

Galapagos February Newsletter



Geospiza fortis

Darwin's finch enjoying banquet-breadcrumbs

Note by Country Director

Hello, once again. It has been an exceptionally busy month in the Galapagos, and in particular on San Cristobal Island, where the Projects Abroad main office is located. We celebrated the date of the creation of the province of the Galapagos Islands on the 18th February, 1973 and the annexation of the islands by the Ecuadorian government on the 12th February 1832, with a fireworks display and fiesta, when all the Projects Abroad volunteers marched around the town with our local staff. This was a great way for the local community to see the people and organisation that are behind all the wonderful changes to the island.

We also had a Dirty Day last Friday, when we cleaned and painted one of the roads leading to Sea Lion Beach near the airport. All our volunteers took part in this activity.

Summer school is about to begin on March 6th and it will end on April 18th. Approximately 100 students have already signed up for art, conservation, English and sports classes. The participants will also go on trips to the local beaches and places of interest. There is still time to register as a volunteer if you would like to take part. We depend on the hard work of our staff and local and overseas volunteers to ensure the success of our programmes. We even have students registering for our courses from the mainland. Thanks to Projects Abroad we are able to supply all the courses at no cost to our community.

As always, everyone here thanks our dedicated staff and volunteers, and Projects Abroad for ensuring the success of all our programmes.



William Puga
Country Director, Ecuador

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Galapagos joins Ecuador Anniversary!

The Galapagos Islands make up one of the 24 provinces of the Republic of Ecuador, located in the Archipelago of Colon, which consists of 22 islands and 107 rocky islets. Its capital is the town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on San Cristobal Island, and its most populated town is Puerto Ayora n Santa Cruz. It is the province that attracts the most tourists, as well as one of the largest and most important ecological reserves in the world. With 26,640 inhabitants, the Galapagos Islands are in the least populated province in the country, mainly due to the strict conservation laws that are in place to conserve the flora and fauna of the region.

The islands were discovered during the period of Spanish colonisation in 1535 by Fray Tomas de Berlanga, although which island he discovered has not been established. For much of colonial times, the islands served as hideouts for pirates who plundered several cities in South America. Ecuador annexed the Galápagos Islands on the 12th February 1832, and the present province was created on the 18th February 1973.



MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE NIÑOS IN THE GALAPAGOS

Justine Temple-Canada-Care

My experience in Ecuador has been life changing! Having worked with children at home in Canada, I found this experience unique and enriching. The niños are sometimes challenging, but in general I adored them. They are so cute, helpful and seeing them progress is extremely rewarding. I will miss them and this will stay with me forever on both personal and professional levels.



TEACHING IN SAN CRISTOBAL

Ashley Clancy-Canada-Teaching



When wanting to volunteer through Projects Abroad, I choose to participate in the teaching project in the Galapagos Islands for a number of reasons. Not only would it apply to my studies – as I am currently an Education student at the University of Alberta- but it would also grant me the opportunity to gain teaching skills much different from any other that I may have gained from teaching in Canadian classrooms. Being able to spend three months on the Enchanted Islands while gaining valuable work experience was just another amazing selling point for me.

I knew teaching in a place like the Galapagos Islands would be a whole new experience for me, but I don't think I was prepared for just how different it would end up being. In the most basic sense, I was assigned to teach a very young group of students. This was automatically a bit intimidating, as I had only ever worked with and taught older groups. Secondly, many challenges came along with the fact that there was no curriculum to follow. There is an immense amount of freedom in this situation. I am able to teach whatever I feel will be the most useful to my students, which is very far from the structured program that I was used to adhering to within the education system of Alberta. However, a lack of structure can also lead to a lack of focus. One of the biggest challenges has definitely been behavior management. The dynamics of classroom functions here are unlike anything I have ever experienced. However, there is a positive side to this. I think that one of the most valuable aspects of this teaching experience has been how much I have already improved on my behavior management skills. I already know that this will be invaluable to me and my future career pursuits.

Teaching in an English community program on San Cristobal Island has been a challenging experience to say the least, but I know that I would not trade it for anything in this world. I have already experienced many rewarding moments and I know that I will experience many more. The students here are amazing individuals and getting the opportunity to interact with them on a daily basis is such a privilege. Those that I have gotten to know are very loving, full of energy and have a genuine desire to improve their language skills. I know that the work that I do here will benefit them a lot in the future – especially concerning their eventual career pursuits. Tourism is a massive industry on the island, and having English skills will give them the edge that they need in order to be successful.

This is advice that every volunteer sells out, but it is completely true. When it comes to your placement, you really do get out what you put in. Sometimes that means altering your expectations – both of yourself and of your students. I think it all comes down to finding something positive in every day, which can sometimes be easier said than done.

I think that all of the ups and downs of this experience so far have proven to me that education truly is a passion for me. This experience has not only broadened my perspective in numerous ways, but has inspired me to pursue more opportunities for teaching around the world. There is just so much to learn and to be learned.



Volunteers during different activities





CREDITS

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Congratulations for your outstanding performances

If you have any suggestions about our work, please contact ecuador@projects-abroad.org.

Best wishes from Ecuador!