



The Galapagos

Darwin's arrival on the Galapagos islands

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On the 8th October 1835 the survey ship HMS Beagle anchored in this bay. On board was Charles Darwin and he and four companions were put ashore on this island for a week. An island that he described as both picturesque and curious.

In Darwin's day it was called 'James Island'. Today it's known as Santiago. At almost 600 square kilometres it's one of the larger islands in the Galapagos. Its highest point is 900 metres above sea level.

On Santiago, Darwin met two Spaniards, who were hard at work butchering tortoises for their meat. Together they had an uncomfortable walk across this lava field.

Eventually they arrived at this volcanic lake, where the Spaniards collected salt to use as a preservative.

Darwin was fascinated by local floral and fauna. He described the Galapagos as a world within itself. Full of creatures that were both curious and remarkable.

The islands were teeming with wildlife. There were so many land iguanas for instance, that Darwin found it difficult to pitch his tent without covering their burrows. Today, there are none left of Santiago.

In total Darwin spent five weeks on the Galapagos. Experimenting, observing and collecting specimens. As for tortoise meat, he noted that he tasted particularly good when roasted in its shell.