

Checking back in the hotel at Quito after two weeks on a 60-foot boat was like hitting town used to be after spending 30 days at the old ranch. The first thing I did was to draw four tubs of water just trying out different temperatures and finding which soap smelled the best.

All my gear had to be stowed out on the balcony, so as soon as any of the stowaway cockroaches recovered from air sickness, they'd stagger off the overhang instead of forcing the glass doors open and invading the hotel's premises.

At a stopover at a place called Quayaquil, the police searched our baggage with a drug snoring dog. When he came to my duffel he started raising his hackles and snarling deep down and sort of sidling away from my pack. I guess those old dogs have such sensitive noses they can't tolerate much roach odor saturated in salt water and diesel fumes.

Once removed, I took a side trip up in the Andes, just being able to walk in pine needles and smell the ferns in the grassy meadows and feel the chilled mountain air paid for the trip. Out on a plain underneath the mountains, I glassed in a band of shaggy-tailed long-maned wild mares being herded by about as disrespectful looking a dun stallion as ever had a black mane and black tail.

Old dunny was taking his job mighty serious. Like any runaway stud horse that ever squealed, he was fighting those mares every step they took toward water.

The big cost of visiting the Gallapagos is the strength it takes to clamor over the volcanic rocks and bear up under the equatorial heat. Nevertheless, if that's what it takes to see the creatures of that world, I say it's worth the struggle.