

MODERN LUXURY

CS

GINA RODRIGUEZ

With Golden Globe Nominations
for Her and Her Hit Show,
Jane the Virgin, This Chicago
Girl-Turned-Star Has Arrived



BEST OF THE CITY

CULTURE / HEALTH & BEAUTY / STYLE / DESIGN / FOOD & NIGHTLIFE

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DC

OSCAR'S TIME
THE DE LA RENTA
FASHION LEGACY

BEST OF THE CITY

DC'S CULTURAL TRAILBLAZERS, FASHION MVPS,
BEAUTY MAVENS, DESIGN GENIUSES & CUISINE HEROES

LOVE IS ALL AROUND: MOST ROMANTIC DATE SPOTS

SWOONWORTHY: BOURBON STEAK'S NEW GROOVE

WINTER FLURRY: NEW BOUTIQUES FOR THE NEW YEAR

ETHAN HAWKE GETS PASSIONATE

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HOUSTON

NEWSFLASH!
Houston's
**KELLY
FRYE**
on Her Rapid
Rise to Stardom

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Divine Design / Beauty's Brightest / Fabulous Fashion / Artists to Watch / Dining's Next Wave

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MANHATTAN



BEST OF NYC

THE PREMIER
PLACES TO EAT,
DRINK, RESIDE,
BEAUTIFY
AND HAVE FUN

ETHAN HAWKE

The *Boyhood* Star and Golden
Globe Nominee on Taking the
Road Less Traveled

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RIVERA

ORANGE COUNTY

ETHAN HAWKE

On His Recent *Boyhood*
Accolades, Upcoming
Sci-Fi Thriller *Predestination*
and Latest Musical
Passion Project

THE BEST OF O.C.

Cultural Milestones,
New Trends in Wellness,
Stylish Shops, Bold
Local Design and the
Cuisine Scene

ART ATELIER! COLLECTOR/ARTIST
MARINA ROMANOVA-ARNOTT
SHAKES THINGS UP

BEAN TOWN: WHAT'S BREWING WITH
PORTOLA'S JEFF AND CHRISTA DUGGAN

STARS ALIGN FOR GLITTER GALS
MARA ROTHBART AND SARA SMITH

HAMPTONS MEETS NEWPORT:
A LEFT COASTAL DEBUT OF BABETTE'S



NATURAL WONDERS

CAVORT WITH IGUANAS, PENGUINS AND FRIGATES ALL DAY; ENJOY SUPERIOR CREATURE COMFORTS ALL NIGHT. FIT FOR SYBARITES (AND SURVIVALISTS TOO), PIKAIA LODGE IS A FIVE-STAR, CARBON-NEUTRAL ECO-LODGE IN THE WILDLIFE HAVEN THAT IS THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS. DARWIN NEVER SLEPT HERE!

By Rima Suqi

Have you ever seen a frigate bird flirt? The male frigate has a red pouch he inflates to comically large proportions, hoping to catch the eye of nearby females. Once successful, it depresses back to its usual, goiter-like state. The parallels to human behavior it exhibits are uncanny and make this poor bird the butt of many jokes. I'd never seen anything quite like it, nor did I think I would be the least bit interested, until I observed this mating ritual while on a recent trip to the exotic Galápagos Islands. I had to restrain myself from posting too many photos on Instagram and quickly learned that the Galápagos Islands have the potential to turn even the most seasoned eco-traveler, who thinks they've seen it all, into a giddy adventure travel fan and turn an adventure traveler into a naturalist as well—just like Charles Darwin. Over 180

years ago, as a young naturalist, Darwin ventured into these parts, and his enthusiastic research resulted in the theory of evolution, as detailed in his seminal *On the Origin of Species*. To this day, visitors follow Darwin's path down to this equatorial archipelago, which is both national park and marine reserve, with the sole purpose of spotting wildlife: the frigate bird, blue-footed booby or any number of creatures, including the famous Galápagos Islands tortoises, in their native habitats.

Traditionally, many have explored this region by yacht or small-scale cruise ship, as this was considered the best way to maximize sightseeing and wildlife-watching. But not everyone, including this writer, wants to be on a boat for days on end. Some prefer to return and sleep on solid ground, especially when that CONTINUED...



LOVE BIRD

From top: The stunning facade of the Pikaia Lodge on Santa Cruz Island in the Galápagos Islands; the inflated, brightly hued throat pouch of the Galápagos Islands frigate bird, one of the multitude of unique wildlife native to this island chain, means romance is in the air.



...CONTINUED solid ground includes a massage, gourmet meal and perfectly crafted cocktail in a luxury setting.

Enter Pikaia Lodge, billed as the first five-star carbon-neutral property in the Galápagos Islands. The lodge is the vision of Herbert Frei, an Ecuadorian native who first came upon the spot 30 years ago on the island of Santa Cruz, where the 14-room lodge now sits. "We wanted to show that a land-based experience can be equal to, if not better than, the traditional cruise-ship model," he explained. The location—31 hectares on an extinct volcano crater, with sweeping views of the surrounding valleys and the ocean beyond—was paramount to his plan. As was the intention, the property is a true eco-lodge in every sense of the word, from the dramatic architectural structures fabricated from recyclable steel, glass and stone; to the teak-wood furniture and bamboo floors; to the use of solar and wind energy to generate hot water and electricity. Even the infinity pool was placed in such a way as to take advantage of maximum heat from the sun, while guest rooms stay tucked out of direct sunlight but maintain incredible views whether you are inside or on the terrace.

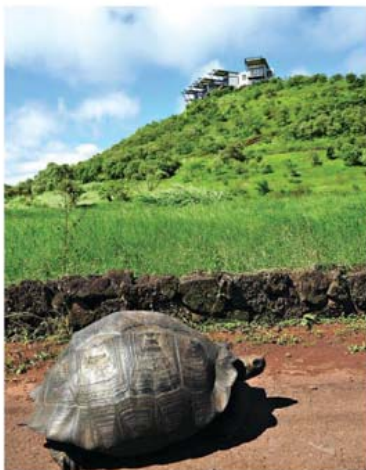
As lovely as the lodge is, we did have to leave it for daily excursions both on the island and off. Call times were early—often 6AM—as we had to drive to the other side of the island to get in a zodiac, which took us to the lodge's private yacht, the Pikaia I. There were two full days of expeditions via yacht and one that was land-based in

between. On the Pikaia I, we each had our own rooms with bathrooms, which came in handy on the longer excursions (two-plus hours each way). The food served on board was above typical cruise fare, and there were plenty of snacks and candy, as well as beer and wine. On the way to the excursion sites, you could choose from several decks on which to lounge, including one with a hot tub.

Excursions included a cruise to North Seymour Island, where, on an hourlong hike through a desert-like landscape (complete with cacti), we spotted iguanas and the frigates, cavorting among native citronella plants. Then it was back to the boat for a quick change into wetsuits to snorkel around the area. The water was cold and choppy, but there were so many fish, and they were so colorful, that it was well worth the trip. Our guide, Paulina, also took us to Playa Las Bachas, an area that's home to nesting sea turtles, fascinating marine iguanas, a flock of flamingoes and hundreds of bright-orange Sally CONTINUED...

CREATURE COMFORTS
Clockwise from top left: Pikaia Lodge's sumptuous infinity pool exudes barefoot luxury, but it's situated to make the most of solar heat to sync with the lodge's passionate embrace of eco-friendliness; a marine iguana lounges in the sun too; Galápagos Islands blue-footed boobies perch on the volcanic rocks; Pikaia Lodge's private Pikaia I yacht is your base of operations for sea explorations.





GALÁPAGOS GLAM
Clockwise from top left: A vibrant Sally Lightfoot crab; a view into nature from a balcony room at the Pikaia Lodge; the pool suite's private plunge pool; a Galápagos Islands tortoise eases on down the road. Galápagos Islands' famous mascot, Lonesome George, was a tortoise who reportedly lived to be 102.

...CONTINUED Lightfoot crabs scampering over black lava rock. On another day, we made the sea voyage to the tiny island of Bartolomé, just off the larger island of Santiago, where we hiked the dramatic, rock-strewn lava fields. Later we climbed the 300-plus stairs to the top of Bartolomé and were rewarded with truly incredible views of the surrounding islands, as well as this area's answer to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Pinnacle Rock. We later spotted penguins and sea lions while snorkeling, and a flock of frigates accompanied the yacht back to Santa Cruz. Our land day was devoted exclusively to the storied Galápagos Islands tortoises—we hiked around the highlands to watch them in their various habitats and took a trip to the Charles Darwin Research Station, which is home to a variety of species as well as the resting place of Lonesome George, a world-famous Pinta Island tortoise who lived out the last days of his reported 102 years there.

It was nice to return to the lodge for a gourmet meal after a long day. The kitchen is helmed by Ecuador native Norman Brandt, and the focus is on local, sustainable ingredients. At lunch and dinner there were two appetizer and two entree choices, and everything was delicious. Wi-Fi addicts, be warned—the lobby is the only area offering connectivity, and the signal there is fairly weak to boot.

I had a great massage in the spa and just glanced at the gym on the way to the beautiful sauna and afterward took a soak in the hot tub, which has ocean views. A browse through the impressive book collection in the library, cocktail in hand, is a nice predinner ritual as well.

Pikaia Lodge proves that an eco-lodge can be executed authentically and in sync with nature without sacrificing luxury amenities at all. In fact, at Pikaia, the “eco” part of the equation is so properly carried out, it is at once invisible and seamless yet also an integral part to the entire luxury experience. In that sense, Pikaia Lodge has succeeded beautifully in creating a nature-friendly lodge right in the heart of where the modern concept of nature itself was practically invented. *Packages for three, four or seven nights including all intra- and interisland excursions with a guide, rooms, full board with meals (both at the lodge and aboard the yacht) from \$3,700 per person, pikaialodge.com* ■

