

GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

Aboard La Pinta

Western
Carolina
UNIVERSITY

Highlands Biological
Station



HIGHLANDS
BIOLOGICAL STATION
*A Multi-Campus Center of Western Carolina University
Founded 1927*

DECEMBER 6-15, 2023

Isolated from the mainland for millions of years, the Galápagos Archipelago is central to our understanding of life's tenacious richness and drive towards change.



HIGHLANDS
BIOLOGICAL STATION

Here on these magnificent islands 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador, we'll find the rich abundance

of wildlife that so inspired Charles Darwin in 1835. Our home among the islands will be the luxury yacht *La Pinta*, a versatile 209-foot expedition vessel accommodating 48 guests. Designed for active exploration of the Galápagos, *La Pinta* also carries kayaks and a glass bottom boat that can be used at certain sites permitted by the National Park as well as wet suits and snorkeling equipment. The ship has a superb staff of resident naturalists who will be on hand to explain the islands' natural wonders. The islands offer a variety of terrain to explore including lava fields, lush green vegetation in the highlands, and sandy beaches. Among the spectacular geology of these volcanic islands, we'll find the Giant Galápagos tortoises, flocks of frigate birds and blue-footed boobies, Darwin's finches and Galápagos penguins, colonies of marine iguanas and sea lions, along with other fascinating sea life—a fabulous archipelago of biological rarities and geological marvels, “a little world within itself” as Charles Darwin declared. Each day offers several face-to-face encounters with animals and birds that are remarkably unafraid of humans. The program also offers the opportunity to explore Quito's celebrated historic center, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The trip concludes in Guayaquil.

SHIP: *La Pinta*

COVER: MARINE IGUANAS



LAND IGUANA



DRY LANDING



GALÁPAGOS TORTOISE



Study Leader

Your study leader is DR. JAMES (JIM) COSTA, executive director of the Highlands Biological Station and professor of biology at Western Carolina University where he teaches biogeography, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and co-teaches a comparative temperate-tropical ecology field course at Highlands Biological Station and Wildsumaco Biological Station in Ecuador.

Jim has written extensively on the explorer-naturalists Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverers of evolution by natural selection, and has traveled among the Galápagos Islands over a dozen times. His books include *The Annotated Origin* (Harvard, 2009), *Wallace, Darwin, and the Origin of Species* (Harvard, 2014), *Darwin's Backyard: How Small Experiments*

Led to a Big Theory (Norton, 2017), and most recently the new Wallace biography *Radical by Nature: The Revolutionary Life of Alfred Russel Wallace* (Princeton, 2023) and *Darwin and the Art of Botany* (Timber, 2023). Recipient of the Wallace Medal and a Trustee of the Charles Darwin Trust, Jim has been awarded research fellowships at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, the LuEsther T. Mertz Library of the NY Botanical Garden, and the DFG-Centre for Advanced Study at the University of Hamburg. For many years he co-instructed Harvard's summer program on Darwin and evolution at Oxford University, and is a long-time research associate of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard and study leader/lecturer for the Harvard Alumni Association Travel Program.



SEA TURTLE



SALLY LIGHTFOOT CRABS



SEA LION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

USA / QUITO

Depart the U.S. on a flight to Quito, Ecuador and transfer to the hotel upon arrival.

HILTON COLÓN QUITO (MEALS ALOFT)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

QUITO

Nestled in a high Andean valley 9,350 feet above sea level, Quito is just 14 miles south of the equator and was declared the first "Cultural World Heritage Site" by UNESCO in 1978. This morning, depart on an all-day city tour of Quito's wonderfully preserved colonial section, including the graceful plazas and arcades, the Cathedral's unique gargoyles, and the impressive gilded interior of La Compañía church among other points of interest. Included is a visit to a traditional chocolate maker in a colorful area of the city filled with art and traditions. Welcome lunch is at the historic Casa Gangotena. Evening is free. HILTON COLÓN QUITO (B,L)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

BALTRA & NORTH SEYMOUR ISLANDS

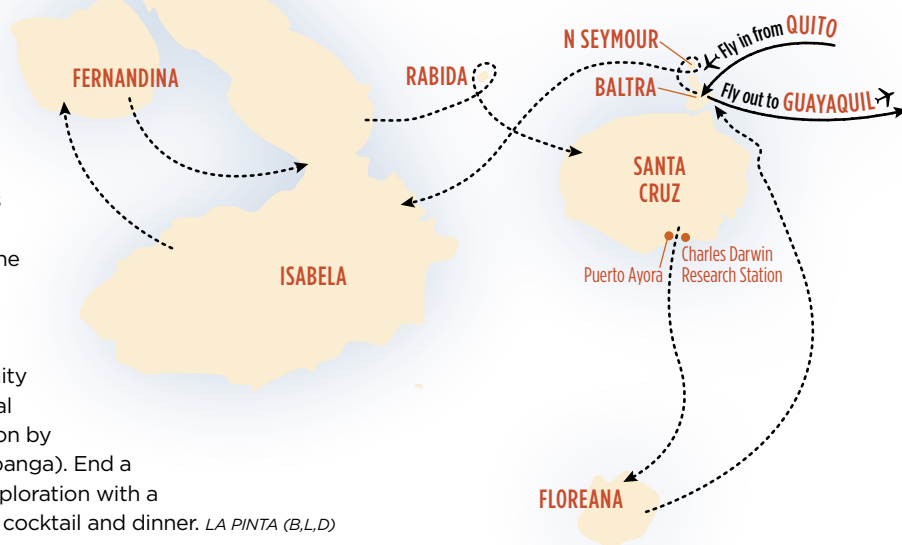
Fly to Baltra Island and transfer to the dock to board *La Pinta*. Welcome introductory briefing and lunch. After lunch, disembark on North Seymour Island, a volcanic uplift from the ocean floor resulting in a flat geological landscape and a large number of marine fossils. A tiny forest of silver-grey Palo Santo trees stands just above the landing, usually without leaves, waiting for the rains to burst into bloom. The other-worldly landscape of North Seymour is dotted with endemic giant prickly-pear cactus pollinated by a large beautiful bee. Practically one giant rookery, the island is teeming with colonies of blue-footed boobies, two species of frigatebirds,

swallow-tailed gulls, tropic-birds, and others, as well as sea lions and marine iguanas. There is also an opportunity for coastal exploration by dinghy (panga). End a day of exploration with a welcome cocktail and dinner. LA PINTA (B,L,D)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

ISABELA & FERNANDINA ISLANDS

Punta Vicente Roca, on the northern coast of Isabela Island, is made up of dramatic rock formations that plunge into the waters below. With no landing site, we explore the coast by skiff with naturalists to explain the rich geology of the area including remains of lava flows and tuff stone layers. Snorkel along the cliffs jam-packed with marine life including red-lipped batfish, frogfishes, Pacific seahorses, the endemic Camotillo, schools of barracuda and brown-striped snapper, not to mention an abundance of sea turtles. In the afternoon, proceed to Punta Espinoza on Fernandina Island, the youngest and most pristine island in the archipelago. While seemingly barren, Punta Espinoza has the highest population density of marine iguanas, with opportunities to see endemic Galápagos hawks, penguins (on the equator!), and amazing flightless cormorants amongst the astounding views of the surrounding volcanic landscape. LA PINTA (B,L,D)



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

ISABELA ISLAND

After breakfast, we disembark at Urbina Bay, on the western side of Isabela Island, the result of a tectonic uplifting of the shallow sea floor in 1954. Here the diverse terrain is made up of coral reefs that were pushed above sea level, sand, lava formations, pumice rock and even rhyolite. Be prepared to share space with large and colorful Galápagos land iguanas, as well as (occasionally) giant tortoises. This afternoon, there are good chances of spotting several species of whales while navigating the Bolívar Channel to Tagus Cove. On the northwest side of Isabela, secluded Tagus Cove is a historical site visited by Charles Darwin in 1835. It was a favorite hideaway for pirates and whalers over the centuries, and you can still see their ancient graffiti left behind. An uphill hike takes us to the back of Darwin Crater, filled with salt water, and attracting a range of bird species. We can



MARINE IGUANA



GALÁPAGOS PENGUIN



RABIDA ISLAND



LA COMPAÑÍA CHURCH



QUITO

snorkel or ride kayaks amid the dramatic landscape where you may see sharks, sea turtles and sea stars. *LA PINTA (B,L,D)*

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

RABIDA & SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS

In the morning, we disembark at Rabida Island's distinct red-colored beaches, a result of volcanic activity depositing high amounts of iron to the island's soil. A stroll along the beach allows us to observe a settlement of sea lions, marine iguanas, mockingbirds, yellow warblers, and Darwin's finches. This is a great place to snorkel from the beach. For non-snorkelers, we can ride our glass-bottom boat for an exploration of life underneath the waves, including white-tipped sharks and eagle rays. Following lunch, we continue to the north shore of Santa Cruz and the fascinating landscapes of Dragon Hill. Our walk includes circling a brackish water lagoon frequented by bright flamingos and pintail ducks, while further inland, the trail offers a beautiful view of the bay and the western islands of the archipelago, as well as the chance to observe land iguanas. *LA PINTA (B,L,D)*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

PUERTO AYORA & THE CHARLES DARWIN RESEARCH STATION / SANTA CRUZ (HIGHLANDS)

In the morning, disembark (dry landing) for a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station's giant tortoise breeding center,

within an impressive forest of endemic giant prickly-pear cactus. These are the headquarters of scientific investigation, conservation and the National Park administration. Following our visit, board our transport to enjoy lunch in the cooler highlands of Santa Cruz Island, a completely different ecosystem from the dryer coast, where we will see forests of the beautiful endemic Scalesia, or giant daisy-trees. The highlands are also excellent for exploring the exuberant vegetation where giant tortoises roam in the wild. We visit a giant tortoise reserve to meet these lumbering giants up-close. *LA PINTA (B,L,D)*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13

FLOREANA ISLAND

After breakfast, panga ride along the maze of channels on Floreana's north shore. Continue to Baroness Cove with its breathtaking views of Floreana. We land at Post Office Bay to visit the historic barrel that has been serving as a post office in the archipelago for over two centuries—one of Charles Darwin's stops. Kayaking and some snorkeling can be arranged here to see green pacific sea turtles and sea lions. Continue to Punta Cormorant, where we can snorkel or ride our glass-bottom boat along the coast of an extinct cone called "Champion Islet," where we will search for the extremely rare Floreana Mockingbird. Later in the afternoon, our visit to Punta Cormorant takes in an olivine-crystal beach, a popular spot for

sally lightfoot crabs, for an easy walk by a brackish water lagoon where various bird species may be observed. On the other side of the island, we come to a smooth coral sand beach where sea turtles come out at night to nest and stingrays cruise the shallow surf. *LA PINTA (B,L,D)*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

BALTRA ISLAND / GUAYAQUIL

Disembark at Baltra Island and transfer to the airport to take the flight back to Guayaquil on the mainland. Upon arrival, check into the hotel to rest and freshen up. In the early evening, gather for a festive farewell dinner. *HILTON COLÓN GUAYAQUIL (B,D)*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

GUAYAQUIL / U.S.

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the international flights back to the U.S. *(B)*

PLEASE NOTE: depending on your return flight schedule, you may depart for flights back to the U.S. late evening on December 14 or early morning or early afternoon on December 15. The hotel room at the Hilton Colón Guayaquil is included in the program cost for the night of December 14 and passengers may choose to use it until their flight home in the evening or stay the night and depart in the morning on the 15th. Other flight schedules may become available later.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The itinerary and program are subject to change without prior notice, due mainly to adjustments in the policies and regulations of the Galápagos National Park.

***DRY LANDING:** Guests step from the panga (dinghy) onto rocks or a dock.

****WET LANDING:** As the dinghy edges onto a sandy beach, guests step into approximately 20 cm (8 in) of water and wade ashore.



SWALLOW-TAILED GULLS



BLUE FOOTED BOOBY



FRIGATE BIRD

What to Expect

This program has been exclusively designed for Highlands Biological Station of Western Carolina University, family and friends to explore the Galápagos Islands. This is a moderately active program. In the Galápagos, walks are approximately one to two miles long (sometimes over uneven and rocky terrain) at a leisurely pace suitable for wildlife observation and photography. There will be wet landings on many islands. Panga or glass bottom boat rides along the coast and shorter walks are available for participants as an alternative to longer and more challenging excursions. There are opportunities for swimming and snorkeling and sea kayaking (snorkeling equipment, wetsuits, and kayaks are available aboard *La Pinta*) and internet service although available can be spotty. The Galápagos Islands are at sea level and temperatures range between the 70s and 90s°F in the islands. Travel is by regular scheduled commercial airlines, motor coach, air-conditioned ship, and inflatable "Zodiac-style" pangas. Quito has a spring-like climate for most of the year due to its high altitude (9,252 ft).

Program Cost Includes

- Educational program of lectures and discussions with Dr. James Costa
- All accommodations as specified in the itinerary including a 5-star hotel in Quito and Guayaquil
- A 7-day/6-night cruise aboard Yacht *La Pinta*, airport/hotel/pier transfers.
- All meals throughout the Galápagos cruise and on the mainland as specified in the itinerary
- Internal roundtrip airfare to the Galápagos islands (Quito/Galápagos/Guayaquil)
- Galápagos National Park entrance fee
- Professional English-speaking guides throughout
- Taxes, service and portage charges
- Basic gratuities to land based guides and drivers
- Turn-key experience under the leadership of an expert Tour Director
- Coordination and administration

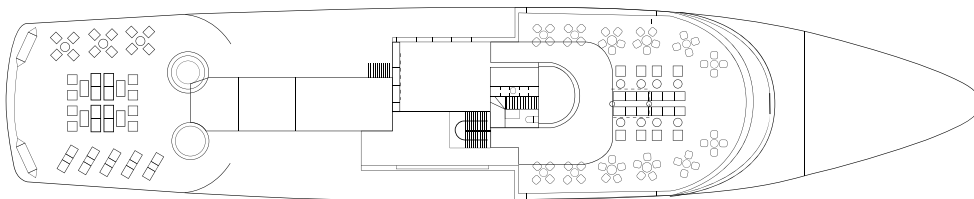
Program Cost Does Not Include

- International airfare (quoted separately)
- Customary shipboard gratuities; international departure tax from Ecuador (usually included in the cost of international ticket)
- Excess baggage charges
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Personal items such as laundry, fax or telephone calls
- Alcoholic beverages, dishes or beverages not included with meals
- Room service
- Passport fees
- Individual transfers
- Medical expenses, travel insurance, optional extensions or deviations from the scheduled tour. Tip to the tour director is at the passengers' discretion.
- Any increases in the in-tour airfare (included as part of the program cost), airport taxes, security, or fuel surcharges imposed after the initial pricing of the program are not included.

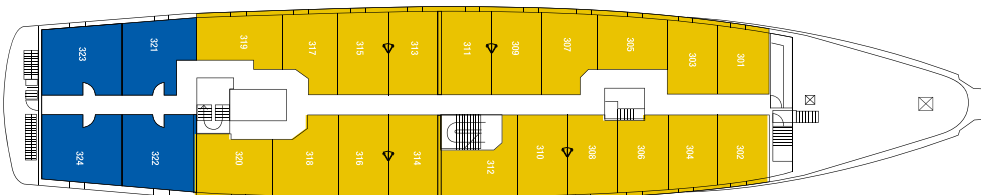
LA PINTA

La Pinta is a 209-foot luxury vessel featuring some of the largest cabins in the Galápagos, complete with floor-to-ceiling windows, spacious interiors and an overall design that minimizes the possibility of seasickness. The yacht's straightforward cabin configuration can accommodate up to 48 guests, and is distributed across the Cabin Deck. There are 20 Luxury Cabins (Twin/Doubles; 176 square feet) and 4 Luxury Plus Cabins (Triples; 247 square feet). All of the beds can be separated or joined according to guests' needs. Four cabins can be interconnected for friends or families traveling together. All cabins have air-conditioning, a safe deposit box, hair dryer, L'Occitane products, desk and chair, and satellite telephone. All the required equipment for exploration is ready and set for your convenience: a glass-bottom boat, kayaks, snorkeling equipment and wetsuits and our large and comfortable pangas. The ideal vessel for exploring the Galápagos in the most comfortable, stylish way, with three spacious decks to enjoy. Guests can admire sunny skies, evening sunsets, and starry nights from atop the Sun Deck, which features open (exposed) and covered (non-exposed) areas, such as: the outdoor Sky Bar, natural history library and conference room, observation lounge, hot tub, cardio gym, and more! On the Main Deck, passengers access the very comfortable dining room, in addition to the reception area, gift shop, and infirmary. Complete with a Cordon-Bleu gastronomy director, *La Pinta* will open up the islands for you like no other ship sailing these amazing waters.

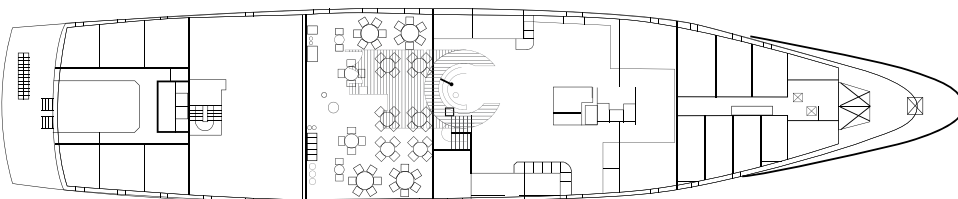
Any cabins for twin/double use, but used as a single, are limited to 2 cabins and prices are shown on the chart. Cabins for single used are subject to availability.



SUN DECK



CABIN DECK



MAIN DECK



PANGA



LUXURY CABIN



LUXURY PLUS CABIN



LOUNGE

Program Cost

(per person, based on double or triple occupancy):

LUXURY CABIN (MAX CAPACITY 2)

Double	\$10,695
Single	\$13,695

LUXURY PLUS CABIN (MAX CAPACITY 3)

Triple	\$10,695
Single	N/A

Sample Airfare

ATLANTA/QUITO/GUAYAQUIL/ATLANTA

(as of March 2023 and subject to change)

.....	\$835
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TERMS & CONDITIONS

RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS AND

FINAL PAYMENT To reserve a space on this program, a \$1,000 deposit is required per person. Please fill out and mail, e-mail, or fax the registration form. Deposits may be charged to a credit card. Reservations are acknowledged in order of receipt. **Final Payment is due on August 28, 2023 and must be paid by check.** Royal Adventures handles all invoicing. CST #2009579-40.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS All cancellations must be received in writing by Royal Adventures or by Highlands Biological Station from the participant. Cancellations within 14 days of booking: full refund of the trip deposit. Cancellations received up to 100 days prior to departure will be assessed a cancellations fee of \$1,000 per person. Cancellations received within 100 days (August 28, 2023) prior to departure are subject to a 100% penalty of all deposits and payments, regardless of the booking date. There are no refunds for unused meals, accommodations or other trip features or for any part of the program on which you choose not to participate.

PHYSICAL HEALTH Participation on the program required that passengers be in generally good health. Normal activities include leisurely walks, often over uneven terrain and excursions aboard Zodiac-type dinghies and wet and dry landings. It is essential that persons with any medical problems and related dietary restrictions make them known to us well before departure.

TRAVEL INSURANCE We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance as the cancellation penalty listed in the brochure will apply. An application for trip cancellation insurance will be available upon confirmation. Most insurance plans must be purchased within 14 days of paying the initial deposit in order to waive preexisting medical conditions as well as to purchase "Cancel for Any Reason" insurance. Neither Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University nor Royal Adventures accept liability for any airline cancellation penalty of a non-refundable airline ticket or other expenses incurred by the participant in preparing for the tour.

RESPONSIBILITY Royal Adventures, its owners, and employees act only as agents for the various independent suppliers and contractors providing transportation, hotel accommodations, restaurant, and other services connected with this tour. Such travel and services are subject to the terms and conditions under which such accommodations, services, and transportation are offered or provided, and the Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University and Royal Adventures and their respective employees, agents, representatives, and assigns, accept no liability, therefore. The Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University and Royal Adventures assume no liability for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or other irregularity that may be caused by the defect of any aircraft or vehicle or the negligence or default of any company or person engaged in carrying out or performing any of the services involved. Additionally, responsibility is not accepted for losses, injury, damages, or expenses of any kind due to sickness, epidemics, pandemics,

pathogens, weather, strikes, local laws, hostilities, wars, terrorist acts, acts of nature, quarantine, force majeure, animal or insect bites, or other such causes. All services and accommodations are subject to the laws of the country in which they are provided. If this tour is canceled due to a force majeure event or other forces beyond our control, only the recoverable portion of unused services or accommodations, if any, will be refunded or credited on a future Royal Adventures tour. A force majeure event, in relation to this tour, shall mean any circumstances beyond our control, including, but without limitation, to acts of God, explosion, flood, forceful wind, fire or accident, war or threat of war declared or undeclared, acts of terrorism, sabotage, insurrection, riots, strikes, civil disturbance, sickness, epidemics, pandemics, quarantines, government intervention or other unforeseeable events. Limitations on travel arising from the COVID-19 pandemic or other pathogens shall be considered a force majeure event. Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University and Royal Adventures reserve the right to make changes in the published itinerary or to the trip leaders whenever, in their sole judgment, conditions warrant, or if they deem it necessary for the comfort, convenience, or safety of the tour participants. They reserve the right to withdraw this tour without penalty. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour or to substitute another qualified leader or special guest. Baggage and personal effects are the sole responsibility of the owners at all times. The price of the program is given in good faith based on current tariffs and rates and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, airfare, or fuel increases will be passed onto participants. Neither the Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University nor Royal Adventures accepts the liability for any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable airline ticket. The air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. There are no refunds for unused meals, accommodations, or other trip features. I will not hold the Highlands Biological Station/Western Carolina University nor Royal Adventures and/or its employees or agents responsible for any expense or loss caused by my/ our failure to purchase trip cancellation and evacuation insurance coverage. As part of the consideration and right to participate in this tour, each participant will be asked to sign a liability release, assumption of risk, and hold harmless agreement.

TOUR SIZE: This tour exclusively designed for the Highlands Biological Station of Western Carolina University is limited to 20 participants on a first come-first serve basis. The minimum group size is 15. Should the minimum not be met, we reserve the right to levy a small group surcharge.

QUESTIONS Please visit <https://highlandsbiological.org/>, email Jim Costa (costa@email.wcu.edu), or phone: (828) 526-2602. Or contact Royal Adventures at (925) 820-6260 or 1-800-453-4754 or email: info@royaladventures.com.



Aboard La Pinta DECEMBER 6-15, 2023



Enclosed is a deposit for _____ (\$1,000 deposit per person) to hold _____ place(s) on the *Galápagos Islands* trip with Highlands Biological Station. Final payment is due August 28, 2023 by check. Scan the QR code to register online, [OR](#)

Please authorize credit card payment below, or make a check payable to Royal Adventures and send, along with completed reservation form, to: ROYAL ADVENTURES, 9 Crow Canyon Court, Suite 205, San Ramon, CA 94583.

NAME AS ON PASSPORT DATE OF BIRTH

NAME AS ON PASSPORT DATE OF BIRTH

STREET ADDRESS

CITY / STATE / ZIP

E-MAIL(S)

CELL PHONE

HOME PHONE OFFICE PHONE

PAYMENT OPTIONS

- ☐ Pay by check made out to "ROYAL ADVENTURES"
☐ Please charge the deposit of \$ _____ (\$1,000 per person) to:
☐ AMEX ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

CARD NUMBER

EXP DATE SEC CODE

ACCOMMODATIONS

- ☐ Luxury Cabin
☐ Luxury Plus Cabin (Triple)
☐ I am sharing with _____
(reservation form sent separately)
☐ I wish to have single accommodations
(limited availability—please call)

ROOM PREFERENCE

- ☐ 1 bed ☐ 2 separate beds

I/We confirm that I/we have carefully read the Program Cost, General Information and Responsibility sections of this brochure and agree to their terms on behalf of myself and of my party named above.

SIGNATURE DATE

SIGNATURE DATE



SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND

Highlights

EXPLORE the Galápagos Islands for 7 days with expert naturalists

ENHANCE your experience with lectures and discussions from Darwin and Galápagos expert Dr. James Costa

Fully professionally organized
“TURN-KEY” EXPERIENCE

SNORKEL alongside sea lions, sea turtles and Galápagos Penguins

MARVEL at the iconic giant Galápagos Tortoises, Blue-Footed Boobies, and Frigate Birds

VISIT Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its old city center, plazas, gilded churches, and museums—rich with Spanish colonial and pre-Columbian history



TRAVELER & GIANT TORTOISE