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Chaski News

Spring 2009

Galapagos Islands: New Species Discovered, Prince Charles Promotes Sustainability & Celebrates Darwin

Scientists have discovered a new species on Wolf Volcano on Isabela Island. The pink land iguana, or *Conolophus rosada*, is genetically distinct from the other two varieties found on the islands. With a unique mating dance and physical characteristics, it is thought that this species diverged some 5.7 million years ago, and less than 100 are in existence today.

This spring the UK's Prince Charles, and his wife Camilla, toured South America to promote environmental sustainability and raise awareness of global warming. They stopped in the Galapagos Islands to celebrate anniversaries related to one of England's most famous explorers, Charles Darwin.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth, the 150th anniversary of the publishing of his revolutionary book proposing natural selection, *On the Origin of Species*, and the 50th anniversary of the Galapagos National Park. To experience this natural laboratory, Southwind offers travelers our [Galapagos Wildlife Odyssey](#), an 11-day journey that includes 7 nights aboard an intimate luxury yacht or catamaran ranging in size from 16-100 passengers. Onboard chefs prepare gourmet meals while guests enjoy nature hikes, snorkeling, kayaking or simply relaxing on the beach.



Travel Fact: In an effort to remove an invasive species that threatened the future of Santiago Island, the Galapagos National Park spent \$6.1 million to remove almost 80,000 goats between 2001 and 2005. Strategies such as these are important to keeping the biological diversity as natural and pristine as possible.

Expanded Lodging Options to Chile's Top Destinations



As we strive to continue offering our clients the most stunning properties and destinations, we have added Chile's award-winning Explora brand of lodges. In 1993 they began with a mission to connect South America and its people with the rest of the world, while respecting and preserving the environment. With some of the finest accommodations in the Atacama Desert, Patagonia and Easter Island, Southwind can take you there on a [trip extension](#) on journeys such as [Hiking the Patagonian Andes](#) or the [Lake District Odyssey](#), or we can design a custom itinerary for a [Private Trip](#) that includes the destinations you've been dreaming about. For those with a love of astronomy they recently installed an observatory at the Atacama Desert property. Due to its high altitude, almost cloudless climate, and remote location far from extraneous light, it is the perfect place for stargazers to explore the universe. Since the Explora experience is all about comfort as

well, the hotel also features Jacuzzis, Turkish baths, swimming pools, saunas, a cocktail lounge, and a new kitchen featuring an interactive dining experience with the head chef.

Travel Fact: In October 2008, Explora's Patagonia property, the Hotel Salto Chico, was rated the "#1 Accommodation in the Americas and the Carribean" by *Conde Nast Traveler Magazine*.



Bon Appetit Magazine Names Lima 2009 Destination of the Year

A generation of Peruvian chefs was trained in Europe's elite cooking schools, returned home to re-examine the wealth of their native fare, and created *Novoandina* cuisine, a revolution sweeping the culinary world. With a year-round growing season, fertile soil and an abundance of micro-climates, chefs have a variety of options for new twists on traditional dishes, such as the famous ceviche. For instance, *Nikkei* cooks (Japanese descendants born in Peru) have influenced this dish with their own sashimi technique. Young stars, like Pedro Schiaffino, have surprised customers by using products from the Amazon rainforest on menus in the coastal capital of Lima. He was also chosen to design the menu on Peru's newest luxury riverboat, the M/V Aqua, which you can experience on Southwind's [Peru Amazon Cruise](#). In addition, we can organize a cooking class in Lima or Cusco to experience first-hand how these dishes are created. With mountains, rainforest and an extensive coastline, the traditions of Peru have mixed with new techniques for a truly unique fusion of flavors.



Travel Fact: Since Peru is near the equator, 80 kinds of vegetables and 60 kinds of fruit can be found any time of the year. This wealth of ingredients, combined with international acclaim and a natural love of cooking, has led to at least 14 cooking schools opening in Lima in the last few years.



Gala Tango Mesmerizes Visitors to Buenos Aires



The tango is not just a dance, but artists creating a piece of work simultaneously. Born out of the lower-class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, Argentina, it soon spread to Uruguay, Europe and the rest of the world. As home of the tango, you can't leave without experiencing an authentic dance and dinner show. With a stunning cast of dancers, musicians and gourmet chefs, all in an exquisitely-decorated hall, Gala Tango has created a name for itself as

one of the city's finest cultural experiences. Guests revel in the French architecture and style, stepping into one of the most glamorous spots in the country. After a gourmet dinner complemented by the finest Argentine wines, you are treated to a superb dance and folklore show. The typical orchestra is formed by a quintet (piano, large concertina, guitar, violin and contrabass), a "charango" (South American lute) player, two singers, four dance couples, and a bolas show. Southwind travelers experience this magnificent piece of art during our [Lake District Odyssey](#) itinerary, or we can add it to any custom trip.

Travel Fact: Tango can be both a type of music and dance. Since its origin in the mid-1800s in Buenos Aires, the dance has branched into multiple varieties including: Argentine, Uruguayan, Ballroom (American & International styles), Finnish, and vintage styles such as Canyengue.



Quito's Plaza Grande Hotel Gives Guests a Touch of History

Located in Ecuador's capital city, Quito, the Plaza Grande Hotel lets travelers experience a unique piece of this UNESCO World Heritage Site's history. The hotel was originally the home of Juan Diaz de Hidalgo, one of the Spanish conquerors who founded the city of Quito at the beginning of the 16th century. With its prime location on the city's main Plaza de la Independencia, the neoclassical architecture is different from the colonial homes of the historic center. In 1943 it opened as the Majestic Hotel, renowned for its elegance, music and color. Even though it was one of the biggest attractions of the era, it eventually closed its doors, serving as both a bank and office building. But in 2005 a group of hoteliers decided to return the building to its previous glory, and it's now the best boutique-style hotel in Ecuador. Attention to detail is evident in the 15 exquisite suites, deluxe spa, 3 restaurants, an extensive wine cellar and even carriage rides of the historic center. The Plaza Grande is offered as an upgrade on any Ecuador trip, including the [Galapagos Wildlife Odyssey](#) and [Andean Haciendas Tour](#).



Travel Fact: The 5-star Plaza Grande Hotel has received the Metropolitan District of Quito's Environmental Management Certificate for not only meeting, but exceeding environmental standards.

What's a Chaski?

"Chaski" refers to the messengers of the Inca who would run along the kingdom's vast network of trails delivering vital information. News, intricate communication, quipus - knotted strings conveying regional statistics or perhaps exotic foods were relayed between Chaskis as they made their way towards the Incan capital of Cusco.

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