

# The Galapagos Islands & Charles Darwin



## Where are the Galapagos Islands?

The Galapagos Islands are a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of South America. They belong to a country called **Ecuador**.



The Galapagos Islands are made up of 18 main islands, 3 smaller islands and over 100 islets.

Around 35,000 people live in the Galapagos but they only live on 5 of the islands. The largest island is called **Isabela**.

The islands are famous for their unique animals that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. They are home to giant tortoises the size of bathtubs, huge lizards that look like dragons, Galapagos sea lions and blue-footed boobies, a bird which has blue feet!

## Did you know?

- The only mammals on the islands are rice rats and two types of bats.
- Many giant tortoises of the Galapagos are nearly extinct. 'Lonesome George' was one of the most famous. He was the only surviving giant Pinta Island tortoise left on Earth. He died in June 2012 at the age of 100.
- There is very little fresh water in the Galapagos Islands.

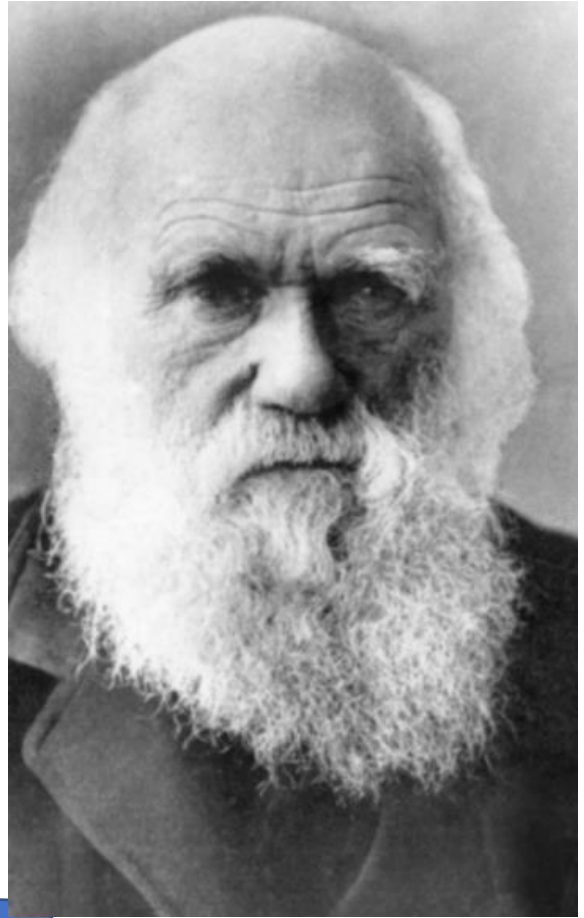


## How did the Galapagos Islands form?

The Galapagos Islands were formed by volcanoes around 5-10 million years ago. The islands **Isabela** and **Fernandina** are still being formed by volcanoes today, while others are slowly disappearing back below the surface of the sea.

### Who discovered the Galapagos?

It is not known for sure who the first visitors to the islands were. The first recorded person to discover the islands was Fray Tomás de Berlanga in 1535. He stumbled across the islands by accident while on his way to Peru. He wasn't very impressed with what he saw, but years later people from around the world found the islands a fascinating place to explore and adventure.



Did you know?

The Galapagos Islands became a national park in 1959.

The islands were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978.

Five different ocean currents meet at the Galapagos Islands.

The famous scientist Charles Darwin spent some time studying the animals of the islands. His observations helped him come up with his theory of evolution.

In his theory, Darwin said he believed animals adapted and changed to their surroundings over long periods of time.