

## The Western Isles

### Galapagos Island Discovery

*An in-depth 7 day/6 night exploration of the western Galapagos Islands  
onboard the M/Y La Pinta*



#### **Day 1 (Thursday): Arrive Quito**

On arrival at Quito airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel for the night.

#### ***La Casona de la Ronda***

*La Casona de la Ronda is a boutique hotel set in an 18th-century home in Quito's historic centre.*

*The rooms are beautifully made up with dark wooden furnishings and parquet floors. They feature wide windows with shutters to allow in lots of natural light, and open onto a central courtyard ringed by wooden balustrades. A cooked breakfast is served each morning in the courtyard, or in the indoor lounge/cafe area.*

#### **Day 2 (Friday): Fly to the Galapagos Islands and North Seymour Island**

Depart Quito on the morning flight to Baltra Island. On arrival, transfer to the dock and board the M/Y La Pinta cruise boat, your home for the next six nights.

#### ***Your Financial Protection***

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

After a safety briefing and check-in, enjoy lunch on board while sailing to the small, flat and arid North Seymour Island. Here you disembark for a coastal walk to see some of the bird colonies, including the magnificent frigate birds. You are also likely to see a colony of sea lions and a large population of land iguanas.

Return to La Pinta late afternoon for dinner and overnight.

### **Day 3 (Saturday): Isabela Island and Fernandina Island**

This morning you transfer to a smaller boat to explore the dramatic geology of the coastline around Punta Vicente Roca, in the north-west of Isabela Island, the Galapagos' largest island. Your naturalist guide will highlight the remains of lava flows and layers of volcanic rock. Depending on the sea conditions, you may be able to do some snorkelling in an area known to have visiting green turtles, seahorses and mola-mola (sunfish).



In the afternoon, continue your cruise to Fernandina Island, the youngest (under 1,000,000 years old), the westernmost and arguably the most beautiful of all the islands in the Galapagos. Dominated by La Cumbre volcano, which sits at the centre of the island with lava fields stretching to its coastline, Fernandina offers some truly fantastic landscape views.

You disembark at Punta Espinosa, on the northern coast of Fernandina, and follow the island's trails on foot to see some of the hundreds of marine iguanas and flightless cormorants that live here. Depending on the tides you may spot interesting fish and marine life in the shallows and tide pools. Keep a lookout overhead for hawks, too.

Late afternoon, return to your yacht for dinner and overnight.

### **Day 4 (Sunday): Isabela Island**

The morning will be spent travelling across the Bolivar Channel to Isabela. Along the way, keep watch for whales who are often sighted in these waters.

Heading further south along the coastline of Isabela Island, you disembark at Urbina Bay. Located at the base of Alcedo Volcano, this area experienced a major uplift of the ocean floor in 1954, causing the land to rise over 16ft, and leaving marine life stranded on the new shore. Here you can go swimming in search of coral, turtles and rays, while on land, some of the Galapagos' largest and most-colourful iguanas can be seen.

Return to the boat for lunch while the crew steer you up the coast to Tagus Cove. This is a famous area frequented by pirates and whalers in the early 1800s. You will have the chance to hike up to Darwin Crater, a saltwater-filled lake, for wonderful views of the island. This is a wonderful spot for birdwatching, with finches, flycatchers, warblers, hawks and many more often sighted.



## Day 5 (Monday): Rabida and Santa Cruz Islands

After sailing back around the north of Isabela Island your cruise takes you to the small islet of Rabida.

The earth on Rabida has a distinctive red colour, owing to lava flows from the volcanic craters at the centre of the island. Disembarking this morning, you'll have time to explore its unique geology, rich and varied birdlife, and of course its marine life. From the beach you can snorkel, or alternatively take a trip on the glass-bottomed boat, while there are short walking trails to follow on-land.

In the afternoon you journey to Cerro Dragon (Dragon Hill), on the northern shore of Santa Cruz. Here you can explore on foot a fascinating landscape circling a brackish lagoon frequented by flamingos and pintail ducks. Further inland, the trail offers a beautiful view of the bay and the western islands of the archipelago.

Dragon Hill is also the site of one of the Charles Darwin Foundation's great success stories. Santa Cruz is amongst the most populated islands in the Galapagos and years of feral dogs roaming the island almost decimated land iguana numbers. A small number of iguanas were relocated to nearby Venecia Islet, where a very successful breeding program took place with the result that iguanas are periodically released back on to Dragon Hill.



## Day 6 (Tuesday): Santa Cruz Island

After breakfast, disembark at Santa Cruz Island and pay a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station, hidden away in a forest of prickly-pear cacti. Here you can learn more about the giant tortoise breeding programme, which seeks to preserve this endangered creature.

After your tour of the station, transfer to the cool, lush highlands of Santa Cruz Island for lunch and further exploration.

The rest of the afternoon will be spent exploring the highlands region via several walking trails. The highlands of Santa Cruz are where most of the Galapagos' tortoises live. If you visit in June, you may be able to witness them migrate from the highlands to the lowlands in search of a nesting place.

## **Day 7 (Wednesday): Floreana Island**

After breakfast, you arrive at Post Office Bay to visit the historic barrel that has served as the archipelago's post office for over two centuries. Here sailors and whalers would leave post for their loved ones in the hope that the next sailors to arrive may be going in the same direction and carry their letters. You too can leave postcards here, although it may not arrive on a doorstep for months, if not years! Heading out on a panga along the maze of channels on the northern shore allows for some very rewarding views. Depending on the waters, it may also be possible to kayak and swim from the beach, too.

After lunch, you stop at Cormorant Point, located between two beaches – Green Beach, so called because of the olivine crystals in the sand, and Flour Sand Beach, so called because of the fine crushed coral. At the right time of year, nesting turtles can be seen on these beaches. Another highlight of the area are the lagoons where you may see flamingos wading through the water.

## **Day 8 (Thursday): Baltra Island**

Say goodbye to the M/Y La Pinta and the Galapagos Islands this morning, as you disembark at Baltra Island and transfer to the airport for your onward flight to the mainland.

On arrival at Quito airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel, Casona de la Ronda, where the rest of the day is free for you to explore.

## **Day 9 (Friday): Departure**

You will be transferred to the airport in time for your onward flight.



## Your Vessel

*M/Y La Pinta – Offering 24 cabins to accommodate a maximum of 48 guests, La Pinta is a luxury cruise ship. Twin or double cabins are relatively spacious, with a large picture window, seating area and en suite shower room. The Luxury Plus cabins are larger with a lounge area with sofa, and so can be used as a triple room. Some cabins are also interconnecting, perfect for families.*

*The main deck has an indoor dining room, reception area and a shop. On the upper deck there is an outdoor bar and Jacuzzi, a small gym and an observation lounge. There is also a cozy library where guests are welcome to read through the ship's reference books. In the evening guests are welcome to join the guides in the lounge to hear about the following day's activities. Between sailing there are natural history talks that allow guests to learn more about these fascinating islands. There are 27 members of the crew in total, including officers, three naturalist guides and an expedition leader.*



### Price Guide:

*The cost of this itinerary is **£5,385 per person**, based on two travellers in shared twin accommodation. For more information, or to enquire about a tailor-made holiday incorporating part of all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

#### Includes:

- Accommodation (twin basis) as outlined in itinerary
- Bed & breakfast on the mainland, full board on the cruise
- Staff as outlined above on cruise
- Entrance fees to all sights mentioned in itinerary
- Airport transfers
- Return flights from the mainland to the Galapagos

#### Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Galapagos National Park admission fee (\$100 per person)
- Transit Control Card for Galapagos (\$20 per person)
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Drinks