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In England any person fond of natural history enjoys a great advantage \_ but in these fertile climates, teeming with life, the attractions are so numerous, that he is scarcely able to walk at all'

When the Beagle sailed out of Devonport on 27th December 1831, Charles Darwin was twenty-two and setting off on the voyage of a lifetime. The journal that he kept shows a naturalist making patient observations concerning geology and natural history as well as people, places and events. Volcanoes in the Galapagos, the Gossamer spider of Patagonia, the Australasian coral reefs and the brilliance of the firefly; all are to be found in these extraordinary writings. The insights made on the five-year voyage were to set in motion the intellectual currents that lead to the most controversial book of the Victorian age: The Origin of Species.

This volume reprints Charles Darwin's journal in a shortened form. It contains an introduction providing a background to Darwin's thought and work, as well as notes, maps and appendices and an essay on scientific geology and the Bible by Robert FitzRoy, Darwin's friend and captain of the Beagle.