



## SEA KAYAKING

- The sea kayak is a low-impact, non-technical and self-propelled craft devised by the ancient Inuit peoples in the Arctic Ocean. It has evolved into a stable, efficient and extremely sea-worthy vehicle, which makes wildlife observation easily accessible and totally unobtrusive from the water.
- Sea Kayaking the Enchanted Islands allows people of all ages and abilities to participate. The sea kayak is a welcome reprieve for the weary knees and backs of hikers and opens up a new paddling realm for canoeists. Paddle strokes are relatively simple and easy to learn, and all of our trips offer expert instruction from a professional guide.
- An elegant catamaran, the *S/C Nemo II*, is the floating base camp and the perfect vessel from which to launch our kayaks. The catamaran, with small but comfortable cabins, has a shallow draw, allowing access to coves and inlets the larger ships can't touch.

## WILDLIFE

- The Galápagos is one of those rare destinations where you become accustomed to being surprised. Nothing quite compares to the joy of observing animals in the wild here, or the sense of wonder and privilege felt while spending time with creatures that don't run or fly away when humans approach. The Galápagos are home to many endemic animals, most of which are fearless because of their lack of natural predators.
- From the world's only seagoing lizards to flightless cormorants and penguins, flamingoes, inflatable frigate birds, wave albatrosses, clownish boobies, patriarchal giant tortoises and 13 species of Darwin's finches, you can enjoy thrilling encounters with these animals—up close and in large numbers—that are completely at ease among human visitors.
- There are extraordinary opportunities to swim with sea lions, fur seals, dolphins, manta rays, eagle rays and golden rays, as well as thousands of over 300 species of colorful fish. The more adventurous may relish the chance to snorkel with the docile white-tipped reef sharks or even hammerheads. Marine turtles and whales are commonplace and simply add to the magic of these enchanted isles.
- No species has done more to upset the delicately balanced ecosystem of the Galápagos than *Homo sapiens*. Almost all extinctions of native species began with and followed the arrival of the first recorded visitor to the archipelago in 1535. The islands are now safeguarded by the Galápagos National Park Service and the Charles Darwin Research Station.

## VEGETATION

- The plants of Galápagos are equally fascinating. In the highlands, there are many species of the indigenous *Scalesia* ("tree daisies"), as well as tree ferns, bromeliads, and orchids. Giant prickly pear and candelabra cacti grow near the coastal areas. Vivid morning glories and mats of bright red sesuvium can be found on the shores. Galápagos also has its very own native species of cotton, tomato, pepper, guava, and passionflower. Many kinds of plants, particularly those belonging to the daisy family, have evolved on the different islands into whole arrays of endemic species, providing scientists with classic examples of adaptive radiation.

### Sample Itinerary

We pride ourselves in running a relaxed and always flexible schedule. Every trip is different depending upon the group, other trips in the area, and sometimes the weather. It is important to note that the Galápagos National Park maintains a system of itinerary submission, review and approval in order to steward responsible eco-tourism. At any time, we may be instructed by officials to reorganize our destinations or change them

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accordingly. Your flexible attitude and spirit of adventure are much appreciated by the Islanders who so graciously let us visit their park. The following is a sample of what your trip might be like.

#### **Day 1: Flight to Quito, Ecuador**

- Upon arrival at the Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito, you will be met by an Explorers' Corner representative and transferred to your hotel. Dinner is on your own this evening (it's likely you will be on the plane during dinner, arriving late in the evening). Originally a majestic colonial house, your hotel is an intimate and unique accommodation, centrally located in downtown Quito. *Hotel Vieja Cuba*

#### **Day 2: Quito, City Tour, Welcome Dinner**

- This morning you have time to relax after your travel. Lunch is on your own and the front desk can offer suggestions. After lunch, we will provide a half-day city tour of Quito's Old Town. Colonial Quito is a UNESCO World Heritage site and well worth the time to visit. Resting atop a high plateau flanked by active volcanoes, the city sits at just over 9000 feet. This evening we'll gather for a welcome dinner and briefing then prepare and pack for our upcoming adventure. *Hotel Vieja Cuba* (B, D)

#### **Day 3: Flight to the Galápagos Islands / Board S/C Nemo II / Santa Cruz**

- We'll take an early morning flight to Galápagos, refueling in Guayaquil before we arrive at the airport in Baltra, a former U.S. Air Force base during WWII. After passing through Park inspection where the entrance fee is collected, our naturalist guide will meet us at baggage claim and escort us by bus, then panga (motorized skiff), to our waiting vessel, the S/C Nemo II. This first-class sailing catamaran, accommodating just twelve guests, will be our home for the next week as we cruise the archipelago.
- Once underway, our first destination is Bachas Beach on the island of Santa Cruz. This empty strand of beach with its fine white-powder sand is a prominent egg-laying site for the Pacific green sea turtle. Flamingoes are also frequently spotted here, wading gracefully in the saline lagoons behind the sand berm. We also keep an eye out for a rusted pontoon, a relic of the Second World War, from which this beach derives its name. "Bachas" was the locals' attempt to pronounce "barges," two of which were wrecked offshore during the war and the corruption of the English name stuck. This evening, we settle in to our floating home and enjoy dinner aboard, followed by a safety talk and orientation by our naturalist guide, including an introduction to our kayaks. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

#### **Day 4: Santa Cruz Highlands and Charles Darwin Research Station**

- This morning we discover a very different side of Santa Cruz as we ascend to its misty heights. Here in the highlands where dry coastal vegetation transitions to wet meadows, moss and lichen-bedecked forest, we find a stark contrast to the lower elevations. Our destination is the Tortoise Reserve, where we'll track and view these ancient, amiable creatures in their lush natural setting. The islands' namesake, "Galápagos" is the common name for "saddle" in Spanish, referring to the shape of the tortoise's shell. These slow-moving land-based turtles can weigh up to 600 pounds and have a life span in excess of 150 years! When Darwin visited the Galápagos in 1835, the vice-governor of the islands told him he could identify what island a tortoise was from simply by looking at it – there were distinctive variations in each. Darwin observed the same phenomenon with finches and mockingbirds, identifying differences in species from island to island, eventually leading to his theory of natural selection.
- Near the Tortoise Reserve we may also visit a network of subterranean lava tubes. Some offer easy access via wooden stairways descending to the mouth of their arched cave entrances. We make our way into the cool, dimly lit tubes through the naturally formed passages, marveling at the fantastic rock formations in their interiors. Sturdy, non-slip footwear is essential, and some hikers may prefer to bring a flashlight.

- Dropping back to sea level, we continue to the main town on Santa Cruz, Puerto Ayora. Here we'll have lunch, followed by a visit to the world-renowned Charles Darwin Research Station, where international scientists conduct biological research dedicated to conservation of the unique habitat and species of the Galápagos. During our tour we'll have a chance to see some of the islands' more famous denizens, including giant tortoise hatchlings so small they could fit in the palm of one's hand and perhaps "Lonesome George," a centenarian tortoise believed to be the last of his sub-species. Once pushed to the brink of extinction, giant tortoises are making a comeback, thanks to the efforts of the scientists working here at the Darwin Station. We may also see up to seven species of Darwin's finches flitting through the bushes in the vicinity.
- There's time this afternoon to stroll around the lively town of Puerto Ayora, with its many shops, art galleries and open-air bars and cafes. Sea lions often congregate along the harbor front, waiting for leftovers from the fishing boats unloading their catch. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

#### **Day 5: Cerro Brujo, Kicker Rock and Isla Lobos**

- During the night, we've crossed to the north side of San Cristobal Island, where we will land at Cerro Brujo. This fabulous expanse of powdery white sand is home to a vast colony of sea lions as well as blue-footed boobies, pelicans, egrets and marine iguanas. Weather permitting, we explore by kayak, paddling through the evocative stone arches and grottoes created by the action of the waves on the lava shores. Our special park permit allows our more hardy paddlers to make the 2-hour crossing to Kicker Rock, a dramatic volcanic tuff cone that rises abruptly almost 500 feet from the ocean's surface. We get a taste of vigorous ocean paddling on this excursion, with the backup of the panga following behind and our catamaran nearby. After our paddle, if the swells are manageable, we have a chance to dive from the boat to snorkel in the deep water where we often see gentle reef sharks.
- By early afternoon we set course westward to Isla Lobos, with lunch served on the way. Frigate birds soar overhead as we anchor in a picturesque turquoise bay on the lee side of the island. We make a dry landing, greeted by a resident colony of sea lions. There are few highlights of a trip to the Galápagos as delightful as a swim with these friendly creatures, which we are able to do from our catamaran moored in the bay. The curious youngsters especially enjoy engaging with us in some underwater ballet! *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

#### **Day 6: Espanola and Gardner Bay**

- This morning we arrive at Espanola, oldest and southernmost of the Galápagos Islands. We'll hike for an hour or two to the headlands of Punta Suarez, one of the archipelago's most prolific wildlife habitats. Espanola's remote location, secluded from the other main islands, has resulted in a great number of endemic species found here, including the "Christmas iguana" – a marine iguana so nicknamed for its red and green color combination unique to this island. Bird life abounds and includes endemic Hood mockingbirds, blue-footed and masked boobies, magnificent frigate birds and Galápagos hawks. Espanola is also the world's main nesting site for the enormous waved albatross, with its stunning 7- to 8-foot wingspan. These birds nest atop the vertical cliffs, which provide a perfect runway for the fledglings' initial flight over the ocean in late winter.
- Returning to our boat, we weigh anchor and set out for the northeastern part of the island, with lunch along the way. On a 2-hour paddle we circumnavigate Gardner and Osborn islands just offshore, returning afterward to relax at idyllic Gardner Bay. This long stretch of beach is exquisite, with the most transparent aquamarine water in the Galápagos. Sea lions laze by the dozens on the white coral sand, and we've no trouble encouraging the young ones to cavort with us in the water, sometimes swimming up to stare in our masks as we snorkel. Galápagos mockingbirds are social, too, often coming right up to our feet and occasionally climbing on top of them. Pacific green sea turtles frequent the shoreline along

the rocky part of the beach. Our peaceful reverie among these charismatic creatures continues as we watch the sun set over the bay before returning to our catamaran for the night. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

#### **Day 7: Floreana Island and Post Office Bay**

- On Floreana we go ashore at Punta Cormorant. Despite the point's name, there are no cormorants here, but there is plenty of other wildlife to make up for that. Not far from our beach landing, a palo santo forest surrounds a brackish lagoon that's home to flamingos. We hike in to see them, and then continue walking to a pristine bay known for its remote turtle nesting areas. As we stand at the edge of this sheltered beach, we suddenly realize the water is teeming with rays that blend into the sand, occasionally stirring it up as they swish their tails, burrowing below the surface.
- We venture out to Devil's Crown, arguably the best place to drift-snorkel in Galápagos. We zip out by panga, then enter the water, taking advantage of the strong current to float past the steep walls of these underwater volcanic formations. We'll spy large schools of colorful fish, and we may see sea turtles and white-tipped reef sharks.
- Next we explore Isla Floreana's "Post Office Barrel," established by British whalers in 1793, where you can still drop off mail, sans stamps. You'll enjoy sorting through the cards and letters in search of one that you can deliver in person when you get home; that's how the system works! Make sure to bring your own cards to "mail" from the barrel.
- Further inland, we descend into a lava tube for a quick swim in a subterranean pool before hiking to the top of Empress Point for a commanding view of the north shore. Late this afternoon, pending permission from the park authorities and safe paddling conditions, we embark on a 2-hour paddle around the northwestern point of Post Office Bay, where we are sometimes lucky in spotting penguins in the secluded bay. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

#### **Day 8: Isla Santa Fe and South Plaza**

- The protected small bay on Santa Fe's northeast coast is an exceptionally picturesque anchorage. We land on the sandy beach where we encounter a sea lion colony guarded by large, competing bulls. A trail climbs to a scenic viewpoint atop a cliff, then into a forest of large prickly pear cactus. Here we'll look for the largest species of land iguana in the Galápagos, unique to this island. These patient lizards are often found beneath the cactus, waiting for the tasty fruit to drop. Keep an eye skyward for the endemic Galápagos hawk, the archipelago's only raptor. We may have time for snorkeling here before returning to the *Nemo II* to begin our afternoon kayak excursion.
- We set out for a 2-hour paddle along Santa Fe's north coast where we'll find sea caves used by brown noddies for nesting and scout for Pacific green and leatherback sea turtles. Depending on sea conditions we may head south once we make the point to explore some larger sea caves to the southwest.
- In the early afternoon we sail to South Plaza. Lying just a few hundred yards off the east coast of Santa Cruz, South Plaza is one of the smallest islands yet rich in diverse flora. Just over 400 feet wide, it was formed by streaming lava forced up from the bottom of the ocean. We ascend the trail to a dramatic view of the ocean and we may see manta rays swimming below. South Plaza also has a significant sea lion population, with a colony of bachelors who sit atop the cliffs and polish surrounding rocks with oil from their fur. Overhead we'll see red-billed tropic birds, and Nazca and blue-footed boobies catching rides on the strong wind currents. If conditions allow, we can jump off the boat to do some snorkeling. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

### **Day 9: Sombrero Chino and Bartolome**

- We start the morning with a visit to Sombrero Chino Island – which really does look like a Chinese hat! We take a short hike and snorkel here, hoping the playful resident penguin family may opt to join us. Then we paddle two hours through the Bainbridge Island group, shaped like a string of mushroom tops floating in the sea.
- Back aboard, we enjoy lunch as we sail to Bartolome. Hiking to the stark volcanic summit, we get a hawk’s eye view of Pinnacle Rock, famous as the backdrop in the movie “Master and Commander.” We also have a view of Santiago Island to the north, volcanically formed Sullivan Bay, and our catamaran, far below. On our walk we observe many unique lava formations, learning about the islands’ fiery origins as we go. After a panga excursion to view penguins, we’re treated to some of the best snorkeling in the Galápagos as we explore the submerged base of Pinnacle Rock. This underwater playground is home to enormous schools of fish, white-tipped reef sharks and sea turtles. On the ocean floor, large rays are camouflaged in the sand.
- Tired after a day of active adventures but enormously satisfied, we’re happy to board the Nemo II and sail again for Santa Cruz. *S/C Nemo II* (B, L, D)

### **Day 10: Isla Santa Cruz / Return to Quito**

- A last day on the water reveals yet more wonders. Black Turtle Cove, a sea turtle sanctuary, is a living illustration of how mangroves alter the marine environment to create a rich and unique habitat. Four species of mangrove crowd the lagoon, which stretches almost a mile inland. As we drift through the placid waters in our kayaks, we’re likely to see spotted eagle rays and cow-nosed or golden rays, which swim in a diamond formation. White-tipped reef sharks are also visible in the transparent sea, and Pacific green sea turtles frequently break the surface for air. Sea birds, including pelicans, herons and egrets, come to feed in the cove.
- As our time in the Enchanted Isles comes to a close, we are reluctant to leave. Our flight back to Quito departs from Baltra Airport this afternoon, however, and we return to the capital where we’ll enjoy a farewell dinner together. *Hotel Vieja Cuba* (B, L, D)

### **Day 11: Return Home**

- Transfer is provided to the Quito airport for departing flights. For those interested in extending their stay in Latin America, we offer an excellent extension to Machu Picchu. Please call our office for details. (B)

### **What’s Included?**

- Fully crewed sail boat with naturalist kayak guide
- 3 nights lodging in Quito (based on double occupancy)
- 7 nights accommodation on catamaran (based on double occupancy)
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Airport transfers
- All kayaking gear and safety equipment
- All activities as noted in the itinerary
- Ground transportation

### **What’s Not Included?**

- Flights to/from Quito, Ecuador
- Flights to/from Galápagos approximately US\$525
- Galápagos Immigration/Transit Card US\$10 per person

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- Galápagos National Park entrance fee US\$100 per person, US\$50 per child under 12, cash only
- Single supplement US\$100 (applicable for Hotel Vieja Cuba only; catamaran cabins are based on double occupancy and solo travelers will be assigned a roommate of the same gender)
- Cabins 1 & 2: guaranteed lower double US\$100
- Meals not covered in the itinerary
- Alcohol and beverages at restaurants, hotels and onboard
- Insurance of any kind, including **mandatory** medical evacuation and suggested cancellation insurance
- Medical immunizations (if necessary)
- Items of a personal nature (an equipment list will be provided)
- Gratuities

## **Terms & Conditions**

### **Reservations & Deposit**

- An \$800/person deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

### **Pricing**

- We believe travel experiences are enhanced by small group sizes. In order to operate with a limited number of participants, our trips are priced according to size and the number of full-paying passengers determines group size. Explorers' Corner staff guests, guides in training or trip doctors are not included. At 45 days, your trip cost will be adjusted down if the group size is 8 or more full-paying guests and the additional fees will be refunded.

### **Cancellations & Refunds**

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, please notify us as soon as possible. All payments are nonrefundable and we regret that we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, **we strongly urge you to investigate trip insurance** (see Insurance).

### **Cancelled Trips**

- Travel Outdoors, Inc. and the outfitter Explorers' Corner reserve the right to cancel any trip due to insufficient sign-ups (**this trip requires a minimum of 6 guests**). In such a case, you will be given a full refund of the tour cost, but Travel Outdoors, Inc. and Explorers' Corner are not responsible for additional expenses incurred in preparation for the trip.

### **Medical**

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying a Travel Outdoors trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

### **Insurance**

- Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, **we require that you purchase medical evacuation insurance to participate in this expedition**. Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website at [www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635](http://www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635) for inexpensive options that cover this requirement. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury, as well as including the coverage required above. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on a river trip, evacuation could be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and we accept no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed, or stolen property.

### **Liability Waiver**

- Everyone is required to sign a standard release form before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with Travel Outdoors cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

### **Responsibility—An Important Notice**

- Travel Outdoors, Inc., Explorers' Corner and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly

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or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings (weather and other factors). There is risk in whitewater rafting, particularly during high-water conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to "self-help" and "float-it-out" without further endangering yourself or others. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time.

- On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

#### **Explorers Corner**

- Explorers' Corner, a travel partner of Travel Outdoors, Inc. is the operator of this trip. Upon arrival, a representative will meet you and escort you throughout the program. These staff members are the very best and will strive to ensure your complete satisfaction.

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