

Walking with Darwin



● *Magnificent: a land iguana on Santa Cruz Island.*

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was inspired after a visit to the Galapagos Islands more than 170 years ago. Ann Brooks of Classic Journeys has been following in the footsteps of the great man...

The Galapagos Islands, located 600 miles west of Ecuador, are justifiably one of the world's great wildlife destinations.

Made famous as the place where Charles Darwin's observations led to the theory of evolution and his book on the Origin of Species, the islands are home to an amazing variety of exotic animals and birds, which featured recently in a BBC TV series.

Quite remarkably, the diverse range of species that live on these islands have no fear of man, allowing visitors fabulously close encounters with many wonderful animals and colourful birds including marine iguanas, giant tortoises, sea lions, the magnificent red-chested frigate birds, blue-footed boobies and penguins.

Quito and Bellavista Cloud Forest

Our adventure began with an overnight flight from the UK to Quito, Ecuador's capital city. Here we were met and driven to the Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve, where we were to spend two nights.

Set deep in the heart of the cloud forest in a swathe of mystery and magic, we discovered a protected reserve with an overwhelming profusion of life. Home to hundreds of species of plants, birds and other animals, we immersed ourselves in the natural sanctuary alongside those who have dedicated their lives to conserving this unique place.

There were ample opportunities to view and photograph many different species from our lodge's jungle surroundings and on a series of walks with a local naturalist guide. So very different from the normal