

Santa Cruz land based extension

4 Days / 3 Nights

Day	Itinerary	Meals
1	Accommodation only**	None
2	Tortuga Bay - Bay Tour	B
3	Island-Hopping: Bartolome or South Plazas or North Seymour or Santa Fé (subject to availability)	B / BL
4	Santa Cruz Highlands and Transfer out	B

B: Breakfast / L: lunch / BL: Box Lunch / D: Dinner

Itinerary Details

DAY 1: Accommodation only

Accommodation: Ikala Galápagos

Meals: None

DAY 2: Tortuga Bay & Bahía Academia Tour, Santa Cruz

Tortuga Bay on Santa Cruz Island has topped many a list as one of the best beaches in the Galápagos archipelago. Picture perfect swathes of white sand overlooking turquoise water make it a great spot to relax and enjoy nature.



Your guide will meet you at the hotel and escort you to **Tortuga Bay**, which is a short walk from the southwest end of Puerto Ayora. The bay is divided into two sections: The first, Playa Brava (angry beach), is a favourite among surfers early in the morning but the strong currents here make it an endurance sport for swimming. Beyond Playa Brava is Playa Mansa (calm beach), a smaller beach off of a protected lagoon where snorkelling along the shores is a great opportunity to spot sea turtles, rays, white-tipped reef sharks, and some of the sea birds that live and feed in the mangroves. There is also a self-guided trail through the Opuntia (Prickly Pear) Cactus forest to spot wildlife.

The afternoon will be spent on The Bay Tour which lasts around 3 hours. Starting from Puerto Ayora's main pier, most of the tour is done by yacht and goes through 5 different sites around Bahía Academia, with several snorkelling locations and two where you will have the opportunity to take a 15-20 minute walk amongst the flora and fauna. The first stop is a small islet called **Loberia**, also known as Islote Caamaño, where you can get close to the large colony of friendly sea lions which reside there. Other stops and activities include:

Canal del Amor (Lovers Channel) - with its calm waters flowing between the craggy rock formations this a beautiful location to enjoy the scenery and observe a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Canal de los Tiburones (Shark Channel) - accessed on foot, Shark Channel is a small crevice filled with clear turquoise water where you can see whitetip sharks and enjoy spectacular views of Santa Cruz Island.

Playa de Los Perros (Dogs Beach) - so named because of the dog crabs that were found here (there are no canines), walk through cactus forests to a remote beach where you will find Sally Lightfoot crabs, marine iguanas and turtles feeding along the shoreline.

La Grietas (The Cracks) - swim or snorkel in the crystal clear, emerald green waters of this fissure canyon between two giant volcanic rock walls. The large crevasse is filled from one end by fresh water from an underground river and sea water from the other end creating a picturesque brackish environment that is perfect for a refreshing dip.

DAY 3: ISLAND HOPPING TOUR

Options: Bartolomé Island, South Plazas, North Seymour or Santa Fe
(subject to availability / day of the week)

PLEASE NOTE: All of these options involve walking / trekking over rocky terrain so you will need comfortable walking shoes or trainers / sneakers; flip-flops or sandals are not suitable.

Option 1: Bartolomé Island



Departure: pick up from hotel at 06:00 (approximately).

Wildlife: Penguins, Sea Lions, sea turtles, marine iguanas.

A 45-50 minute drive from Puerto Ayora will bring you to Itabaca Channel where you will board a boat for the 2 - 2 ½ hour cruise to Bartolomé. Located Northwest of Santa Cruz this small islet offers some of the most spectacular landscapes and scenery of the Galápagos Islands. A walk up a 600 metre trail leads to the summit of Bartolomé's volcanic cone which provides panoramic views of the surrounding islands and a variety of geographical formations such as spatter cones, tuff cones and lava tubes.

After the walk a dingy ride along the coastline will give you the opportunity to see the Galápagos penguin. This curious, endemic bird nests amongst the fissured lava flows and ventures into the crystal-clear waters of Bartolome to fish along with the sea lions and marine birds.

In the afternoon, you will go to **Sullivan Bay** on Santiago Island where you will have the opportunity to snorkel and discover the marine wildlife around the island, or you can relax and enjoy the beach.

Lunch, consisting of fresh fish, salads, rice and dessert is included in the tour and will be served on the boat. Special meals / dietary requirements need to be requested at the time of booking.

Option 2: South Plazas Island



Departure: Pick up from hotel at 08:00 a.m. (approximately)

Wildlife: sea lions, land, marine and hybrid iguanas, Galápagos lizards, Darwin's Cactus finches, Blue-footed boobies, Nazca Boobies, Red-billed Tropicbird, frigates, marine turtles,

Following pick up from your hotel, you will take a 45 minute coach ride north from Puerto Ayora to Itabaca Channel where you will board a yacht. The first stop on this full day excursion will be **Punta Carrion** on the northeastern tip of Santa Cruz where you will be able to experience what is considered to be one of the best snorkelling locations in the Galápagos. The shallow waters play host to a wide variety of marine life including colourful reef fish, sea turtles, marine iguanas, rays, Galápagos sharks and much more. If you don't want to get wet, you can relax on the boat and enjoy the scenery.

After the snorkelling stop at Punta Carrion, the yacht will head east to **South Plazas** which takes around 1½ hours. Isla Plazas Sur, as it is called in Spanish, has an amazing and colourful landscape covered with Sesuvium which changes colour from green to red, with orange and purple tones depending on the time of year.

Sea lions will greet you as you disembark from the yacht, then you will walk along a trail through an Opuntia cactus forest. Also known as the Prickly Pear, the cactus fruit provides a vital food source for many wildlife species in the Galápagos, including the land iguanas which rely on fallen cacti fruit and flowers in their diet on South Plazas, and Cactus Finches which also nest in their branches.

The island is also the only location in the entire archipelago where the Galápagos land iguanas and marine iguanas live side by side which, through interbreeding of the two species, has resulted in the rare Hybrid Iguana only found on South Plaza.

Lunch, consisting of fresh fish, salads, rice and dessert is included in the tour and will be served on the boat after your time on South Plazas Island. Special meals / dietary requirements need to be requested at the time of booking.

Option 3: North Seymour Island



Departure: Pick up from hotel at 08:00 a.m. (approximately)

Wildlife: Blue sharks, lava herons, sea lions, marine iguanas, zayapas (Galápagos crabs), rays, tropical fish, sea turtles.

North Seymour Island is located off the northern coast of Baltra Island, to the north of Santa Cruz Island. A 45 minute transfer from Puerto Ayora by road will bring you to Itabaca Channel followed by a short boat ride (approx. 1 hour) to North Seymour.

Unlike many of the other islands, North Seymour was formed from lava rising up from the seabed as opposed to surface volcanic activity and is therefore relatively flat. Considered to be one of the most important fishing locations for marine birds, it is best known for its large colonies of blue-footed boobies, frigates and pelicans. Once on the island there is a 2.5 km trail to walk which takes you through the nesting sites of the largest breeding colonies in the islands; if you're lucky you might even get to witness their elaborate mating rituals. The waters around the island's shores play host to colonies of sea lions and marine iguanas, as well as attracting a variety of sharks and rays.

After visiting North Seymour, lunch will be served on the boat which will then take you to **Bachas Beach** which is located on the northern shore of Santa Cruz, to the west of Itabaca Channel. Known locally as Playa Las Bachas, the name is derived from a mispronunciation of the English word 'barge'. At the end of WWII, US armed forces who had been based in the area abandoned several of their barges which ended up on the beach, the remains of which can still be seen buried in the sand.

The 1 km long, white sandy beach, with scatterings of black volcanic stones and turquoise waters, is the perfect place for a leisurely stroll or some snorkelling. It is a major nesting ground for Galápagos green turtles and has two small lagoons where Galapagos flamingos can often be seen feeding in the shallow waters.

Option 4: Santa Fe Island

Departure: Pick up from hotel at 08:00 a.m. (approximately)

Santa Fe Island (also known as Barrington Island in English) is a 24 km² islet that lies roughly 20 km southeast of Santa Cruz. It is one of the oldest islands in the Galapagos archipelago and boasts two endemic species: the Santa Fe Rice Rat and the Santa Fe Land Iguana which is paler in colour and has a longer snout than those found on other islands.

The boat will take you to Barrington Bay beach on the north side of the island where there is a short, 300 metre trail starting from the beach that will take you to one of the tallest stands of opuntia cactus on the island to find the islands' unique land iguanas. Other attractions include excellent snorkelling, a sea lion colony, marine iguanas and of course birds (Blue-footed boobies, Frigatebirds, Galápagos gulls).



Photo credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

DAY 4: Highlands and Transfer out

Breakfast at your hotel.

You will need comfortable walking shoes or trainers as this tour involves walking through muddy and uneven terrain. Flip-flops or sandals are not suitable.



In the morning visit the highlands of Santa Cruz Island where you can observe giant land tortoises in their natural habitat. A 25 minute drive from Puerto Ayora brings you to a reserve where these slow moving reptiles can be seen roaming freely amongst the trails and vegetation providing visitors with some great opportunities to get some close up pictures.

photo credit: Nicole Hemsley

Following your encounter with the giant tortoises, you will have the opportunity to walk through the nearby lava tunnels. These subterranean geographical formations are the result of lava flows from the many volcanic eruptions that created the entire Galápagos archipelago.

Following the 3 hour highlands tour you will be dropped off at Baltra airport for your flight to the mainland.

Price per person:

Program	2 pax	4 pax	8 pax	12 pax	16 pax
4 days / 3 nights	1,359 USD	1261 USD	1,151 USD	1,112 USD	1,093 USD

**** 3 nights Santa Cruz accommodation at Ilkala Galápagos, or similar**

Inclusions:

- Accommodations in selected hotel and room type
- Private transportation on the islands
- Speedboat passage between islands (shared basis)
- Professional bilingual (English/Spanish-speaking) guide services
- Excursions, as indicated in the itinerary
- Meals, as indicated in the itinerary
- Island-hopping land tours (shared basis)
- Snorkelling equipment

Not included:

- Domestic flights (Quito – Galápagos Islands – Quito)
- Galápagos Park Entrance fee: \$100 USD per person
- Tourist Transit Card: \$20 USD per person.
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Personal Expenses
- Alcoholic and bottled drinks
- Items not indicated in the itinerary
- Wetsuit use
- Tips / Gratuities

Looking for a longer or shorter extension?

Each of the day tours listed above are also available to book separately. If you would like to arrange a shorter or longer tour package, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to help tailor an itinerary to meet your preference.