



MARK CARWARDINE



Galápagos Exclusive

with Mark Carwardine and Wildlife Worldwide Founder, Chris Breen

Probably the most famous wildlife-watching destination on Earth, and the place that provided the inspiration for Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection.

16 - 30 May 2024



About our trip

Aboard the exclusively chartered 16-berth *MV Beluga*, this 12-night voyage to the Galápagos explores no fewer than 12 islands in the archipelago. There will be photographic opportunities aplenty, both above and below the waves. Species we expect to encounter include: blue-footed boobies,

waved albatross, magnificent frigatebirds, red-billed tropicbirds, Galápagos flightless cormorants, marine iguanas, Galápagos penguins, all sorts of lava lizards and land iguana, Galápagos sealions, various species of Galapagos giant tortoise and, of course, umpteen different Galapagos finches. The snorkelling is some of the best - and easiest - in the world.

Itinerary (the following may change according to weather conditions and wildlife encounters)

Thu 16 May Fly to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, with free time to explore before overnighting in Casona de la Ronda hotel.

Fri 17 May Fly to **Baltra Island** in the Galápagos and head for the highlands of **San Cristóbal** and El Junco Lagoon, which lies in a collapsed crater of a volcano – it's the archipelago's only source of fresh water and a haven for birdlife such as the endemic San Cristóbal mockingbird and white-cheeked pintail. Head back to port to board the *Beluga* which will be home for the next 12 nights.

Fri 18 May In the morning, we visit Gardner Bay on the northeast coast of **Española Island** to see the Galápagos sealion colonies and go for a snorkel with tropical fish and even a manta ray or two. Then in the afternoon, we visit Punta Suarez, which is one of the finest walks in





the Galápagos, to see a colony of waved albatross, as well as Galápagos hawks, lava lizards, Nazca boobies, red-billed tropicbirds and Galápagos snakes.

Sat 19 May This morning we land at Punta Cormorant on

Floreana Island for a walk along the beach to a brackish lagoon, which is a hotspot for Caribbean flamingos and white-cheeked pintails.

Galápagos flycatchers are common over the volcanic cinders a short distance inland. Next we visit Devil's Crown for a spot of snorkelling and later in the day, we visit Post Office Bay to learn more about the human history of the Galápagos Islands.

Sun 20 May Next stop is **Santa**

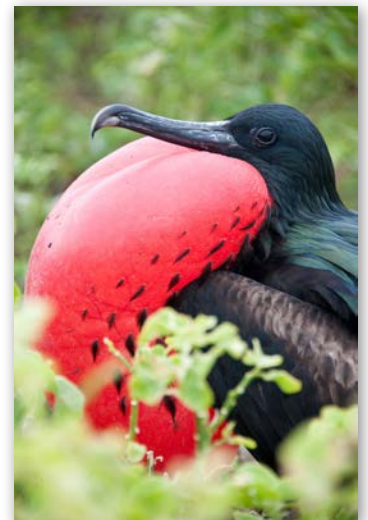
Cruz Island to visit Dragon Hill on the northwest coast. This is a great place to see land iguanas as well as flamingos, yellow warblers, Galápagos doves and some of the Darwin finches. In the afternoon, we land at Sullivan Bay on **Santiago Island**, which is famous for its lava flows. Once more, there is an opportunity to swim and snorkel from the beach - hopefully with playful sea lions - before heading back to the *Beluga* for dinner.

Mon 21 May Next stop is the island of **Genovesa** in the northeast corner of the main archipelago, to explore Darwin Bay. Following a trail to a tidal lagoon, we should see a variety of species, including marine iguanas, endemic lava gulls, great frigatebirds and large-beaked cactus finches - and perhaps a swim before returning to the *Beluga* for lunch. Then in the afternoon, we visit one of the most iconic locations on the Galápagos Islands: Prince Phillip's Steps on Genoveva. Ascending to the top of the plateau, we should encounter large numbers of red-footed boobies (it's thought as many as 200,000 nest on Genovesa), as well as red-billed tropicbirds, warbler finches, lava herons and Nazca boobies. Then we sail through the night to reach the island of Santa Cruz.

Tue 22 May Enjoy a panga ride around Black Turtle Cove on the north coast of **Santa Cruz Island**, a hotspot for various species of sea turtles and white-tipped reef sharks. In the afternoon, we head for the island's highlands to see giant tortoises and land iguanas, and visit the Charles Darwin Research Centre.

Wed 23 May Landing at Puerto Villamil on the island of **Rábida**, we have a closer look at the fascinating volcanic landscape as well as colonies of marine iguanas and sea lions, American oystercatchers, Laval lizards, and if we're lucky, Galápagos penguins.

Thu 24 May Arrive at **Isabela**, the largest island in the archipelago, and head by mini-bus to the caldera of Sierra Negra to see recent lava flows and parasitic volcanic cone landforms. Later there will be a chance to explore Puerto Villamil and its marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies as well as flamingos in the nearby lagoon.





Fri 25 May This morning we continue exploring **Isabela**, and land at Punta Moreno. The volcanic landscape is wildlife-rich, including Galápagos pintails, blue-winged teal, black-necked stilts, common gallinules, Caribbean flamingos and flightless cormorants. In the afternoon, we will explore Elizabeth Bay by panga, looking for Galápagos penguins and marine iguanas, and spotted eagle rays, white-tip reef sharks and green sea turtles.

Sat 26 May Today will be a guided walk along the shores of Urbina Bay on **Isabela** to see land iguana (thought to be the largest individuals in the archipelago). We also hope to see wild giant tortoises, flightless cormorants, blue-footed boobies and Galápagos brown pelicans. Later, we explore Tagus Cove and go up to the saltwater lake at Darwin's crater and enjoy some fabulous views.

Sun 27 May We sail overnight to the island of **Fernandina**, and this morning land at the iconic Punta Espinoza, renowned for its large colonies of marine iguanas. Exploring further, we should find other species such as Galápagos hawks. Galápagos penguin and flightless cormorants. Later, we head for Punta Vicente Roca

to enjoy panga rides along the cliffs to see seabirds, such as Nazca and blue-footed boobies. While snorkelling we hope to encounter sea lions, green sea turtles, marine iguanas, and even bottlenose dolphins.

Mon 28 May We wake up at the island of **Santiago**, and land on a black sand beach at Puerto Egas for a walk. We should see Galápagos fur seals and a sealion colony. Further inland, we will hopefully encounter some of the famous finches, including warbler, woodpecker, large tree and common cactus. During lunch, the *Beluga* sails to **Bartolome Island** where we make two landings, to explore both above and below the waves.

Tue 29 May This morning, we land on **North Seymour Island** for a walk on the beach and further into the interior of the island to look for colonies of blue-footed boobies, swallow-tailed gulls, and magnificent frigatebirds, as well as Galápagos snakes and sea lions. After this, we bid farewell to the crew on the *Beluga* and disembark and transfer back to Seymour Airport on **Baltra** to catch flights home.

Wed 30 May Arrive home.

Prices

Including flights from the UK, 15 days from £12,595 per person; excluding international flights, 13 days from £11,895 per person.

Group size

14

Price includes: Return flights between Ecuadorian mainland and Galápagos Islands, 1-night hotel in Quito, 11 nights aboard *Beluga*, most meals, transfers, guided excursions as described, services of boat crew and local naturalist guide, services of tour leaders Mark Carwardine and Chris Breen.

To book (and for more information)

Please contact Wildlife Worldwide, who are organising this trip: sales@wildlifeworldwide.com tel: 01962 302 055

