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LEGACY

Future

ARCHIVE

Pinnacle Rock, on Bartolomé Island, is one of the most famous symbols of the Galápagos



Gaga for the Galápagos

Text JOHN WOGAN

**All aboard Aqua Mare's new superyacht
for unparalleled naturemaxxing.**

There is nowhere else on Earth like the Galápagos. Charles Darwin understood this when he arrived in 1835 aboard the HMS Beagle, and the islands have been humbling visitors ever since as a place where marine iguanas cling to volcanic rock like ancient sentinels, giant tortoises crawl through highland mist, and albatrosses execute their famously ungainly landings like miniature airplanes. Modern travelers to the islands have had a choice of expedition ships and luxury vessels, but never in quite this form. Aqua Mare is the first true superyacht in the Galápagos, and the newest addition to the fleet by luxury small-ship operator Aqua Expeditions.

Designed for just 16 guests across seven suites, the 164-foot Aqua Mare feels closer to a private yacht than a conventional expedition vessel. French designer François Zuretti has given the interiors the understated polish of a contemporary superyacht, with walnut paneling,



*Instagram: @aqua_expeditions
aquaexpeditions.com*

marble bathrooms, and artwork that nods to the age of exploration. It also features an enormous-by-ship-standards 861-square-foot Owner's Suite that occupies the bow, and the aft Beach Club, whose hydraulic windows open directly onto the sea.

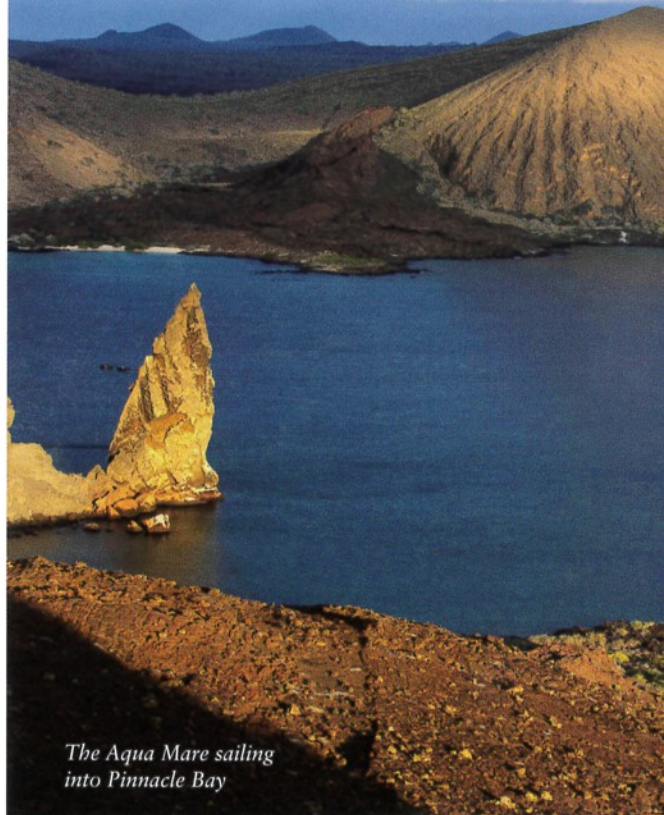
With 16 crew members serving so few people (the ratio is 1:1), the experience is highly personal, especially when it comes to exploring ashore. Every departure includes two expert naturalist guides, allowing excursions to split into groups of no more than eight. The smaller groups make wildlife encounters feel less crowded and conversations more spontaneous.

The Aqua itinerary, meanwhile, shows how no two islands are alike: on Genovesa, thousands of red-footed boobies occupy the lava fields while fur seals retreat into volcanic crevices below. Bartolomé offers perhaps the archipelago's most recognizable panorama, with the distinctive Pinnacle Rock rising above turquoise water and penguins darting through the shallows. On Española, waved albatrosses, marine iguanas, and the endemic mockingbird illustrate the extraordinary diversity that fascinated Darwin nearly two centuries ago. Throughout the voyage, the naturalists continually return to the same idea that captivated him: isolation. Over millions of years, each island became its own evolutionary experiment, producing species found nowhere else on Earth.

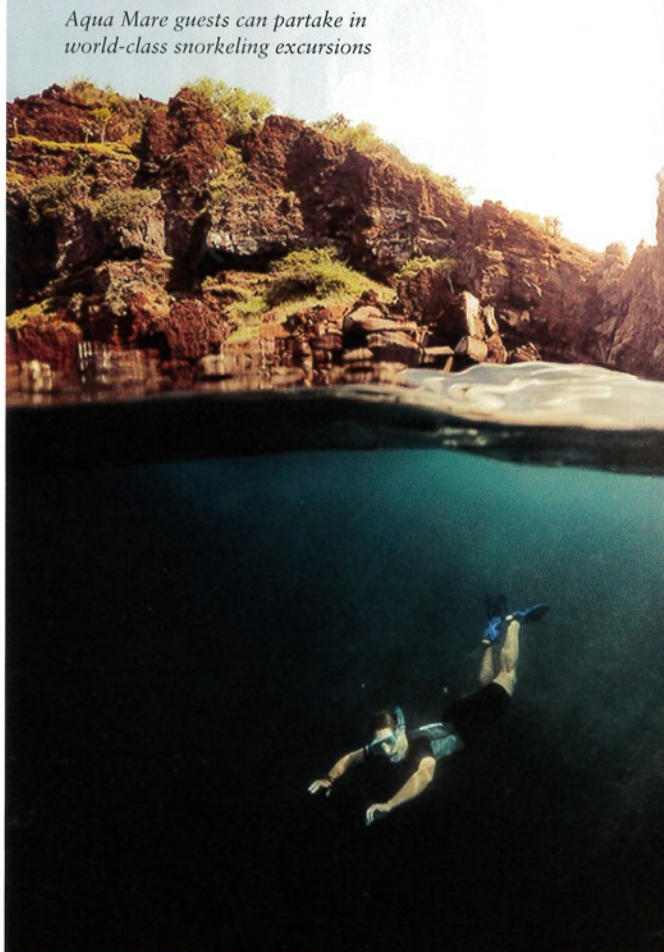
Any new vessel entering the Galápagos also arrives with an unavoidable responsibility. Tourism helps fund conservation, but it also places pressure on one of the world's most carefully protected ecosystems. Aqua Expeditions has responded by eliminating single-use plastics aboard Aqua Mare, while Peruvian chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino's culinary program emphasizes Amazonian ingredients that have been sourced from local producers and sustainable fisheries. The menu reflects the surrounding region rather than imported goods, from shrimp ceviche and tuna crudo to the Galápagueña lobster lettuce wraps and llapingachos (traditional Ecuadorian potato pancakes originally from the Andes).

The final morning brings guests to Los Gemelos, the twin volcanic craters in the Santa Cruz highlands, where mossy woodlands shelter Darwin's finches (so-called because the unique physical attributes of the birds influenced his theory of evolution). It is a fitting place to conclude the voyage. Aqua Mare may be the most refined way yet to experience the Galápagos, but by journey's end the ship is no longer the thing you'll remember. What remains instead are the lava fields, the wildlife, and the realization that evolution here is, shockingly, something that still feels very much alive.

Rates for Aqua Mare's seven-night itineraries begin at \$9,450 per person and include all meals, beverages, excursions, the Galápagos National Park's entrance fee, laundry, and internet access. Private charter options are also available. ●



The Aqua Mare sailing into Pinnacle Bay



Aqua Mare guests can partake in world-class snorkeling excursions



Aqua Mare's largest cabin, the Owner's Suite

