

## ECUADOR - XAVIER III



### INTRODUCTION

Cruise for 7 nights through the Galapagos National Park aboard Xavier III, coming face to face with 100 year old giant tortoises, encountering large colonies of blue-footed boobies and marine iguanas on the volcanic rocks, looking for 3 species of boobies and 2 species of frigatebirds nesting together at Punta Pitt and maybe sending a postcard from Post Office Bay. Explore the island chain that has enchanted explorers since Darwin first anchored off its shores and discover the incredible wildlife of the Galapagos archipelago in the company of an expert naturalist guide. Return to the Xavier III each evening, sailing overnight to the next island and the next adventure.

### ITINERARY

#### DAY 1: Arrival transfer in Quito

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office. Please note this service is with a driver only.



#### TRIP CODE

SEV10MC

#### DEPARTURE

28/05/2019, 11/06/2019,  
25/06/2019, 09/07/2019,  
23/07/2019, 06/08/2019,  
20/08/2019, 03/09/2019,  
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29/10/2019, 12/11/2019,  
26/11/2019, 10/12/2019,  
24/12/2019

#### DURATION

10 Days

#### LOCATIONS

Ecuador, Galapagos  
Islands



## ECUADOR - XAVIER III

### DAY 1: Arrive Quito

Today is free for you to explore Quito. Sitting at 2,850 metres above sea level high in the Andean foothills lies Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The city, a short distance from the Equator and with an amazing backdrop of snow-capped mountains, is known for its stunning colonial architecture and artwork. Founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city, Quito has one of the largest, least-altered and best-preserved historic centres in the Americas. It was declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 1978.



### DAY 2: Baltra / Santa Cruz

This morning you will have an early transfer to the airport for your flight to the Galapagos Islands. On arrival in Baltra, you will be met by your naturalist guide and transferred to the Xavier, moored in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island. Please note that the Galapagos National Park charges a visitor fee of USD100, payable on arrival, which funds park maintenance and supervision in the Galapagos, as well as ecological study and conservation. The Galapagos Islands are located about 1000 kilometres (620 miles) off the Pacific coast of South America. The archipelago is comprised of 13 major islands and scores of islets that served as a living laboratory for Charles Darwin, the renowned evolution theorist. Long before Darwin arrived in the Galapagos, seafarers knew these isolated islands as home to some of the strangest and most wonderful wildlife imaginable, including birds that could swim but no longer fly, aquatic iguanas, dragon-like lizards left over from prehistoric times and the giant Galapagos tortoises for which the islands were named. Covering nearly 5000 square kilometres (3100 sq. miles), the Galapagos Islands are now a National Park. This afternoon we head to the highlands of Santa Cruz Island and visit El Chato Reserve, to see giant land tortoises in the wild in their natural environment. We explore the Reserve's lagoon and lava tunnels, keeping an eye out for owls that often roost in the entrances to the tunnels. Back on board the Xavier III you can relax on the outdoor deck, take in the views and enjoy local and international cuisine. The ship sails overnight ensuring that you arrive at the next destination relaxed and ready to explore, whilst maximising time spent on the islands.



TRIP CODE
SEV10MC
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**ECUADOR - XAVIER III**

**DAY 3: Rábida / Bachas Beach**

This morning’s excursion takes us to the red sand beach of Isla Rábida to see a saltwater lagoon and sea lion colony. An abundance of birdlife frequents the island including pelicans, white-cheeked pintails, boobies and a number of species of finches. There are a number of trails here. A short trail leads to a saltwater lagoon that is often home to wading flamingos and another trail goes past the lagoon to the interior, where the revered palo santo trees grow. When burned, the branches of this tree give off a pleasant aroma that wards off mosquitoes. Back at the beach you can observe the pelicans nesting among low-lying bushes and maybe watch parent pelicans returning with gullets full of fish for the noisy youngsters. In the afternoon we visit Playa las Bachas (Bachas Beach), located on the north eastern tip of Santa Cruz. Here the sand is made of decomposed coral, making it soft and white and a favourite site for nesting sea turtles. As you stroll along the beach, you may see colourful Sally-Lightfoot crabs on the lava rocks along the shoreline. Trek with the guide to look for a range of wildlife including flamingos, hermit crabs, frigatebirds, black-necked stilts and sea lions.



<b>TRIP CODE</b>
SEV10MC
<b>DEPARTURE</b>
28/05/2019, 11/06/2019, 25/06/2019, 09/07/2019, 23/07/2019, 06/08/2019, 20/08/2019, 03/09/2019, 17/06/2019, 15/10/2019, 29/10/2019, 12/11/2019, 26/11/2019, 10/12/2019, 24/12/2019
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## ECUADOR - XAVIER III

### DAY 4: Floreana

Punta Cormorant is the only landing site on Floreana Island. The landing site is a green sand beach, coloured by olivine crystals, volcanic-derived silicates of magnesium and iron. The trail leads to a lake normally inhabited by flamingos and other shore birds and continues to a beach of fine white sand particles known as “Flour Beach”, an important nesting site for turtles. You may see Galapagos penguins and marine iguanas. In the afternoon we visit historic Post Office Bay. In the late 18th century, English whaling vessels placed a barrel here to be used as a post office. Today the box is used mainly by tourists, who drop off and pick up unstamped letters to be carried to far destinations. The remains of a Norwegian canning factory are the only evidence of the Island’s history prior to its designation as a protected area. A short hike up past the post barrel takes you to an interesting lava cave. With the aid of a flashlight, you can descend about 80 metres (262 ft) to the point where the sea enters the cave. We also plan to make a stop at Champion Islet where you will be able to snorkel with a colony of playful sea lions that reside in the waters off this tiny island. You may also see turtles, rays and tropical fish. You need to be a strong swimmer to snorkel here due to the currents around the island.



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SEV10MC

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**ECUADOR - XAVIER III**

**DAY 5: Española**

Today we head to Punta Suarez on the western side of Española Island. Española (also known as Hood) is the southernmost island in the Galapagos archipelago and is home to several species of wildlife including masked and blue-footed boobies. A hike to the top of the cliff provides spectacular photo opportunities. We follow the trail through a rookery and learn the geological history of the island from our guide, including its dramatic volcanic features, climate, flora and fauna. Punta Suarez is a spectacular spot that feels like a desolate wilderness. Gargantuan waves break on jagged cliffs and large bird colonies populate the interior of the island. The waved albatross is seen here from April to December during its mating and nesting season. This bird leaves land between January and March each year to make its annual odyssey far out to sea. Amazingly, Española is the nesting site to virtually the entire world population of this species, with more than 12,000 pairs residing here. Large numbers of masked and blue-footed boobies are also found here along with red-billed tropicbirds and both marine iguanas and sea lions are common. A huge blowhole, where the surf is forced through a natural rock formation spouting seawater 15 to 20 metres (49 - 66 ft) into the air, adds to the island's impression of untamed beauty. This afternoon we sail to Gardner Bay, with its beautiful white sand beach and turquoise water. The bay is home to sea lions and a variety of seabirds and other sea life. As well as sea lions you may see large schools of tropical fish including yellow-tailed surgeon fish, king angelfish and bumphead parrotfish.



<b>TRIP CODE</b>
SEV10MC
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## ECUADOR - XAVIER III

### DAY 6: San Cristóbal

San Cristóbal is the easternmost island of the Galapagos and also one of the oldest. Its principal town is Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Galapagos. We visit the Interpretation Centre where you can learn about the Galapagos Islands from the natural history of the archipelago and their volcanic origins through to their ecosystems, flora, fauna and today's conservation efforts. The Human History exhibit provides information on the discovery of the Galapagos Islands and their colonisation. We also visit the Jacinto Gordillo Breeding Centre in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. At this giant tortoise Breeding Centre you can see all of the different species of tortoises close up. The tortoises are bred in captivity in a protected wild area, safeguarded from predators. There are newly hatched tortoises as well as full-grown adults that can live well over 100 years. You may also see finches, warblers and mockingbirds in the vegetation surrounding the Breeding Centre. There is time to explore the town and maybe do a little shopping before visiting El Junco Lagoon in the afternoon. Located in the San Cristobal highlands, this is the largest freshwater lake in the Galapagos, surrounded by diverse vegetation and home to many endemic bird species.



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## ECUADOR - XAVIER III

### DAY 7: Punta Pitt / Kicker Rock

We make a landing this morning at Punta Pitt on the eastern tip of San Cristobal, where we will see a group of eroded volcanic cones. Here you can see fascinating geological formations and enjoy amazing wildlife opportunities. Punta Pitt is made up of volcanic tuff substrate and it is the only site in the Galapagos where three species of booby and two species of frigatebird can be seen. Next we visit Cerro Brujo on San Cristobal to explore its coastline, look for wildlife and learn about the human and natural history of the area. There is time to take a refreshing dip in the turquoise water and head out on a short walk to a freshwater lagoon to see flamingos. Later in the afternoon we sail to the dramatic León Dormido, or Kicker Rock, which is a magnificent rock with steep vertical walls that rise from the ocean, set in a shape resembling a sleeping lion. The rock rises 150 metres above the surface of the water and is divided into two parts by a narrow channel navigable by small vessels. Kicker Rock is one of the most stunning landmarks in the Galapagos Islands, home to an incredibly diverse range of marine life that inhabits the nutrient-rich water. Sharks and fish are drawn to the rock and provide an exhilarating and unique snorkelling experience.



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### DAY 8: Isla Santiago

This morning we make an excursion to Playa Espumilla, one of the most idyllic beaches in the Galapagos Islands, with thick mangroves along with flamingo and sea turtle nesting sites. After exploring Playa Espumilla, we head to Buccaneer Cove with its towering cliff wall rock formations. Here we cruise by panga and explore the cove that was once a hideout for pirates as they restocked their boats with food and water. We may spot seabirds nesting in the cove and sea lions resting on the beach. Our third stop for the day is at Puerto Egas with its spectacular shoreline, salt crater, dark-sand beach and tidal pools. Also known as James Bay, there are many reptiles and shore birds to be seen here. Santiago Island has seen its share of human activity from whalers and pirates over the years, and despite the introduction of goats to the island many years ago, the wildlife of Santiago has flourished and provides outstanding viewing opportunities. The island boasts marine iguanas, sea lions, fur seals, land and sea turtles, offering great wildlife viewing both on land and in the water.



## ECUADOR - XAVIER III

### DAY 9: Santa Cruz / Baltra / Quito

This morning we arrive and disembark in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island for a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Centre. Santa Cruz is the second largest island in the Galapagos, with the largest population and with Puerto Ayora as its main town. It also boasts the most varied of the islands' vegetation zones including coastal, transition, scalesia, miconia and pampa. The Charles Darwin Research Station is located a short walk from the centre of the town. It is a science organization that was initiated in 1964, working to preserve the ecosystem of the Galapagos through the conservation efforts of scientists, researchers and volunteers. It also provides a study location for international scientists and training for Naturalist Guides. We tour the exhibition centre to see photo displays of recent volcanic eruptions, charts outlining geological formations and drawings of the evolutionary development of endemic species. The station is also a great place to observe many species of tortoises and land iguanas in captivity, brought back from the brink of extinction. Here you can see the famous Galapagos tortoise close up. A corral houses adult Galapagos tortoises and there is a nursery in which the young are cared for until around age three when their shells have hardened. **\*\*Please note: The Charles Darwin Research Station has partially closed until December 2016. Groups affected will visit the highlands to see the giant tortoises in the wild.\*\*** After the visit you are transferred to the airport for your flight to Quito. On arrival there is a transfer to the group hotel with time to enjoy one last night in Ecuador's capital.



NO IMAGE AVAILABLE

### DAY 10: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



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SEV10MC

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## INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

<b>Accommodation</b>	Cabin
<b>Inclusions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hotels (2 nts), aboard the Xavier in twin-share cabins (7 nts).</li> <li>Certified Galapagos Park Guide</li> <li>All landings, excursions and transportation,</li> <li>Flights to and from the Galapagos Islands,</li> <li>Snorkeling equipment, visit to a wildlife interpretation centre</li> <li>Arrival transfer on Day 1</li> <li>9 Breakfasts, 7 Lunches, 7 Dinners. (Allow USD75-100 for meals not included. Drinks and tips while on the yacht are extra.)</li> <li>Hotels (2 nights), On board Xavier in twin-share cabins (7 nights)</li> <li>Local flight, motorized yacht, van, zodiacs, private bus</li> <li>Galapagos National Parks Guide while in the islands</li> <li>Small group experience; Max 16, Avg 12</li> </ul> <p>Not included: USD20 Tourist Transit card fee at the Quito airport and a USD100 (cash) Galapagos park entry fee upon arrival to the Islands.</p>
<b>Difficulty Rating</b>	1 (easy)
<b>Single Surcharge</b>	Available upon request
<b>Notes</b>	Snorkeling equipment and beach towels included at no extra charge. Wetsuits available for rent. Comprehensive breakfast and gourmet Ecuadorian and international cuisine prepared fresh daily. All meals on board included.
<b>Price Dependent upon</b>	Season and availability

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## SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with

**ECUADOR - XAVIER III**

Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.

4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.

5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structures to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.

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