

[Amazonía]

Las Pizarras

cruzando una línea imaginaria

Las Pizarras, crossing an imaginary line

Texto y fotografía: María Gabriela Loza Pinto

[Sierra]

Mitad del Mundo

un homenaje a la inteligencia humana

The Middle of the World,
the tribute to human intelligence

Texto y fotografía: Evelia Peralta y Rolando Moya Tasquer



Los rostros ocultos del Cayambe

The hidden faces of Cayambe

Texto y fotografía: Ramiro Garrido

[Costa]

El mar de la mitad del mundo

The sea of middle of the world

Texto y fotografía: Juan Moya Peralta

My first trip to the Enchanted Islands

Text and photography: David Cevallos

I still remember the first time I stepped foot on the Enchanted Islands. I was 21 years old and had four subject to go at the university, six female travel buddies, and a strong obsession for one of them.

On a student's salary, we flew in a military logistics airplane and were forced to stay on the island for 15 days since the logistics aircraft in which we travelled, a Hercules C-130, only flew to the island on Monday's every fortnight. At the end of the first week, an acquaintance offered to take us to Isabela. In those days we traveled in a small fishing boat; we left at four in the morning and, as the motor was new, we had to warm it up slowly which turned a two-hour trip into an eight-hour journey at sea. Upon arriving we found ourselves in a paradise, like in the movies, a very small community, sand streets and very few buildings along the beach.

Currently the Villamil Port, the the cantonal head of the Isabela Island, remains very similar to that time, they have the same streets of sand but with a significant increase in buildings, inhabitants population, and mostly in

tourism, which nowadays is one of the primary incomes for a large part of its inhabitants.

Inhabited by approximately 2,300 people, it's the largest island in size but the third largest in population, and its beaches are unmistakably the best out of the populated islands.

Geographically it's the newest island of the archipelago and as a result of its formation allows the Galapagos Islands to intersect with the Equator. It's unique fauna and flora, fantastic landscapes, and exotics places are not found on any other island in the archipelago. As a result of its volcanic formation, incredible natural sites were created, one such place has been named "The Tunnels" due to its geological formation and it is possibly one of the best scuba diving or snorkeling locations because of its calm, clear, and shallow waters.

Today's laws of the Galapagos National Park, which is the entity in charge of controlling the natural area such as the interaction of locals and tourists with nature, make it almost impossible to travel by small fishing boat or any other type of vessel that does

not have a permit to provide such services; however, there are now some more comfortable alternatives to get from Santa Cruz to Isabela.

This community has organized itself to provide the best services and in doing so achieve the greatest commercial and touristic development, while simultaneously being concerned about preserving their resources as well as keeping their paradise as pristine as possible.

The Wall of Tears

Culturally speaking, Isabela may have one of the saddest histories of the islands, which defines many of its characteristics.

Shortly after the end of World War II and the withdrawal of allied troops of the island, the military base's facilities housed the famous penitentiary that was home to the continent's repeat offenders like thieves and criminals. Within no time, the penitentiary was being used to "accommodate" more dangerous criminals and murderers.

In 1946, with a total of 30 policemen, 6 officers, and 300 convicts

that came from various parts of the continent, the Penal Colony had a problem; they couldn't keep their "guests" "entertained". Thus, as a form of punishment through forced labor, they began the construction of a wall made from heavy volcanic rocks, that accompanied by the strong rays of the Equator's direct sunlight throughout the long paths, fulfilled its function of torture.

They never established the number of prisoners that died under these horrible conditions or by rocks that fell from the wall on top of those who were building it. They say it was common to find skeletal remains when they restarted the building activities, which led to adopt the saying "here is where the brave cry and the cowards die."

The Penal Colony came to an end in 1958, and many of its occupants joined hundreds of inhabitants of the Villamil Port, in order to rebuild their lives on this part of the island. Currently, there is one prisoner and a few policemen from that period who still live on the Isabela Island; they share one of the saddest chapters of this paradise.

