

FLOREANA

Monday, December 12th, 2022

Sunrise: 0546 Low tide: 1112, 1.2 ft. / 0.4m Sunset: 1757; High tide: 1732, 5.7 ft. / 1.9 m

Floreana (also known as Charles and Santa Maria) is a peaceful, rolling island dotted with numerous extinct volcanic cones amidst a variety of scrubby vegetation. Its colorful human history goes back almost two centuries and, at times, verges on the bizarre: from marooned whalers to prisoners and colonists, and from a toothless dentist to a self-proclaimed empress. Our view of Floreana will be considerably gentler than it's past, however. We will start the day with an optional early morning wet landing at a site named Punta Cormorant. Walkers will disembark on the fascinating beach of olivine sand, and walk to a second beautiful beach, this one of incredibly fine, white, coralline sand that is a favorite nesting site for green sea turtles. The walk is relatively easy, with firm scoria (small cinders) underfoot. Two trails, one very short (200 yards/180 m) and the other one leading to the second beach (1 mile/1.2 km, some climbing), skirt along a large salt pond where we may observe flamingos, pintails or shorebirds, as well as interesting vegetation.

Back aboard for breakfast, the ship repositions to a small offshore volcanic cone named Champion Islet. This is the only island where a small population of the Floreana mockingbird—which was driven to extinction by cats, rats and other introduced predators on the main island—still exists. The islet's rocky shores are home to colonies of Galapagos sea lions, and the underwater cliffs are swarming with colorful fish species. The rest of the morning will be devoted to Zodiac rides and deep-water snorkeling, where there'll be a "drift snorkeling" option for the more experienced and a "bay snorkeling" option for those who prefer calmer conditions. Currents occasionally sweep around the island, so it is important to always remain within the designated snorkeling area where our Zodiacs will be on patrol. We will offer glass bottom boat excursions, if sea conditions permit, for non-snorkelers.

We will lift anchor once more, following lunch, and spend the afternoon visiting the famous Post Office Bay, where a barrel is still used for an old mail swap tradition going back to whaling days – it was first mentioned in 1793 by British Captain James Colnett. You are also following in Charles Darwin's footsteps, as Floreana was the second of four islands he went ashore on during his 5-week visit to the Galapagos in September 1835, and this beach was one of the spots he went ashore at. We will spend the afternoon visiting the famous landmark and going through the mail to see if we can carry on with a centuries-old tradition and hand deliver some mail picked up here (you may also drop some postcards of your own here, no stamps needed).

FLOREANA, Monday's Schedule

Continued

- 0605** Disembarkation for Wet landing for **Photo Emphasis groups** at Punta Cormorant. (Set your alarm, no announcements).
- 0630** Disembarkation for Wet landing for **Natural History Emphasis groups** at Punta Cormorant. (Set your alarm, no announcements).
- 0700-0730** Join our wellness specialist on the sky deck for Stretching.
- 0800-0900** Breakfast is served.
- 0915-0930** Snorkeling gear exchange at the 300 aft with naturalist.
- 0930** First round of the glass bottom boat departs. We will have more departures according to sign-ups (You go by Zodiac, from the ship). This is an option for non-snorkelers as for people interested in looking for the Floreana mockingbird. *King Angel fish*
- 0940** Deep water snorkeling: Drifters (for those of you who are confident with currents).
- 0950** Deep water snorkeling: Bay option (it is deep water, but on the lee-ward side of islet).
- 1230 -1330** Lunch is served.
- 1330** Join National Geographic Photographer Jonathan Kingston, in the lounge, for his presentation: "Shoot until you feel it".
- 1430** Kayakers will disembark. After Kayaking you can be taken to the beach for visiting Post Office Barrel (**Bring your postcards**) and for swimming later on.
- 1500** Disembarkation to Visit Post Office Barrel (wet landing). Afterwards, you can swim from the beach, or Kayak in the second round (**16:00 – 17:00**). (**Bring your postcards**)
- 1845** Cocktail hour in the Lounge.
- 1930** Dinner is served.
- 2045** Join Ecologist, Conservationist and Author, Professor Carl Safina, in the lounge, for his presentation: Charles Darwin, What your mother did not tell you.

Nat Geo Global Explorer Ideas for today (write it all in your field notebook!):

- Spot it: A barrel of postcards, green sand, a creature with five fins, an organic beach, a bird the color of lava, pink mud, a plant with hairy leaves.

FYI: Early photo-oriented walk, glass-bottom boat and the two kayak outings require to sign-up. Sign-up sheets located at the Workstation's front desk (200 level).