

Book Review

Galápagos by Joseph Litt

by Peter Rowlands

I don't think there can be any doubt that the most significant place in the whole of the natural history world has to be the Galápagos Islands where less than 200 years ago the young Charles Darwin observed how similar life varied from island to island. This led to the development of his theory of natural selection explaining evolution, which was presented in *The Origin of Species* in 1859. The rest is, shall we say, natural history.

Fast forward 150 years and the very essence of it's attraction was fast becoming it's undoing with a major tourist onslaught both above and below the water. Very careful and considered controls were put in place to protect this fragile ecosystem yet keep it available for those who wanted to experience such a unique location.

I have never visited the Galápagos Islands and doubt if I ever will but Josef Litt's comprehensive and well illustrated book left me with the impression that he has captured that magical sense of what it must be like to be there. Furthermore, as primarily an underwater photographer, he has avoided that oft tread trap of over doing the underwater images and come up with a good balanced delivery of very well researched information with consistently good visuals above and below. In addition both sets of images have avoided the 'coffee table' look; they all contribute without trying to dazzle and as a result this book



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GALÁPAGOS

SAN CRISTÓBAL

San Cristóbal is the easternmost island in the archipelago and one of the oldest geologically. It is 2.4-4.0 million years old. Despite such a broad age range, the scientists believe that it is younger than Española. Geologically it is composed of three or four fused volcanoes that are all long extinct. A small lake called *El Junco* in the caldera of one of the volcanoes served as a source of fresh water for the very early settlements on the Galápagos.

The island's official name is derived from the name of the patron saint of travellers and seafarers, St Christopher. The traditional English name, Chatham, was given by Captain James Cook in honour of William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham (1708-1778), who was the British Prime Minister for two years in the second half of the eighteenth century.

San Cristóbal has an area of 558 km² (215 mi²) and reaches a height of over 700 m (2 300 ft) at Cerro San Joaquín. It hosts all the vegetation zones present in the archipelago and is the most fertile island. The capital of the Galápagos, **Puerto Baquerizo Moreno**, lies at the south-western tip of the island. Approximately 7,500 people live on the island, which places it as the second most inhabited island in the archipelago after Santa Cruz. Residents make their living predominantly from work in government, tourism and artisanal fishing. The seaport is home to the largest fishing fleet in the Galápagos. The San Cristóbal Airport is located near the capital and services daily flights from Quito and Guayaquil.

The first settlement was founded by the colonist General Villamil in 1842. The town was named after Alfredo Baquerizo Moreno in 1916, who was the first president of Ecuador who visited the islands, and became the capital of the archipelago. From 1991 the



▲ And zone vegetation at Puerto Chino.

number of hotels, bars, restaurants and shops grew and today the promenade and a handful of streets around it bustle with tourists, taxis, mopeds and local life.

Fresh water from the *El Junco* lagoon has enabled a revival of coffee production in the Galápagos. The history of coffee in the archipelago goes back to 1879 when Manuel Julián Cobos established *Hacienda El Progreso*. His workers planted *Arabica Bourbon* beans and Galápagos coffee beans on 100 ha (250 ac) in the section of the hacienda called *El Coletor*. The coffee plantation survived two uprisings against the Cobos family and it reached a size of 126 ha (311 ac), with about 160,000 coffee plants in 1930. It seems that part of the plantation was abandoned after 1960 when an American, Donald Harrisch, procured the *Hacienda*

▼ Crack of dawn at the busy port of San Cristóbal.



▲ Topographic map of San Cristóbal. Wikimedia Commons, (CC) Bamsa.

El Progreso for \$110,000. His plan to settle on San Cristóbal and earn money by fishing spiny lobster and growing coffee faltered after many setbacks. Don Manuel Cobos Jr. still grew coffee in 1983, but wanted to sell the plantation as he was nearly 87 years old. In the 1990s the Gonzales-Duche family purchased *El Coletor*. They started to renovate the hacienda, with the help of a number of local workers, into an ecologically sustainable farm and tourist attraction. Visitors can, by prior arrangement, enjoy lunch at the hacienda and try a cup of the local brew.

San Cristóbal has several visitor sites that are accessible either by land or boat. Many of them do not require the presence of a naturalist guide. There are plenty of beaches suitable for swimming and recreation. Playa Punta Carola and Playa Morán are white sand beaches, a 10-minute walk northeast from Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. The operators offer trips to the more remote beaches, for example, Playa Punta Grande, Playa Punta Pucuna with lava cones behind the beach, Bahía Rosa Blanca, Playa Ochoa or Playa Manglicto with the adjacent mangrove area.

CHAPTER THREE

INIMITABLE NATURE



GALÁPAGOS

A comprehensive guide book bringing together history, science and personal travelogue packed with beautiful photography.



GALÁPAGOS



“A must-read for anyone planning to visit the islands and equally for those that already have a place in their heart for Galápagos.”

Dr Alexander Mustard,
internationally awarded
underwater photographer
and a commended author.

will appeal to the widest of audiences; those, like me, who have never been, those who are going and want to be fully informed and those who have been who want a complete volume to show others just how special it was.

I suspect this book was conceived from an uncontrollable passion which led to a self inflicted dedication of both time and finance. Most of the time that can be a dangerous and destructive cocktail

but, in this case, that cocktail is most definitely champagne.

Galápagos costs £29.90/\$39.90 and is available from Amazon. It has 288 pages overflowing with more than 300 stunning photographs as well as original illustrations.

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For more information

For US sales

For UK sales

www.amazon.co.uk/Galápagos-Mostly-Underwater-Books-Travel/dp/132099931X

<https://mostlyunderwaterbooks.com>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/132099931X>



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GALÁPAGOS by Josef Litt
www.MostlyUnderwaterBooks.com

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Guidelines for contributors

The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you! UwP is the perfect publication for you to increase your profile in the underwater photography community.

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards,

Subjects -, Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com**

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable, we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

Size - Maximum length 20cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 20 cm wide and verticals would be 20cm high.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.

Parting Shot

Sometimes you just have to take advantage of a unique situation.

A small group of four humpback whales were hanging around the coast of Shetland. The day before we went to see if we could see them. Luckily for us we saw all four with two of the humpbacks coming just off the point where we were stood allowing my one and half year old son to see them.

There was a very short weather window so the next day I headed out with a good friend Brydon Thomason to try to shoot the whales for Scotland The Big Picture.

Two of the whales were still there. We spent four hours slowly working with the two whales before an opportunity came to get in the water and within seconds they passed within meters of me.

I had never dreamed that I would be shooting humpback whales off the UK coast.

Shetland Islands, Scotland

Richard Shucksmith
www.shetlandphototours.co.uk



Nikon, D4, Nauticam, Nikon 16-35mm F4, iso 1600, F7.1, 1/80, Natural light

**Do you have a shot which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500 words of text
and yours could be the next Parting Shot.**

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