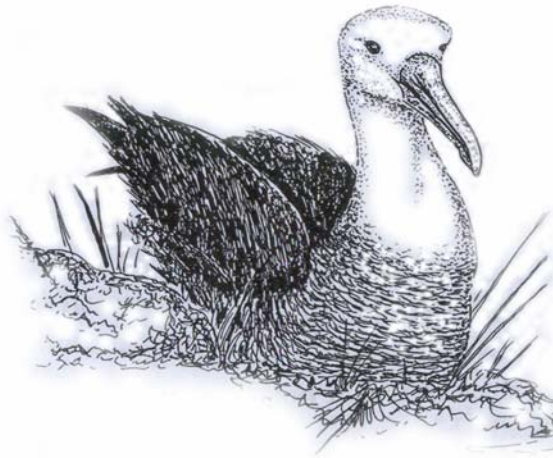


GALAPAGOS ISLANDS & *Ecuador's Hummingbirds*

Thursday 25th September - Saturday 11th October

These “enchanted isles” made famous by Charles Darwin, and more recently by several evocative TV documentaries, are the number one destination for most wildlife enthusiasts. We will begin our holiday at an exquisite cloud forest lodge in mainland Ecuador, where you have the chance to explore the extensive trails looking for a wealth of tropical bird species, or just relaxing while hummingbirds visit the feeders set out in the lodge’s lush grounds. Possibly the highlight here will be a lek of the truly spectacular



Waved Albatross

Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, and 3 species of tame antpitta. However, the main focus of our superb tour is a full 10 days spent on the magical Galapagos Islands. Our new luxury “first class” motor yacht was built specifically to cruise the Galapagos Islands, and will visit all the most important islands, giving us the best possible opportunities to look at some of the tamest wildlife imaginable, from the 26 endemic bird species (we see all of them!) to spectacular seabird colonies, Giant Tortoises, Marine Iguanas, whales and dolphins. This will prove to be a totally unforgettable experience! If you’ve ever wanted to visit these magical islands then this tour will live up to all your expectations.

Our Tour Itinerary

Day 1 We take a morning flight from London Heathrow via Madrid arriving in Quito, Ecuador late evening. Night in our guides private lodge.

Days 2 - 5 This morning we’ll drive to the luxuriant undisturbed forests of Yanacocha, situated on the slopes of Pichincha Volcano where our introduction to Ecuador’s spectacular and diverse avifauna will see us search for a number of target species that include Rufous Antpitta, Barred Fruiteater, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Rufous Wren and the first of what should be a long list of gorgeous hummingbirds and stunning tanagers. We’ll search for the outrageous looking Sword-billed Hummingbird, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sapphire-vented Puffleg as well Black-chested, Hooded and Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanagers. After a good morning’s birding here we will drive to our wonderfully secluded lodge in the Tandayapa Valley for a three-night stay. And what a location! Set amidst a picturesque and private forest where numerous hummingbirds visit the bird feeders right outside the front porch, and which offers a perfect setting in which to find a good selection of Ecuadorian birds. This veritable jungle with its profusion of birdlife and extensive trails, offers the chance to see some of the 360 species of birds recorded here. Over 30 species of hummingbird can be seen in our few days here as well as a good selection of ‘Choco endemics’. The gardens of our lodge can easily produce 50 species in a morning, and by travelling a little further we can search for specialities such as White-capped Dipper, Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Golden-headed Quetzal, Masked Trogon, Toucan Barbet, Club-winged Manakin, Beautiful Jay, Ocellated Tapaculo, Choco Toucan, Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Green-and-Black Fruiteater, Cinnamon Becard, Andean Solitaire, Slate-throated Whitestart, Chestnut-breasted

Chlorophonia, Tanager Finch, numerous spectacular tanagers and a multitude of dazzling hummingbirds with names like Gorgeted Sunangel, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Empress Brilliant, Booted Racket-Tail and Collared Inca, many of which can be observed easily around the lodge. Our local guide knows where to find all the specialities of the region and we will visit Los Bancos and Pedro Vicente Maldonado where a whole host of other species can be found, including Moss-backed Tanager, Choco and Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, Pale-mandibled Aracari, Guayaquil Woodpecker, Pacific Hornero, Yellow-collared Chlorophonia and Choco Trogon. The many colourful tanagers present will include Flame-rumped, White-capped, Tawny-crested, Scarlet-browed, White-shouldered and Swallow Tanagers, and there are also Slate-coloured Grosbeak, Red-headed Barbet, Ornate and Rusty-margined Flycatchers, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Pacific Antwren, Cinnamon and One-coloured Becards amongst many other possibilities. Possibly the highlight of our stay here will be a dawn visit to a lek of the spectacular Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. The males of this species are an incredible bright scarlet-red and to see up to 10 to 15 of these birds displaying in front of us must rank as one of the worlds greatest avian sights! A new and very exciting sideline to this is that the locals here now put out worms which attract several seldom seen forest dwellers, namely Giant, Yellow-breasted and Moustached Antpittas and Dark-backed Wood-Quail. Few people have ever seen such difficult birds up close and just a few feet away! Bring your camera! Day 5 we return to our guide's lodge for the night and have time to prepare for our exciting visit to the fabled Galapagos Islands tomorrow.

Day 6 This morning we take a flight from Quito to the small island of Baltra in the Galapagos Islands, where we board our prestige "first class" motor yacht the "The Millennium" our home for the next 10 days and what has been described as probably the nicest yacht in the whole of Galapagos.

A little about our boat: The 'Millennium' was built specifically to cruise the Galapagos Islands and being a motor vessel will not be subject to wind conditions. Birdseekers have chartered the whole boat so we will not have the problems that some of the larger mixed interest groups encounter, so the tour will be run according to our specific requirements. Equipped with a crew of 8, international cook and bilingual naturalist guide it is able to provide comfortable cruising, fine dining and attentive service, as well as offering a blend of spaciousness, comfort and elegance that will make our journey around these fascinating islands such a memorable one. The boat is 82ft long with a 33ft beam and cruises at a steady 12 knots. It spaciously accommodates 16 passengers in 8 large double cabins (194 sq feet each) with two full size twin beds. All cabins have individual climate control, security boxes, private balconies, and private bathrooms with hot water showers. The entire vessel is fully air-conditioned and features a large dining room, lounge, TV and bar, sundecks, jacuzzi, and all rooms and social areas have direct views of the ocean. The ample deck space provides us with great opportunities for everyone to watch seabirds and other marine life as well as superb chances for photography. We have two 10 passenger motorboats that can ferry us ashore, whether it is for a wet or a dry landing! Once we are safely aboard our ship we will sail the short distance to North Seymour where we will follow a nature trail that takes us alongside a colony of Great and Magnificent Frigatebirds, and we can get our first experience of how extraordinarily confiding the birds are here. The trail takes us within a few metres of the frigatebirds with their huge red, inflated throat pouches, and will provide some of the most memorable sightings of the whole trip! As we walk around Blue-footed Boobies and Galapagos Sealions standing on the path, we need to keep an eye out for the scarce Land Iguana and rare Lava Gulls as well.

Days 7 – 14 As we are not in a sailboat we will not be dictated to by the winds and we should therefore be able to follow our planned itinerary. Unfortunately for other visitors this is not always the case. Over the following days we will cruise at night enabling us to make the most of each island during the day. Our first sunrise in these magical isles will see us docked at San Cristobel, where we will take a bus up into the highlands in search for the endemic Chatham Mockingbird. Leaving here we will sail the four hours to the most southern and remote Espanola Island, or Hood as it is often called. This island is the breeding ground for the endemic Waved Albatross, a magnificent bird which we also have a chance to see anywhere at sea! Other birds here can include any of the four Ground-Finches, Hood Mockingbird, Galapagos Martin, Blue-footed and Nazca Boobies, as well as Red and Green Marine Iguanas, Sea Lions and even the famed Blow Hole! The following day will see us traverse Champion Island for Charles Mockingbird, before visiting Floreana which is the only island where Medium Tree Finch can be found.

We should also find Galapagos Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Galapagos Mockingbird, Smooth-billed Ani, Galapagos Dove and much more. Our ship will then take us around the other side of the island to a large saline lagoon where we can find Greater Flamingos, Black-necked Stilts, and White-cheeked Pintails, and sometimes some passage American waders such as Semipalmated, Least and Spotted Sandpipers. And nearby, Galapagos Penguins and Common Stingrays can be seen at very close quarters. Our journey then takes us to a couple of different areas on Isabella and Fernandina, where amongst even more spectacular scenery we will search for Flightless Cormorant, Lava Gull, Lava Heron, Galapagos Hawk, Short-eared Owl, plus Warbler and the seldom seen Mangrove Finch – a species we have never missed. Walking along the volcanic paths with huge groups of Marine Iguanas everywhere, will provide yet more photographic opportunities! Imagine being greeted in the mornings by volcanic sea cliffs and white coral beaches, where we can walk amidst the incredibly tame Nazca Boobies, and marvel at the Great Frigatebirds with their huge red, inflatable throat-pouches, while Red-billed Tropicbirds glide past and vie for photographs. In fact throughout the tour you will be amazed at how easy it is to photograph the wildlife even without a zoom lens, as these unique creatures sit just a few feet away totally unconcerned. The beautiful Swallow-tailed Gull, should be found, along with the more demure Lava Gull. Here also are a few of Darwin's Finches, birds that helped formulate the theory of evolution, and in particular Large Cactus Finch, whilst Sharp-beaked Ground and Large Ground Finch should be seen. There will be time for a swim before crossing the picturesque bay in our zodiacs and visiting the Wedge-rumped Storm Petrel colony, where hundreds of these little birds can be seen busily visiting their nesting holes. We aim to leave here and sail out into some really deep water where there is a good chance of Bryde's Whale and hopefully Madeiran (Band-rumped) Petrels returning to their nest sites. We should be able to get views of Dark-rumped Petrel, flocks of boobies and Red-necked Phalaropes, Common Noddies and even the huge Waved Albatross. Sailing from here to Santa Cruz we will base ourselves on this island for the next two nights in a hotel. Several excursions are required to see everything on Santa Cruz, and we shall start by searching for Galapagos Rail, which we have never missed! The scenery in the highlands here is totally different to anywhere else on these fabled islands, with mist covering the fern and dwarf tree clad hillsides, and we can view enormous pit craters, lava tunnels and some wild Giant Tortoises. As we travel around these islands, watching beautiful sunsets and sunrises, we shall encounter much more than briefly described here. There should also be Short-eared Owl, Dark-billed Cuckoo, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Large Tree, Woodpecker and Vegetarian Finches inhabiting the dense woodland. Elsewhere on the island, White-cheeked Pintail, American Purple Gallinule, the elusive Paint-billed Crake, Galapagos Flycatcher, Small Tree Finch, and Galapagos Giant Tortoise can be found. The Charles Darwin Research centre is also not to be missed, and gives us a chance to observe the tortoise research and breeding programme, whilst there is also the added advantage of numerous small souvenir shops! On another day we can cruise slowly around shallow, mangrove filled coves where Galapagos Green Turtles, Black-tipped Reef Sharks, and numerous other sea creatures such as Golden, Common Sting, Diamond Sting and White-spotted Eagle Rays cruise in flocks just below the water's surface.. As we cruise between the islands, we can watch Elliot's and Wedge-rumped Storm-petrels feeding just a few metres off the boat, and if we are lucky then Madeiran or even a Markham's Storm-petrel will make it onto our lists. Audubon's Shearwater is common here, whilst Red-billed Tropicbirds and both frigatebirds often fly close overhead. Cetaceans are well represented, with both Bottle-nosed and Spinner Dolphins sometimes playing in front of our boat, and whale species could include Orca, Sperm, Bryde's and Humpback, and there is also a possibility of the huge Whale Shark. Add to all of this Galapagos Green Turtle, Lava Lizard, Galapagos Snake, Sally Lightfoot Crabs, White and Black-tipped Reef Sharks, and a whole host of beautifully coloured tropical fish that we have opportunities to swim amongst, and you wouldn't be wrong in saying that this has to be the ultimate in wildlife watching experiences.

Day 15 Unfortunately we must transfer to Baltra this morning in order to catch our plane back to Quito. On arrival, we will be met by our coach and spend the evening relaxing at our guides private lodge.

Day 16 This morning we will visit the nearby and spectacular reserve of Antisana. Set high above the city of Quito, it is seemingly a world away and a picture of remoteness. Here we have a good chance to find the mighty Andean Condor, as well as Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and numerous Carunculated Caracaras. At the top beside a mountain lake we could find Black-faced Ibis, Andean Gull, Andean Duck,

Andean Coot, Andean Lapwing, Silvery Grebe and possibly Aplomado Falcon. While roadside stops could produce Black-winged Ground-Dove, Grass Wren, Paramo Pipit, Giant Hummingbird, Shining Sunbeam, Black-tailed Trainbearer and Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant. We will return from this very different habitat back to Quito in time for our return flight to London via Madrid, where we arrive early morning of **Day 17** and so concluding a truly spectacular tour.

Leaders: Juan Carlos Calvachi, Josele Saiz, plus local naturalist.

TOUR PRICE **£3850.00** per person

Single supplement: £720.00 **Deposit:** £400.00

Maximum group size: 14 Excluding leaders

Included in cost: Return flight from London to Quito, Ecuador, internal flights to Galapagos, full board en-suite accommodation on first class motor yacht, en-suite rooms and all meals at lodge, transport throughout the tour, Galapagos entrance fees and all services of the leaders.

Not included: Insurance, extra drinks, tips and other personal expenses.

Note: Because of the exceptional high standard of this tour and the luxury boat we use we can only run the tour with a minimum of 9 persons. Changing restrictions on visiting some islands may see our itinerary alter.

Note: There is one cabin/suite available on this boat which is an even bigger room with double bed and private jacuzzi. Please contact us for the additional supplement if you would like this cabin!

BIRDSEEKERS – Holidays for Birdwatchers
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Website: <http://www.birdseekers.co.uk>

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BOOKING FORM

PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS THROUGHOUT

Tour name.....Dates.....

Surname	Initials	Mr/Mrs/Miss	First Name (That by which you wish to be known on trip)	Date of Birth (Insurance purposes only)

Address for Correspondence:	
Postcode:	
Telephone: (Home)	(Work)
E-mail Address:	
Contact Number: (in case of accident or emergency - this must be filled in)	
Doctors Number:	

Passport Details: * (Please fill in forenames as they appear on your passport)					
Surname	*Forename(s)	Passport No.	Place of Issue	Date of issue	Expiry date

Please make the above reservations
I/We enclose £..... **Deposit** (Please see tour description for amount)
I/We enclose £..... **For travel insurance**
TOTAL £.....

I confirm that I have read the terms and conditions as set out in the brochure and agree and accept them on behalf of all persons named above.

SIGNATURE **DATE**

Please make your cheque payable to 'BIRDSEEKERS' and return, together with completed booking form to the address overleaf.

PLEASE TURN TO BACK OF FORM AND COMPLETE ALL RELEVANT SECTIONS

Other Details:

Accommodation required (please tick) single twin double

I would be prepared to share twin-bedded accommodation yes no

What type of passport do you hold? This must have at least six months to run after the return date of your holiday. British Citizen Other (please state)

Do you have any special dietary requirements (vegetarian, diabetic, other?) yes no
If yes give details.....

Do you have any medical conditions I should know about? Or is there anything else which may prohibit full participation of the tour? Yes no

If yes give details

Insurance:

For details of insurance please refer to relevant section at back of brochure

Do you want me to provide your travel insurance? Yes no

IMPORTANT: If you answered no above, I will require a copy of the alternative policy you intend to use

(Wish List!)

Please fill-in if there are any particular species of bird or other form of wildlife that you would like to see on this tour. We cannot guarantee anything, but it helps to let us know if you have any target species.

Birds:	Other Wildlife: / Sites etc:
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

Other countries you would like to visit?.....

Other interests, Butterflies, Mammals, Flowers, Whales, Photography see www.natural-selection.info/
.....

Please return this form with enclosed cheque to:

BIRDSEEKERS, 4a Plymouth Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, PL7 4JR

Tel/Fax: 01752 342001

e-mail: info@birdseekers.co.uk

www.birdseekers.co.uk

ATOL No. 6156

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Bookings are welcome right up to the last minute, please ring for details of any vacancies.

Steve Bird trading as BIRDSEEKERS

