



## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY



### **Day 1: Baltra Island [Galapagos Islands, Ecuador] (arrival day)**

Morning: Santa Cruz - Baltra Airport

Afternoon: Santa Cruz - Baltra Island (1 check dive)

AM - Baltra Island

Guests fly to the Galapagos Islands from mainland Ecuador, arriving in the late morning. The GSD dive masters and yacht divemaster/naturalist guide will be waiting at the airport on Baltra Island. Once the group has collected their luggage and cleared the National Park immigrations, we will board the yacht which will be anchored in the port 10 minutes travel by bus. After everyone has settled in their cabins the guides will give a briefing on ship life, national park rules and diving safety, whilst the galley crew prepare the dining room for a delicious buffet lunch.

PM - Baltra Island (Check dive, equipment and weights)

After a briefing on the dive platform, all equipment should be set up in readiness for the test dive. This will be at a nearby anchorage in calm shallow waters. Maximum depth of 12m. Although plentiful fish and usually sea lions and other species are to be seen, the objective is to check weight and equipment for the following days.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 2: Cape Marshall / City of Mantas**

Morning: Cape Marshall (2 dives)

Afternoon: City of Mantas (1 dive)

This area on the northeast side of Isabela island offers a few great dive spots. One of them is Cape Marshall, also called 'Ciudad de las Mantas' (City of Mantas), named for how common it is to see giant mantas. The plankton-rich waters of this area are an attraction for many species of rays - like the eagle ray or giant manta, white tip sharks,

sea lions, green sea turtles and many more. The topography is beautiful and invites divers to enjoy their first dives in the Galapagos Islands.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*



### **Day 3: Darwin Island**

Morning: Darwin's Arch (2 dives)

Afternoon: Darwin's Arch (2 dives)

All four dives are at the same site, the world-renowned Darwin Arch (now called the "Pillars of Evolution" since the collapse of the arch on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021). We drop onto a rocky ledge and from a protected position watch the marine life swim by. Hammerhead and Galapagos sharks, Blacktips and Silkies. Marine turtles abound and Bottlenose dolphins often pass by overhead. Huge schools of fish, tuna, jacks and Creole fish swim in the blue whilst dozens of other species inhabit the coral covered platform and ledges.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*



#### **Day 4: Darwin's Arch & Wolf Island**

Morning: Darwin's Arch (2 dives)

Afternoon: Wolf Island (2 dives)

AM - Darwin Island (2 dives)

This is also the realm of the biggest shark of them all, the whale shark. Frequenting the Islands between June – December, over 95% of all sightings occur here at the Arch. Of these, a staggering 99% are female and in an apparent state of advanced pregnancy. Is it a place where whale sharks give births? Why they come to this rocky volcanic outcrop remains a mystery and one that the Galapagos Whale Shark Project team is trying to solve.

PM - Wolf Island (2 dives)

The powerful marine currents around Wolf are part of the reason we see so many sharks. Schooling hammerheads, Galapagos sharks, Blacktip and Silky sharks are the usual protagonists. Dolphins are often present as we end our dives with a drift in the blue. Two turtle species, the Green and Hawksbill are frequently sighted along the rocky walls and slopes of this island. Eagle rays and large schools of fish, snappers, grouper and jacks patrol the drop-off.

Today depending on the dive conditions we will offer you a night dive.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*

#### **Day 5: Wolf Island**

Morning: Wolf Island (2 dives)

Afternoon: Wolf Island (1 dive)

Another full day exploring the diverse dive sites of Wolf. The dives may take us to the swim through arches and along the spectacular walls and cave entrances. Again, the local conditions will decide which are the best options dependent on current and swell. More time to observe the sharks and marine megafauna or study the massive diversity of life that inhabits the large coral heads and boulder slopes. Towards evening we set sail for the north of Isabela Island, once again sailing overnight.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*



### **Day 6: Town**

Morning: Punta Vicente Roca (1 dive)

Afternoon: Cape Douglas (1 dive)

AM - Punta Vicente Roca (1 dive)

This morning we will dive at Punta Vicente Roca. Best known for the frequent sightings of *Mola alexandrini*, the Southern Ocean sunfish. The Molas approach the wall to visit the cleaning stations where wrasses and angelfish await. Sea lions and Galapagos fur seals abound and often follow divers playing with bubbles and darting in and out of schools of sardine sized Brown striped Salemas.

The wall is one of the most diverse of all Galapagos for marine invertebrates and is one of the favorite sites for macro photography. Brightly colored blennies, Longnose coral hawkfish, frogfish and sea horses can be found amongst the solitary corals, anemones, tunicates and sponges. Green sea turtles are present all year and whales are often spotted in these waters.

PM - Cape Douglas (1 dive)



After sailing across the Bolivar Channel to Fernandina Island we will dive at Cape Douglas. Showcased by many documentaries including BBC's Blue Planet I & II, this is where marine iguanas are to be found feeding in the shallow bays between 5-10m.

The cold ocean upwelling from the Cromwell current brings a myriad of life to an apparently stark volcanic shore. A unique experience that can only be had in the Galapagos, we also find the endemic flightless cormorant and Galapagos penguins feeding here.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*



### **Day 7: Town**

Morning: Cousin's Rock (2 dives)

Afternoon: Santa Cruz - Highlands with giant tortoises (land excursion)

AM - Cousin's Rock (2 dives)

In Cousin's Rock, we often find playful sea lions, Eagle rays, Golden rays and sometimes Mobula and Giant Pacific manta rays. The underwater topography provides refuge for sleeping turtles and white tip sharks whilst the steep walls are covered by marine invertebrates.

Two species of black coral, sponges and colonial tunicates are a colorful backdrop for the abundant fish that frequent this emergent volcanic cone. The currents often found here attract some of the larger shark species such as hammerheads and blacktip sharks. Amongst the corals, we sometimes find Pacific golden sea horses and frogfish.

PM - Santa Cruz

After the dive, we will go to Santa Cruz Island. Here we visit the highlands of Santa Cruz to see Giant tortoises in the wild. On our visit we also will make a stop at a lava tunnel and often mistaken for volcanic craters, Los Gemelos – or “The Twins” in English – are actually sinkholes.

*Accommodation: Yacht*

*Included meals: Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks*



### **Day 8: Baltra Airport**

Early Morning: Baltra Airport depart or continue with a land extension

AM - Santa Cruz

Assisted by the naturalist guide and some crew members, the dinghy will bring you and your luggage to Baltra, where we will take the airport shuttle. Your guide will accompany you to the check-in counters in the departure hall.

This is certainly one adventure that will change your lives and you will remember forever... until you return perhaps?

*Included meals: Breakfast*

## INCLUSIONS

- **Accommodation:**
  - Accommodation on board the yacht for 7 nights/8 days
- **Meals:**
  - Pre-breakfast, breakfast, lunch, dinner meals plus in between-dive snacks
  - Coffee, tea, purified water
- **Transportation:**
  - Transfers from and to the airport within the Galapagos Islands
- **Permits, Fees, Guides:**
  - 3 Dive Masters total (ratio: 1 Dive Master per group of 4-5 divers)
  - You will be accompanied by the one representative of the research project team
  - Photography instruction & practical advice
- **Other:**
  - 2-4 dives per day, for a total of 19-20 dives during the trip
  - Technical equipment: tanks, weights, weight belt.
  - SCUBA tuba SMB
  - A variety of lectures about the Galapagos Islands and the Galapagos Whale Shark Project
  - Translation in Spanish, German and French

## EXCLUSIONS

- **Meals:**
  - Alcoholic beverages and bottled drinks
- **Transportation:**
  - Flights to/from the Galapagos Islands - can be included upon request
  - Please note: To arrive in the Galapagos Islands, you must first fly into either Quito or Guayaquil Airports. From there, you will fly to Baltra Island, where our trip begins. There is no way to arrive to Baltra Island other than by plane.
- **Permits, Fees, Guides:**
  - Galapagos National Park tax (\$100 pp, cash only) - payable upon arrival at Galapagos Airport
  - Transit Control Card (\$20 pp, cash only) - payable in cash at Quito or Guayaquil Airport of departure for Galapagos
- **Other:**
  - Personal equipment: Wetsuit, BCD (Buoyancy control device/jacket), regulator, booties, fins, mask, dive computer, gloves, hoods, dive light
  - Camera
  - Nitrox (\$ 150 / per week)
  - Dive Accident/MedEvac Insurance
  - Personal expenses



- Onboard gratuities, (always optional)