

Refusing to give in to MS, Sylvia Brown made it to the Galapagos Islands.

"The Galapagos is everything David Attenborough promised and more. We were in the land of sea lions, iguanas, blue-footed boobies, turtles and sharks, and to swim with these creatures was a most exhilarating experience."

My Trip to The Galapagos Islands

By Sylvia Brown

Sylvia Brown, 33, was diagnosed with MS when she was 23. She has progressive MS but is relatively stable after going on a diet similar to the Best Bet Diet. She met Steve Wright in 1999 and they have a 21 month-old toddler, Marcus. Sylvia and Steve have just got married in their native Sheffield.



Sylvia Brown

Our trip to the Galapagos was part of an epic journey to South America last winter that I took with my fiancé (now husband) Steve and brother Matthew. From Quito we took a flight to the largest island in the Galapagos, Santa Cruz, where we met our tour guide and cruise boat called the "Seaman".

We had booked this 5 day cruise through the internet, and

had deliberately chosen a smaller boat rather than a big cruise liner because we thought it would be easier to get on and off such a boat, and there would be fewer health and safety regulations. We were right.

Though when we got on this boat I had my doubts as I couldn't get around it in my wheelchair. I panicked about being dependant on Steve and Matthew and was worried about how I would manage going to the toilet, which was downstairs in our cabin.

I couldn't just stop drinking because that puts me at risk of a urinary tract infection, but thanks to my trusty Pipinette pot, back-up dry-nite nappies, and my carers, I managed! It might not be glamorous weeing into a pot with people about, but it is discreet and people were very understanding!

The meals on the cruise and throughout the whole trip were ideal for me, as the staple diet is rice, vegetables and seafood - and they were delicious too!

Snorkelling With Penguins And Sea Lions

Before I knew it we had docked at our first island, and I was bunged onto a dingy, wheelchair and all. The crew-members were so helpful; if I needed carrying they just did it! The next minute I was snorkelling in a cove with penguins, sea lions and fish aplenty all around me!

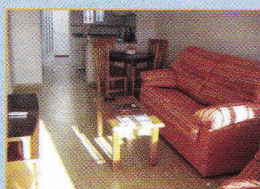
The schedule was intense, as we had early starts and chose to go deep-sea snorkelling most days. I just went for it, though I didn't stay in the sea too long, as it was cold! Getting in was easy, though a bit scary - just



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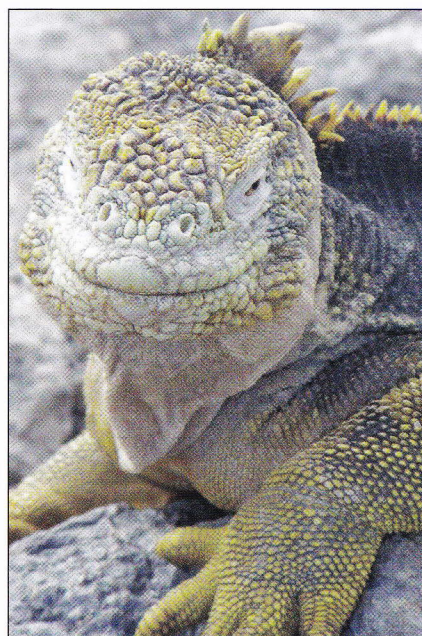
chucking yourself into cold water off the side of the dinghy. Getting out was fine too, as I had strong male crew members to haul me out.

The bonus side effect from this activity was that afterwards I could actually climb the very steep ladder up onto the top deck of our boat to sunbathe and view the many frigate birds.

On the islands we saw blue and red-footed boobies, a vast array of other birds, turtles, huge iguanas, thousands of fish when snorkelling, penguins and sea-

lions - including a baby which reminded me of my own toddler Marcus as he was sooo cheeky. Steve even saw a shark when deep-sea snorkelling. Wildlife was all around.

On some islands there were walks I couldn't go on as the



paths were too steep and rocky, but I saw pretty much everything you could ever wish to see and I'd been prepared not to see much at all.

On the day we saw hundreds of iguanas and sea lions, I must admit that the heat and the punishing schedule of the trip got to me and I was seriously flagging, but I did it, and felt a great sense of achievement.

On the final day of our cruise we saw the huge tortoises, many of which are over a hundred

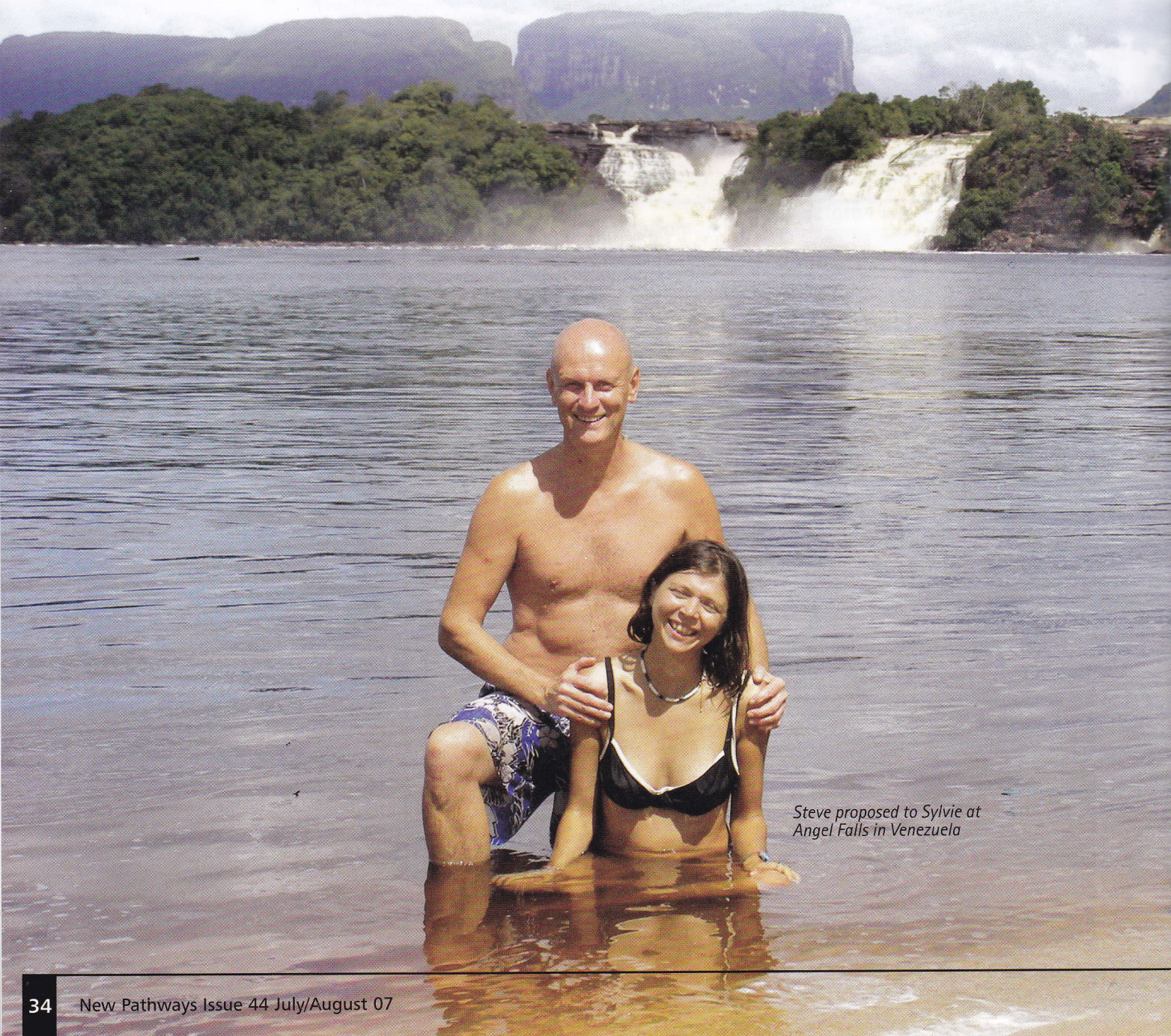
Life Is For Living



years old. First we saw them in a wildlife park, where Steve kissed one of them called Ranger. We also saw a big tortoise called "Lonesome George" who is the last tortoise of his species. They are trying to get him to mate, but so far without success.

After a short rest in a hotel, I felt revitalised enough to go on a trip to see the massive tortoises out in the wild. It was incredible to see them, so huge and so old, just going about their day, munching grass and bathing in the pond.

I'm so glad I went! I know how lucky I am.



Steve proposed to Sylvie at Angel Falls in Venezuela