

HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



DARWIN'S GALÁPAGOS: A FAMILY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY ON *CORAL I* JUNE 11–20, 2024 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- Enjoy an exclusive seven-night charter of the 18-cabin *Coral I*, a boutique expedition yacht exploring the Galápagos.
- Experience a fascinating educational exploration with your Harvard Study Leader and enriched by a youth coordinator and expert naturalist guides.
- Make two landings each day (in the morning and afternoon) with a delicious lunch on board in between.
- Throughout the cruise, the youth leader(s) conduct fun-filled, interactive learning activities for children of all ages.
- Snorkel and kayak among playful and curious sea lions by day and stargaze from deck at night.
- Marvel at wildlife, such as tortoise, iguanas, penguins, blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, mockingbirds, and the finches that made Darwin famous.
- Visit San Cristobal, Espanola, Floreana, Santa Cruz, Genovesa, Rabida and Bartolome islands, each with its endemic species that have evolved differently than on neighboring islands.
- Learn about the Galápagos Islands' giant tortoises with visits to the Highlands Tortoise Reserve, Charles Darwin Research Station, and the Fausto Llerena Breeding Center.

SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner

OPTIONAL QUITO PRE-EXTENSION JUNE 10–11

Arrive Ecuador one day early and enjoy a day of touring Colonial Quito and the Middle of the World monument before the start of the main program.

TUESDAY, JUN 11

DEPART FROM HOME CITY / ARRIVE
QUITO, ECUADOR

Depart U.S. and fly to Quito, Ecuador.
Welcome reception and dinner

Overnight at *Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel*(R, D)

WEDNESDAY, JUN 12

FLY TO SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND /
EMBARK *CORAL I*

Fly to San Cristobal Island (about 2.5 hours).
Meet your naturalist guides upon arrival and

transfer to the pier to embark *Coral I* in Puerto Baquerizo.

In the afternoon, visit is the Interpretive Center, an excellent place to learn about the islands' history. Then, climb Frigatebird Hill for a magnificent view at the foot of a frigate bird nesting colony.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, JUN 13 SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND

Today, experience your first “wet” landing, meaning that you transfer to land via dinghy and get your feet wet as you step on the beach. Many of your landings on this voyage will be “wet” as opposed to “dry”, which indicate you can step onto a pier.

Morning: Wet landing at Cerro Brujo, where lava formations are juxtaposed against a white sandy beach and migratory birds such as Black-necked Stilts, Ruddy Turnstones, Whimbrels, other sandpiper species, and White-cheeked Pintails nest. After a leisurely hike you will have the opportunity to swim and snorkel.

Afternoon: Wet landing at Pitt Point, for a hike over rocky terrain searching for three species of boobies, as well as frigate birds and a sea lion colony.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, JUN 14 ESPAÑOLA ISLAND

Morning: Dry landing at Suarez Point (Española Island). Being one of the oldest and most isolated of the Galápagos, Española is of geological interest has a high percentage of endemism. Here, it is possible to explore volcanic formations and see large colonies of sea lion singular marine iguanas, lava lizards, and the colorful Sally light-foot crabs. Seabirds include the Española mockingbird, Nazca boobies, and the spectacular, red-billed tropicbirds.

A somewhat lengthy hike leads to nesting grounds that sometimes overlap the trail. You may see the Galápagos dove, the Galápagos

hawk, swallow-tailed gulls, and the world's largest colony of waved albatross—an unequivocal highlight during mating season, which generally takes place between April and December.

Admire the island's dramatic backdrop, featuring the famous “Soplador,” a seaward blowhole that shoots water up to 23 m (75 ft) into the air.

Afternoon: Wet landing at Gardner Bay on a beautiful, white coral sandy beach guarded by a colony of sea lions. There are no trails, but along the shore you can spot Galápagos hawks, American Oystercatchers, Galápagos Ground Doves, Hood mockingbirds, Yellow Warblers, lava lizards, marine iguanas, and three species of Darwin's finches.

The swimming and snorkeling here offer a great variety of the Galápagos marine wildlife: king angelfish, Creole fish, damsel fish, parrotfish, manta rays, and white-tipped reef sharks.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, JUN 15 FLOREANA ISLAND

Morning: Wet landing on an olivine green, sanded beach for a hike to a brackish lagoon, which usually holds one of the largest flamingo populations in the Galápagos. The trail continues to a beautiful white sandy beach, one of the most important nesting sites of Green Pacific Sea Turtles.

After the hike, enjoy a swim or snorkel amongst sea turtles, reef fish, and sea lions. A small colony of penguins resides here and can sometimes be observed as well.

Afternoon: Wet landing at Post Office Bay, on the north side of Floreana. It is named such because in 1793 Captain James Colnett installed a wooden barrel to serve as an informal post office for sailors passing through. Today, visitors continue the tradition by placing unstamped postcards inside the barrel, hoping that some other traveler, going to the letter destination, will take it back for free. The chances are that the letter posted can take a long time to arrive at its destination. However, there have been cases

where it has arrived before the sender returned home.

You may also encounter Darwin's finches, Yellow Warbler and Lava Lizards. Great snorkeling opportunities with Green Pacific Sea Turtles. As well, the island is best known for its endemic vegetation.

Snorkelers can again practice on the main beach among playful sea lions.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, JUN 16 SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Morning: Dry landing on Santa Cruz Island for a hike to the Highlands Tortoise Reserve. The trailhead is a 45-minute drive from the pier, and the hike itself will take about 1.5 hours over flat, but potentially muddy, terrain.

In the highlands of the Galápagos, it is possible to see tree and ground finches, vermilion flycatchers, paint-billed crakes, yellow warblers, and cattle egrets (usually standing on the tortoises' shell). The journey to the reserve offers great opportunities to see the contrasts that the island offers in reference to the variety of ecosystems. Often, Galápagos Giant Tortoises are also seen on the way, wandering through pastures in the paddocks. This spot is a birdwatchers' haven, since almost every land bird present on the island lives or migrates here.

Afternoon: Dry landing to visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, where the Galápagos giant tortoise breeding program takes place—and where the famous Lonesome George (the last surviving specimen of his species) lived for decades. Admire a prickly-pear cactus forest and a variety of Darwin's finches and other land birds. The Darwin Station also provides environmental education to the communities, schools, and tourists visiting the Galápagos Islands. You will also have some free time to visit the town and shop for souvenirs.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

MONDAY, JUN 17 GENOVESA ISLAND

Morning: Dry landing at the gully formed of lava rocks known as El Barranco. Marvel at the variety of sea life that uses the crevices of the cliffs for shelter. Red-billed Tropic birds fly overhead, switching between their nests and the bay, and a small colony of fur seals may be found near the landing site.

A steep stairway leads to a path that takes you through a seabird colony full of Nazca and Redfooted Boobies. At the plateau, the trail continues inland allowing you to see more nesting booby colonies in the thin Palo Santo forest. Near the end of the trail, over a rocky lava plain, Wedge-rumped Storm-petrels can be observed flying in all directions. If you are lucky, you may catch a glimpse of a Short-eared Owl.

Afternoon: Wet landing at Darwin Bay onto a small sand and coral beach. A short trail heads west along a tidal lagoon and then up a rocky hill that leads to a point overlooking the cliffs and Darwin Bay.

You may see pairs of Swallow-tailed Gulls, Lava Gulls, Yellow-crowned and Lava Herons. The trail continues through Palo Santo trees, Opuntia cacti, and Saltbushes inhabited by Great Frigate birds and Red-footed Boobies. This is one of the few places in the islands where you are guaranteed to see Red-footed Boobies. It is estimated that more than 200,000 Red-footed Boobies live in the trees and bushes of Genovesa.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, JUN 18 RABIDA ISLAND / BARTOLOME ISLAND

Morning: Wet landing on Rabida Island. Dark-red sand covers the unique beaches of this island, home of sea lion colonies. Rabida is considered the epicenter of the Galápagos Islands due to the diversity of its volcanic geology. Nesting brown pelicans are found from July through September, plus nine species of the famous Darwin's finches.

Take a dinghy ride along the marine cliffs to observe nesting seabirds. Then, snorkel off

the coast, where marine life is particularly active.

Afternoon: Dry or Wet landing at Bartolome Island.

At the center of the archipelago, Bartolome is one of the most frequently visited sites of all the islands. The highest point is only 374 feet (114 m) above sea level, and it has a surface area of 0.74 mi (1.2 km). The island is separated from the island of Santiago by the Sullivan Bay, which is an excellent site for snorkeling, filled with the breathtaking volcanic landscapes that make this corner of the world so unique.

The first landing possibility is by a dock made of lava and concrete, which soon turns into a long, wooden staircase leading to the island's summit. Here you will find what just may be the most photographed site in the Galapagos: Pinnacle Rock. The second type of landing possibility is at coralline beach next to Pinnacle Rock, which is a wet landing site. From this point, you will be able to snorkel among tropical fish, perhaps sea lions and penguins as they rest on the lava floors of the intertidal zone and sometimes decide to take a dip.

Overnight on *Coral I* (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, JUN 19

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND / DISEMBARK / FLY TO QUITO

Morning: Take a dinghy ride along the north shore of Santa Cruz Island to Black Turtle Cove, which is accessible only by sea. Four species of mangrove crowd and form an internal lagoon where turtles peak their heads above the surface while fish, rays, and white-tipped reef sharks circle below. You may also see sea birds including pelicans, herons, and egrets.

Afternoon: Disembark *Coral I* at Baltra Island and fly to Quito.

This evening, attend a farewell reception and dinner at the hotel.

Overnight at *Wyndham Quito Airport Hotel* (B, R, D)

FRIDAY, JUN 20

RETURN FLIGHTS HOME

(B)