TRAVEL

It's evolutionary Grandparents' trip to Galapagos teaches lessons in prehistory

John and Joan Reddy of Rhomfield Hills took a trip to the Galapagos Islands with an Elderhostel group. They docu-mented their trip in a diary to their nine grandchildren. Here is their account:

DAY 1: We arrived by plane at the island of Baltra. A short bus ride brought us to the dock where we board of dinghies, which took us to our ship. While we ate lunch, the boat sailed to Santa Cruz Island. There we disembarked for a bench where we saw marine iguna, sea licembarked for a bench where we saw great variety of birds that allowed us to get very close to them and their nesting areas. We also spotted the large tracks for a giant Pacific green sea tur-tle which had come in the night DAY 1. to lay its eggs high on the beach

DAY 2:

banch. It sees high we sailed to DAY 2: During the night we sailed to Genovesa or Tower Island. It is the only major island that is entirely north of the equator. In the morning, we made a wet lending at Darwin's Bay, where we walked the beach and saw masked and red-footed boobies (birds), swallow-tailed gulls, hava gulls, great frigatebirds. In all cases, we could have reached out and touched the birds, but, of course, we didn't. We also tried snorkeling as we did on the beach the first day. Neither Grandpa John nor Grandma is a very good snorkelor. But our guide helped Grandma, and sho got to see some seiths. In the afternoon, we visited Prince Phillip's Steps, where we had a steep climb on lava steps. At the top, we walked among masked and red-footed booby colonies. We were looking for ystorm petrels, the short-cared owl and other shore birds.

owl and other shore birds. DAY 3: Again we sailed during the night and arrived in the morn-

ing at Bartolome Island. Here we observed how a volcanic-formed island gradually trans-forme island gradually trans-forme island gradually trans-formed island gradually to a so-wooden tops, which made it to the top, but the elimb was 365 wooden tops, which made it to climb all those rocks. The view from the summit of the vol-cane was spectreular. The afternoon expedition took use Puerto Eggs on Suntiago Island, where we made a wet hading on a dark brown sandy beach. We walked along the shoreline. Our destination was the grottos, whore we saw the Galpagos fur seals. These are really see flons, but unlike the visu calitornia sen lions which we saw calitor, they like to hide out ing themselves on the beach whote duta there the marine patches of green and red on black and blend in with the law cale of and the they live. The increased color comes from the sches of more and red or black and blend in with the law seal deled in with the law seal of algo a that here the spinose of spinet and blend in with the law seal of algo a the they live. The increased color comes from the sches the largest colory of marine seal the argest colory of marine seal to argest the spinose of spinos and sead the argest colory of marine sead to spino the sead the spinose of the start bargest colory of marine If you're going ... Trip to the Galapagos arranged by Elderhostel through Holbrook Travel. Cost \$3,300 Holbrook Travel. Cost \$3,300 per person, includes transporta-tion, all meals, three rights in a Quito hotel and seven nights on ship. Group size: 39, with three full-time guides provided by Galapagos National Park Dis-tict

Galapagos National Park Dis-trict. Trips usually booked through travel agents who coordinate travel on and among the Islands with the National Park District and the government of Ecuador, which is trying to balance rev-enue-generating tourism with government desire to protect the environment.

Ship size and nomenclature varies, with some traveling on wind-driven vessels. Local scuba gear stores periodically organize gear stores periodically organize swimming tours. January to June experience clear skies, high cumutus clouds and heavy, though short rains. July to December is character-ized by low clouds with light rain

common. Currency is U.S. dollar

ship anchered, as well as the salt water crater lake that he discovered. DAY 5: This morning we hit a red sand beach on Rabida Island where we had another opportu-nity to snorkel after a walk along the beach where a male sea lion was guarding his harem. He swam along the beach where the fomales were sunning themselves, barking warnings for other males to stay wary. On another part of the beach, Grandma swam with a young sea lion. Sea lions are very playful — particularly the young cas. Infanting at Funct application Fernandina Island. This island has the largest colony of marine iguanas in the archipelage. We had to be caroful not to stop on them. The males were piled up on the lava rocks, sunning themselves. It was difficult to tell what were rocks and what were iguanas. But the females were busily laying eggs all over the beach. On the trip back to our ship, we followed a school of seven dolphins, who seemed to enjoy playing with our boat. Our afternoon trip was to Tagus Cove on Isabela Island. We had a steep elimb to a look-out where we could see the har-

DAY 6: We spent a whole day on Santa Cruz Island today. It's the home of the Charles Darwin



Coastal rocks: This is the view from the peak on volcanic Bartolome Island.

Research Station where giant land tortoises are bred until they are large enough to be released back into the wild. We then took a bus into the high-lands where we had a wonderful

Brank Street

Inde whore we had a wonderful lands whore we had a wonderful lands at an open-air restaurant where the Darwin finches came right up to the table. Then it was off to a cattle ranch where the cattle live with the torioises in perfect harmo-ny. (They both love the rich, green grass.) Again, we were able to get very close to the an-imals although they would draw in their necks if we got to close. We spotted the various vari-etics of Darwin finches along the suy although we didn't see the clusive vermilion flycatcher. Fortunately, we had seen or years ago on a birding trip to Texas. After our return from the

After our return from the highlands, we enjoyed relaxing in the town of Puerto Ayora. Most of the Galapagos Islands

are uninhabited, but there are are uninhabited, but there are populated areas on a number of them. The town is full of flowers and trees that are very beauti-ful, but they have been import-ed by people. Imported plants and animals creato many prob-lems as they interfore with the natural environment. For instance, there are hundred of thousands of wild goats that eat all the vegetation and leave lit-tle for the native animals.

DAY 7: Today we visited Espanola Island, landing at Punta Suarez. The marine iguanas on this island are particularly col-orful, with many yellow, green and red markings. Their skin looks almost as if it is beaded. Also on this island is the hood mockingbird, which is particu-larly curious and unafrid of humans. But Grandma encoun-tered a lava lizard here who became so curious that it DAY 7:

narine.

LAX 8: In the morning, we left the boat for the last time and returned to the airport at Bal-tra. From there we flew to Quito, Ecuador, and then home at last.

Joan Reddy is a retired Birm-ingham School's secretary. John Reddy is the former publisher for the Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric.





walked up and tested her boot as a possible food source. We hiked some very rocky ter-rain here in order to see a blow hole, where the sea water hits a spot in the rocks that produces so much pressure that the water shoots up in a tower of water and foam.

Our final day of snorkeling was at Gardener Bay where the sand was white and very fine and the water the color of aqua-

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