

***ITINERARY FOR: Hofstra University students and professors, 4<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> January 2009.*****VISITING: Galapagos Islands (Land-based), Quito and Andes and the Amazon Jungle.**

4<sup>th</sup> Jan

Arrival in Quito

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Group transfer from Quito airport to the hostel, ten minutes away. Hostel Fuente de Piedra.

5<sup>th</sup> Jan

Quito to San Cristobal Island, Galapagos

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After breakfast, an early morning airport transfer and flight will take you to the island of San Cristobal, the site of Charles Darwin's first stop in Galapagos. Here, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. After lunch, you'll make your way to the top of the island through La Soledad for panoramic views over the Pacific and other Galapagos Islands. After this, you'll ride downhill on mountain bikes for an exhilarating trip through the various vegetation zones of the island. You'll pass through the settlement of El Progreso and end up back in the town of Puerto Baquerizo.

After a visit to the Interpretation Centre to learn about the mysterious history of "The Enchanted Islands" you'll spend the rest of the day on Mann Beach for a swim where playful sealions and gliding frigates are often observed.

The evenings welcome dinner will be served with some of the islands fresh fish and produce. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included (B,L,D).

6<sup>th</sup> Jan

Isla, Lobos, Kicker Rock and Cerro Brujo, San Cristobal

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Today begins with a short ride in the Christine, your inter-island transport for the next few days.

After 30 minutes you'll stop in Isla Lobos to observe nesting frigates and blue-footed boobies. This is followed by a snorkel with the playful young sealions, one of the snorkeling highlights.

You'll then continue on to Kicker Rock, the dramatic yellow remains of a Tuff Cone protruding out of the ocean like a sky-scraper. Here you'll be able to snorkel with Sea-turtles, manta rays and maybe the harmless Galapagos Sharks, among a lot more.

This will be followed by a visit to the white coral beach at Cerro Brujo, one of the most beautiful beaches on the island, returning to port by late afternoon. (B,L)

7<sup>th</sup> Jan

La Galapaguera, San Cristobal

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A 2 hour early morning launch ride will get you to the start of the trail to La Galapaguera. This is where the majority of the endemic subspecies of San Cristobal giant tortoises can be found in their natural habitat. The 10-mile hike will take you through the dry zone of the island, laden with finches and the endemic Chatham Mockingbirds.

Upon reaching the beach you'll indulge in a well-earned swim, returning back to port by late afternoon. (B,L)



8<sup>th</sup> Jan

San Cristobal to Isabela Island, via Floreana

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An early morning final departure from San Cristobal will take you to the eastern islets of Floreana, four hours away. The journey may take in dolphins and Waved Albatross on the way.

Snorkeling will be the menu of the day in some of the best sites in Galapagos, with superb schools of tropical fish. After 2-3 immersions, you'll continue on to Puerto Villamil on Isabela Island. (B,L,D)

9<sup>th</sup> Jan

Sierra Negra Volcano, Isabela

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Today you'll ride to the top of Sierra Negra Volcano, one of the most active volcanoes in Galapagos and the second largest active crater in the world at 6-miles diameter. A walk will take you along the caldera rim and to the site of a recent eruption surrounded by majestic lava flows, sulphur and steam vents with a backdrop of dramatic views of out-lying islands. Upon reaching port in mid-afternoon, you'll visit the giant tortoise breeding centre, run by the national park and the biggest of its kind in the islands.

An evening relaxing on the empty beaches that surround this town is a perfect end to a perfect day. (B,L)

10<sup>th</sup> Jan

Puerto Villamil, Isabela

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By pick up truck and on foot you'll make your way to the wall of tears, built by convicts many years ago. Along the way we'll observe pink flamingos, also stopping at the lookout and one of the many natural pools, short walking trails, beaches and mangrove swamps

along the way. After lunch you'll go kayaking, affording close observations of penguins up close, the only ones found close to the equator. (B, L, D)

11<sup>th</sup> Jan

Highlands of Santa Cruz Island

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Today is an early morning departure to the Island of Santa Cruz. Upon arrival, you'll visit its highlands, observing some of the biggest giant tortoise in the wild, walking through extensive lava tunnels, and exploring Los Gemelos, the most intact endemic highland vegetation in Galapagos. Here, the geological formations, finches and other features of this natural cloud forest will be explained to you. Later in the day you'll head off to Tomas de Berlanga School to learn about a social education project. (B, L, D)

12<sup>th</sup> Jan

Bartolome Island

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An early pick and overland transfer by bus to northern Santa Cruz, to board the Yacht Santa Fe II for day tour to Bartolome Island. Bartolome is the jewel in the crown of Galapagos. Its majestic volcanic scenery is unrivaled and is the image of Galapagos. Galapagos penguins can be observed on the coastline and are often seen during the snorkel too. (B,L,D)



13<sup>th</sup> Jan

North Seymour & South Plaza Islands

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After breakfast you'll take an overland transfer to northern Santa Cruz by bus, to board the Yacht Santa Fe II for a day tour to North Seymour and South Plaza. North Seymour is home to blue-footed boobies, great and magnificent frigates, land iguanas and myriad sealions. After a great snorkel and a short navigation, you'll be disembarking in South Plaza. This is a tiny, colorful island with a high concentration of land iguanas and sealions. (B,L,D)

14<sup>th</sup> Jan

Volunteering with Conservation International

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Breakfast followed by a volunteering day with Conservation International. The areas of work and education will be in the highlands of Santa Cruz, concentrating on reducing the introduced plants and assisting the endangered native plants. (B,L)

15<sup>th</sup> Jan

Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS)

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An early morning visit to the CDRS will teach you about the conservation problems that have been aggravating the natural habitat and how the institution is dealing with it. Top of the agenda is the giant tortoise restoration projects that are underway.

A free day will ensue with options to kayak, explore the idyllic beach of Tortuga Bay or simply relax and snorkel on the CDRS beach. (B)

16<sup>th</sup> Jan

Fly to Quito

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Crossing north over Santa Cruz will take you to a narrow canal across which is the island of Baltra. Bus, ferry then bus will get you to the airport of Baltra, where you'll take your Quito bound flight. You'll arrive in the late afternoon at the hostel Fuente de Piedra. (B,L)

17<sup>th</sup> Jan

Otavalo Market

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2 hours North along the Pan-American highway is the town of Otavalo. Long before the Spanish Conquest, town squares like the one here, were used by the indigenous people to sell their products. This tradition has remained unchanged and in these colorful and noisy "mercados" the natives offer all of their wares in the largest market of its kind in South America, displaying a wide variety of goods, folklore, arts, crafts, ceramics and regional garments. Certain days also hold the fruit and animal market.

A day tour would take you to various surrounding villages and take in some breathtaking Andean views. (B,L)

18<sup>th</sup> Jan

Cotopaxi Volcano

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2 hours south along the Pan-American Highway is the most impressive active volcano of the Andes. With its limpet shape, and snow-capped peak, Cotopaxi Volcano provides a great way to get close to Andean summits. Glacial streams lead to rivers ending either in the Pacific or the Amazon.

Its surrounding foothills are a national park where condors sometimes soar past. At this high altitude (15,000ft), extreme weather has shaped an extraordinary flora.

Among the birds found here is the Ecuadorian hillstar: the world's highest humming bird. Many others make the national park their stopping ground, and the high mountain lake a great sight for bird-watching. (B,L)

19<sup>th</sup> Jan

Amazon

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A mid-morning flight will take you east into the Amazon jungle.

19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan

La Selva

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(B,L,D)

### **La Selva**

Get a taste of the Amazon. 'La Selva' ('The Jungle') is the more comfortable way of doing this. Only a half hour plane ride from Quito to Coca, then an exciting path down the Napo river, a tributary to the Amazon river, takes you to remotely situated Sacha Lodge.

The lodge consists of a series of cabins with insect screens and other 'creature' comforts. The dining area butts on to the mosquito-free lake. Although full of Cayman and piranhas, it is the most comfortable swim you can imagine.

Excursions take place from the lodge itself and will take you on to canopy walks, rowing down streams, visiting butterfly breeding areas. Staying put and relaxing in the lodge itself is a great option, often resulting in some of the best wildlife and bird experiences.

23<sup>th</sup> Jan

Amazon to Quito old town

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After quite a morning adventure upstream in the jungle and back to Quito, you'll be given an optional visit to the old colonial town of Quito.

The city's historical centre is one of the most famous and dazzling testimonies of the colonial past of America. It is the first Cultural Heritage site designated by UNESCO.

A tour would include a visit to the Independence Square at the very heart of the colonial city where public buildings, baroque churches and neoclassical monasteries were built. From the nearby hill named "El Panecillo", you can admire the entire city with its mixture of high, modern buildings and 17th century domes. (B)

24<sup>th</sup> Jan

Leave Ecuador

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An early morning transfer to the airport where you'll bid farewell to a memorable experience in this great country!

### **Not Included**

Meals where indicated (9 dinners & 2 lunches)

Tips (allow \$120 per person)

Galapagos National Park Tax (\$100 per person)

Ecuador departure tax (\$42 per person)

Trip to 'La Selva' (Quito airport – Quito airport inclusive)