



ITINERARY A4
4 DAYS / 3 NIGHTS
Monday to Thursday
 (every 14 days)



Our 3-night northern route enables you to combine the seabird colonies of North Seymour and exclusive Genovesa with spectacular volcano islets Bartolomé and Chinese Hat, where you will be impressed by their creative forces.

Though less frequented than popular central and south-eastern islands, the barren north offers most dramatic landscapes and reveals the first chapter of evolution. 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 they are 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*, *marine*

iguanas and Galapagos penguins close to the equator! In the contrasting lush highlands of Santa Cruz you will find the famous *Galapagos giant tortoises*.

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 search for wildlife, observation of specific species can never be guaranteed.

Day 1 – Monday

North Seymour is the perfect start of 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 the most extensive colonies of frigatebirds and blue-footed boobies in the archipelago, and you will find Galapagos land iguanas crawling around there as well!

Programme:

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

PM: After become 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 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 introduce themselves 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 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 you will 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 perceive a *Galapagos land iguana*. North Seymour didn't used to be home to *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 that followed at Charles Darwin Research Station turned into a big success.

You can spot lots of seabirds, such as *brown pelicans*, *red-billed tropicbirds*, endemic *swallow-tailed gulls* and even *Nazca boobies* (*seasonally*), 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* prefer to attack returning *boobies* and conduct aerial battles rather than fishing for themselves. 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 – visit this favourite birding spot with the 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 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 make 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 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*. *Heron*s 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 hear 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* differ in their singing.

Tropicbirds, *Nazca boobies*, *storm petrels*, endemic *lava-* and *swallow-tailed gulls* soar along the cliffs. When you have already 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 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' 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 off 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 exactly on 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 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). After this you can be refreshed 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 0.7 km/0.5 mi).

Navigation: While sailing to Puerto Ayora (Santa Cruz, about 7hr) you will have dinner. We will anchor in the sheltered harbour of Academy Bay 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 in 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 will 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 spot 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 to be any more inhospitable than the almost virgin Bartolomé and lunatic Sullivan Bay. You will arrive just in 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, which 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

This cruise itinerary ends at Puerto Ayora. En route to the airport you will pass the lush highlands of Santa Cruz, where you will get the opportunity to look for the most famous representatives of Galapagos: a wild population of *Galapagos giant tortoises*.

Programme:

AM: After an early breakfast it's time to say goodbye and to leave the yacht. You will travel by inflatable dinghy and private bus from the pier of Puerto Ayora into the highlands. In the agricultural zone you can see *Galapagos giant tortoises* in the wild before continuing to the airport.

AM: Highlands (Santa Cruz)

Because wild *Galapagos giant tortoises* don't stop at official National Park boundaries, dozens of them also roam – and even mate – on the adjacent woodlands in the populated agricultural zone of Santa Cruz. Thanks to their concentrations around their favourite muddy pools, these semi-open pastures and moist *scalesia*-woodlands are the best place for a quick visit. Armed with a rain poncho and (provided) rubber boots you will get good chances to approach wild *Galapagos giant tortoises* within just a few metres! Their dome-shaped shells characterise the Santa Cruz subspecies.

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.

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.

You will return home with stunning pictures and unforgettable lifelong memories!