VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY:

Wonders of the Galápagos Islands

aboard the Exclusively Chartered Santa Cruz II

February 12 to 21, 2017
Dear Alumni & Friends:

“The natural history of this archipelago is very remarkable ... the greater number of its inhabitants, both vegetable and animal, being found nowhere else.”

We invite you to join us, as well as alumni from other colleges and universities, for this incredible, once-in-a-lifetime firsthand experience to understand why Charles Darwin made this keen yet simple observation of the Galápagos Islands, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Today, the archipelago’s natural biodiversity is still intact, much as it was when first encountered by a galleon that drifted off course in 1535. Home to the amazing exotic birds, plants and animals that inspired Darwin, this “living laboratory of evolution” continues to offer the excitement of original discovery to every visitor.

Cruise aboard the recently refitted first-class exploration vessel Santa Cruz II, designed specifically to navigate archipelagos. The ship is fully equipped to make your Galápagos experience complete, from complimentary snorkeling gear to a fleet of Zodiacs and a glass-bottom boat. Certified onboard naturalists lead excursions and share their knowledge to enhance your understanding and enjoyment of this fascinating and mysterious natural realm.

These islands, each with its own ecosystem, are teeming with vibrant flora, fascinating fauna and species unknown anywhere else in the world, like the flightless cormorant and the marine iguana. With few natural predators on the islands, the abundant wildlife is nearly fearless and innocently receptive to up-close human company, unlike any other place on our planet! Here, you can almost touch spiny-backed iguanas and snorkel alongside playful seals and tropical penguins.

On mainland Ecuador, explore picturesque Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage site known for magnificent colonial churches with opulent gold interiors; walk through the historic Old Town; and straddle the Equator with one foot in either hemisphere.

To complement your Galápagos Islands cruise, we are pleased to offer an exclusive Pre-Tour Option to Mashpi, a protected reserve of rainforest and cloud forest abundant with wildlife found nowhere else on Earth, and a Post-Tour Option to experience the marvels of the UNESCO World Heritage site of the legendary “lost city” of Machu Picchu and the breathtaking Sacred Valley.

We encourage you to reserve now as space is limited and Early Booking Savings are only available through July 13, 2016, on this exceptional travel value through the “Islands of Tortoises,” which has always been a fast sellout.

We also encourage you to purchase the trip cancellation insurance offered through the Auburn Alumni Association. For details or questions on the travel insurance, call USI Travel Insurance Services Customer Service Department at 1-800-937-1387, or you may visit www.travelinsuranceservices.com/select/auburn. Please visit our website at www.aualum.org/travel. If the Auburn Alumni Association can be of service to you, please call 334-844-1443.

War Eagle!

Gretchen VanValkenburg ’86
Vice President Alumni Affairs and Executive Director, Auburn Alumni Association
The enigma of the
Galápagos Islands

“The Archipelago is a little world within itself...”
— Charles Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle

Amazingly, this remote volcanic archipelago, consisting of islands and islets located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador, inspired one of the most revolutionary theories in the history of science. Formed millions of years ago by volcanic eruptions, these islands’ dramatic landscapes now make a safe home for the quirky finches and primeval iguanas that inspired Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection and evolution, which he presented in On The Origin of Species in 1859.

Scientists theorize that most Galápagos species originally floated to the islands from the mainland, were transported by birds or deposited by whalers and buccaneers. Others, like the Humboldt penguin, Chilean dolphin and Southern sea lion, probably arrived by way of the Humboldt Current, a cold stream of ocean water flowing from the southern coast of Chile. This current makes the Galápagos the world's only tropical region to support such species.

Darwin noted that life in the Galápagos Islands is comprised of mostly “aboriginal creations, found nowhere else,” which led him to hypothesize that the islands' species survived by evolving over time independently from their continental cousins. Because natural predators failed to survive—possibly due to the lack of fresh water, which deterred even permanent human settlement until the 20th century—its bevy of birds and animals were able to thrive and adapt in a manner not possible in other habitats. This also explains why Galápagos species never developed a fear of humans and allow the near contact that makes your own personal experience on the islands so thrilling and unique.

U.S./Quito, Ecuador
Sunday, Day 1
Fly to Quito, the highest capital city in the world at 9350 feet, and transfer to the HILTON COLON HOTEL. Surrounded by snowcapped peaks, yet only miles from the Equator, Quito is known for its magnificent Spanish colonial architecture and lively street life.

Quito
Monday, Day 2
Quito is a city of startling contrasts, where thousands of years of native South American traditions are interwoven with imported Catholicism, the Spanish language and European culture. Quaint family-owned shops and open-air markets are steps away from gleaming skyscrapers and ornate Spanish Baroque-style cathedrals favored by the Conquistadors. This afternoon, visit the Equator and stand with one foot in each hemisphere in the “middle of the world,” where an 18th-century multinational expedition located zero degrees latitude and established an accurate measurement of the earth's size for the first time. Step inside the hundred-foot-tall monument to this endeavor for spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and tour the Ethnographic Museum, illustrating the diversity of Ecuador’s indigenous peoples.

This evening, attend a private Welcome Reception in the hotel.

Quito
Tuesday, Day 3
This morning, the panoramic city tour features a visit to the noble, 16th-century church, Iglesia de San Francisco.

Photo this page: Watch marine iguanas, found only in the Galápagos Islands, basking in the afternoon sun.
Photo above: While snorkeling in the azure waters, look for panamic cushion sea stars and green sea turtles.
Cover photo: Look for the unique and amazing naturally colored blue-footed booby and the agile Sally Lightfoot crab along the rocky shores of the Galápagos Islands.
In the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Quito, see the Moorish-influenced Catedral Metropolitana and Iglesia de La Compañía de Jesus, renowned for its lavish interiors decorated with an estimated seven tons of gold leaf. Visit Casa del Alabado Museum, a private museum of pre-Columbian art housed in a colonial mansion built in the 17th century, which displays 500 of its 5000 archaeological pieces.

Quito/Baltra, Galápagos Islands/ North Seymour
Wednesday, Day 4
Fly to the small Galápagos island of Baltra. Embark the SANTA CRUZ II in time for lunch. Depart Baltra and attend your first briefing by the English-speaking Ecuadorian naturalists.
En route to diminutive North Seymour, a sandy-shored isle known for its exceptional whale-watching and home to sea lions and swallow-tailed gulls, observe large colonies of charming blue-footed boobies and magnificent frigatebirds, whose males puff up their bright red chests to impress potential mates.
Attend the Captain’s Welcome Reception this evening.

Please note that the itinerary and cruise pattern is dependent on weather, sea conditions and Galápagos National Park Service regulations.

Isabela/Fernandina
Thursday, Day 5
Cruise through the Bolivar Channel, showcasing stunning views of the volcanic peaks of Isabela and Fernandina. Spend the morning at seahorse-shaped Isabela Island, snorkeling in the waters off Punta Vicente Roca and searching the northern shores for blue-footed boobies, Darwin’s finches and penguins that inhabit the area.
Dominated by the sweeping slopes of La Cumbre Volcano, the moon-like landscapes of Fernandina Island are the habitat of one of the densest concentrations of wildlife in the Galápagos, including the famous flightless cormorant, sea lions, marine iguanas, pelicans and penguins. Explore how recent volcanic activity has reshaped the island’s topography, creating an ever-changing environment for the thriving species found only in the Galápagos.

Isabela
Friday, Day 6
Trace the west coast of Isabela, one of the younger Galápagos islands, formed by six shield volcanoes. Be on deck for possible sightings of orcas and dolphins breaching the waters of Tagus Cove.

The distinctive conical shape and steep slopes of the Galápagos Islands are a result of five million years of repeated volcanic activity that caused this chain of islands to emerge from the very bottom of the ocean floor.
One of the many different species of birds living on the Galápagos Islands, watch for the magnificent frigatebird doing its unique mating "dance."

On shore, a short but steep walk leads to Darwin Lake, a saltwater pool within a tuff cone frequented by land birds—ground and tree finches, large-billed flycatchers and sometimes the woodpecker finch, which awed Darwin with its remarkable use of twigs as a tool for feeding.

Observe the unusual results of geologic forces at Urbina Bay, where in 1954, volcanic uplift stranded nearly four miles of coral reef 15 to 20 feet above the water's surface. On the island's arid shore you may encounter the largest land iguanas in the Galápagos as well as giant tortoises and flightless cormorants. Enjoy spectacular snorkeling in the bay.

Santa Cruz
Saturday, Day 7
Santa Cruz's pristine white beaches, prickly pear cacti, vibrantly colored flamingos and prehistoric-looking iguanas make it an essential stop during a cruise around the archipelago. Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station to learn more about efforts to protect the island's rare giant tortoises. Transfer to Santa Cruz's cool, lush highlands for lunch amidst mist-covered forests.

This afternoon, choose from a variety of leisure activities. Swim in the clear blue waters of secluded Tortuga Bay, home to black turtles, colorful reef fish, marine iguanas and lava gulls. Walk through the island's trails or simply stroll along the sparkling white sandy beaches, the perfect avenues to experience Santa Cruz.

Post Office Bay, Floreana/
Champion Islet/Cormorant Point
Sunday, Day 8
Floreana was one of the first islands in the archipelago to be settled by European whalers and buccaneers. At Post Office Bay, peruse the mail in the wooden barrel “post office,” established by whalers to transport letters home on passing ships. Discover a piece of mail to hand-deliver to its final destination, or leave a message to be delivered by a future visitor.

Snorkel or cruise via Zodiac in the clear waters surrounding pristine Champion Islet, encountering sea horses, sea turtles, sea lions, coral hawkfish and other aquatic wonders. Scan the skies and shorelines for possible sightings of the endemic Floreana mockingbird, common to the islands when Darwin visited, but critically endangered today. Walk along the brackish lagoons and mangroves near Cormorant Point, famous for the flamingos and pelicans that congregate here.

Attend the Captain’s Farewell Reception this evening.

Baltra/Guayaquil, Ecuador
Monday, Day 9
Dock at Baltra to disembark the ship. Fly to Guayaquil and enjoy dinner in the Hilton Colón Hotel, with late-evening departure to the U.S., or continue on the Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley Post-Tour Option.

U.S.
Tuesday, Day 10
Arrive in the U.S.

Surveying the Ecuadorian Rainforest
Pre-Tour Option
Discover life “among the treetops” in the most unspoiled ecosystem on the planet, the Mashpi Rainforest Biodiversity Reserve, encompassing 3200 acres of protected rainforest located in the monumental Andes Mountains. Learn about this rich ecosystem during discussions with native guides and look for multi-hued toucans, tree-nesting kinkajous, electric blue butterflies and hundreds of species of orchids during naturalist-led day and night trail walks and while gliding through the understory of the forest on canopy aerial gondolas. Accommodations for one night are in the HILTON COLÓN HOTEL in Quito and two nights in the MASHPI ECUADOR LODGE, located in the heart of the reserve.

The Pre-Tour Option is at additional cost.
Details will be provided with your reservation confirmation.

Observe the distinct creatures indigenous to the Galápagos Islands, like this land iguana, the same way Charles Darwin did more than 150 years ago.
The intimacy and personal service of a small cruise ship experience are the distinguishing characteristics of travel aboard the recently refitted, first-class exploration vessel SANTA CRUZ II. It is designed specifically to navigate the narrow channels, shallow bays and environmentally sensitive waters of remote archipelagos and provides the most comprehensive access possible to the region’s marine and wildlife treasures. Refurbished in 2015, the air-conditioned SANTA CRUZ II features only 50 cabins and offers modern amenities and facilities.

A team of multilingual onboard Ecuadorian expert naturalists will share their in-depth insight and knowledge about the Galápagos’ distinctive ecosystem during daily excursions and natural history lectures. The ship provides a glass-bottom boat to observe marine life, Zodiacs for island landings and excursions, complimentary snorkeling equipment and a nighttime stargazing program.

Each outside, air-conditioned, tastefully appointed ocean-view cabin and suite (163 to 325 square feet) features one fixed double bed or one double bed convertible to two twin beds, a private bathroom with shower, safe and hair dryer.

All meals, featuring international and Ecuadorian specialties, are served in single seatings in the inviting Beagle Dining Room or alfresco when conditions permit. Complimentary wine is served with dinner.

The ship’s public facilities include two lounges, natural history library and reading room with Internet access, bar, boutique, observation deck for dolphin watching, two jacuzzis, gym and medical clinic with a full-time physician.

With a ratio of one crew member for every 1.8 guests, the SANTA CRUZ II’s staff provides professional, attentive service. The ship maintains the highest international safety and environmental standards.
Included Features

In Quito, Ecuador
- Three nights in the superior first-class Hilton Colón Hotel.
- Full American breakfast each morning.
- Welcome Reception.
- Tour Quito’s UNESCO World Heritage-designated historic colonial district.
- Visit Casa del Alabado Museum, a private museum of pre-Columbian art.
- Excursion to the Equator including a visit to the fascinating Ethnographic Museum.

On board the first-class Santa Cruz II
- Five-night cruise of Ecuador’s Galápagos Islands round trip Baltra Island, with calls at the Galápagos’ most beautiful islands: North Seymour, Isabela, Fernandina, Santa Cruz and Floreana.
- Ocean-view, air-conditioned accommodations with private bathroom facilities.
- Three meals each day, featuring international and Ecuadorian cuisine.
- Complimentary wine is served with dinner.
- Captain’s Welcome and Farewell Receptions.
- Multilingual naturalists will share their in-depth insights and specialized expertise about the Galápagos’ distinctive ecosystem and wildlife on board, on shore and underwater.
- Two island excursions each day by Zodiac landing craft, sea conditions and weather permitting, focusing on the unique wildlife, natural history and conservation efforts in the Galápagos.
- Snorkeling equipment for further explorations of the Galápagos’ diverse marine life.

In Guayaquil
- Dinner in the deluxe Hilton Colón Hotel before return flight to the U.S.

Enhanced Travel Services
- Transfers and luggage handling abroad for participants whose arrival(s)/departure(s) coincide with the scheduled group transfer(s).
- All excursions and visits, as outlined above, with experienced naturalists and local guides.
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers on included excursions and transfers.
- Galápagos National Park fee.
- Hospitality desk in the hotels and aboard ship.
- The services of experienced Gohagan & Company Travel Directors throughout the travel program.
- Travel document wallet, name badge and pre-departure information.
- Automatic $250,000 flight insurance policy for each participant ticketed on flights by Gohagan & Company.

Small Zodiacs allow for landings on remote island beaches for up-close encounters with the miraculous array of wildlife found ashore, such as these Nazca boobies.
Plaza de Armas is the magnificent center of historic Cuzco, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley Post-Tour Option

Delight in this extraordinary opportunity to experience Machu Picchu, the majestic “lost city of the Incas;” the lush Sacred Valley; and the colonial and Inca traditions of Cuzco.

Perched on an awe-inspiring mountain range in the Peruvian Andes, Machu Picchu was obscured from humankind for 400 years until Yale Professor Hiram Bingham literally stumbled upon it in 1911. A century of extensive research and study still has not revealed the secrets of its purpose, its residents or its abandonment; nevertheless, this UNESCO World Heritage site has been carefully excavated and preserved.

Admire the spectacular archaeological sites of the beautiful Sacred Valley, where ancient engineering marvels, such as the fortress of Ollantaytambo, stand as lasting testimony to the powerful and far-reaching Inca Empire. Here, village craftsmen employ age-old techniques to weave intricate tapestries and sculpt colorful pottery.

In the historic Inca capital of Cuzco, a UNESCO World Heritage site, see the Inca stone fortress of Sacsayhuamán and grand Baroque- and Renaissance-style churches that provide a fascinating mix of pre-Columbian and colonial influences.

Day 1  Guayaquil, Ecuador/Fly to Lima, Peru
Day 2  Lima/Cuzco/Sacred Valley
Day 3  Sacred Valley/Scenic train ride to Machu Picchu
Day 4  Machu Picchu/Transfer to Cuzco
Day 5  Cuzco
Day 6  Cuzco/Lima
Day 7  Lima/Depart for the U.S.

The Post-Tour Option is at additional cost. Details will be provided with your reservation confirmation.

Plaza de Armas is the magnificent center of historic Cuzco, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
LAND/Cruise Tariff (per person, based on double occupancy)

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* SANTA CRUZ II has been specially contracted for this tour, and the applicable deck plan is available on request from Gohagan & Company and reflects the only valid cabin categorization of the vessel.

Wonders of the Galápagos Islands Reservation Form

Send to: War Eagle Travelers
Auburn Alumni Association
317 S. College Street
Auburn University, AL 36849-5149
Email: wareagletravelers@auburn.edu

For more information, please call Gohagan & Company at: (800) 922-3088.

Title   Full Name (exactly as it appears on your passport)   Class Year

Street Mailing Address (no P.O. Box number please)
City     State     Zip Code

Telephone: (Home)    (Mobile)

Email Address   (Business)

Preferred Name(s) on Badge(s)   Tour No. 099-02/12/17-004

Program reservations require a deposit of $600 per person and $200 per person Ecuadorian Rainforest Pre-Tour Option and/or $200 per person Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley Post-Tour Option. By reserving and depositing on this program, I/we agree to the Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Agreement as printed on the outside back cover of this brochure.

Enclosed is my/our check(s) for $_______ as deposit.

Make checks payable to 2017 Wonders of the Galápagos Islands.

I/we authorize you to charge my/our deposit of $_______ to:

Visa   MasterCard

Card Number   Exp. Date

Signature as it appears on credit card

All FINAL PAYMENTS are required to be made by check or wire transfer by November 9, 2016.

Note: Airfare is subject to change and availability and is nonrefundable.

I/we will make my/our own air arrangements.

Enclosed is my/our check(s) for $_______ as deposit.

Make checks payable to 2017 Wonders of the Galápagos Islands.

I/we authorize you to charge my/our deposit of $_______ to:

Visa   MasterCard

Card Number   Exp. Date

Signature as it appears on credit card

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I/we will make my/our own air arrangements.
In 1570, the islands were named “galápagos,” meaning tortoise, based on sailors’ descriptions of...

RELEASE OF LIABILITY, ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND BINDING ARBITRATION AGREEMENT

By forwarding of deposit, the participant certifies that he/she does not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that would create a hazard for himself or herself or other participants and accepts the terms contained in this Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Agreement.

PHOTO CREDITS: Ecuador Travel, PhotoShot; all images are rights managed and cannot be resold without assistance. Travelers requiring assistance must travel with a traveling companion and climb stairs and step over raised thresholds without assistance. Travelers requiring assistance must travel with a traveling companion and climb stairs and step over raised thresholds without assistance.

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION: Cancellation penalties may apply.

CANCELLATIONS: Cancellations for all or any part of the trip including PrePost Program(s) reservation(s) will not be effective unless received in writing in the offices of Gohagan. Should you have to cancel, the following terms will apply: reservation cancellation(s) are subject to a $200 ($50 PrePost Program(s)) per person administrative fee from the time of booking through 120 days prior to departure; from 95 through 119 days prior to departure, $600 ($200 PrePost Program(s)) per person; from 60 through 94 days prior to departure, 50% of the published full regular tariffs; cancellations 59 days or less prior to departure, a no-show, or early return from the trip will result in forfeiture of 100% of the published full regular tariffs. In addition, any applicable airline cancellation fees, optional excursion cancellation fees and non-refundable charges for subsequently imposed governmental tax increases.

REGISTRATION: Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating in any way to this Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Agreement, the brochure, or any other information relating in any way to the trip, or to the trip itself, shall be settled solely and exclusively by binding arbitration in Chicago, Illinois, in accordance with the commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association then existent. In any such proceeding, the substantive, but not procedural law of Illinois will apply. The arbitrator and not any federal, state, or local court or agency shall have exclusive authority to resolve any dispute relating to the interpretation, applicability, enforceability, conscionability, or formation of this contract, including but not limited to any claim that all or any part of this contract is void or voidable.

ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRACT: By forwarding of deposit, the participant certifies that he/she does not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that would create a hazard for himself or herself or other participants and accepts the terms contained in this Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Agreement.

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