

## travel



galapagos islands

# travelsnaps

Claudia Rossi Hudson and Roger Hudson

### Where did you go and when?

Last November, we spent seven nights on an exploration cruise of the Galapagos Islands, off the west coast of Ecuador. We were able to get to most of the big islands in the archipelago: Fernandina, San Cristobal and Isabela.

### Where did you stay and what was it like?

We spent the evenings on the ship, the Isabela II, which was chartered by travel company Butterfield & Robinson. It was very, very comfortable. We had a twin cabin with en suite and air-conditioning. There was a large formal dining room, a jacuzzi and scuba-diving facilities. The ship is small enough to go very, very close to the islands.

### What did you eat and drink?

Ecuadorian food and Chilean wines are interesting but not something you would travel miles to get. Lots of bananas and corn! Picnics were a highlight. We would go for a long walk across recent lava flows and when we returned, there would be a feast – including bacon and egg pies, freshly sliced ham and tomato and a dessert – under a beautiful tree. It had all been brought there on horseback, complete with waiters.

### What did you spend most days doing?

Walking and snorkelling. The proximity to the animals – penguins, sharks, turtles and tropical fish – is amazing. Sea lions are everywhere. We would be standing on the beach talking and a baby sea lion would come up and nibble our toes out of curiosity.

### What were the highlights?

The ability to enjoy animals living in this untouched environment. It's unlike any other country.

### What was the weather like?

Warm. It's right on the equator so the temperature is quite constant all year round.

### What were your fellow travellers like?

Butterfield & Robinson attracts an interesting stable of fellow travellers. To us it was like a travelling house party. When we sat down to a table at night, we were confident there would be stimulating conversation. There were many affluent Americans, aged between 40 and 70.

### Did you have any mishaps?

Be prepared for nature's fury. A volcano not far from Quito, the capital of Ecuador, began erupting three days before we arrived and shut the airport for a week.

### What advice would you give to those planning a visit?

Some people try to do the Galapagos on the cheap, by just going to the little towns and doing day trips. This is a mistake. You need to get on a boat and travel around for a week to see the best of it. Also, I would have liked to have re-read *The Voyage of the Beagle* by Charles Darwin before I went.

### How would you sum it up in a few words?

A voyage of natural exploration and discovery.

Claudia Rossi Hudson spoke to Lisa Pryor.

### Facts about the Galapagos Islands

**How to get there** Fly to Quito in Ecuador with Lan Chile for \$1921 plus tax, if you fly before November 30.

**Best time to go** December to May can be rainy but it's a good time for snorkelling as the weather is warm.

**Do you need a visa?** Australians spending less than 90 days in Ecuador do not need a visa. All visitors to the Galapagos Islands must pay a \$162 Galapagos National Park entrance fee.

**Immunisation** Visitors should consider a hepatitis A vaccination.

**Butterfield & Robinson tours** A 12-day Butterfield & Robinson cruise of the Galapagos Islands starts at \$12,900 per person, twin share. The price includes charter flights from the mainland, but not flights from Sydney. See [www.butterfieldandrobinson.com](http://www.butterfieldandrobinson.com)