



The colour of the water in Galápagos contrasts with the moonscape of some of the islands.

While snorkelling we are dazzled by turtles, marine iguanas and penguins, sometimes all in the same place at once. After snorkelling one afternoon, I'm sitting on the side of the zodiac when I feel a tug on the back of my wetsuit. I turn to look and a cormorant has my zipper pull in its mouth!

**THE AMAZON**

After a 30-minute flight from Quito to Coca, we board a long motorboat and travel for two hours down the wide Napo River. Then we walk for 20 minutes through the jungle. Finally, a 15-minute paddle brings us to Sacha Lodge. Nothing is stirring, not even a

bird. "People come from Galápagos and they think animals are going to be sitting outside their balcony," said our guide Christian. "And it's not like that. Animals hide. Animals don't want to be seen here because there are so many predators."

Yet over the next few days, the rainforest yields some of its secrets.

Early one morning we hear — then see — dozens of white-faces and black-blotched-mouths monkeys swinging from trees as we paddle up a creek. Further along, we climb a 43-metre tower adjacent to an enormous Kapok tree. Long, plank-like roots buttress the tree at its base. From the plat-

form, we watch birds flit to and fro. A blue dacnis disappears into a bromeliad. "Come and see," calls Christian from his spotting scope. "A green honeycreeper."

Next an opal-crowned tanager and a laughing falcon come into view. Then the howling starts. "Howler monkeys," says Christian. "They're coming this way!"

As for us, we've come full circle. Water from the highlands at Hacienda El Porvenir flows into the Napo River, which supports all living things in this part of the Amazon. The cycle of life never ends.

*The writer was hosted by Enchanted Expeditions. No one from the company previewed this article.*



The Kapok Tower reaches 43 metres into the canopy of a giant kapok tree in the Ecuadorian rainforest. PHOTOS: SUZANNE MORPHET



The writer greets one of about 40 horses at Hacienda El Porvenir in Ecuador's highlands.

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