

EXTEND YOUR SOUTH AMERICAN ADVENTURE TO:

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



The Galapagos Islands lie 600 miles (970 km) off the coast of Ecuador, at the Equator line. The Galapagos Islands consists of 6 main islands, 12 smaller islands, and over 40 islets. When you visit the Galapagos you will quickly understand why Spanish pirates named the islands "The Enchanted Islands". Perhaps our first association with the word "Galapagos" is the name "Darwin" and not without reason. The theories of the Galapagos' most famous visitor have highly influenced western thought inspired over 150 years of biological research.



And it was the Galapagos Islands, after a visit of only four islands in five weeks, which were to have a resounding impact on the formations of **Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection**.



The Island's interesting volcanic geology, as well as its rich flora and fauna have been admired and studied by numerous travelers, scientists, and nature-lovers. Scientists are still faced with a mystery how such a large diversity of species could develop in a remote location like the Galapagos Islands. On the Islands, a multitude of animals, by most people only known from the Discovery Channel, are romping about: the main reason for tourists and nature lovers to pay the Galapagos Islands a visit.

Fray Tomas de Berlanga, the Bishop of Panama documented the official first visit to the islands in 1535. Delegated to investigate the accounts of the barbaric actions of the conquistadors in what is now Peru, his ship, caught in a dead calm, drifted westward in the ocean currents. With water sources depleted, the Bishop and crew searched the new islands for fresh water, almost entirely in vain. Frustrated, and suffering, the men resorted to crewing the native cactus for water. Disenchanted, they left the islands,



but not without sending word to King Carlos V of Spain, telling of the strange and foolishly tame wildlife and the numerous galapagos (giant tortoises), and the name stuck. The islands appeared on the map late in the 16th century as the "Insulae de los Galopegos."



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