

Sailing by Small Yacht through the Galapagos Islands

March 20 – 29, 2010



Saturday March 20: Depart the US for Guayaquil, on the coast of mainland Ecuador. I suggest using American Airlines departing Miami at about 6:15 PM nonstop to Guayaquil arriving at 8:25 PM, or an Ecuadorian Airline, Aerogal at 8 PM (both airline schedules subject to change). Meeting and transfers to the Hotel Oro Verde, the best hotel in Guayaquil and the only member hotel of “Leading Hotels of the World” in Ecuador. There is a free evening, with an informal get together in one of the hotel meeting areas.

Sunday March 21: Breakfast at the hotel is included. Check out from the hotel and a group transfer to the airport for our flight to the Galapagos Islands which departs at 10:45 AM, arriving at Puerto Moreno, San Cristobal Island at 12 noon. Arriving passengers are carefully registered and the \$100 National Park Entrance fee is collected (included in your tour cost). Our yacht crew will be waiting to meet us, handle our luggage, and transfer us to our yacht anchored nearby. There is a welcome briefing, safety instruction and buffet lunch, and we sail a short distance to Playa Ochoa where you have your first “wet landing”: that means we motor from the yacht to the beach on a zodiac and walk a shore through the gentle lapping surf, instead of landing on a purpose built pier. At Playa Ochoa you can try enjoy snorkeling with a small colony of sea lions! There is a also a tidal lagoon nearby where you might see the Chatham Mockingbird.

At sunset we cruise around Kicker Rock (aka Leon Domingo), a vertical tuff cone formation that juts abruptly almost 500 feet out of the ocean. Blue footed boobies, masked boobies and magnificent frigate birds dot the rock. Tonight the Captain hosts a Welcome dinner party. Every evening during the trip some time is set aside for a briefing about our next day’s activities.



Monday March 22: We make our first sailing across the Equator and spend the entire day on Tower Island (Genovesa) considered by many to be one of the best islands in the Galapagos for bird species. It’s also a fascinating geological site, being $\frac{3}{4}$ of a crescent – the last remainder of the top of a sunken volcano. Here we have a “dry landing” at Prince Phillip’ Steps, and we follow a nature trail through a colony of Red footed boobies in Palo Santo trees, and through “Nazca” boobies who nest right in the trail: you will have to walk carefully around them! Nazca boobies were formerly called “masked boobies.” The trail leads thru an open lava field where we’ll see large numbers of storm petrels, and sometimes the elusive short-eared owl.



After the walk kayaks are available to paddle around the shoreline where you can see the red-billed tropicbird in the rocky crevices. After lunch you are free to take a siesta. The afternoon excursion is to Darwin Bay (wet landing by zodiac) where a coral sand beach is home to swallow tail and lava gulls near the tide pools. There is a forest of Optuntia cactus and mangroves where colonies of great frigate birds nest. The males inflate their red-throated pouches to attract females as they fly overhead. The nature trail leads through a rich tidal zone of diverse wildlife. After the nature walk you can swim and snorkel at the beach with sea lions, and then we sail to the Western islands during the briefing and dinner.

Tuesday March 23: This morning, we have a semi-wet landing at Punta Espinoza, Fernandina, the youngest and most pristine Island in Galapagos. Recent lava flows formed by an active volcano stretch their way around the coast. Hundreds of ma-





rine iguanas, the largest colony in Galapagos, bask in the sun along the rugged shoreline. Observe sea lion harems with resident bulls carefully guarding their territory. Flightless Cormorants build their nest on the point and Galapagos Hawks fly overhead. After lunch, we cross the Bolivar Chanel where we often spot whales and dolphins riding the bow wave.

This afternoon, we have a dry landing at Tagus Cove, located on the western Island of ISABELA. Six volcanoes flowed together and formed the largest Island in Galapagos. During the walk, we discover a salt-water lagoon, a scenic overlook with a spectacular view of the ocean, lava fields and volcanic formations. Graffiti dating back to the 1800's is written on the rocky cliffs. Explore the Coves by Zodiac or in one of our clear-bottom sea kayaks to find Galapagos penguins, boobies, pelicans and other seabirds. An excellent snorkeling opportunity is offered here after the walk. After the briefing and dinner, a sky full of stars beckons to go out on deck and observe the galaxy as we cross the equator.

Wednesday March 24: This morning, we have a wet landing at Puerto Egas, Santiago (James). Stroll along the shoreline looking for octopus, starfish, and other sea life caught in the tide pools. At low tide, catch a glimpse of marine iguanas as they feed on exposed green algae. Watch for great blue herons, lava herons, American oystercatchers, and yellow-crowned night herons. Our walk ends at the grottos, deep pools of clear water where we encounter fur sea lions once on the verge of extinction. Before returning to the yacht, there is a snorkeling opportunity with loads of tropical fish. As an alternative, you may use the kayaks to explore the marine life without getting wet. During lunch, the yacht motors to the other side of the Island



which provides for scenic landscapes. Located off the Southern tip of Santiago, SOMBRERO CHINO or Chinese Hat owes its name to its shape. After a wet beach landing with sea lion colonies, the trail gives way to a primeval landscape of volcanic rubble including cracked lava formations and lava tubes. The lava tubes are fragile and one must be careful to stay on the trail. We find marine iguanas and pairs of oystercatchers. There are



good photographic opportunities and also snorkeling with penguins offered off Bainbridge Islets where we can spot the Greater Flamingo. There is a briefing followed by dinner as we anchor in a calm protected area.

Thursday March 25: On Bartolome, it seems like we are walking on the moon. This young Island is inhospitable to most plants and animals. After a dry landing, climb 30 minutes up stairs leading to the summit of a once active volcano. Along the way, we pause to marvel at lava bombs, spatter

cones, and cinder cones. From the top of the wooden stairs, we can gaze out across the island for a panoramic view of the island and "Pinnacle Rock," an eroded tuff cone. Down below, crystal clear water is an invitation to snorkel from the beach or Zodiac with schools of tropical fish and Galapagos Penguins. On the other side of the Island, encounter sea turtles and white-tipped sharks.



This afternoon, we have a dry landing at North Seymour, a small geological uplift. We follow a trail that leads us to swallow-tailed gulls, blue-footed boobies and the endemic land iguanas. Visit the largest colony of magnificent frigate birds found in Galapagos. As we

stroll along the beach, we find marine iguanas and sea lions bodysurf the northern swells. After the walk there is a snorkeling opportunity offered in deep water. The evening briefing is followed by dinner and a short navigation to anchor at Academy.



Friday March 26: This morning we travel by bus to the highlands of Santa Cruz Island. The scenery gradually changes as we wind our way through all seven vegetation zones found in Galapagos. Here, we visit the tortoise reserve at one of the private farms in the highlands where we encounter giant tortoises in their natural habitat. We visit *Los Gemelos*, Spanish for “The Twins,” a pair of large pit craters where we find the bright red male vermilion flycatcher. We stop at “the tunnels,” the largest lava tubes found in Galapagos.

After lunch on board, we visit the Charles Darwin Research Station. We visit all three-tortoise corals and the breeding center with new hatchlings and miniature tortoises not yet ready to be repatriated. Scientists from all over the globe work at the station and conduct biological research from anatomy to zoology. We also visit the Van Straelen Hall where there are exhibits and a short video presentation. Visitors can see the pen of Lonesome George, the last surviving member of the Pinta Island subspecies. Stroll through the town of Puerto Ayora (population: 20,000) and the largest town in the Galapagos. Buy souvenirs, mail postcards or kick back at an internet cafe in the social heart of the Islands.

Saturday March 27: This morning we have a dry landing at Punta Suarez, Espanola (aka Hood Island), where we witness the highest rate of endemic species in Galapagos. Sea lions noisily greet us as we land on their beach. Curious Hood mockingbirds peck at our shoelaces. From April to November, the waved albatross, found only on Espanola, perform their wild mating ritual. Colonies of blue-footed boobies engage in “sky-pointing” to show off for potential mates. Nazca (formerly masked) boobies busily care for their young. Stunning swallow



-tailed gulls are the only nocturnal gulls in the world. Red-billed tropicbirds take shelter under the cliffs. We also find Darwin’s Finches, Galapagos Doves, and Galapagos Hawks. Observe unique species of marine iguana identified with traces of red and green colorings. Colorful sally light-foot crabs crawl along the shoreline near to the famous “blow hole”. This is the scene most people envision when they decide to visit Galapagos. During lunch, we motor to the other side of the Island.



On our last afternoon in Galapagos, we have a wet landing on Gardner Bay, Espanola. Walk along seemingly endless stretches of this white sandy beach where you’ll find large colonies of sea lions. There is no trail to follow so this is a chance to explore and you may find a Galapagos Hawk, Darwin’s Finches or Hood Mockingbird. Swim with sea lions from the beach or just relax on your last glorious day in Galapagos. There’s an excellent snorkeling site off Gardner Islet with a colorful diversity of sea life near Tortuga Rock in caves covered with invertebrates. Passengers are also permitted to use the kayaks at this particular site. Back on board, enjoy the Captain’s Farewell party and slide show followed by dinner and a briefing.

Sunday March 28: This morning, we drop anchor in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, San Cristobal. We visit the Interpretation Center opened in 1999. Here we gain a more complete understanding of the natural and human history of the Islands. Afterwards, we head straight to the airport for our flight back to the mainland departing San Cristobal at 12:30PM on Aerogal Flight 37, which arrives in Guayaquil at 3:10 PM. Overnight lodging at the Hotel including breakfast, and transfers back to the airport on March 29th are included in the tour price.

March 29th: Departure date from Ecuador back to the US.

Our chartered yacht will be one of 3 identical vessels, the Eric, Flamingo or Letty. They each hold only 20 passengers and they are first class state of the art vessels, well maintained, and with a sizeable crew. Professionally Ecuadorean nature guides (some born on the islands) who have been especially trained and educated lead all nature expeditions on the islands. The cruise includes all meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily), sight-seeing, and equipment use. Snorkeling equipment and kayaks are available free of charge.

The trip price of \$2795 includes meeting and transfers in Guayaquil on March 21, overnight accommodation at the Oro Verde Hotel that night, transfers to and from the airport for flights to the Galapagos Islands and return, overnight at the Oro Verde Hotel on March 28, with transfers and breakfast March 29 for flights home. The cost also includes the \$100 Galapagos National Park Entrance Fee (which helps fund research and protection in the Islands). *The cost does not include airfare to the islands from Guayaquil which is \$369 – subject to change until purchased – and a \$20 airline transit card.* The tour cost is based on a minimum of 18 paying participants and if numbers should fall markedly below that number the right is reserved to make a cost adjustment. The charter price has been quoted in US dollars so as such it should not be subject to any vagaries related to foreign currencies. Ecuador bases its currency on the US dollar which gives it good stability.

Deposit and payments: A deposit of \$1100 is required to reserve space. The balance of \$1695 is due on December 18, 2009. Payments are non refundable once made unless it is possible to find a replacement of the same gender or configuration (male / female / single / couple) in which case 75% of funds paid can be transferred towards any future Ken-trip.

Getting there: I suggest using American Airlines from Miami because they offer daily nonstop service on modern aircraft at convenient times, and for a reasonable price. Their schedule is as follows:

March 20: Flight 933 Depart Miami 6:15 PM – arrive Guayaquil 2025

March 29: Flight 952 Depart Guayaquil 1030 – Arrive Miami 1540.

The cost of this at the writing this brochure is \$571 round trip.

A lower cost airfare option: This is a ticket that includes Miami to Ecuador, and then out to the islands and back all the way to and from Miami. It costs approximately \$700 round trip and the ticket purchase must be arranged through Ken. The itinerary is:

March 20: Depart Miami 2000 Arrive Guayaquil 2325

March 21: Depart Guayaquil 1045 Arrive Galapagos 1125

March 28: Depart Galapagos 1230 Arrive Guayaquil 1510

March 29: Depart Guayaquil 1415 Arrive Miami 1830

If you purchase your own ticket, please do so from a dependable travel resource, such as a travel agent, a reputable online ticket source such as Expedia or Travelocity, or the airline. If you are taking the Machu Picchu trip you would add flights from Guayaquil to Lima as part of one total ticket; participants doing both trips should contact Ken before purchasing any airline tickets.

Diets: Being a small ship limits the number of special dietary needs that can be accommodated; please check with Ken if you have a food allergy or special dietary request.

Gratuity: The trip price does not include a Gratuity for the Crew which is \$10 per day, which is shared by the

entire crew. The Gratuity will be collected during the cruise. When you see the level of education and training of the guides, you will probably really want to give them something to encourage their continued dedication to working in this isolated environment for low wages.

Weather and timing: The weather in the Galapagos is very similar throughout the year; it is an Equatorial country so the length of days is always the same. Temperatures should be pleasant for snorkeling and sunbathing. Mist and rain can occur throughout the year and is not predictable.

Customs: US citizens are required to have a valid Passport. A Visa is issued when you arrive in the country.

Payment mailing address and Contact Information: Make all checks payable to Ken McFarland and mail to: 3875 Geist Road, # E323, Fairbanks AK 99709-3549. Sorry credit cards cannot be used at this time. Please use email to reach me: ken_mcfarland@earthlink.net. This is because I am often away with groups or other exploratory trips and therefore not available by phone.

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