

German arrested for stealing iguanas from Galapagos

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File photo of an iguana in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. In 1976 wild dogs wiped out a colony of around 500 of the iguanas on the island of Santa Cruz. The national park rescued around 60 survivors and launched a captive breeding program to try to revive the species.

A German tourist has been arrested for allegedly trying to smuggle four endangered iguanas out of the Galapagos Islands, according to the national park.

The [Galapagos National Park](#) said its security guards had intercepted the man on Monday at the airport on the archipelago after he was seen carrying a suspicious package, which was found to contain four lizards wrapped in canvas.

The reptiles appear to be Galapagos Land Iguanas (*Conolophus subcristatus*), an endangered species. The yellowish lizards can grow to be over a meter (three feet) long, with males weighing up to 13 kilograms (30 pounds).

The iguanas have been seen to raise themselves off the ground to allow finches to eat ticks off their bellies -- the same Galapagos finches that inspired [Charles Darwin](#) when he visited the islands in the 19th century.

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The [Galapagos Islands](#), situated about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) off Ecuador's coast, gained fame when Darwin visited in 1835 to conduct research that led to his revolutionary theories on evolution.

The archipelago has been a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) since 1978 for the rich plant and animal life found both on land and in the surrounding sea.

The man arrested on Monday faces a prison sentence of up to three years if convicted of the charges.

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