



## **ECUADOR PLANNING GUIDE** updated 12.9.24

### **Practicalities**

#### **Language**

The official languages of Ecuador are Spanish and the indigenous language, Quechua. The importance of Quechua in Ecuador and in other Andean countries such as Peru is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Microsoft™ released its popular Office software in Quechua in 2006.

#### **Religion**

Ecuador's principal religion is Roman Catholicism. Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of native belief-systems as the indigenous people reclaim their identity and voice.

#### **Electricity**

110 VAC. Many outlets will not accept US polarized plug. Purchase an inexpensive plug adapter.

#### **Time Difference**

Quito is GMT-5, Eastern Standard Time. Ecuador does not observe Daylight Saving Time. [Optional Galapagos: GMT-6, one hour earlier than the mainland/Quito].



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### Currency

#### **Credit, Debit, Prepaid Bank Cards**

Many hotels, stores, and restaurants accept payment with credit or debit card; rarely are prepaid bank cards accepted. Be sure to let your card carrier know before your departure that you will be travelling to Ecuador and ask them for any service fees. In addition to these fees, it is common and legal for individual establishments to charge their own credit card use fees for purchases. Cards should always be in the name of the participant themselves. Debit cards work well for cash withdrawals, but typically must be run as credit for any purchases.

**Paper Money:** all paper money in Ecuador is U.S. currency. They are issued in the same denominations that they are in the U.S.

**Coins:** Ecuador has all the same coins that the U.S. is using. US coins, of course, are accepted. Additionally, Ecuador issues centavo coins. These coins are issued in 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 cent and \$1 denominations. These are equal in value to the U.S. coins. The \$1.00 centavo coin is commonly used. **CENTAVO COINS ARE ONLY VALID IN ECUADOR.** These coins have the numeric value written in Spanish on them along with the words "Banco Central de Ecuador." The reverse side has a portrait of an important Ecuadorian and the words "República del Ecuador." They also have the country's coat of arms. The 1 centavo coin is brass or copper in color. The rest of the coins are silver colored.

**Carry smaller denomination bills (\$1-\$20) in good condition, without writing or tears. Larger bills are regarded with a great deal of suspicion and the new counterfeit resistant currency is only slowly gaining acceptance even years after its introduction. Additional details are provided below.**



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### Government

The constitution was approved by national referendum in 1978, taking effect in 1979. The President, elected for a term of four years, holds executive power. He is assisted by the Vice President and a Cabinet, which includes 12 Ministers and a Secretary General. Legislative power is unicameral and resides in the House of Representatives, with 69 members; there are 12 national representatives and the remainder represent the provinces.

### Holidays

Every city of Ecuador celebrates their own festivals either in honor of a saint (Most Ecuadorians are Catholics), or the city's festivities. There are plenty more celebrations throughout the country such as: "Virgen del Carmen", on the 16th of July.

The main festivities of the country are as follows:

**1 January** (New Year's Day).

**6 January** (Día de los Inocentes, y Reyes Magos).

**27 February** (Día del Civismo). **Carnival** (Monday and Tuesday before Lent).

**Easter** (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

**1 May** (Labor Day).

**24 May** (Batalla del Pichincha, Independence Day).

**June** (Corpus Christi).

**10 August** (Primer grito de independencia).

**9 October** (Guayaquil independence).

**12 October** (Columbus' day).

**1 November** (All Saints' Day).

**2 November** (Día de los difuntos, All Souls' Day).

**3 November** (Cuenca Independence).

**6 December** (Quito Foundation).

**25 December** (Christmas Day).



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### Traditional Foods

Ecuador is known for its exotic fruits, high quality fish and seafood, and countless types of potatoes in the **Andes**. In Ecuador, food is intrinsically linked to **culture**. Across the country you'll find a broad spectrum of national and regional dishes, including lemon-marinated shrimp (*ceviche*) on the **coast**, toasted corn, and pastries stuffed with spiced meats.

At only pennies per bite, bakeries offer a delicious range of breads, sweet pastries, and savory snacks, such as *empanadas* (hot, crispy meat or cheese-filled pastries) and *llapingachos* (potato and cheese pancakes). Dishes sold in the street are also quite cheap, but hygiene is often questionable, and you may quickly surpass your intestinal limits. A good rule to follow is the "locals rule" -- if the place is frequented by many locals, the food probably merits joining the crowd.

The typical Ecuadorian diet of rice, potatoes, and meat (beef and chicken everywhere, pork in the Sierra) is complimented by another national culinary institution, *aji* (hot sauce). Most Ecuadorian restaurants and homes have their own version of *aji*, each with its own intensity of "*picante*" (a word derived from the verb to bite or to sting; meaning spicy), so sample a bit before smothering your food! If you don't see a little bowl of *aji* on your table, just ask - they've surely got it. In addition to *aji*, basic dishes are usually accompanied by the proverbial rice, small salad, and potatoes or *patacones* (squashed, fried green bananas). On the coast and in the Amazon, potatoes are often supplemented or replaced by *menestra* (bean or lentil soup) or yuca.

Soups are without doubt Ecuador's specialty. Most lunches and dinners are accompanied by a savory soup as the first course. *Locro* soup, made with cheese, avocado and potato, sounds a bit odd, but is actually quite tasty. *Chupe de pescado*, a fish and vegetable soup with coastal origins, is becoming popular throughout the country.

Other dishes found in typical restaurants and homes include: *seco de pollo* (stewed chicken accompanied by rice and avocado slices); *lomo salteado* (thin beef steak covered with onions and tomatoes); and *seco de chivo* (goat stew served with a mound of rice). *Tortillas de maiz* (thin corn pancakes) and *choclo* (barbecued Andean corn) are sold by street vendors and make great snacks any time of day.



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### Vocabulary of food preparation:

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>A la brasa:</i>   | grilled              |
| <i>Al vapor:</i>     | steamed              |
| <i>Apanado:</i>      | batter-fried/breaded |
| <i>Brosterizado:</i> | deep-fried           |
| <i>Encocado:</i>     | stewed in coconut    |
| <i>Frito:</i>        | pan-fried            |
| <i>Hornado:</i>      | roasted              |
| <i>Reventado:</i>    | skillet-fried        |
| <i>Seco:</i>         | stewed meat plate    |

### Drinks

It's wise to drink only bottled water. Host families use purified drinking water. Distilled and sparkling waters from Ecuadorian springs are available throughout the country and are of good quality.

Along with the mouthwatering exotic fruits of Ecuador come delicious fruit juices, (*jugos*) including *naranjilla* (a cross between an orange and a tomato), *tomate de árbol* (tree tomato), *mora* (blackberry), *guanabana* (a luscious thick aromatic sweet white juice), *maracuya* (passion fruit) and papaya.

Bottled and canned fizzy drinks (including Coca Cola, Sprite and Fanta) are widely available throughout the country, as are teas and coffees. In spite of Ecuador's status as a coffee producing country, coffee quality is often rather disappointing, as the best beans are usually sent over the border.



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### **HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT**

#### **1. INCA EMPIRE and SPANISH COLONIALISM**

Although we know that Asian Bedouins traversed the Bering straight some 25,000 years ago and began populating the continent of South America around 12,000 BC, the more advanced known cultures sprung up between 10,000 BC and 1,500 AD. These include the Bahía, Tolita, Jama Coaque, Chorrera, Machalilla and the oldest recorded culture of the Americas, the Valdivia.

The Inca empire whose roots and origins stem from central Peru was developed further in Ecuador through Huayna Capac. The Incas had the monopoly of control from 1450 to the first quarter of the 16th Century stewarded by Huayna Capac until his death in 1526 when he left the empire to two sons. He divided the empire into two main areas of control. One son, Huascar was given Cuzco while the other Atahualpa ruled Quito.

The division however for the first time in Inca history weakened their infrastructure and imperial stronghold causing them to go to war with one another which also contributed to their downfall against the Spanish invasion.

The battle between the two fractions of many years finally ended near Ambato with the Quito ruler defeating his brother. However, the division had taken the strength away from this great race and became quickly known by the Spaniards ruled by Francisco Pizarro who came to South America in 1532 with the objective of conquering the Incas.

With the arrival of Pizarro who spread fear into the Indians hearts with their cannons, metal armor and powerful horses, the Spanish advanced rapidly their agenda of the Inca surrender. On November 16th, 1532. Pizarro set up a meeting with Atahualpa to discuss a meeting for mutual interests and negotiation but once the Incas had arrived Pizarro went back on his word and quickly killed off all of Atahualpa's guards forcing him to surrender and be taken as a ransom in return for gold, silver and other Inca wealth.

The ransom tactic proved to be another scam by the Spaniards who instead of releasing Atahualpa put him in a rigged trial which found him guilty of polygamy according to Spanish law even though this practice of marrying ones sister was considered normal Inca custom. He was sentenced to death on August 29, 1533; and his subsequent execution essentially ended the Inca Empire.



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One further historical archive of note occurred in 1534 when General Rumiñahui faced with a further Spanish invasion by Pizarro's lieutenant Sebastián de Benalcazar entered Quito only to find the city had been burned completely to the ground leaving just ruins out of the ashes. Such action demonstrated the high levels of proudness from the Incas who preferred the destruction of their city by their own hand rather than leaving it to the Spanish Infidel.

Rumiñahui was subsequently executed in January 1535. The Spaniards took colonial rule for around 300 years and by 1600 had taken over as the ruling power nearly all of Central and South America. Ecuador also became an artistic center.

### **2.INDEPENDENCE**

The city of Guayaquil liberated itself from the Spanish and achieved independence on October 9th, 1820, through the Venezuelan liberator Simón Bolivar under the auspices of one of Bolivar's Generals Antonio José de Sucre who used the city as his main base. However, it took a further 2 years for the complete liberation of the country through a battle in the hills of Pichincha volcano in May 24th, 1822 against the Spanish royalist army.

Bolivar's vision was to unite Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador to form a federation called Gran Colombia but this independent nation of unity lasted only for 8 years until Ecuador took full independence on its own in 1830.



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### **3.REPUBLIC**

Between 1861 and 1895, Ecuador enjoyed a period of authoritarian Conservatism under Gabriel García Moreno who added several useful public projects as well as being a catalyst in various artistic movements.

A liberal take over towards the end of the 19th Century under the guidance of Eloy Alfaro mainly through cocoa exports which gave the country a large economic boost and movement into a more capitalistic approach and away from the more conservative rule of the church. Alfaro also boosted further capital infrastructure and industrialization of the country by constructing a railway from Guayaquil to Quito.

Traditionally most Latin country's are politically split between the Liberal and Conservative parties and Ecuador political rulers are no different, for example, Quito is more Church run in its conservative approach while the Guayaquil area is run in a far more socialistic and liberal manner that has led to some regionalism amongst the two major capitals (administratively and commercially).

The two factions came to a head in 1912 when Eloy Alfaro was killed and tortured through fire by an angry political mob. The military then entered the scene and during the 20th Century the country went through intermittent exchanges of military and civilian control.

An example of Military takeover occurred in 1925 when Isidro Ayora brought in various reforms of economic policy as well as introducing various institutions to monitor the economy. This period also saw the creation of the Central Bank but Ayora was evicted from power in 1931 as a result of world economic difficulties that began in 1929.

The 1930s saw a decade of political chaos through a series of interchanging rulers with José Maria Velasco Ibarra by way of example being elected as Ecuador's President on no fewer than five occasions illustrating the volatility of the time.

1941 was the year of a territorial war between Ecuador and Peru began when Peruvians occupied land inside the Ecuadorian frontier which forced the country to sign the Protocol of Río de Janeiro but the agreement was not formally accepted by the authorities till the 1998 peace agreement with Peru.

After the second world war around 1948-60, the country enjoyed a relatively stable period as well increasing export levels through the banana industry.





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### **Introduction to Quito**

Nestled in a long, narrow valley between the lush base of the Volcano Pichincha to the west and the precipitous canyon of the river Machángara to the east, Quito enjoys an unmatched natural setting. Quito's classic architecture and modern structures work with the timber and vegetation that surrounds them to produce South America's most beautiful capital city.

Quito's Centro Histórico is an extensive colonial center built over the ashes of what was a major part of the Inca empire until the Inca general Rumiñahui razed it to the ground rather than surrender to the Spanish conquistadors.

Proclaimed a World Heritage Site by the United Nations in 1978, Quito's Centro Histórico will transport you back and forth between centuries as you meander down its cobblestone streets and pedestrian walkways, passing by vendors selling everything from choclo (Andean corn) to DVDs. At the beginning of the 20th century, Quito fit within the boundaries of Old Town. Today, it is just a small slice of Quito, but undoubtedly the sector richest with history. Some of Ecuador's most famous battles and executions took place in the plazas that now peacefully bustle with tourists, beggars, protestors and locals out for a stroll.

Sidewalk vendors are banned, many of the facades have been repainted, the Trolle and Ecovia cut down on bus traffic and fumes, and most importantly, the police are a strong presence deterring pickpockets and other criminals. As with all places, be cautious and discreet as the streets do quickly fill with people and tourists are still a bit of an oddity in this section of Quito.

During the pre-Columbian era several tribes inhabited present-day Quito, including the Quitus from whom the city took its name. In the beginning of the 16th century, while the Incas controlled Ecuador, Quito served as the Capital of the northern half of their empire. In 1533, the Inca General Rumiñahui destroyed Quito so that it would not fall into the hands of the advancing conquistadors. Just a year later, after the Spanish conquered the Inca, the Spanish Lieutenant Sebastián de Benalcázar began rebuilding Quito from the rubble the Rumiñahui left behind.

Ecuador was part of the Viceroyalty of Peru from 1544 until 1720, when it joined the newly created Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada. In 1563, however, Quito became a Royal Audiencia



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of Spain, thus, permitting it to deal directly with Madrid on certain matters instead of going through Lima. The name Quito Audencia is misleading because it gives one the idea that the territory under the jurisdiction of Quito was comparable to the limits of the city of Quito today. In truth the territory of the Quito Audencia greatly exceeded that of present-day Ecuador, encompassing the north of Peru, the city of Cali in the south of Colombia, and much of the Amazon River Basin east of Ecuador.

Your language school is located in Modern Quito, which bears no marks whatsoever of its colonial past. While the Modern Quito does not benefit from the area's brilliant history, it shines in its own right. Modern Quito, with its gleaming office buildings and bustling crowds of business people, is leading Ecuador into the twenty first century. Take the time to explore both "Cities", neither will disappoint you.

### **Quito's Altitude, Climate and Weather**

Quito's altitude, at 2820 M (9252 feet), Quito is almost twice as high as Denver, Colorado. Although it sits only 25 kilometres from the Equator, Quito does not suffer through long winters like the Mile High City. On the contrary, Ecuador's capital enjoys mild days and cool nights almost year-round. The climate in the Andes varies according to the altitude and the time of the year. In Quito the temperature ranges from 7 degrees C (55 F) at night to 26 C (78 F) at noon, and averages 15 C (64 F). There are two seasons, wet and dry. The wet season is called winter and the dry is considered summer. Quito's summer lasts about 4 months, from the end of June to September. Quito sees its fair share of rain from October through May, though even during this period, there are enough sunny days to accommodate all but the most insatiable sun worshippers. International flights arrive at night, and many travelers arrive in shorts, assuming that since it's on the Equator, it must be hot. Their first step out of the airport gives them a crisp, cool Quito welcome.



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### **La Mitad del Mundo**

In 1736 the First Geodesic Mission arrived in Ecuador. Its main objective was to measure an arch of a meridian to prove the shape of the Earth.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Paris Academy of Science, anxious to confirm the results obtained by the scientist in the XVIII century, sent a Second Mission.

In 1936, the French American Committee sponsored the idea of the Ecuadorian geographer Dr. Luis Tufiño and raised a monument commemorating 200 years of the arrival of the First Mission. They chose to raise a monument of 10 meter high in San Antonio de Pichincha.

Dr. Luis Tufiño established the Equatorial Line based on the pyramids of Oyambaro and Caraburo, landmarks erected by the First Mission. This historical monument remained in this place for 43 years. In 1979, it was moved 7km to the West to the town of Calacalí, which the Equator Line also crosses.

Today a new and much larger monument stands in San Antonio de Pichincha to replace the historical pyramid. This new monument has the same geometric features as the former pyramid. It is 30 meters tall, three times bigger than the first one, with a large metallic globe at its top. Inside the monument there is an ethnographic museum containing scientific and cultural exhibits.

It is called Equatorial Monument because the quadrangular pyramid is located on the Equator Line, which is 0°-0'-0" latitude. This line passes through many nations and different continents; however there is only one country reclining on the Pacific Ocean that bears its name, the "Republic of Ecuador" (1830).



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### **Otavalo Indigenous Market**

Otavalo's beauty lies in its people, the Otavaleño Indians, and their market, undoubtedly one of the most important and spectacular in all of Latin America.

The best day of the week to hit this famous and friendly corner of the Andes is Saturday, the biggest market day for tourists and locals alike. This market is centered around Poncho Plaza. All day long, the whir of cotton candy machines, Andean pipe music, and Quichua, the native tongue derived from the Incan tongue, drift across the square. A blinding maze of colored textiles spills from the square out across town. As you stroll the streets you'll find everything from jumpers to armadillo shell guitars, wall hangings to ceramic fried eggs. Don't restrict yourself to Poncho Plaza, as you'll probably get better bargains away from the main square (the more items you buy, the lower the prices you can haggle), and the goods on display start to diversify as the market weaves its way through the side streets.



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### Otavaleños

Otavaleños have become the most prosperous and possibly the most famous indigenous group in Latin America -- you may have seen them in your own hometown selling their woolen sweaters or strumming Andean tunes. In the past ten years, Otavaleños have begun globe-trotting in a successful campaign to export Andean culture -- and earn big bucks along the way.

In part because of their economic success, Otavaleños have managed to hold on to centuries-old traditions without adopting a 'quick get dressed, here come the tourists' cultural identity. They are proud people and it shows. While other indigenous peoples -- under pressure to assimilate-- are donning Levis and tee-shirts, Otavaleños are still easily identified by their distinctive dress: women wear intricately embroidered blouses and a wealth of beaded necklaces, while men have long, braided hair and wear calf-length white trousers, ponchos and sandals.

History has it that Otavaleño Indians have been talented textile makers and businesspeople since ancient times, prior even to the Incan invasion. Under Incan rule in the 15th century, Otavalo became an important administrative center, as new crops and animals were introduced to the area. A year after the Spanish conquest, Ecuadorian land was parceled-out to the Spanish. In Otavalo, Rodrigo de Salazar set up a large weaving workshop ("obraje") on his land; by the mid-1500's it employed hundreds of workers and produced a large share of the textiles used in colonial South America. The Spanish introduced new tools and fibers to the weaving industry, and by the early 1600's, the Salazar workshop had become the most important in the country.

The textile boom in Otavalo really took off in the early 1960's, when Otavaleños working at Hacienda Zuleta began to use weaving techniques introduced from Scotland. And so was born the material known as Otavaleño cashmere, which with its low price and high quality soon found important customers in Ecuadorian cities. The weavers diversified their products and soon established themselves throughout the country. Now, with over 80% of the Otavaleños involved in textile industry, products from Otavalo are found in markets around the world.