



PRESS RELEASE

MiniDarwin¹'s third expedition started today. Destination: the Amazon Forest, in the *International Year of Biodiversity 2010*

Monday, 26 July 2010 - The third expedition of the MiniDarwin has lifted off today to Brazil. It is devoted to BIODIVERSITY, its importance for the future of the planet and its social and economic spin-offs. Following the first expedition to the Galapagos Islands, on the occasion of Darwin's 200th Anniversary, and the adventure on Italian volcanoes in 2008 (International Year of Planet Earth), the main destination of expedition 2010 is the Amazonian rainforest, to celebrate the *International Year of Biodiversity*.

Under the patronage of [2010 International Year of Biodiversity](#) and with the scientific support of [IUCN](#) (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature), [ERASMUS MC](#) Rotterdam and [INPA](#) (the National Brazilian Institute for Research in the Amazonic region), as well as the support of [Merck Serono](#) Geneva, five children between seven and thirteen years of age, of Italian, Dutch and Brazilian nationalities, are back on Darwin's tracks in Brazil.

The first leg will be the **Fernando de Noronha islands**, where the Beagle docked on February 20, 1832. At the time, Charles Darwin could not imagine that the Archipel would be inscribed today on Unesco's World Heritage List. Fernando de Noronha is a "hot spot" of biodiversity, a crucial place for the conservation of the Southern Atlantic threatened species, in particular marine turtles. After Noronha, the MiniDarwin's first encounter with the Rainforest will take place in the capital city of the Amazon region, **Manaus**. At the INPA headquarters (The Brazilian Institute for Research on the Amazon region), the MiniDarwin will receive an introduction to the themes of research in Amazonia, in both biological and social sciences, to be prepared to a short cohabitation with the resident populations of the rainforest. Then they will take a boat on the **Amazon River**, the longest river in the world and the vital force of the entire region, to reach **Tefé**, the door to the Amazon rainforest. A few more hours navigation in canoes with Indios guides will take them to the central leg of the expedition, the **Mamirauá Reserve for Sustainable Development**. Mamirauá protects the largest area of rainforest in the world, and is based on an innovative model of conservation of biodiversity. In the Mamirauá reserve, scientific research regulates the use of natural resources with the participation of the resident population. The MiniDarwins, coached by local scientists and by professor Ab Osterhaus of the ERASMUS MC, will observe a very rich ecosystem of endemic and threatened species, including the charismatic bald uakari (*Cacajao calvus calvus*), a symbol of the Reserve, two species of fresh water dolphins (including the pink dolphin "boto rosa"), nineteen species of parrots, six species of toucans and the black caiman (*Melanosuchus niger*), the largest predator of South America.

¹ **MINIDARWIN** is a science popularization initiative based on the expeditions of an international group of children from 7 to 14 years of age, guided by a group of scientists, on the tracks of Darwin aboard the Beagle, to discover *the Evolution theory* and its multiple scientific spin-offs. The purpose of the initiative is to communicate science to a young audience through several multimedia, produced with the material and the experience gathered during the expeditions: didactic websites with online travel diaries, books for children, travelling exhibitions, reportages for the media, tv programs and documentaries. Visit <http://www.minidarwin.it> to find out the material available from previous expeditions.



In addition to biological observations and conservation activities, the MiniDarwin will experience cohabitation with the indigenous population in the rainforest and their traditional practices, perfectly aligned with sustainability. The local populations' lifestyle, based on reciprocity and exchange, where land is seen as a source of life and a sacred space rather than goods to trade, is a flagrant example of respect in the cohabitation with nature, almost a cult for natural biodiversity, because biodiversity is the only guarantee for the survival of these communities.

Through this experience, the MiniDarwins will understand the reasons for conservation actions and, with the help of scientists, understand why maintaining genetic diversity is a key factor to avoid that climate changes and new diseases have a devastating effect on our planet.

Among the multimedia products based on the material collected and the experience of the expedition, there will be a book for children, the third in the series, published by [Giunti-EditorialeScienza](#), an interactive website, photo reportages and videos for international media.

Follow all the legs of the expedition online, on the **MINIDARWIN 3 TRAVEL BLOG**:

<http://minidarwin.blogspot.com>

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