

Isabela Island

Dec 16, 2015 - National Geographic Islander



Galapagos penguin.



Pelican in flight and National Geographic Islander.

Captain Garces and our crew hauled up the anchor in the wee hours of the morning and we navigated across the Bolivar Channel to anchor in Urbina Bay, Isabela Island. Isabela is by far the largest island of the archipelago, with more land mass than all the other islands combined. After breakfast we boarded the *National Geographic Islander's* fleet of Zodiacs and motored to shore to land on a steep black sand beach.

This morning our guests set off with the naturalists for either a long two mile exercise hike or a nature/photography walk of about a mile. On both of these hikes we found many very large and brightly colored land iguanas. The palo santo trees were sprouting leaves and the finches and mocking birds were in full song. It had obviously been raining on Alcedo volcano and felt like Galapagos springtime!

Back again at the beach there was time for a swim, to relax, or for those who were ready, I called the Zodiacs to take some back to the ship. Eight penguins, several pelicans, and blue footed boobies were feeding in a frenzy around and between us to our delight. Those who took their masks also saw several small black tipped reef sharks and sea turtles.

During lunch and siesta we navigated north and anchored in Tagus Cove. In the early afternoon we again had options to choose from: snorkeling from the Zodiacs or kayaking. Two Zodiacs went out with eager guests, and we had an amazing time! The water clarity was just ok but the variety and abundance of wildlife was incredible. We saw sea turtles, mobula and manta rays, cormorants, penguins, sea lions, sierra mackerel and dozens of other species of schooling fish.

As the afternoon cooled off there were more choices to be made: we offered a second round of kayaking, or a hike, or a Zodiac cruise along the shoreline. The hikers climbed above a crater lake and had a fabulous view back towards the ship at anchor in the cove. Continuing on they climbed up a cinder cone and had a view north towards Volcan Wolf. Those who joined me on the panga ride saw the rare Galapagos martins and penguins and cormorants along the shore. This has been yet another full and very interesting day for us in the enchanted islands of Galapagos!