

NATURAL HISTORY EXPEDITION IN THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS with CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

January 4 - 15, 2017



WORKSHOP OVERVIEW:

Spend a full 8-days/7-nights aboard a yacht in the Galápagos Islands, allowing you to visit most of the significant outer islands, and allowing for a maximum of wildlife observations. Each day we typically go ashore twice, observing and photographing the unique wildlife - the plants and animals that led Darwin to his theory of evolution when he visited the Galapagos in 1835. Our days are full, with early-morning and late-afternoon excursions to catch the peak animal activity as well as best lighting for photography. There are also 1 or 2 snorkeling sessions most days, plus occasional opportunities to kayak. Star viewing is incredible as there is no outside light interference as you search the night sky for the Southern Cross and other constellations not visible from the northern hemisphere. I don't think you'll find a one-week Galapagos tour where you will learn more or get more photo opportunities!

TOUR LENGTH:

12 days total, including 8 days aboard the yacht in Galápagos, 2 days in Puerto Ayora, Galápagos, and 2 nights in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

DETAILED ITINERARY:

January 4: The trip begins in Guayaquil, Ecuador. On arrival on the group flight from Los Angeles, you will be transferred directly to the HOTEL ORO VERDE where we will spend the night. We think very highly of the HOTEL ORO VERDE – they are one of the finer hotels in Guayaquil. Meals on your own today.

January 5: A morning non-stop flight will transport you to another world; the Galapagos Islands. Upon arrival we will be transferred to the yacht, the M/Y TIP TOP IV, waiting for us in the nearby harbor. This afternoon we will begin our program of shore excursions with a visit to the island of **SANTA CRUZ • Puerto Ayora** is the scientific heart of Galápagos, including the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) with its **newly opened** exhibit on Lonesome George, and National Park headquarters, as well as the primary population center.

January 6: ESPANOLA • Punta Suarez is a paradise for birders, with waved albatross, Nazca Boobies, blue-footed boobies, Galápagos Hawks, Galápagos Doves, and also marine iguanas (the most colorful in the islands) all vying for center stage. • **Gardner Bay** is a tranquil white sandy beach known for sea lions (often in the hundreds), lava lizards, finches, yellow warblers & Hood Mockingbirds, to name just a few. Gardner or Osborn Rocks offer great snorkeling, as well as the occasional chance to kayak.

January 7: SAN CRISTOBAL • This is the easternmost island in the archipelago (and also the provincial capital). • **Punta Pitt** is a coastal tuff formation that serves as a nesting site for many sea birds, including blue-footed, Nazca & red-footed boobies (the only site where all 3 species might be seen together), frigatebirds, swallow-tailed gulls, and storm petrels. • **Cerro Brujo** is a very striking, eroded tuff cone. One

of the first places visited by Charles Darwin, the beautiful white coralline sand beach and lagoon are home to brown pelicans, blue-footed boobies and swallow-tailed gulls, plus a variety of shore birds. Stroll the beach and you will soon realize that you are being watched by hundreds of shy ghost crabs. San Cristóbal is also home to the endemic Chatham Mockingbird. • **Kicker Rock** is a similarly eroded tuff cone, this time rising almost 500 feet from the ocean. The yacht will cruise around Kicker Rock as the sunlight plays off the contours of the cliffs (complete with blue-footed boobies, Nazca Boobies, and frigatebirds).

January 8: MOSQUERA - This is a tiny islet, really more of a long, narrow sand spit, with a huge population of sea lions. Additional occupants include Sally Lightfoot Crabs and lava lizards, plus a wonderful variety of birdlife flying over. **SANTA CRUZ • Black Turtle Cove** is a mangrove-surrounded series of coves and inlets. Exploring by panga (zodiac) we often see mating green sea turtles, plus rays and white-tipped reef sharks. This is a prime feeding area both pelicans, noddies, and blue-footed boobies.

January 9: SOMBRERO CHINO perhaps more than any visitor site conveys the volcanic origins of the Galápagos. The shoreline is a wonderful snorkeling area with numerous coves and grottos. **RABIDA •** This is one of the best snorkeling sites in the islands, while kayaking is also possible. The red sand beach makes a striking backdrop for the ever-present sea lions. Just inland a salt-water lagoon often has a few flamingos, while yellow warblers are in the salt bush, and brown pelicans nest in the mangroves. Galápagos Hawks are often seen here. The higher elevations of the island host palo santo trees.

January 10: SANTIAGO • Sullivan Bay offers a rare look at a recently-formed lava field, with fantastical Pahoehoe formations in every imaginable shape. If we're lucky snorkeling along the shore we might be accompanied by penguins. **BARTOLOME •** One of the most popular visitor sites for the panoramic views. The view is educational as well as inspiring; the volcanic features include lava formations such as spatter cones, cinder cones, and tuff cones. There are also wonderful examples of pioneering plants and some beautiful stands of endemic lava cactus. The shoreline around Pinnacle Rock might be your best chance to snorkel with penguins.

January 11: SANTA FE • This island is home to a unique species of land iguana; some of these iguanas can be 5 feet long! The stands of giant prickly pear cactus here are specially adapted to a larger size as a form of protection against the iguanas. Santa Fe is also likely your best chance at seeing the elusive endemic rice rat. Snorkeling and kayaking round out the possibilities. • **SOUTH PLAZA** is a geologically uplifted island vegetated with the distinctive red mats of sesuvium, along with prickly pear cactus, both being the food base for the land iguanas. A walk along the breezy sea cliffs is wonderful, with swallow-tailed gulls, shearwaters, and red-billed tropicbirds in flight. The island is also home to a colony of "retired" male sea lions.

January 12: SANTA CRUZ • Las Bachas are two white sand beaches on the north shore, backed by a small brackish lagoon where flamingoes and coastal birds are occasionally seen. The soft sand of these beaches is a favorite nesting area for sea turtles. Following our morning landing we will disembark the yacht for the last time, and drive across the island to the town of Puerto Ayora. The drive traverses all 7 vegetation zones of the Galápagos. In addition to two enormous pit craters, other volcanic formations in the **Highlands** include some of the largest known lava tunnels in the Galápagos. Not surprisingly, the lush highland vegetation is home to a variety of land birds, including vermilion flycatchers, Galápagos flycatchers, woodpecker finches, dark-billed cuckoos, and barn owls. Tortoises are often seen in the wild here. • Overnight in **Puerto Ayora** at the Hotel Fernandina.

January 13: SANTA CRUZ • This morning will be spent in the scalesia forest of the highlands at **Media Luna**. The 5km trail takes you through 3 vegetation zones; the agricultural, the Miconia, and the Fern & Sedge zone. One of the rarest birds in Galápagos resides in the area; the Galápagos Rail. Keep an eye out for the peregrine falcon, which has been regularly spotted here as well. After lunch we head to what is considered by many to be the most beautiful beach in Galápagos for some relaxation, **Tortuga Bay**. Overnight in Puerto Ayora at the Hotel Fernandina. Dinner on your own today.



January 14: BALTRA • Transfer to the airport for your mid-morning return flight to Guayaquil, Ecuador. Late-afternoon at leisure in Guayaquil, where highlights are often the Malecone waterfront promenade park, and the “iguana park” – home to dozens of wild iguanas – near the hotel. This evening we will enjoy a typical Ecuadorian dinner at the hotel in Guayaquil. Overnight Guayaquil; HOTEL ORO VERDE.

January 15: After breakfast transfer to the airport for your return flight home. Lunch and dinner in flight or on your own today.

YACHT:

The 125 ft, steel-hulled **TIP TOP IV** was built in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in 2006. The design includes all modern navigation instrumentation and safety features. She has a crew of 8 and carries 16 passengers in 10 air-conditioned double cabins (all with two lower twin berths, which can be arranged together to create a larger berth), each with a private bathroom and hot shower. The interior is very attractive, and features a library/ conference room and a spacious dining room. There are extensive outside viewing (sun/ shade) areas, all with very comfortable, cushioned lounge chairs. Twin diesels give her a cruising speed of 12 knots. Shore landings are made via twin 17-foot inflatable zodiacs. There is also a desalination water making system on-board. There are 2 double kayaks available for guest use, as well as basic snorkel gear to loan.



INCLUDED:

- All accommodations, including 2 nights in a First Class hotel in Guayaquil Ecuador and 7 nights aboard the yacht in the Galápagos, and 2 nights in Puerto Ayora, Galápagos.
- Roundtrip airfare from Guayaquil to the Galápagos
- Galápagos National Park entrance fee (\$100 per person).
- Gratuities to Naturalist Guide or Crew of the yacht.
- Galapagos Tourist/Migration Card (\$20 per person).
- All meals and set non-alcoholic beverages aboard the yacht and in Puerto Ayora, with the exception of one dinner in town, and some meals in Guayaquil.
- All group airport transfers in Guayaquil and the Galápagos.
- The services of a University-level Naturalist Guide conducting the Galápagos land tours.
- Use of basic snorkeling equipment aboard the yacht (mask, snorkel & fins)
- Government imposed fuel tax of \$280 per person (*subject to change**)
- Extensive pre-departure materials, including a copy of our guidebook, A Traveler's Guide to the Galápagos Islands.

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare; Alcoholic Beverages; Optional wetsuit rental aboard the yacht (contact Galápagos Travel for info); Baggage/Trip Cancellation/Evacuation insurance; Passport or Visa fees (no visas are currently needed for US or Canadian citizens); Some meals in Guayaquil and Puerto Ayora (as specified), Items of a personal nature, such as room service, telephone or fax calls, and souvenirs; Airport departure taxes.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

All accommodations are shared by two or three people, except by special arrangement.

INTERNATIONAL AIR ARRANGEMENTS:

Our California office will schedule flights for the Chapman University workshop leadership team. We are happy to assist with international air arrangements from the US or Canada to coordinate with these flights for any students wishing to travel with them.

All Galápagos routings and visitor sites (land, snorkeling, & kayaking) are subject to change by the Galápagos National Park Service, yachts, and/or guides in an attempt to minimize tourist traffic on all visitor sites and protect the group's safety.

Updated March 2017