

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS:

Aboard the *ISABELA II*

November 28-December 7, 2011

TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP

November 26 - 28, 2011

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A trip to the Galapagos Islands is like no other, for it involves total immersion into all aspects of the natural history of one of the world's elite destinations. It is one of the unique places on Earth where the wildlife is abundant, approachable, and utterly unafraid of humans. The Galapagos tortoise is the classic symbol of the islands, but the seabird colonies, marine iguanas, sea lions, and fish are equally appealing. Thousands of people from all over the world visit the Galapagos annually to experience the wildlife spectacles, to walk in the footsteps of Darwin, and to enjoy this remarkable form of tropical paradise. The best way, the only way, to really see the Galapagos is by ship, and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is proud to offer a wonderful opportunity to cruise these islands aboard the ISABELA II, a handsome vessel ideally suited for the Galapagos Islands.

The history of the Galapagos is rich. Since their discovery in 1537, they have witnessed the ages of piracy and privateering, exploration and whaling, and eventually, the age of Darwin and all the scientists and collectors who came after. Through it all, the islands have endured a steady procession of those who would take from their bountiful supply of natural resources. It wasn't until 1934, however, that the government of Ecuador set the islands aside as a wildlife sanctuary. In 1959, the uninhabited areas were declared a national park in order to better preserve the unique flora and fauna. In 1962, the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz began operation, and, in 1986, the government of Ecuador created the Galapagos Marine Resources Reserve. The national park now includes the 50,000 square kilometers of surrounding ocean that supports the entire ecosystem and preserves over 90 percent of the land area, as well as the marine resources.

The government monitors the number of tourists permitted to visit the Galapagos, and the National Park Service has set strict behavioral guidelines for all visitors. All tourists to the islands must be accompanied by well-trained and licensed Galapagos guides. These guides are not only excellent naturalists; they also have a mandate to enforce behavioral guidelines, so that this special place will remain an outstanding natural laboratory and a superb destination for the visitor. There are over 50 official tourist-landing sites, all of them areas of significant interest for natural historians, where visitors can observe and photograph the wildlife at close range. Swimming and snorkeling at select spots are an essential element to this trip and add an underwater perspective on the rich life of the islands. You may find yourself nose-to-nose with a sea turtle or trying to keep pace with a sea lion! The assortment of tropical fishes will prove that what is seen below water is as fascinating as what is encountered on land.

Like many oceanic islands, the Galapagos are volcanic in origin and, in fact, some islands are still young and active. Each island is different and has its own unique mix of wildlife and scenery. Climatically, most of the land at lower elevations is arid, seemingly barren and hostile but surprisingly rich in life. The surrounding marine environment provides the key to this contrast, for it supports most of the ecosystem. Several oceanic currents converge in the Galapagos, supporting an abundance of

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food resources and great diversity in marine fauna, including over 300 species of fish. Seabirds, sea lions, marine iguanas, and Sally Lightfoot crabs may utilize the islands as breeding sites, but it is the abundance of food in the ocean that makes this possible.

Of the diversity of seabirds that occur here, six are endemic breeders, including the world's northernmost penguin, the only equatorial albatross, the strange Flightless Cormorant, and the Lava Gull, one of the world's rarest gulls. The comical and absurdly tame Blue-footed Booby is one of the most abundant birds here, nesting on many of the islands and fishing the shallow inshore waters. The Nazca and Red-footed boobies, on the other hand, are more restricted in their choice of nesting areas, and fish the deeper waters farther offshore. Elegant Red-billed Tropicbirds are a frequent sight, and cruising between the islands yields pelagic species like Galapagos Shearwater, Galapagos Petrel, Elliot's and Wedge-rumped storm-petrels, and Great and Magnificent frigate birds. Outstanding among the land birds, of course, are the famous Darwin's finches. Other endemic land birds include the Galapagos Dove (surprisingly beautiful and distinctive), Galapagos Hawk, Galapagos Flycatcher, Galapagos Martin and the Galapagos mockingbirds.

Because the islands are so distant from the mainland, colonization of landform has been limited. There are 29 species of resident land birds, four native land mammals (two rats and two bats), and 22 species of reptiles. But in isolation and in response to the harsh climatic conditions, a high degree of endemism has evolved, and few of these forms now bear much resemblance to their closest relatives on the mainland. The plants, too, show a high degree of endemism. Amidst the many unique forms, the abundance and variety of cacti stand out, forming "forests" on some islands.

Aside from the legendary natural history of the islands, participants will enjoy a true tropical paradise. Awaiting the visitor are glorious sunrises and spectacular sunsets, strolls on white and black sand beaches, fascinating snorkeling, and moonlit nights under the stately Southern Cross. Any voyage to the Galapagos is remarkable and exhilarating, and though your time among the natural wonders may seem all too brief, your memories and photos will last a lifetime.

An optional two-day pre-trip visits the Andean cloud forests of the Tandayapa Valley outside Quito. Participants will experience beautiful mountain scenery and visit a private residence to witness one of the world's greatest hummingbird shows

NOTE: Although we will attempt to see as many bird species as possible following this itinerary, the emphasis on this trip will be birds AND general natural history. We believe the Galapagos Islands are an extraordinary destination where birds are just one component of the islands' unique biological heritage.

November 28, Day 1: Travel to Quito. Participants should plan to arrive in Quito, Ecuador any time today. After clearing immigration and customs, you will be met outside the airport by a representative of our local ground operator and transferred to the Hotel Quito where a room has been reserved in your name. As many flights from the United States do not arrive in Quito until the nighttime, dinner will be on your own.

A group dinner will be held tonight at the hotel for participants of the Tandayapa Pre-trip. If you are not registered for the pre-trip but arrive in Quito early enough to participate in the dinner and wish to do so, you will need to contact our office no later than two weeks before departure. Please note that an extra charge for the dinner applies.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 29, Day 2: Flight to Baltra in the Galapagos Islands; board the *Isabela II*. Following breakfast, we will transfer to the international airport in Quito for our group flight to the Galapagos Islands. En route we will stop briefly in the coastal city of Guayaquil before continuing on. We will arrive at Baltra early this afternoon, where we will immediately board the *Isabela II*.

The Galapagos Islands are as sensational a destination as any in the world. It is an archipelago consisting of 13 major islands and numerous islets and isolated rock towers, all volcanic in origin. While there are obvious similarities between all the islands, there is also a tremendous amount of variety that simply begs for exploration. The wonderfully unique natural history, otherworldly landscapes, and warm waters provide visitors with numerous and varied activities. We expect to visit most of the major islands and a few of the smaller islets as well. At each stop, versatile Pangas (Zodiac landing craft) will take us ashore, where our expedition leaders and naturalist-guides will lead us on walks amidst the natural wonders of the islands, with commentary and interpretation as we go. There will be ample opportunities for photography and unlimited subject matter.

This afternoon we will visit our first island—North Seymour.

NIGHT: Aboard *Isabela II*

November 30-December 5, Days 3-8: Galapagos Islands. We will spend the next 6 full days exploring the Galapagos Islands and the surrounding marine environment. While our itinerary is subject to final approval by the Galapagos National Park, we plan to stop at all of the islands described below. The park service, however, strictly regulates visitation on the islands in order to protect and preserve the ecosystem. The result may be that we will need to deviate from our schedule at times. Weather conditions may also restrict us from certain locations. A peculiarity of the islands is that most of them have two names, an English name and a Spanish name. This is a product of the rich history of the islands, in which they were alternately explored and named by the Spanish, then the English, and then ultimately claimed by Ecuador. The first name in the list is what we consider the primary name, while names in parentheses are secondary. **NOTE: At the time of publication of this itinerary (April 2011), our plan to include the island of San Cristóbal on our cruise route has not yet been approved by the Galapagos National Park. As we are still months from departure, we feel our chances are good for receiving permission to visit this island.**

NIGHTS: Aboard *Isabela II*

North Seymour

A smallish island in the central Galapagos, North Seymour originated as an uplifted submarine lava formation. Featuring an easy 2 km hiking trail that traverses the island's interior, we'll take our time exploring the varied botany and birdlife we encounter along the way. This island is particularly well known for its large nesting colonies of Blue-footed Boobies, Magnificent Frigate birds, and Swallow-tailed Gulls. North Seymour is one of the better places to see the Galapagos land iguana, which is now a highly range-restricted animal.

San Cristóbal (Chatham)

San Cristóbal holds one of the largest human populations in the islands and is home to one of two sizeable airports in the Galapagos. This island is one of the oldest, geologically speaking, and has had more time to erode. The resulting soil deposits are thicker here than on other islands and support an abundance of vegetation. An impressive variety of birds are found here including the San Cristóbal Mockingbird, a species found nowhere else.

Our time on San Cristóbal will be limited, but we may board a bus bound for the far side of the island where we'll have a couple hours to explore a Galapagos tortoise preserve where semi-wild tortoises dwell under the protection of the National Park Service. A well-maintained loop trail will take us through the dry forest where San Cristóbal Mockingbirds are found, as well as a variety of Galapagos finches. Both the Vegetarian Finch and

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Woodpecker Finch occur among the far more common Small and Medium ground-finches and Warbler Finches. There are usually at least a few tortoises somewhere along the path.

Other species we may encounter either at the preserve or en route are Smooth-billed Ani, Dark-billed Cuckoo, and Yellow Warbler.

The waterfront at Puerto Baquerizo Moreno is often filled with Galapagos sea lions hauled up on the beaches, while Blue-footed Boobies, Brown Pelicans, and occasional Lava Gulls loaf on the boats and pilings.

Española (Hood)

Known for its dramatic scenery and abundant seabirds riding the updrafts along the windswept cliff faces, Española is virtually the only breeding ground for the rare Waved Albatross. We will land at Punta Suarez where we will have all morning for touring this small but critically important island. An established path leads from the boulder-strewn beaches through the drier uplands, promising more exploration and close encounters with nature.

Upon landing, the first bird we're likely to see is the Española Mockingbird. From a numbers standpoint, this species is among the rarest of the endemic birds in the archipelago. It is found only here and on one tiny islet nearby. Fortunately, they are conspicuous and easy to see and photograph. Turning our sights inland, we will be in pursuit of the decidedly uncommon Large Cactus Finch. Española is one of the only islands where this species occurs, and we will allot as much time as necessary to locating one. During our search, it is only a matter of time before we come across our first Waved Albatross. These magnificent birds are arguably the signature seabird of the Galapagos Islands. Both big and bold, these marvelously patterned birds never fail to steal the show. Many of them will be at rest near a nest site, while others may be engaged in the bill-clacking sequences that have made their courtship behavior famous. Photographic opportunities abound, and we will have ample time for enjoying them.

The wild, windswept cliff tops are indeed a sight to behold. With the rumbling Pacific far below, and the cacophony of bird calls all around, some people consider Española Island the premier Galapagos experience. There is simply so much to see here. Red-billed Tropicbirds arc by at high speed; Waved Albatrosses float by on outstretched wings; and Nazca Boobies dot the tips of eroded rock towers. Blue-footed Boobies are common and easily photographed, as well. Their comical antics are a sight to behold!

At some point we are bound to encounter the endemic Española lava lizard, perhaps sunning on the rocks or chasing a rival out of its territory. Española also has the largest race of the marine iguana, some of them a rare red morph. Circling back toward the landing area, our excursion will conclude with a walk by several sea lion colonies scattered along the beach.

Floreana (Santa Maria, Charles)

One of the few populated islands, Floreana possesses some of the best scenery and most interesting geography in the archipelago. Our time here will include several activities that afford exposure to different parts of the island. We will Zodiac cruise around Champion Island, lying just offshore, to see the Charles Mockingbird. Once occurring commonly on Floreana, this species was extirpated through the introduction of livestock that fed upon the trees and plants where the bird preferred to nest, and ship rats, whose predacious habits heralded doom for vulnerable eggs and nestlings. Remarkably, a number of pairs still survive on Champion Island, and we should have little trouble finding them. Nearby is the Devil's Crown, an eroded out, half-sunken volcanic crater. The snorkeling here is fabulous and easy. By swimming with the current, participants will be carried effortlessly through the center of the crater, all the while viewing an array of beautiful tropical fish. We will land on a green-sand beach, so called because of the presence of the mineral olivine. From there a short path inland will take us to Flamingo Lagoon, where American Flamingos feed in their pink brilliance in the morning sun. The shallow brackish lagoon is also great for seeing White-cheeked Pintail, as well as a variety of shorebirds. Continuing

farther, the path ends at a spectacular white-sand beach with the consistency of flour. It is great fun to take your shoes off here and simply let the sand slide between your toes. The warm water is shallow and inviting, and gently washes the beach with each incoming roll of the sea. This is an excellent place to study the surf for the white-tipped reef sharks and inconspicuous marbled sting rays that occur here. The ambience at this site embodies the tropical island experience. On the way back, we will watch for the endemic Floreana lava lizard.

Time permitting, we will visit historic Post Office Bay. In 1793 an English sea captain, James Colnett, visited the islands for the purpose of making navigational charts as he explored the area for its whaling potential. About this time, the first post office was erected on Floreana. This so-called post office was really nothing more than a barrel and was seen as a way for mail to be delivered to England and the United States. The idea was that whalers, sailors, and mariners would leave their mail in the barrel, and homebound ships would stop, pick up the mail, and deliver it. The beach where the barrel was placed became known as Post Office Bay. While the original barrel is long gone, the tradition is alive and well. Most visitors to the island will deposit a post card and then sort through the stack, looking for a card to hand-deliver to somebody they might know back home.

Later this afternoon, we hope to board a local “bus,” which is really a modified truck (and must be seen to be believed), and head to the highlands in search of several very special birds. Our ride inland will take us out of the arid coastal zone and up into more lush vegetation. Our destination is the middle elevation interiors of the island, where birds are abundant and views of the surrounding landscape are superb. Floreana is studded with over 50 small volcanic cones and at least one sizeable mountain, which is the most prominent feature from our elevated perch. Our main quarry is the Medium Tree Finch, a species restricted entirely to Floreana and among the rarer of the Darwin’s Finches. During our search, we are likely to turn up several other varieties of finches including Small Tree Finch, Small Ground Finch, and Medium Ground Finch, as well as Galapagos Flycatcher.

This part of Floreana is also the focal point of a bizarre tale concerning several German and Austrian settlers, whose interaction led to an amazing sequence of lies, deceit, wild jealousy, mystery, and murder. While the stories coming out of the island became tabloid fodder for readers in Europe, the entire tale was chronicled more thoroughly by John Treherne in his 1983 book, *The Galapagos Affair* (see suggested reading section for more information).

Santa Cruz (Indefatigable)

Situated toward the middle of the archipelago, Santa Cruz is one of the largest of the islands and home to the headquarters of the Galapagos National Park and the world-famous Charles Darwin Research Station. Our vessel will rest at anchor in Academy Bay, from which we will ride to shore to spend the morning exploring the environs of the research station and the shops and stores of nearby Puerto Ayora. The station is a world-class facility and is designed primarily to ensure the survival of the Galapagos tortoise. The paths, pens, and propagation facilities are all tastefully constructed. As we tour the grounds, our Galapagos guides will have much information to offer about the tortoises and the methods employed for reproduction and conservation. These long-lived and gentle creatures are the largest tortoises in the world, but their numbers were sadly reduced by centuries of relentless hunting and collecting, and now it is believed that only 11 of the 14 races still survive. Research at the station is still ongoing, and great effort is being made to ensure their long-term survival.

The natural setting around the station is most attractive. Huge columnar cacti dominate the immediate precincts and make this area possibly the best in the Galapagos for viewing the Common Cactus Finch. The whole area is loaded with finches and gives us more opportunities for sorting out this confusing group. Large Ground Finches are found here and offer nice comparisons to the Cactus Finches, while Vegetarian Finches perch quietly munching on *Muyuyu* flowers.

The highlight of our time on Santa Cruz will be an afternoon excursion into the scenic highlands to the giant tortoise reserve. We will have little trouble locating the massive beasts as they feed in the open pastures of the reserve. Depending on the specific site we visit, we may even get to look for the diminutive Galapagos Rail, a rarely seen resident of the moist highlands.

Mist from the clouds sweeping the highlands (the “garua”) creates a much wetter environment than at the low-elevation deserts, and tall *scalesia* trees dominate the botanical community here. Among the tall trees that surround a couple of volcanic pit craters (Los Gemelos), we will search for several of the finches of the upper zone, most notably Green Warbler-Finch, Large Tree Finch, and Woodpecker Finch.

Genovesa (Tower)

This island, an eroded and partially sunken volcano, is widely regarded as the wildest in the archipelago. Genovesa is also one of the most isolated of the islands, and, therefore, supports the largest colonies of breeding birds. A trip here is essential as it epitomizes the Galapagos experience. Not only are the sheer numbers of birds overwhelming, but their confiding nature allows for close-as-can-be experiences. Nesting birds, resting birds, and preening birds cover the bushes and the ground around us, allowing for dazzling photographic opportunities and easy study of their often fascinating behavior.

On the eastern side of Darwin Bay is a path (Prince Phillip’s Steps) up the side of the crater and then overland to the other side of the island. We will be sure to walk as far as we can, as each step on the path reveals more fantastic interactions with nature. Nazca and Red-footed boobies are literally everywhere! If we are lucky, we may see them engaged in their entertaining courtship behavior. Sharp-beaked Ground Finches and Gray Warbler-Finches are the two latest additions to our growing list of Darwin’s finches and can easily be seen on or near the ground throughout the area. The Gray Warbler-Finch, in particular, is fascinating, as it looks and acts entirely unlike a finch. As the path winds toward the far side of the island, we will come upon the massive Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony, several million birds strong. The profusion of these little birds is simply mind-boggling. Seemingly more like insects, they dominate the landscape around us, flying to and from the sea to their hidden burrows. This species is the only member of its family which is diurnal at its nesting colony, presumably because of the near-absence of predators here. Only the endemic race of Short-eared Owl hunts them; often these owls are sitting about, lending themselves to easy study as they pick at the hapless storm-petrels who fail to get away. Beyond the colony are the towering cliffs, where Magnificent Frigate birds and sublime Red-billed Tropicbirds soar effortlessly by. The tropicbirds, especially, round out the scene. Their dazzling white plumage accentuates their deep red bills, and their long streamer tails blow about in the strong ocean breeze.

The sight of it all is unforgettable. The stark rock of the nearly barren island covered by thousands of birds, the air swirling with millions more, the deep blue Pacific reaching to the horizon—all of this is the Galapagos. All of this is wild nature.

Back on the other side of the bay, an afternoon walk along the beach will take us through a colony of nesting Great Frigate birds and many more Red-footed Boobies. Swallow-tailed Gulls are common and lounge on the waterfront. They surely must be one of the world’s most beautiful gull species. At times they seem to pose for the camera. The much rarer Lava Gull is here as well, and like the Lava Heron that haunts the rocky coastline, this cryptic, smoke-colored denizen of the islands reflects adaptations to the volcanic surroundings.

Isabela Island (Albermarle)

Isabela is easily the largest of the islands and accounts for half the total landmass of the archipelago. The landscape owes its barren appearance to the five major volcanoes whose eruptions created the island. Like Fernandina, it is one of the youngest. Depending on the discretion of our expedition leader, we will go ashore in at least two places.

We’ll cruise down the Bolivar Channel, the body of water separating Fernandina from Isabela. The trip is both glorious and relaxing. The rugged, volcanic landscapes of the islands merge with the calm, protected waters of the channel, which harbors big flocks of feeding birds, including Brown Pelican, Blue-footed and Nazca boobies, Waved Albatross, Magnificent Frigate bird, scores of Galapagos Shearwaters, Elliot’s (White-vented)

and Wedge-rumped storm-petrels, and Brown Noddies. We will want to keep a sharp eye out for the endemic Galapagos Petrel, which breeds high up on the sides of the volcanoes but uses the surrounding waters for feeding grounds. This is also the best area on the cruise route for finding whales. Bryde's (pronounced "broo-das") is most likely, but other species are possible as well. Near the southern end of the island, we will have excellent opportunities for viewing the Galapagos Penguin. The northernmost of the world's penguins, their existence here on the equator is possible because of the cooling effect of the Humboldt Current. Their numbers are probably no higher than 5,000 pairs in all the islands, thereby making them vulnerable. Flightless Cormorants are fairly common here as well.

A visit to Tagus Cove will see us in a lovely secluded bay situated between the shoulders of two volcanic craters. The faces of the surrounding cliffs are marked with the names of pirates and whalers who cruised these waters in the distant past. After an exploration of the cove we will have an opportunity to walk inland, hiking uphill through *Palo Santo* forest to an inspiring viewpoint. From atop a hill we have wonderful views of the sheltered bay far below, also known as Lake Darwin.

Fernandina Island (Narborough)

Westernmost of the Galapagos Islands, Fernandina is the youngest. It is a harsh land characterized by hardened lava flows, spatter cones, and barren landscapes. Volcán La Cumbre is the single active volcano on the island and rises more than 5,000 feet. We will land at Punta Espinoza and spend several hours exploring the natural communities of the shoreline and nearby mangrove swamps. The marine iguanas found here are among the largest in the Galapagos and certainly among the most numerous. We will have no problems finding these curious beasts, as they appear everywhere—lounging in the sun, emerging from the mangroves, and even scrambling over each other's backs. Galapagos lava lizards occur commonly and offer an interesting contrast to the ubiquitous iguanas. Here, too, are Flightless Cormorants, another of the great symbols of the Galapagos. We may see them at their nest sites, or perched on the rocks surrounding the tidal pools, drying out their stubby wings. These remarkable birds are the only flightless members of this group and elicited both awe and consternation from early explorers, scientists, and mariners, many of whom felt the bird was a living relic from prehistory. Lava Herons patrol the edges of the tidal pools, while Striated Herons prefer the more isolated mangrove swamps. Galapagos Flycatchers and Galapagos Mockingbirds are common here, and even the Galapagos Martin is seen at times.

Following our morning outing, we may have an opportunity to snorkel among the offshore rocks, where multitudes of Blue-footed Boobies gather between feeding forays. This part of Fernandina will present some of the best opportunities of the trip for viewing these birds.

Santiago (San Salvador, James)

Beginning with a wet landing at Puerto Egas on the west side of the island, we will be in for an action-packed morning of wildlife viewing and snorkeling. The feature activity is a walk along one of the best tidal zones in the Galapagos. Here, amid the wave-washed shore, shimmering tidal pools, and algae-covered boulders, a profusion of life flourishes. Bright-orange Sally Lightfoot crabs of all sizes scurry here and there in search of food. Depending on our route, we may encounter our first marine iguanas. Mostly they will be lounging on the rocks above the waterline, but with patience we will see them swimming through the surf or moving from one set of rocks to another. It is this peculiar adaptation that defied the belief of early explorers, who were dumbfounded by the sight of seemingly prehistoric lizards in the water. This tidal zone is also an excellent place for viewing shorebirds. Whimbrel, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Willet, and Wandering Tattler are all found here, as well as the striking American Oystercatcher (endemic race). Cryptic Lava Herons stalk the tide pools, always on watch for an easy meal. California (Galapagos) sea lions are common and are seen in numbers hauled out on the rocks.

The walk to the tidal zone will take us at first along the shoreline, where waves have cut deep grottos in the lava bed, and then up through an area of scrubby uplands, where the birding can be quite good. Small Ground

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Finches are common, Large Ground Finches are uncommon but regular, and the dainty Galapagos Dove will often walk right up to our feet. Galapagos Hawks are regular here, and we should have excellent looks at perched and flying birds. Galapagos Mockingbirds sing from exposed snags, scolding us, much like they must have scolded Darwin some 175 years ago. For added measure, Galapagos lava lizards are common amongst the volcanic boulders and dry scrubland around us.

Returning to the beach, we may have a chance to snorkel in James Bay. This is an activity we encourage all tour participants to take advantage of, as this is one of the best places in the Galapagos for snorkeling. The protected bay is excellent for studying a wide range of coral and tropical fish. Endangered Galapagos fur seals occur in these waters and occasional approach to within inches, while Pacific green sea turtles paddle effortlessly by, totally unconcerned by our presence. The fur seals prefer the cool water of the nearby Humboldt Current and tend to be more numerous here than other places. Back on board the ship, Wedge-rumped and Elliot's storm-petrels flutter effortlessly over the calm waters of the bay.

Bartolomé Island

Located off Santiago Island, this is one of the most recently created islands and represents a very fragile ecosystem still being formed. The Galapagos is among the most active volcanic sites in the world, and there is no better place for a lesson in geology than here, with the evidence all around us. A hike to the summit of Pinnacle Rock, the island's central volcano, offers fine views of spatter cones, eroded tuff cones, old lava flows, orange sand beaches, and mangrove swamps. The walk up Pinnacle Rock is leisurely and takes us along a well-built boardwalk and up several flights of stairs. The scenery from atop is breathtaking and is among the finest in all the Galapagos. To the southeast, the Daphne Islands are visible in the distance. This is the site where Peter and Rosemary Grant did their landmark research on Darwin's finches, later described by Jonathan Weiner in his prize-winning book, *The Beak of the Finch*. We try to time this activity for either the early morning or late afternoon, when the sun, rising or setting, illuminates the sky over the vast Pacific Ocean in a blaze of orange, yellow, and pink. Far below, our ship rests at anchor amid the serene waters of Sullivan Bay.

Later in the afternoon, we will have the chance to swim and snorkel in the bay, where we may encounter Galapagos Penguins and more Galapagos fur seals.

December 6, Day 9: Departing the Galapagos; return to Guayaquil. With memories and photos to last a lifetime, we must leave the Galapagos today and fly back to Guayaquil on the mainland. Prearranged transportation will shuttle us to our hotel for check-in. We will gather for a group dinner tonight at the hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Hilton Colon in Guayaquil

December 7, Day 10: Return to the U.S. Passengers are free to depart Guayaquil for the U.S. at any time today.

TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP

November 26 - 28, 2011

On this optional two-day pre-trip, we'll explore the beautiful cloud forests of Ecuador's northwestern Andes, sampling the magnificent diversity of hummingbirds, tanagers, toucans, trogons and more found only a short distance from Quito. We strongly recommend participation on the pre-trip for protection against flight problems that may delay your arrival, or that of your luggage, in Ecuador. As with any cruise program, a delayed arrival can make catching up to the ship extremely difficult once it has departed.

From Quito, Ecuador's capital city, we'll head northwest, drop over a mountain pass and quickly enter a realm of towering tropical hardwoods, cloud-shrouded peaks and ridges, and lush river valleys. Our destination is the region centering on the Mindo and Tandayapa valleys, an area renowned as a premier place for seeing birds in Ecuador, particularly hummingbirds. As the site of some of the best infrastructure for eco-tourism in the country, it is an ideal "first stop" for natural history observation in Ecuador.

The Mindo/Tandayapa region has much to offer in the way of birding potential, and we will focus on two locations both of which host the types of extravagant hummingbird shows that contribute to the region's fame. Among the expected species are a remarkable collection of hummingbirds, including Violet-tailed Sylph, Brown and Collared incas, Green and Sparkling violet-ears, Booted Rackettail, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and a host of woodstars, brilliants, train-bearers, and coronets. We'll also drive the old road that connects the town of Mindo to the Tandayapa Valley, making strategic stops with the hope of finding some of the more spectacular species of the deep forest and edge. This area, well off the main highway, is well known for hosting a dazzling assortment of tanagers, of which we will see many, and other regional specialty birds such as Golden-headed Quetzal, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, and Toucan Barbet.

Any trip to the northwestern slopes is bound to be rewarding, but in this situation, as a short pre-trip to the Galapagos Islands, participants gain experiences unlike any in the Galapagos, while receiving a perfect introduction to the joys of birding in Ecuador.

November 26, Day 1: Travel to Quito. Please book your flights so that you arrive in Quito anytime today. Please note that many flights from the United States to Ecuador arrive in the evening. After clearing immigration and customs, you will transfer to the Hotel Quito, where a room has been reserved in your name.

The Hotel Quito is one of the better hotels in the city. Offering large, comfortable rooms, tasty cuisine, and good service, it is a perfect starting point for our tour. The restaurant sits near the top floor and features massive plate glass windows which provide impressive views of Quito and the high mountains surrounding the city. Dinner is on your own tonight.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 27, Day 2: Birding the Tandayapa Valley. Though our time at the hotel is limited, for the early risers, we recommend taking a walk through the gardens around the swimming pool before breakfast as a number of interesting species are easily found here. Eared Dove, Great Thrush, and Rufous-collared Sparrows are common, while two spectacular hummingbirds, Black-tailed Trainbearer and Sparkling Violet-ear, are highlights of the garden.

After breakfast, we will leave the large capital city and head toward the Tandayapa Valley, a two-hour drive from our hotel. Here, we will enter a whole other world of undamaged cloud forest, rushing streams, a plethora of tropical birds, and glorious mountain scenery. Our destination is the private home of Tony and Barbara Nunnery, who happen to host the world's greatest hummingbird show. Their home is set on a hillside overlooking the picturesque Tandayapa Valley and boasts an expansive outdoor deck, beautiful garden, and as many as 20 hummingbird feeders. What awaits the visitor is a hummingbird show unlike any other. The feeders are continually swarming with hummingbirds of all shapes, sizes, and colors. The middle elevation holds some of the highest diversity of hummers anywhere, hosting numbers of resident types and also attracting numerous other species normally found at higher and lower elevations.

It is not uncommon to see as many as 15 species in a two-hour period, with some of the world's most beautiful and striking hummers among them. Species to expect include Green Violet-ear side-by-side with Sparkling

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Violet-ear; Western and Andean emeralds; Fawn-breasted Brilliant; Buff-tailed Coronet; Brown Inca; Violet-tailed Sylph; and others. If we are truly fortunate, we will encounter the incredible Booted Rackettail, lovely Gorgeted Sunangel, and glittery Green-tailed Trainbearer. Even the Collared Inca, one of the world's most captivating hummingbirds, both in beauty and style, is likely.

Most of the surrounding valley and forest is lightly populated and largely preserved. The setting is idyllic and lends itself to further exploration. If we can pull ourselves away from the entertainment at the Nunnery property, a check of the surrounding forest, and stops along the road to Mindo, may reveal some of Ecuador's most sensational birds. The list of possibilities is long and varied, but the "blue ribbon" species that we will watch for include Masked Trogon, Golden-headed Quetzal, Toucan Barbet, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Turquoise Jay, and the extraordinary Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan. These same cloud forests are also home to one of the highest diversities of tanagers that grace the Neotropics. Their names are as attractive as the birds themselves. We hope to find Golden Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, Blue-necked Tanager, Metallic-green Tanager, and others. Though unlikely, the Grass-green Tanager is possible, and the beautiful and bold Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager is probable.

In the late afternoon we will check into the Sachatamia Lodge for the night, a delightful lodge catering to birders and nature-lovers.

NIGHT: Sachatamia Lodge, Mindo

November 28, Day 3: Mindo/Tandayapa Valley; return to Quito. Situated at the edge of the mountain forests that cloak the mighty Andes, the Sachatamia Lodge provides a wonderful setting from which to begin the day. A system of trails takes the visitor into well-developed secondary forest below the lodge where an array of tanagers, manakins, and flycatchers may be found, while the lodge is continually buzzing with an onslaught of hummingbirds that are attracted to the myriad feeders put out by the property managers.

One of the primary, and more curious, attractions of the lodge is the morning congregation of birds around the streetlight in front of the lodge. As the lodge sits back from the highway, the streetlight blazes throughout the night and tends to attract hordes of moths and other insects. Remarkably, the birds, even species typically associated with the deep forest come out to the road early in the morning to feed on the insect cuisine. The morning ritual produces some interesting surprises, like Strong-billed Woodcreeper and a host of gorgeous tanagers, but we will also likely encounter other birds that are easy to see. One of the best results of such easy birding is that we will likely gain outstanding views of the birds we are looking for.

Back at the lodge, the feeders that hang from the eaves as well as the gardens will certainly produce an enthralling collection of hummingbirds—so many, in fact, that we will be simply overwhelmed by the variety of colors, shapes, and sizes of the 10 species or more likely to be present. Such favorites as Violet-tailed Sylphs and Brown Incas represent the larger end of the spectrum, while diminutive woodstars represent the smallest of the hummingbirds we'll see. In between are species bearing such angelic names as coronets, jacobins, violet-ears, racket-tails, emeralds, and brilliants. Possibly the most beautiful of them all, the Velvet-purple Coronet, is seen better here than any other site. At times, the show is mesmerizing, with countless birds zipping through the gardens, clustering around the feeders, and peering out from nearby trees and bushes.

In the late morning we'll begin the return to Quito, but with several stops planned. Along the rushing stream in the bottom of the valley we may find White-capped Dipper and Torrent Tyrannulet, two species tied closely the forested streams of the Andes.

On the outskirts of Quito is a monument marking the location of the Equator. We will make a stop at this interesting landmark and learn the history of the early survey efforts to determine the equator's exact location. It is fascinating to understand how close the early surveyors came to marking the exact spot, as we know it today, through the use of more primitive instruments and tools.

We can expect a mid- to late-afternoon return to the hotel. A group dinner at the hotel tonight includes an introduction to our upcoming voyage to the Galapagos Islands.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

TOUR LIMIT: The Tandayapa Pre-trip will be limited to 18 participants. The Galapagos Islands Cruise will be limited to 38 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: The Galapagos Islands cruise and the Tandayapa Pre-trip will be co-led by **Paul Greenfield** and **Bob Sundstrom**.

Paul Greenfield grew up near New York City and became interested in birds as a child. He received his B.F.A. from Temple University where he was an art major at the Tyler School of Art. Since 1972, he has lived in Ecuador where his fascination for birds and art has culminated with the completion of 20 years of work illustrating *The Birds of Ecuador*, which he co-authored with Robert Ridgely. Paul is very involved in saving Ecuador's avian diversity and important habitats through his involvement with various foundations, as well as working with local government and communities to encourage their involvement in the protection of "their" biodiversity and the promotion of birding tourism in Ecuador. He has been showing visitors the birds of this fascinating country for over two decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. He and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.

Bob Sundstrom has led VENT tours since 1989 to destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Iceland, Papua New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific islands, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and many destinations throughout North America. Bob takes a strong interest in both the natural and cultural settings of his tours. He earned his doctorate at the University of Washington. Bob and his wife Sally live in the rural Scatter Creek Valley south of Olympia, Washington. Bob lived in Seattle for more than two decades, continues to teach birding workshops, and leads a program of short, regional tours that begin in the Seattle area. During two seasons of work in the Pribilof Islands, he helped chronicle the occurrence of North American bird rarities. A skilled birder with a special interest in bird song, Bob has served on the boards of several nature and conservation organizations, as well as the Washington State Bird Records Committee. He is a co-author of *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. When not on tour, Bob keeps busy as the lead writer for the daily public radio program *BirdNote*, which is archived at www.birdnote.org.

CRUISE INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: Prices quoted are per person based on double occupancy. All staterooms are outside cabins with two lower beds or one queen and private facilities. Cabins will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Single accommodations are limited and not available in all categories. You will be charged the single price if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

Master Suite Queen	\$5,950
Classic Cabin Twin / Double	\$5,750
Standard Cabin Double	\$5,600
Standard Cabin Single **	\$6,725

** Single accommodations are limited and are not available in all categories.

Included in your cruise package:

- Seven nights (November 29-December 6) accommodation aboard the *Isabela II*
- Hotel accommodations in Quito on November 28 and Guayaquil December 6.

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- Meals beginning with breakfast on November 29 through breakfast on December 7 (if you are an overnight guest in the hotel on December 6th).
- Use of ship snorkeling equipment and wet suits.
- Galapagos National Park entry fee and entry fees to all sites shown in the itinerary
- All port charges and service taxes
- Land transfers including airport to hotel on November 28; hotel to airport on November 29; land transfers in the Galapagos Islands; airport to hotel on December 6; hotel to airport on December 7
- Services of the tour leaders and naturalist guides in the Galapagos
- Gratuities to the staff and crew of Isabela II

Not included in your cruise package:

- International roundtrip airfare from your home to Guayaquil
- Domestic airfare Quito-Galapagos-Guayaquil*
- International or domestic departure taxes
- Passport expenses
- Insurance for baggage loss, accident, or trip cancellation
- Items of a personal nature including laundry, postage, internet usage, alcoholic beverages
- Emergency evacuation charges
- Fuel surcharges
- Gratuities to the Expedition Leader and local guides
- Gratuities to VENT leaders

****Please Note: Domestic airfare Quito-Galapagos-Guayaquil is not included in the tour fees above. VENT will have a group block of seats on these flight segments and will automatically assign to these flights as you register for the cruise. At the time of printing the approximate cost of these two air segments is \$525 but is subject to change without notice until the time of ticketing. Approximately 40 days prior to departure you will be sent an invoice for the cost of your ticket(s).***

Galapagos expeditions are intended for persons in reasonably good health. Walking conditions may vary from simple to moderately difficult on certain islands including walks over rocky and uneven surfaces. Travelers with disabilities, heart and/or respiratory problems, or other significant physical limitations or conditions are advised not to participate in expeditionary cruises. Please be advised that medical conditions that are discovered at any time during or prior to boarding and which, in the sole and reviewable opinion of the Captain, may jeopardize the health or safety of the Passenger or any other individual, will be grounds to deny the Passenger permission to board the ship at the point of embarkation, and/or to require the Passenger to leave the ship and terminate his or her continued participation in the cruise. By forwarding the expedition deposit, you certify that you do not have any physical condition or disability that would create a hazard for you or other passengers. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to decline, except, or detain you or any other passenger should your health, actions, or general department impede the operation of the expedition or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of other passengers.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this cruise, complete the application form and return it with a deposit of **\$1000** per person. The deposit for the optional Tandayapa Pre trip is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. The balance of the fee is due 120 days prior to your departure date.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS: If cancellations for the Galapagos Cruise occur outside of 6 months before the departure date, cancellation penalty is **\$500** per person. Cancellations occurring between 6 and 4 months of the departure date, cancellation penalty is **\$1000** per person. Cancellations occurring between 4 months and date of departure all money paid is 100% non-refundable. Any refunds will be reduced by applicable airline cancellation penalties. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing. **We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance and/or travel insurance to protect yourself.**

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Tandayapa Pre-trip is \$795 per person in double occupancy. The single supplement is \$110. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may be applied.

Included in your pre-trip fee:

- Hotel accommodations for two nights: Day 1, Hotel Quito and Day 2, Sachatamia Lodge
- All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 3
- Land transfers including airport to hotel on Day 1 and land transportation during the tour
- Guide services provided by the VENT leaders and drivers (including gratuities for the drivers)
- Entrance fees

Not included in your pre-trip fee:

- International roundtrip airfare from your home to Quito and return from Guayaquil
- Transfers or accommodations other than those stated in the itinerary
- Meals before breakfast on Day 2 or after dinner on Day 3
- Insurance for baggage loss, accident, evacuation, or trip cancellation
- International or domestic departure taxes
- Passport expenses
- Items of a personal nature including phone calls, laundry, postage, emails, and alcoholic beverages.
- Fuel and currency surcharges
- Gratuities to VENT leaders

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

If you cancel:

120 days or more before departure date
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$250*
No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

GENERAL INFORMATION

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this voyage. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of brochure printing. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the voyage is MANDATORY for participation in this cruise. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

CONDITIONS:

Overview: In the Galapagos Islands, most travel will be aboard the *Isabela II*, where cruising among the islands is effortless. We will spend time on most of the major islands, which will involve short Panga (Zodiac) rides from ship to shore. The majority of our landings will be dry, but some will certainly be wet (meaning that water up to the knees is possible), and participants need to prepare accordingly.

Due to the fact that the Galapagos Islands are one of the world’s great natural history destinations, this trip is more than a birding tour. While we will certainly work to see as many species as possible, especially the endemic ones (those found nowhere else), we will take time to appreciate all facets of natural history, including geology, botany, herpetology, and even star-gazing. The Galapagos, however, is also a place to have fun! Most days will include opportunities for snorkeling in different bays on different islands. This activity is something we strongly encourage participants to take advantage of, as what we see below the water surface is every bit as beautiful and impressive as what we see on land. For information regarding snorkeling gear, please refer to the equipment section of this itinerary.

Shopping opportunities in the Galapagos are very limited, but the outdoor shops at Puerto Ayorra and the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz, offer a fine variety of clothing, books, wood carvings, post cards, and souvenirs. The *Isabela II* keeps an inventory of shirts and post cards aboard available for purchase, also.

The Ship: *Isabela II* is a 166 ft.-long small cruise ship that accommodates up to 40 passengers in 20 outside cabins, single or twin. Ideally suited for a cruise among the Galapagos Islands, she offers a mix of beautifully furnished inside public areas (bar-salon, library, and dining room); and outside viewing decks. This vessel preserves the smaller boat atmosphere and attention to detail we look for when selecting the right vessel for VENT trips to the Galapagos. All cabins have a window, private facilities, and climate controls.

Dining: Meals are served in single seatings with unassigned tables for an informal atmosphere and easy mingling. The menu is international but with an Ecuadorian flair. The chef is able to accommodate vegetarian requests.

While at Sea - While cruising at sea, you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching or remain below decks and relax in the library, the passenger lounge, or your stateroom. The seas in the Galapagos are generally calm, but some inter-island crossings may require transits through moderately rough water.

While on Land – Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and terrain. The diversity of topography in the Galapagos Islands guarantees that you'll experience a variety of terrain, from soft sand, to coarse gravel, to sharp and uneven lava flows. Walks along sandy and rocky beaches and along trails through brush frequently involve short outings of varying length. The highlands of Floreana and Santa Cruz feature some trail walking through open forest, but the degree of difficulty of these activities is low. No participant will be expected to participate in any activity they are not physically capable of or comfortable with.

Zodiac Landing Craft – Expedition cruise ships carry fleets of Zodiac landing craft (known as *Pangas* in the Galapagos Islands). Developed as a means for gaining access to places where larger vessels cannot go, Zodiacs are employed to bring greater intimacy to your travel experience. Each craft is constructed of high performance plastimer fabrics and outfitted with a powerful motor, and designed to withstand the challenging conditions of the Galapagos environment. During your cruise you'll make numerous excursions to shallow bays and along rocky coasts and land on isolated beaches, coming face-to-face with an assortment of wildlife. Each craft holds as many as 10 passengers. Although flat-bottom design allows for direct on-shore landings, passengers will need to walk through shallow surf on some occasions.

Swimming and Snorkeling – There will be opportunities for swimming and snorkeling at select sites along the cruise route. *Isabela II* is fully equipped with fins, masks, snorkels; wet suits ('shorty' type only) and carries a variety of sizes and enough for all participants. Those participants who prefer to bring their own equipment are welcome to do so. If you get cold easily, we recommend bringing your own wetsuit and one that is full-length and rated to comfortably insulate you in water temperatures in the 60s.

For the pre-trip – The physical demands of a trip to the Tandayapa/Mindo area are light. All birding areas are accessed by wide paved and dirt roads. Feeder watching at the Nunnery property and Sachatamia Lodge are effortless. Elevations reach over 9,000 feet on this tour route.

CLIMATE & WEATHER:

For the cruise: The Galapagos Islands has two different climates. The period from January to June is known as the warm/wet season with warm air temperatures and clear skies, but with occasional heavy rain. Temperatures range from 81-95°. From June to December, the season is known as the "garua" or cool/dry season, when air temperatures are cooler, but conditions generally drier. The mornings can be overcast and misty with the lowlands virtually free of precipitation, while the highlands are much wetter. Temperatures during the day range from 68-77° and the evenings are in the 50s. The water temperatures in the Galapagos vary throughout the year. It can range from cold, 62-68°F between June and December, to a rather warm 80-85°F from January to May.

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For the pre-trip: The city of Quito is located at 9,000 feet. Nights can be cool with temperatures dropping to 50-60° and daytime highs usually 70-75° and sunny. Most of our birding will be in the Mindo/Tandayapa area about 1.5-2 hours northwest of Quito at an elevation of about 5,000 feet. Temperatures in the Mindo/Tandayapa area will be mild (60-80°), but rain or heavy fog is a possibility.

The city of Guayaquil is tropical, with a warm and humid climate and temperatures in the mid 80s.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. **Please consult your pre-departure materials and airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Aboard *Isabela II*, your cabin has been designed so that luggage can be stored under your bed. There is space to hang and store clothing.

Due to airline weight restrictions, and space limitations aboard ship, we ask that you pack as efficiently as possible as you prepare for this expedition.

CLOTHING: For your trip to the Galapagos, comfortable, casual clothing in the expedition spirit is all that is necessary. The Galapagos are desert islands on the equator, and you should be prepared for warm daytime temperatures and sun most of the time. The mornings may be marked by light overcast and fine mist. Since the islands of the Galapagos are widely distributed, conditions can vary considerably from island to island. The highlands of Santa Cruz are usually cooler than the surrounding lowlands.

- **Shorts** – 1 or 2 pair; ideal for comfort and when outside on decks while cruising between destinations.
- **Pants** - 1 or 2 pairs of lightweight pants; Cotton or other thin materials are ideal for field trips; sea watching from the ship's decks, and for evening recaps, social hours, and dinners. Denim and corduroy are acceptable, but are heavier and warmer materials. Many people are comfortable simply wearing field-clothing at all times.
- **T-shirts** – Several t-shirts (short and/or long-sleeved), will provide comfort throughout the voyage, especially during cruising times.
- **Rain poncho or light water repellent jacket** - In the event of rain, morning mist, or an overcast sky.
- **Warm sweater or fleece** – May come in handy for the cool highlands
- **Casual wear** – Other items of attire that you may find appropriate for a relaxed atmosphere, such as short-sleeved button-down shirts.
- **Field clothing** – For birding field trips and for pre- and post-trip extensions. Many people now favor the lightweight designer shirts that offer well-ventilated seams, numerous pockets, and roll-up sleeves that button down. Matching pants contain numerous pockets and removable zipper-seamed pant-legs that alter pants to shorts. *Ex-officio*, *Columbia*, and other manufacturers of outdoor apparel (including those who make cheaper, more cost-effective knock-offs) make these products, and they are easily found in most outdoor or sporting goods stores.
- **Swimsuit** - Essential, since snorkeling is an important element to our Galapagos trips.
- **Hat** - A hat for protection from the sun is absolutely essential. Baseball caps provide some protection for your face, but wide-brimmed hats are superior for providing better protection for other exposed areas, such as the ears and neck.

FOOTWEAR: Consider bringing two pairs of shoes. For the time on the boat, a deck shoe or tennis shoe is certainly adequate while some may prefer sandals with straps or other open-toed footwear. When we land on the islands, there will be some places where “wet landings” are unavoidable. For this reason an open-toed sandal is

a good choice. Various brands include *Teva, Nike, and LaSportiva*. These are merely examples, but any sporting goods store will offer a selection of such shoes. For those who prefer more stability, a light hiking boot or trail walking shoe will do the job, particularly when we are on the various islands and walking on old lava flows.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Check with the staff upon embarkation for procedures and turnaround time.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your Galapagos adventure:

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all landings and excursions
- **Ziploc bags** – Excellent for keeping small items or any items of value dry; bring several different sizes
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7 x 35, 8 x 42, 10 x 40, or 10 x 42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7 x 35 or 8 x 42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes - Since most wildlife viewing will take place on a moving ship or zodiac, or among the birds and animals at very close range, you do not need to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have one available for group use on the occasions where it is necessary to have one.

PASSPORTS AND DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS

A valid passport is required. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with Customs and Immigration authorities. Your passport will be collected prior to or upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

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VISAS

Visas are not required for U.S. citizens for entry into Ecuador.

Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the consulate or embassy Ecuador for information on entry requirements. If you are not a citizen of the United States or Canada and are required to have a visas to travel in Ecuador, we recommend Pinnacle Travel Document Systems (www.traveldocs.com on the web or 888-838-4867 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement.

Visa requirements can change without notice, and you should check the latest requirements as far in advance as possible in order to allow time to obtain a visa in your home country should that be necessary.

Americans can check http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1108.html.

Canadians can check www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/report-en.asp?country=79000#4.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to the Galapagos includes most necessary expenses, including all meals aboard the ship. You will want to bring enough cash to cover such extra expenses as taxi rides (if you come early or stay after the program), gifts, laundry, gratuities, and meals on your own before and after the cruise, and personal items. Cash and credit cards are recommended for meeting expenses during the cruise. Traveler's checks may not be accepted. Small denominations of cash are best as the places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. Shipboard accounts can be paid with cash or credit cards. Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

The unit of currency in Ecuador is the U.S. Dollar (\$USD).

Should you extend your vacation in Ecuador beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you'll want to consider carrying bills in small denominations. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are widely accepted. Please inquire about the use of American Express and Discover. ATMs are available in places. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

TIME: Ecuador stays 5 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and does not observe Daylight Savings Time. At this time of year, the Galapagos are one hour ahead of EDT.

ELECTRICITY: Electrical outlets aboard the *Isabela II* are the same as they are in the U.S., 110 volts, 60 cycles.

HEALTH: As of this writing (July 2011) no major vaccinations are required for entry into Ecuador; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases, including:

- The so-called **Routine Vaccinations** (if you are not up-to-date), which are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine; diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine; and poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure).
- **Hepatitis A** or Immune Globulin (IG)
- **Hepatitis B**
- **Typhoid**

Please consult your physician well in advance of the tour for advice about these and other health precautions, and visit the website of the World Health Organization (WHO) or CDC for updates.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian

citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

Passengers who are not fit for an expedition cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. **Comprehensive optional insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation, is available and highly recommended. This coverage is available through your trip cancellation policy, if purchased through VENT. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.**

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

The crew is trained to handle medical emergencies and is in contact with other boats, as well as the nearest sources of help in the islands. Any condition that cannot be dealt with on board and that requires emergency treatment will result in the evacuation of a debilitated passenger, either by boat or helicopter.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Motion Sickness – Since our cruise route will not take us far from shore, travel in rough water is not expected. However, those travelers especially sensitive to motion sickness should be prepared. Most cruise ships typically carry a supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers. We recommend that you consult your physician for an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are more dangerous at the equator than most other places in the world. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

SUGGESTED READING: Our web site at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com, or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

The Galapagos Islands have received great acclaim and publicity as a world-class destination for many decades. As a result, there is a wealth of material available on the Galapagos to help you prepare for your trip, and this list offers only a few of the possible suggestions. Aside from the above-mentioned websites, almost all of the major natural history magazines also have articles on the Galapagos from time to time. Finally, most major bookstores will also offer a variety of books pertaining to the Galapagos.

Field Guides:

Birds:

Swash, Andy and Rob Still. *Birds, Mammals & Reptiles of the Galapagos Islands*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2nd edition, 2006. This is an excellent pocket guide, composed entirely of photographs, to all of the birds, mammals, and reptiles of the Galapagos. It is by far the single best resource for quick and easy identification of all the more prominent forms of life found in the archipelago. Its treatment of seabirds and the mockingbirds and finches of Darwin fame is very good.

Mammals:

Shirihai, Hadoram and Brett Jarrett. *Whales, Dolphins and Other Marine Mammals of the World*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006. This is the most recent, and one of the best field guides available for information on identifying the world's ocean-going mammals.

Fish:

Humann, Paul and Ned DeLoach. *Reef Fish Identification: Galapagos*. New World Publications, 2nd edition, 2003.

Wildflowers:

McMullen, Conley K. *Flowering Plants of the Galapagos*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Natural History

Jackson, Michael H. *Galapagos: A Natural History*. 2nd Edition. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2nd edition, 1993. This book is more of a companion to a field guide, but offers a far more in-depth look at all facets of the Galapagos Islands. It gives nice overviews of all aspects of the archipelago's natural history, yet does so in a way that is very user-friendly. It is structured in a way that is well-suited for the first-time visitor who possesses nothing more than a casual interest, but also for the more serious-minded observer who prefers a more substantive body of work. It is certainly one of the better all-around resources for the Galapagos, as it provides much information but avoids becoming bogged down in overly scientific or technical information.

Kricher, John. *Galapagos: A Natural History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. Written by accomplished ecologist, John Kricher, this book provides a comprehensive overview of Galapagos history and wildlife.

Stewart, Paul D. *Galapagos: The Islands That Changed the World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007. This is one of the newer guides to the human history and general natural history of the Galapagos Islands. Though we have not yet tested it in the field, the reviews of this book are highly favorable. An added bonus is the 150 color photographs that further illuminate the islands.

Historical:

Beebe, William. *Galapagos: World's End*. Dover Publications, 1988. A great naturalist's account of his expedition to the islands in 1923.

Barlow, Nora. *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*. New York: Norton Co. 1958.

Browne, Janet. *Charles Darwin: Voyaging*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. A vivid picture of Darwin as a man and scientist.

Darwin, Charles. *Voyage of the Beagle*. England: Penguin Group, 1989. Originally published by Henry Colburn, 1839. A chronicle written by Darwin himself of the classic five-year expedition that would forever cement his place in history.

Treherne, John. *The Galapagos Affair*. New York: Random House, Inc. 1983. This book is something of a classic, as it deviates from the standard Galapagos fare, which tends to focus on science or related topics, and recounts some of the human history of the islands. In particular, this is a sordid story of three unrelated German parties who settled independently on Floreana Island. As the three groups invariably come into contact, the results are quite mixed and replete with lurid tales of intrigue, lying, deceit, strange disappearances, jealousy, and murder. At the end of this wildly entertaining novel, the reader will come away left to draw his own conclusions.

Science and Evolution:

Attenborough, David. *The Life of Birds*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. Created by the legendary nature documentarian, this book is an instant classic.

- Darwin, Charles.** *The Origin of Species: by Means of Natural Selection.* Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968. Originally published by J. Murray, London, 1859.
- Larson, Edward J.** *Evolution's Workshop: God and Science on the Galapagos Islands.* Basic Books, 2001. Written by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, this outstanding book delivers an excellent historical treatise of the Galapagos Islands in an enjoyable and easily readable style. In 243 pages (short for such a project), the reader is taken on a 500-year historical rampage that begins with the discovery of the archipelago in 1537 and builds through the age of pirates and privateering and on to the monumental achievements of Charles Darwin, and then through the great collecting expeditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and finally to the establishment of the islands as a national park and modern conservation concerns. Aside from reciting dates and events, Larson effectively frames his narrative with a sense of time and place against a backdrop of religion and politics. The effect is that the reader not only gains a profound appreciation for the accomplishments of the greatest scientific minds of the time, but also for the very real struggle that played out permanently following Darwin, surrounding god, science, and man's role in the world around him. Finally, one of the finer points of this story is the humanistic approach that Larson takes in recounting this history, as all the major players were revealed in-depth, including their successes and character flaws.
- Mayr, Ernst.** *Evolution and the Diversity of Life.* MA: Harvard University Press, 1976. A great resource written by one of the great evolutionary biologists of the 20th century.
- Quammen, David.** *The Flight of the Iguana.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998. Written by the author who produced *Song of the Dodo*.
- Weiner, Jonathan.** *The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time.* Random House Incorporated, 1995. This is an award-winning story of long-term research on the Darwin's finches done by Peter and Rosemary Grant, who worked with them for more than 20 years. A highly insightful and readable story.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on all land portions of this tour as well as to the ship's staff and crew.

Note: To avoid confusion the ship's crew generally consists of housekeeping, dining room service, maintenance workers, and deckhands. The Cruise Director, Expedition Leader, and trip lecturers are **NOT** considered part of the main crew. **If you decide to tip the Cruise Director, Expedition Leader, and lecturers, you should hand it to them directly.** Gratuities are a personal decision and the amount extended should be based on the quality and manner of the service you receive.

If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect April 10, 2011 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held

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responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.