

ST.SOMETIMES GALAPAGOS 2013



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# LAND LIFE!



Colorful land  
Iguanas are all over!



Tortoises. Some of  
the last (wild) alive.



See the baby Blue-  
Footed Booby?

## What text books only describe, Darwin's playground.

This was a dream for me. Back in December, the Dive Group that I hang out with (go Bahis Divers!) set their sites on Galapagos. Nancy Gagne set out to plan a trip for 19 people to the Galapagos for a week. My dream.

We took off on March 18 with all of our dive gear. Barcelona to Caracas, Caracas Panama City, PC to Guayaquil, Guayaquil to Galapagos. A day and a half of travel, South American style. This was one of the best planned trips I have ever been on. THANK YOU Nancy!

We arrived without issue (planes, buses, water taxis, etc) and immediately went on our first scheduled land tour. The guide took us all over Santa Cruz to see the land tortoises. One of them came real close to me. Amazing. They are protected and roam freely -different species- on each island.

That evening, we organized our dive equipment for our dives on days 3-6 with a promise to see everything except Whale sharks - they aren't around any more. I talked to one guy staying at our hotel. He had just finished his five day live-a-board trip on an Agressor. Imagine my reaction when he explained waking up on-board this morning, in a small bay of Darwin Island, to see two Killer whales circling their yacht! I was mystified.

Did you know the Agressor weeks in Galapagos are close to \$5,000 for five days? Way too expensive for a bunch of teachers. Our trip was based out of the dive shop on Santa Cruz Island. That way we could dive for four days at about \$2,000 instead. (continued on page 3)



## Galapagos with Bahia Divers

It always pays off to have an excellent dive group to go on a dive trip with. I doubt this trip would have been so exciting if I had set it up on my own. Nancy planned everything out to the last detail. This is a short account.



The real trip started with breakfast. All 19 of us met in the small restaurant of the [Mainao Hotel](#). We ate a leisurely light breakfast while waiting for the bus. The bus took us on a 45minute trip across Santa Cruz to the north side harbor. All of the dive boats and

tours are based there, closer to the tour islands. It was a tour bus, better than most buses I have been on around Latin America. We were transported via dinghy to the 50ft yacht - complete with cook, captain, tour guide, and beer.

The tour consisted of a land tour to North Seymour Island to see the Blue Footed Boobies, iguanas, and sea lions. Wow. Imagine the tour guides speak English, Spanish, German, and French. Our group needed all but the German. (Yes, our small group of divers communicated in French, English, and Spanish) I had a lot of fun snapping pictures of the animals, but Nancy has a brand new Canon with a better long lens than I have. After about two hours of walking, we met back on board for lunch in a small bay.

The rest of the afternoon was snorkeling. I didn't enjoy it but I think the others really did. There is a lot to see with a mask and fins! Rays, sharks, marine iguanas, and lots of fish are all over the place. I did a little bit of snorkeling, but it was more fun to stay on the beach and walk in between the sea turtle nests. I anticipated great diving!

Day 01 (Mosquera and Daphne)The diving days all started with the same breakfast and a taxi ride to the harbor. The first day was crap! We had two boats, two dive guides (instructor status), and two small groups. The rules were a bit different here. Rule #1 was stay with the group. If someone strays from the group, the guide will put everyone on a rock to wait while he goes and gets the stray diver. Ugh. We happened to have the one diver with a history of not giving a damn about staying with the group. With low visibility, and a continual stray diver, we did two dives and saw nothing. At the end of dive 2, with 15 minutes left of the planned dive, Santos (one of my heroes in the dive industry) waved me over to his group. I left my partner with the group and followed Santos into the shallows. We spent

15 minutes chasing small sharks in the shallows, while the groups hung on a rock, gave up, and boarded the boats. Santos and I were in the "doghouse" with the rest of the group. I truly didn't care. Here was my dream trip and we had seen NOTHING for the first two dives until I had strayed with Santos.

Day 2 (Mosquera and Gordon Islands) went much better. Basically, when the Sea Lions started playing around us, everything from the day before was forgotten. I am not kidding, these sea lions were playing right in front of us, all around us, for about 15 minutes. We just sat there in awe!

The most difficult parts of Galapagos are the currents and the visibility. The "vis" is what really depressed me. Most of my pictures didn't turn out. Sharks were around us but we didn't see them for more than a few seconds. The vis was usually not more than 10 feet. Ugh.

The temperatures underwater went from 73F to 70F. I didn't use a wetsuit for the first two days so the guides and captains started calling me "the Naked Diver". It lasted until Day 03.

Day 03 (Bartholomew and Cousin Islands) This was another amazing days. We didn't have Killer Whales surrounding the boat, but our groups were staying together and we went to one of the most beautiful sites I have ever witnessed underwater. I call it the "hanging gardens" of Bartholomew. Sea Lions were nipping the small galapagos sharks' fins. The entire volcanic island has steppes, each level littered with green corals. It was absolutely beautiful. Turtles were plentiful, swimming around the dive groups as we waited for the sea lions to come and play. But the sea lions were more interested in bothering the sharks in the shallows. Unfortunately, the guides took us around the back side of the island and the visibility went to crap. The last part of the dive was uneventful but peaceful.

Day 04 - Hammerheads! Yes, we headed to the famous North Seymour island. It wasn't an easy dive due to currents, but for one amazing moment, a very large Hammerhead made a vertical bolt between the two groups. It was only an instant, but wow. Amazing. I didn't have enough time to click my camera! The first dive took us into a cloudy, murky open water that held a school of more than 20 hammerheads. Ha's camera was the only witness. I caught a glimpse, but that was it. Finally, on the final dive, Santos and I were the only divers with air. We were treated to four hammerheads swirling around five feet below us! That was such a final treat. I have finally seen hammerheads.

### More Thoughts about Diving

If you go to the Galapagos for diving, I say plan a trip to the islands for diving. HOWEVER, about two weeks before you go, check with the Live-A-Board trips that are planned and see if they are looking to fill tickets. This would especially work if there are two of you or if you are solo. When we were there, a Live-A-Board company posted openings for two divers at half price - \$2500. Yes!

Now say you don't find a deal. Don't worry. There are three official dive clubs on Santa Cruz Island. They are the only three. We went with Silverstein and LOVED it! Earlier in the newsletter, I seem a bit deflated. That is because I have been around the world diving and I had built up a huge anticipation.

In order to see a lot of sea life, especially pelagic (larger fish) there is a correlation with currents.

Galapagos has a lot of currents. Therefore, there are tons of fish, lots of schools, and plenty of pelagic. The trick is just picking the right day for visibility. I don't know the secret to that. The word on the vine was to go around Easter. And so I did.

The Galapagos hits my top list, but it is still two steps below Sipidan in Borneo (Steve and Kris where are you?) and the Florida Keys. If the vis had been better, this would have rated top of the list. There are just so many different species and beautiful dive sites.

There is one outstanding aspect of the Galapagos. The lack of trash. Both in the water and on the islands. It is obvious that this has been a World Heritage Site since the '70s. It was a pleasure to be underwater without putting trash into my BCD. That one aspect was a real treat.

I will go back for a Live-A-Board.

## OCEAN LIFE!



A school of 20-25 golden rays



green turtles are abundant



this sea lion played around us for 15min



a golden colored puffer fish



## Someone Pinch Me! I found Tim Kneeland in the Galapagos!

Now this is a first for the past twelve years overseas! One of my best friends from high school happened to be on a remote island at the same time I happened to also be there. Here is the skinny!

During the dive week, I was only on the internet for a few slow minutes each night. The net in Galapagos must be maintained by the local tortoises. One night I got a Facebook message from Tim Kneeland, who happened to be on a sailboat en route to Galapagos from Panama. What? I guess Lori Kneeland had seen a picture that tagged me on Facebook with Galapagos mentioned. Meanwhile, Tim is on a friend's boat with some of his kids in the middle of the Pacific! According to Tim, his friend Wes (the world sailor and captain) was showing signs of Malaria. Tim was on the phone with Green Bay doctors planning for a solution. On one of the calls, Lori told Tim about my location. The rest is

The biggest surprise in 12 years!

history. There was Tim, walking out of an internet café as I was getting off my final boat day.

Luckily, Tim and his boys had time to share with me. We met at a local restaurant, where Tim and Wes shared stories of crossing the equator, making their kids walk the plank, and the wonder of technologies allowing Tim to plan for Wes's medical care from a phone in the middle of the Pacific. Truly a great evening to share. This was a first for me. My friends and family usually only share my overseas stories virtually. Now, Tim and I share an overseas story together.

Tim is living a virtual life for me. Five kids, a financial career, and a loving wife. I know nothing about such a life. I actually keep tabs on Tim and his family through Kappy and Mackey. Tim and I seem to be wrapped up in our own lives to keep up with each other, even in a world with so much technology. At least we can connect on a remote island once!

# ARGENTINA



Buenos Aires, I went to the Capital



The Farthest South I have gone



There was Toilet Paper and Sugar!

## Attending a Teaching Conference in Buenos Aires

I have wanted to set foot in Buenos Aires since I did the Argentinian version of the “stress test” underwater in Honduras 2003. If my Ag friends could only have seen me! Argentina was only a quick trip for me. I spent five days going from my hotel to the Lincoln school, back and forth each day. I didn’t get to see much. The highlight was a BAS - Big A\*\* Steak - and the pre-conference days learning from Tim Burns . We learned about researched brain theory in education. Then I presented during the main conference. My one hour presentation on “website creation for busy teachers” was well received. Even though it was during the lunch break, about 20 attendees left with newly made websites. Everyone was thankful. A presentation well done!

Like past conferences, both in the USA and abroad, this was a hit or miss conference. The keynote speakers were fantastic, but finding well prepared and useful teacher presentations is a roll of the dice. The key aspect of an excellent presentation is to bring something back into your classroom the first day back. Of the dozen presentations I was a part of, only one really gave me something to take back. I was introduced to an app called AirServer that allows an iPad user to wirelessly use their iPad with a projector. It may seem like a small victory, but it certainly made the trip to Argentina (without actually seeing much of BA) worth it. Looking back on the trip, I was mentally preparing for the Galapagos. That’s why I didn’t stay there for Easter and travel around. Argentina is a place I will go back to and possibly live, but for now, I am satisfied. There is a lot to see there. There is always next time.

Probably the **BEST** steak I have ever had



## Fear, Shortages, Lines, Traffic,

This past year has been a roller coaster in Venezuela. Chavez beat Capriles in October. We had two weeks off of school. Most gringos fled the country. Now the schools are closed again and the food shortages are still here in the aftermath too. We haven't been able to find toilet paper, coffee, milk, butter, or sugar for months. This country is going down the shit-hole progressively faster and faster. And to think, years back, Venezuela was the number one country in South America for many people.

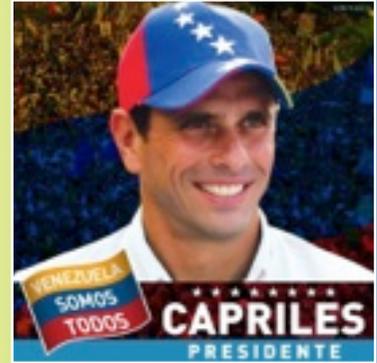
As I write this on election day, the international teachers have been told to have a "go bag" ready, keep a low profile and stay at home, and to have stocked up on basics like water and food. This is real. We are all on defcon 3 here. Defcon 5 is evacuation. But will it really happen. I'll find out tomorrow.

I made it a personal rule many years ago not to talk politics when I am a guest in foreign countries. That goes for ANY politics. It places me in the observer position. This country is going through some amazing changes as I write this.

Capriles is known as the new hope for Venezuelans. But he is up against a government that showers the poor with televisions and rice right before a vote. The poor people (a majority in Venezuela according to some sources) have a day by day life. When the government (Chavez and now Maduro) throw gifts at the poor just prior to a vote, the poor see the government for that day. They don't perceive the future.

Capriles might just have a chance. He was close during October. But if he wins, what will happen? Unrest? Murder? a Coupe? We'll see.

## VZ TODAY



Henrique Capriles is a hope for change!



Nicolas Maduro "son of Chavez"?



This country is closed down during elections. Time to lay low!



No toilet paper, sugar for months

# GOING TO A NEW RED

## The transition to Switzerland from Venezuela starts now

This is going to be a quick two months. I have to sell my boat, sell my car, get the paperwork all done, buy tickets to the USA, buy tickets to Las Vegas, Rent a car in the USA, prepare for the GRE tests to apply for my PhD at Michigan State University, buy tickets to Switzerland, arrange for my paperwork at the Chicago Swiss Embassy, prepare for one hell of a big going away party, and teach the last two months of class. The end of a school year is always busy with graduation. Moving away from a school after four years is a difficult task, if you want the replacement teacher to be successful.

The most liberating part of moving to Switzerland will be giving away all of my warm weather clothes. I have targeted a receiver for most of my clothes. I am going to simply pack up one of my old suitcases full of clothes and give it to Clemente. Clemente is the owner of the beachside restaurant I frequent on weekends. He will really appreciate all of the clothes.

This is a time to slim down again. Even my dive gear (except my brand new regs) will go to my buddy Ruben. Almost everything that I have used in the past years here are well used and need to be replaced. My goal is to get back down to one suitcase - my second suitcase is usually my dive gear. I am almost done digitizing my DVD collection too. Goodbye to most of my stuff. It's been fun.

My biggest worry is selling the boat for the right price. Once that is arranged, I can move on and enjoy myself as I rid myself of my worn out belongings and help someone else out with donations.

Wish me luck. This will be a whirlwind!



*The beautiful TESIS campus in Lugano Switzerland. See you soon.*

### [www.itre.us/ssw13](http://www.itre.us/ssw13)

The St.Somewhere website has been the online home for St.Sometimes since 2000, when I first started writing. All of the past issues are online waiting to be read. The goal is to write an issue every month. It doesn't always come to fruition, but there are a lot of issues to read.

### Upcoming Dates

- June 07 - Last day of School at CIPLC
- June 08 - GoyoFest - Going away party
- June 10 - I fly to Minneapolis - rent a car
- June 19 - Classes start at MSU
- July 2 - F2F Classes end at MSU
- July 15-19 Las Vegas Math Conference on Sinagpoer Math
- August 17th TESIS Job Starts