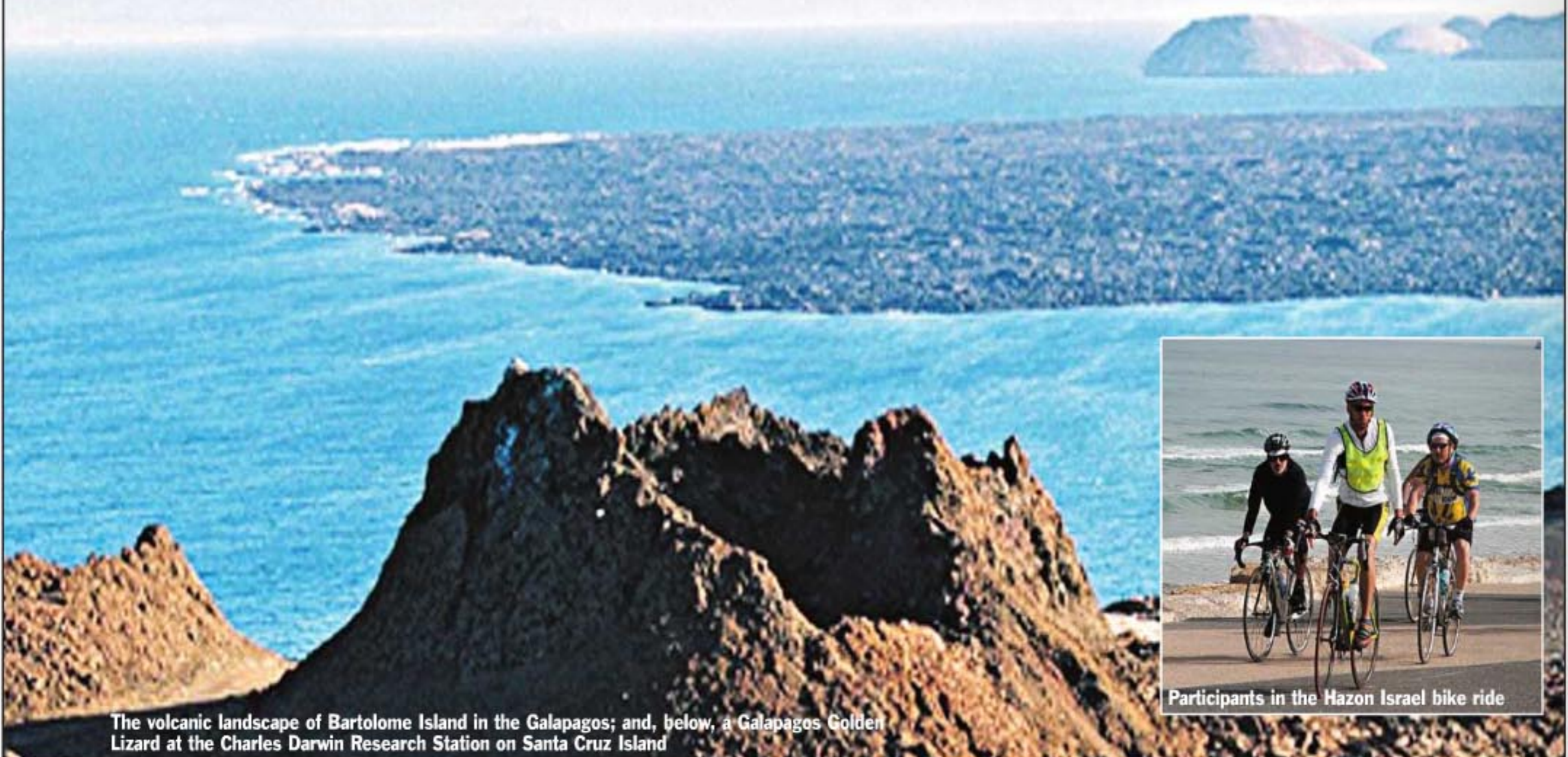


# Exotic adventure that won't cost the earth

## HOW TO TRAVEL SUSTAINABLY TO THE GALAPAGOS AND THE ARAVA DESERT



The volcanic landscape of Bartolome Island in the Galapagos; and, below, a Galapagos Golden Lizard at the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island



Participants in the Hazon Israel bike ride

**O**ur tradition teaches that the earth is the Lord's and that we are co-workers with God in protecting the environment. The good news is that, due to programmes sometimes referred to as "sustainable tourism", "green tourism" or "voluntourism" we can now fulfil this responsibility and, at the same time, enjoy a rewarding and fulfilling holiday.

The Galapagos Islands, located in the South Pacific Ocean, west of Ecuador, are among our planet's most precious ecosystems, home to an extraordinary profusion of exotic, often endemic flora and fauna. It was there that Charles Darwin did his research resulting in his seminal work, *The Origin of Species*. Tourism to these islands has become increasingly popular during recent years and this has put great pressure on a fragile environment that imperils its entire ecosystem.

Among the several companies offering cruise tours to the Galapagos is Ecoventura, a family-owned company based in Guayaquil, Ecuador, whose three expedition yachts meet a strict set of conservation and social standards and are designed to protect against potential

sources of pollution. These yachts each have first-class accommodation for 20 passengers in ten double cabins. A fourth vessel, the Sky Dancer, carries

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16 passengers and offers weekly seven-night dive programmes visiting the northern islands of Wolf and Darwin. For information, visit [www.ecoventura.com](http://www.ecoventura.com).

The Planeterra Foundation, based in Toronto, Canada, is dedicated to supporting sustainable community development through travel. By means of an arrangement with Gap Adventures, the foundation offers a programme of "voluntours" which give travellers a hands-on opportunity to make a direct and lasting contribution while experiencing true cultural immersion.

"Voluntours" are operated in Central and South America; Asia and Africa. Examples of some of their projects include spending eight days helping out on an organic farm in Ecuador; volunteering at a daycare centre in one of Rio de Janeiro's favelas or urban slums; helping out at different community projects on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar before embarking on a safari on the Serengeti Reserve; and helping to eradicate child labour in India. For details, visit [www.planeterra.org](http://www.planeterra.org).

Travellers who wish to include Jewish content in their eco-holidays may want to consider the outdoor adventures offered by Hazon, a New York-based organisation founded by Nigel Savage, formerly of Manchester. Hazon is the Hebrew word meaning "vision" and the organisation's programmes are designed to "engage both Jewish tradition and the world around us". They do this by means of bike rides and hikes with participants ranging in age from less than 10 to more than 70.

The New York Jewish Environmental Bike Ride takes place

over the first weekend in September and is Hazon's largest annual event, attracting more than 300 participants. It combines a two-day Shabbat retreat with a two-day bike ride. Participants learn about Jewish tradition and environmental issues as they live, eat and relax together. The itinerary varies from year to year but always follows a beautiful route from a community a hundred or so miles from the city and culminates with a joyful celebration at the Jewish Community Centre in Manhattan.

For its Israel ride, Hazon partners with the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, the leading environmental education program in the Middle East. The seven-day ride follows a 250-mile route from Jerusalem to Eilat and affords participants a unique opportunity to see Israel in a fresh new way, including vistas of the Mediterranean and the powerful, natural beauty of the Negev desert. The Israel Ride is scheduled to take advantage of the favourable weather conditions in spring and autumn.

For those who don't like to ride a bike, Hazon in cooperation with the Heschel Centre for Environmental Learning and Leadership, offers a five-day hike through the mountains, meadows, streams and forests of Northern Israel. Participants follow the Israel National Trail through the stunning Nahal Amud canyon and into the city of Sfad, the ancient centre of Jewish mysticism. As in all Hazon programmes, the hike brings together great food, beautiful surroundings and world-class educators. Detailed information about these and other Hazon programmes is available at [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org).

If you are the kind of person who wishes to minimise the environmental impact of your travels and maximise the good you can do while having fun, one of these programmes might just be right for you.