for *iguanas*, *turtles* and even for *Galapagos giant tortoises* that descend all the way down from Alcedo volcano in the wet season. The *marine* and *land iguanas* of Urbina Bay are the largest of the Galapagos.

Day 7 – Sunday

James Bay (Santiago) was where Charles Darwin spent most of his time whilst on the Galapagos, while HMS Beagle continued mapping the archipelago. A highlight of this pearl necklace of visitor's sites are the outstanding *fur seal* grottos at the beautiful sculptured coastline of Puerto Egas, together with other coastal landscapes that could well be exotic film sets; not to forget Buccaneer's Cove crystal-clear snorkelling waters.

Programme:

AM: After breakfast you will take a guided walk along the coastline (easy level) to the *fur seal* grottos. Back on-board we will provide a snack before snorkelling.

PM: At lunchtime we will navigate 12km/7 mi/45 min north to Espumilla Beach. After a wet landing (bare feet) on the beach, a guided walk goes uphill and inland (easy level; about 2km/1.25 mi). Afterwards you can take a dinghy-ride (or alternatively sea kayaking) along the coastline.

Overnight navigation: Before dinner SC Nemo I will continue along the south coast of Santiago to Daphne Major, where we will arrive after about 4 hrs for a relatively quiet floating night sleep.

AM: Puerto Egas (Santiago)

Dominated by Sugarloaf Hill (395m/1300ft) and named after a former salt mine (1960s), Puerto Egas is the southernmost visitor's site along James Bay. Its masterly sculptured coastline of black basalts and polished multi-coloured ash-layers forms a photogenic scene with collapsed lava tunnels, natural arches, caves and blowholes such as 'Darwin's toilet'.

In a grotto right below a spectacular rock arch at the end of the beach, a colony of *Galapagos fur seals* occupies the shade, sheltering from the equatorial sun. Unlike more common *Galapagos sea lions* this smaller species of seal is no beach lover at all, due to their adorable, but insulating coats. This refuge is the best place to see these endemic, shy and once heavily hunted marine mammals.

Particularly at low tide Puerto Egas teems with extremely varied intertidal life. Notice how *marine iguanas* just leave, return cold or warm-up after grazing weeds on the seabed at lowest tide. Ossified *night herons* and *lava herons* keep an eye on the tidal pools that are refilled every flood again with small fish, *octopuses*, *star fish*, *snails*, *urchins*, *shells*, *green algae* and many other snacks. Noisy *oystercatchers*, *turnstones*, *plovers* and *whimbrels* inspect these pools zealously. Hundreds of *sally lightfoot crabs* seem even brighter orange against the pitch-black rocks (immature are dark-coloured).

PM: Espumilla Beach & Buccaneer Cove (Santiago)

Espumilla Beach has been revived as an important breeding site for *turtles*, as it is no longer suffering from digging wild pigs. The *turtles* return year after year to bury their eggs into the cinnamon coloured sand dunes. About two months later (roughly from February to August) the eggs hatch all at the same time. Sadly most vulnerable hatchlings will never reach the sea, and form a banquet for predators such as *herons*, *frigatebirds*, *mockingbirds* and *ghost crabs*.

The beach ridge hides a mangle with two picturesque lagoons on the backside. A colony of *American flamingos* and aquatic birds used to be its main attraction, but after the climate phenomenon of El Niño, strong sedimentation altered the brackish water environment, and it no longer contains their food...

As often in the Galapagos, different vegetation zones are very close by, providing great scenic contrasts. Upon climbing a hill you will be rewarded with a beautiful view of the transitions from sea into beach into *mangrove* into dry *palo santo* forest.

At the nearby Buccaneer Cove we have a great snorkelling opportunity.

Day 8 – Monday

On your last morning in the Galapagos you can feel the ocean breeze in your hair while navigating around the characteristic volcanic islet of Daphne Major. A wide range of seabirds will wave you out!

AM: Daphne Major

The characteristic offshore tuff cone of Daphne Major looks how a child draws a volcano islet. You might have already got a glimpse of it from your airplane window on arrival. Access to the 120m/400ft high islet is restricted because of its fragility and susceptibility to erosion. On your last morning in the Galapagos you will make a dinghy-ride around. You can spot large flocks of *storm petrels* and other *seabirds*.

This islet forms an almost undisturbed semi-closed ecosystem and is therefore of great scientific interest. Coexisting *Nazca boobies*, *red-billed tropicbirds*, *magnificent frigatebirds*, *blue-footed boobies* and 8 other breeding species have nicely distributed different sections of the cone, according to their needs and the ecological niches. The caldera contains two craters, both completely white-plastered by the increments of *blue-footed boobies*, which have founded a very large breeding colony in this sheltered place. There is a colony of *Galapagos sea lions* on the only small beach. This islet has also been the location for an important multidecade study of *Darwin's finches*. This concluded that population fluctuates strongly and *finches* that survived in dryer years were mainly the ones with larger beaks; results that strongly supported Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution.

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!