

CHARLES DARWIN FOUNDATION

# CREATING A LIFETIME CONNECTION TO THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



Fundación  
**Charles Darwin**  
Foundation  
GALAPAGOS





As one of the most renowned planetary treasures, the Galapagos Islands have played an unrivaled role in the history of science. But the archipelago is facing unprecedented threats from invasive species and climate change, to habitat loss and overfishing. For more than 65 years, the Charles Darwin Foundation has been on the frontlines, tackling these challenges through scientific research and conservation action. But a key consideration is how to better engage the world in protecting the Galapagos Islands and the hundreds of unique species that call the islands their home. We envision a new Visitor Experience, at the heart of the Charles Darwin Research Station, playing this critical role, creating a global network of ambassadors who understand the importance of the islands to regional and global ecosystems.

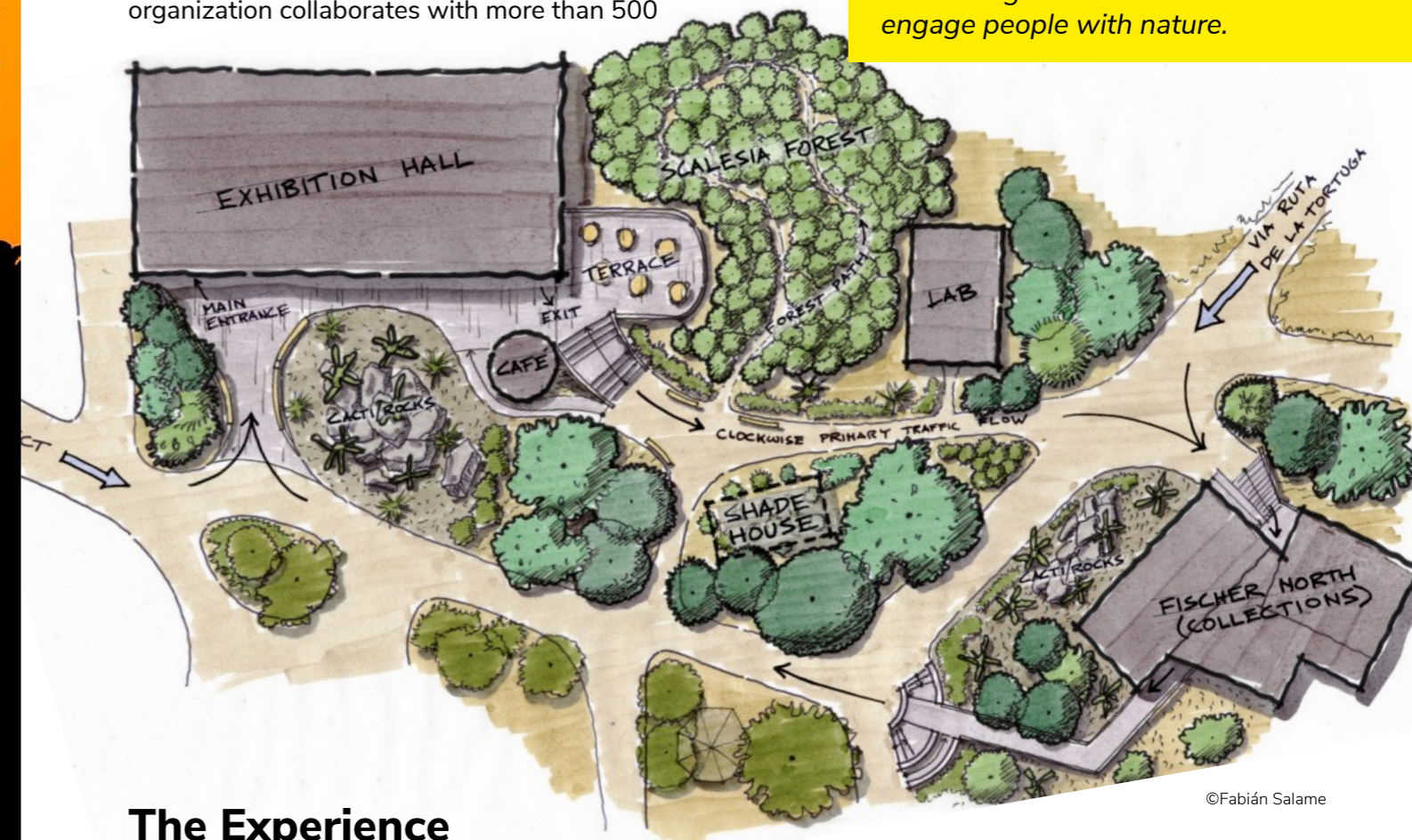
## Our Story

Founded in 1959, the Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) and its Research Station (CDRS) is based in Galapagos. CDF is at the forefront of regional science and conservation action and has accumulated a wealth of scientific and social knowledge to share with the world. The research station is the primary partner for the government of Ecuador for scientific research and capacity building to protect Galapagos' unique natural habitats.

CDF has approximately 135 staff of which ~70 are full time scientists and researchers and some 200 visiting scientists come every year. The organization collaborates with more than 500

scientists around the world annually and functions as a science training ground, contributing enormously to the pool of local talented biologists in Galapagos. The CDF curates the only Galapagos Natural History Collections in Ecuador with more than 135,000 specimens housed on campus, alongside a collection of historical artifacts, archives and a library that is accessible to the public.

**WHY GALAPAGOS IS SO UNIQUE:**  
*harnessing science to connect and engage people with nature.*



## The Experience

Just like any successful film, book, play or opera, a good visitor experience also has a "big idea." This is the essence of the story that visitors will experience. For the CDRS visitor experience, the fundamental storyline is aimed at their connection and engagement with nature. Why Galapagos is so unique: harnessing science to connect and engage people with nature. Every object, every exhibit, every design, text, or interpretive staff

contributes to conveying this story. The new CDRS visitor experience is a call to action but it is not 'activist'. It is welcoming, accessible, and offers different layers of information aimed at the brain (knowledge), heart (emotion), and hands (experience).



## The Opportunity

The research station currently has a small visitor exhibition hall that attracts ~170,000 visitors yearly, which is about half of all tourists that visit Galapagos. It is important to capture the hearts and minds of these visitors because most are here once; less than 20% come back to the Galapagos in their lifetime. It is also important to engage with the local community through this exhibition space, so they can learn more about Galapagos and CDF's projects and, through them, discover their islands as well as become agents of change.

The new CDRS Visitor Experience was developed in partnership with two world class museums, the California Academy of Sciences, located in San Francisco, USA, and the Naturalis Biodiversity Center, located in Leiden, Netherlands. With their advice and expertise, CDF will be able to provide an experience that will challenge visitors to learn, think, do, and discuss. It offers visitors a life-changing experience and an educational visit, with social interaction and stimulation of all senses. CDF's Visitor Experience brings something that Galapagos does not have as yet, complementing perfectly the living museum and untamed natural beauty that is Galapagos, and that all tourists will have encountered while exploring the islands. The Visitor Experience comes to life through five themes, each of which will be designed as distinct spaces or exhibits, but are part of a single larger narrative.

### The themes are:

- Evolution:** how nature is formed and changes
- Ecology:** how nature is connected
- Threats:** how nature in Galapagos is threatened
- Solutions:** how CDF and others are helping to save the unique nature of Galapagos
- Opportunities:** Galapagos in the year 2100, and the possibilities that lie ahead if we come together as humans to safeguard this unique archipelago

Together, they tell a story of hope, awakening in visitors a sense of curiosity for life, nature, and a passion to protect it, through science and conservation action, in Galapagos and throughout the world.

## Result of the visit

### This is what the visitors should know after their visit:

- Galapagos is an iconic global treasure of irreplaceable biodiversity.
- It is one of the most important places on earth for historical and future scientific research.
- Galapagos is under threat and will be lost if not supported by all.
- CDF and its Research Station is essential in safeguarding the Galapagos.

### This is what visitors should feel after the visit:

- Overwhelmed by their understanding of the importance and beauty of Galapagos.
- Closely attached to nature and Galapagos nature in particular.
- Energized to support efforts to safeguard Galapagos and hopeful that this is feasible.
- Motivated to support nature conservation in and outside of Galapagos.



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## BECOME PART OF THE STORY

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The Charles Darwin Foundation has launched an ambitious \$4M campaign to bring the newly envisioned visitor experience to life. The effort will require contributions big and small as well as funding from long-time supporters and new friends. We invite you to learn more about this effort by contacting Jim Boyle, Chief Development Officer at [jim.boyle@fcdarwin.org.ec](mailto:jim.boyle@fcdarwin.org.ec) or at +1 360.920.6302.

**Thank you for your interest.**



Photographs by award-winning photographer and long-time Galapagos friend, Mattias Klum. For over three decades, Mattias has been dedicated to raising awareness of endangered environments, species, and cultures. His work includes acclaimed films, TV productions, and 15 books, two co-authored with Johan Rockström and one with Dr. Jane Goodall. Mattias's stunning photography has also graced the pages and covers of top international publications such as The New York Times, BBC Wildlife, Vogue, and National Geographic.