Ecuador: Sustainability of Its Peoples, Lands, and Waters

ON-SITE GUIDE 2014–15
Important Names & Addresses

Prior to departure, please direct all questions to staff in the United States. Friends and family members should always contact US staff, not on-site staff, for assistance, even once you are overseas.

In the United States
Maggie Wallenta
walle104@umn.edu
612.624.3221

Emergencies
In the case of a serious emergency, contact 612.626.9000. If you are calling after business hours, you will be directed to an emergency phone number that is monitored 24 hours a day by the Learning Abroad Center.

In Ecuador

Telephone Codes
011 International access code from the US. The code from other countries will probably be different.
593 Ecuador country code used for dialing from outside Ecuador.
2 Quito city code. Not necessary for calls from within Quito.

Time Differences
Ecuador is one hour ahead of Minnesota during the winter and on the same time as Minnesota during months when the United States is on Daylight Saving Time.

Addresses
NOTE: Please direct all pre-departure questions to the OIP CFANS staff, not to the on-site staff.

Office
Fundación Cimas del Ecuador
P.O. Box 17.21.942 (mailing address)
Ave. Los Olivos E14-266 y Las Minas (street address)
San Isidro del Inca
Quito, Ecuador
Phones: +593.2.241.4153, 593.2.241.2496

On-Site Staff
José Suárez and Dolores López

US Embassy
For information on the local US Embassy in Ecuador, please visit the following website: ecuador.usembassy.gov.

Know Before You Go
Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, Online Orientation, and the Learning Abroad Center's policies (UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Program Health & Safety
Program health and safety information is available at http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.
Purpose of This Guide

This Program Guide provides an overview of your study abroad program. It contains information relevant to the program as well as specifics about the country. The Program Guide should be used in tandem with the Learning Abroad Center’s online orientation, website, as well as any pre-departure materials you might receive from your program leaders.

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport
A valid passport is required to enter Ecuador and to re-enter the US. For information on applying for a passport see the Learning Abroad Center website: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports.

Visa
US citizens can enter Ecuador for up to 90 days without a visa. If you are not a US citizen, it is up to you to look into your specific entry requirements.

Once in country, the on-site staff can give you advice about keeping your passport and visa secure. In some countries, you can carry a photocopy of the relevant pages and keep the documents themselves locked up. When you do need to carry your passport, always keep it in a money belt.

Your passport and visa are valuable documents. Do not lose them. You cannot leave your host country without them. It is always wise to have a copy of your passport and visa in a separate location and one copy at home in case your passport is lost or stolen. The process of replacing a passport is much easier if you have a copy of it. If your passport is lost or stolen, you should notify your local staff, the local police, and the US Consulate.

Packing
A packing list is provided at the end of this guide. The following considerations can help you pack wisely.

Packing Principles

Think about laundry. Lighter colors help you stay cool, but darker colors show dirt less; you might wish to strike a happy medium if you expect to be in hot areas. Stress lightweight fabrics that can be easily hand-washed, can hold up to repeated washing, and do not need ironing. A key question for choosing clothes: How long does it take to air dry?

Be conservative. Some clothing that is common on a US campus would be considered provocative. If you wish to pack a running outfit, choose athletic pants or shorts that extend to the knee. Do not plan on using shorts except when you go to the beach. If you use tank tops, choose modest ones. Women tend to wear skirts in rural areas, and although you may wear pants without offending, in some rural settings you may look out of place.

Choose your luggage wisely. Most students prefer backpacks to suitcases. Buy a high-quality backpack/daypack. Can your smaller backpack/suitcase nest inside a larger one?

Anticipate possible delays (or even losses) in checked baggage when packing your carry-on. Pack in your carry-on anything that you would need during your first two or three days in country, including prescription drugs, as well as small items that are fragile, irreplaceable, or of significant monetary value. Do not take scissors, knives, etc., in your carry-on.

Don’t take the kitchen sink. The most consistent hindsight of returned students is “I took too much.” Be selective. Decide what, and how much, is really essential to you. Try to get by with one large backpack and a carry-on. Many savvy travelers recommend that you pack once, try walking around the block with all your stuff, and then begin eliminating things until you can do it comfortably.

A Note on Electricity

The supply of electricity tends to be erratic, with frequent blackouts and occasional power surges. You will need a good surge protector if you are taking a laptop computer or any other sensitive items, and if you are using a computer you should save documents frequently.

Electricity is very expensive. Host families may want students to limit their use of electronic appliances in the home.

Health & Safety

Health

The Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov/travel, provides extensive information and advice on immunizations and on staying healthy in Ecuador.

Keep in mind that it is illegal to ship medication overseas, and any packages that are held at customs abroad will require payment of a high import tax before they are released. Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control) with you to your study abroad site.

Medical facilities and health conditions are significantly less advanced than in the US. It is important that you inform yourself prior to departure what precautions to take while living abroad.

Long before travel, consult with a health provider specializing in travel medicine; most general practitioners lack the requisite knowledge. Do this as early as possible, for some immunization series begin many months before departure.
Following consultation with a travel health specialist, you will need a number of immunizations. Ensure that these are recorded in your international immunization record, a yellow card that you should keep with your passport.

The program headquarters have good doctors and medical facilities, and care may be quite satisfactory in some other major cities as well. Only rudimentary levels of care, at best, tend to be available in villages and small towns.

**A Few Additional Tips**
- Avoid eating in restaurants with poor hygiene or buying food from street vendors. Make sure that food is well cooked. Avoid uncooked fruits or vegetables unless you can peel them yourself.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Tap water is not recommended. Drink boiled or bottled water (either carbonated or non-carbonated). Soft drinks are usually okay, but beware of juices that may be diluted with water.
- Ice is as unsafe as water. Never add it to drinks unless it has been made from boiled or bottled water.
- Take your own medications with you.
- If you travel to high altitudes, avoid intense exercise until you have adapted. Drink lots of liquids and eat lots of carbohydrates. Monitor any symptoms of altitude sickness, which can include headaches and nausea.
- It is strongly recommended students bring a water purification filter.

**Malaria Prevention**
Malaria is a very serious illness. Your travel health specialist will recommend that you take a prophylactic (preventive) drug for malaria, possibly beginning before you are scheduled to arrive in country. Different medications are required for different countries so seek medical consultation. It is essential that you purchase and take the necessary medication. Without medication you will become very ill very quickly and may need hospitalization. While the medication cannot prevent you from contracting malaria, it significantly reduces the symptoms, allows you time to seek medical attention at a clinic in country, and facilitates a speedy recovery.

Speak with your US health care specialist about possible side effects and alternative anti-malarials if a change needs to be made overseas. Not all overseas physicians are aware of the different types of medications available so inform yourself before you leave. Should you experience side effects once overseas, speak with the on-site staff about possible alternative medications.

Students in the past have inquired about purchasing medication in country against malaria. In order to be protected, you must take the medication prior to your departure. Exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitoes could occur as soon as you arrive in country, and it is difficult to arrange clinic visits immediately upon arrival. Clinic visits are quite time-consuming, and medication in country can be unreliable. If you determine that your country-specific conditions require medication, purchase and take your medication while in the US.

Insect repellent with at least 21% DEET will additionally help ward against malaria-carrying mosquitoes. A new product, Ultrathon, manufactured by 3M contains 30% DEET and has been recommended by health professionals.

You should use insect repellent both during the day and especially at dusk and in the evenings. Mosquitoes carrying dengue fever are active in the day, and malaria-carrying mosquitoes are active at night.

**Medication Overseas**
Keep in mind that medication should not be shipped overseas and will likely be confiscated at customs. Students should bring any medication with them for the duration of their time abroad. CISI insurance can also assist in determining whether and how medication can be transported to another country, if necessary. Some medication and dosages that are legal in the US may not be available overseas.

**Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault**
Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful. When in doubt, consult with an on-site staff or faculty member with whom you feel comfortable. Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to on-site staff immediately.

**Health Insurance**
All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad. For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s US Insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

In addition to your US health insurance, the University has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program. If you plan to travel before or after your program you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventive care, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any check-ups or preventive care prior to departure.

Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).
Practical Information

Before you go abroad it may be difficult to imagine the depth of the bonds that can develop between you and your host families. There is a special magic to friendships that cross deep cultural boundaries, and you may find the relationship with your family to be quite unlike other relationships you have experienced.

Diversity & Host Country

Race & Ethnicity

Race can influence students’ perspectives on their host country. Past participants of color tell us that the differences between their experiences and those of Euro-Americans can include both advantages and disadvantages. Students of color often learn a great deal about their identity as a US citizen through an experience in a foreign country, and they sometimes find the new cultural context quite liberating. On the other hand, they occasionally encounter new forms of prejudice and discrimination. It is important that participants of all races avoid projecting American assumptions and attitudes about race onto the host culture. For example, definitions of racial categories, if they exist at all, may be very different from those in the US.

It is difficult to generalize about the overt and covert levels of racism that may or may not exist in any given culture, or to predict what a particular student’s personal experience will be. It can be said that any experience abroad will be a combination of circumstances, attitude, and coping skills. Some study abroad offices have put together resources for students of color who are preparing to study abroad. You should contact your own study abroad office or a member of the staff for additional information.

Gender

Gender roles tend to be more rigidly defined in Ecuador, especially in rural areas, than they are today in the US. You may find that people respond quite differently to you depending on whether you are male or female. You may also observe a strongly gender-based division of labor in your homestay family or your agency. This sometimes challenges students’ cross-cultural understanding and skills. As in other areas, try to understand what is going on rather than to judge. It is all right to gently test the limits of gender roles—for example, if you are male to see what happens when you offer a couple of times to help with the dishes in your homestay, or if you are female to try to be more assertive than you observe among female colleagues in your agency—and be sensitive to the feedback you receive. Above all, resist any temptation to launch a one-person crusade to change things. For example, even if you feel that your homestay mother and sisters are “oppressed,” you will not be able to “liberate” them, and any attempt to do so could irreparably harm your relations with your family.

Many women experience “cat calls” and other forms of gender harassment while overseas. Be prepared in advance for this possibility and consider the following coping strategies: look straight ahead and keep walking; walk with a purpose and do not appear to be wandering without aim, walk quickly and with confidence; say “no” or “no, thank you” with conviction; consider wearing local attire to help you blend in (shawls, head scarves, etc. can reduce the possibility of intruders catching your eye and attention); develop a tough skin and do not take the matter personally; avoid walking alone or at night.

Cultural norms concerning relations between men and women, including dating, vary considerably among countries, and even from one region to another or between rural and urban settings. This topic will be included in your in-country orientation. When in doubt concerning what behavior is acceptable, consult with a trusted on-site staff or faculty member.

Sexual Orientation

Attitudes towards sexuality are very traditional. People are generally intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos and laws against such relationships exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult with the Learning Abroad Center staff for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues if you have questions.

For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.diversity.umn.edu.

Disabilities

In-country staff are more than willing to help locate personal assistance or arrange testing accommodations as needed, so long as they learn early enough of your needs. The level of physical accessibility varies from country to country. For example, wheelchair-accessible transportation or elevators may be non-existent in some sites. On the other hand, local people tend to be very supportive and will often assist you in gaining access to public transportation or buildings. It is important to consider your comfort level in asking for access assistance while abroad. For more information on access and available accommodations, contact the Learning Abroad Center.

Diversity among Participants

Whatever your own sexual orientation, gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or physical ability, keep in mind that you will be part of a diverse group. Some differences will be obvious or made known to you, others will not. Sensitivity to diversity within your own group will further enrich your experience abroad. Some of your most powerful learning experiences may revolve around differences within your group. Participants also come from extremely varied academic backgrounds. Majors range from the social sciences or humanities to fields such as engineering, business, or
agriculture. All students are strong in some dimensions and weak in others. Be prepared to share your strengths and to draw on those of your classmates.

FERPA

It is important to be aware that the Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial or academic information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can download a Student Information Release Authorization at onestop.umn.edu. Complete the form and send it to OneStop Student Services, 200 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. The Learning Abroad Center must receive a copy of a notarized Power of Attorney form in order to share any program-specific information.

Ecuador: Sustainability of Its Peoples, Lands, and Waters—Program Information

On-Site Staff

On-Site Director

There are two on-site directors: Dr. José Suárez and Dolores (Loli) López. Dr. Suárez is Executive Director of Fundación Cimas del Ecuador, a development-focused nonprofit organization in Quito. Dr. Suárez received his MPH and Ph.D. degrees in public health from the University of Minnesota. A physician and epidemiologist with extensive community experience, he has authored research studies and books about health and environment in Ecuador, participated in many international and national committees, and served as a consultant to the Pan American Health Organization and Ecuador's Ministry of Health. In addition to his extensive experience working with North American students and academic programs—including the Minnesota Studies in International Development program since 1989—Dr. Suárez has taught at the University of Washington, Evergreen State University, and the Medical School of the Universidad Central del Ecuador.

Ms. López, who is President of Fundación Cimas, has Bachelor's degrees in anthropology from the Universidad Católica del Ecuador and from Evergreen State College in Washington, a Master's degree in Ecuadorian Studies from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Quito, and a doctorate from the same university in Anthropology. She has conducted research on social and cultural population issues; gained practical experience in working in indigenous and peasant communities; and organized local, national, and international conferences. In recent years she has been deeply involved in the quest for local development alternatives based on community participation. She has long worked with US study abroad programs, including Minnesota Studies in International Development since 1989.

Facilities

The on-site office is located at the Fundación Cimas del Ecuador (Cimas). Cimas draws program faculty from a variety of Ecuadorian institutions of higher education. The Cimas staff numbers around 15.

Cimas’ facilities include several classrooms; two conference rooms; a small library emphasizing environment, health, society, economy, and politics in Ecuador and Latin America; study space; offices; and two utility rooms used for social events and staff lunches. There is also a quiet area for students to rest, and one bedroom which students can use when feeling sick.

Computers

All of Cimas’ computers, including 14 set aside for students, are PCs (Macs are uncommon in Ecuador and receive little support). Cimas computers are for academic use only. Cimas has wireless internet access and also provides students with addresses and phone numbers of libraries in Quito. It can be helpful to bring along an inexpensive PC (not Mac) laptop to use for completing assignments, but keep in mind that laptops are easily stolen. Keep it well hidden when storing and traveling with it and do not ever put these kinds of valuables in your checked luggage.

Housing

You will stay in a variety of hotels for the duration of the program and take breakfast at the hotel each morning.

Homestay Families

You will live with a host family for one night. Life with an Ecuadorian family can be a wonderful adventure if both parties understand and adapt to cultural differences. The homestay is an important venue for gaining insights into Ecuadorian culture. Cimas will outline your rights and responsibilities in the homestay. Remember that you are expected to adapt to the family, not the family to you. Cimas tells the families that overall your presence should not lead them to change their customs, operating rules, or food; however, Cimas does ask the families to accommodate the dietary needs of students who are vegetarians or who have food allergies.
Living in Ecuador

Arrival
All students will arrive on the group flight. Upon arrival to the airport, you will go through Customs. After clearing Customs, you will be directed to pick up any checked luggage.

If for any reason you will not be arriving as planned and you are not able to communicate with Cimas or the University of Minnesota about this, or if you are not able to locate the Cimas person at the airport, take any of the yellow taxis at the exit of the airport (they are quite safe and reliable, although more expensive, $6 to $8) and request to be transported to Cimas (see address in the front of this guide).

You might not be able to call home upon your arrival. Let your friends and family know it might take several days for them to hear from you, and you are likely to contact them via email. The on-site staff will notify the Learning Abroad Center if a student does not arrive, and we will call the student’s emergency contact, as needed. **Remind friends and family members not to contact the on-site staff directly.** All contact should be through the Learning Abroad Center.

Orientation in Country
The in-country staff provide an orientation covering a wide variety of topics including cultural differences; homestays; health and safety; local transportation, communication systems; and other practical matters. It will also include a welcome lunch and a walking tour of the city.

Communication
Video calling is an easy way to keep in touch. You will have wireless internet access at Cimas if you choose to bring your own laptop. Otherwise, computers at most internet cafés are set up with Skype or other video calling software.

Email & Internet
Internet cafés are readily available in Quito and other large cities at an average cost of $0.80 to $1.20 per hour. Guard against overuse of email and social media. It is easy to allow excessive communication with friends and family at home to get in the way of your integration into Ecuadorian culture.

Social Media
Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Students should keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after a student has returned to the US.

Telephone
Telephone services in Ecuador are very advanced and, in fact, cell phones have much greater signal strength than in most of the US. Cell phones cost as little as $45. Cell phone companies offer pay-as-you-go plans for which you can buy top-up cards for approximately $3–$35. International calls to cell phones almost always can be received, and calls to the US from cell phones are around 30 cents. Telephone cabinas are located conveniently all over the city for local and national calls, although they are expensive for international calls.

Money Matters
Since January 2000, the national currency in Ecuador is the US dollar; therefore, there is no need to exchange money upon your arrival. The former currency denomination was the **sucre**, named for Field Marshal Antonio José de Sucre, the hero of the independence.

Debit Cards & Credit Cards
Debit cards or check cards are the best way to access money while in Ecuador. ATMs are available in all major cities, although not always reliable. Wiring money can be costly and risky. Keep a little money in ones and fives available in your money belt to use only in case of emergency. Most businesses will not accept bills larger than $10, so keep small bills and change on hand at all times. Students repeatedly report that traveler’s checks are difficult to cash and places that do accept them frequently charge a service fee.

We strongly suggest that you carry a major credit card in your name, which you can use to charge items. Visa and MasterCard are most widely accepted. Your cards must be Cirrus or Plus compatible (look for the symbol on the back of the card). You should inform your bank in advance of your travel to let them know you will be using your card abroad and to inquire about the associated fees. You will need to know your PIN in order to access funds abroad. You will also likely be charged a foreign transaction fee of between 1% and 3%.

Although many establishments oriented to tourists or the Ecuadorian middle and upper classes accept credit cards, do not expect to use one for purchases as routinely as you might in the US. Street markets and the more inexpensive sorts of hotels, restaurants, and shops that students on a tight budget patronize typically do not accept credit cards.

Financial Planning
Breakfast and dinner are included at the hotel and with host families. You will need to budget for your weekday lunches, bottled water ($2 to $5 per day), local transportation, and other miscellaneous expenses.
Personal spending habits vary too greatly to predict exactly how much it will cost you to live in Ecuador during the program. The amount you spend will depend on your lifestyle and your own spending habits.

**Climate & What to Wear**

Pack for warm and cold conditions. Sweaters are often necessary in Quito, especially at night.

Ecuador’s climate is greatly varied in terms of both temperature and precipitation. The different environments support everything from desert to rainforest to permanent ice and snow.

Being on the equator—hence its name—Ecuador experiences only tiny seasonal variations in temperature. The difference in average temperatures between the warmest and coldest months is less than 5˚ F in Guayaquil and only 0.4˚ F in Quito. Ecuador experiences little of the day-to-day temperature variations that characterize mid-latitude climates. Although average temperatures in Ecuador can be higher than in Minnesota, the hottest days in Minnesota are actually warmer than the hottest in Ecuador. Because one day in the tropics is nearly the same as the next, Ecuador neither experiences the cold fronts that bring relief after a heat wave nor sweltering hot days.

Temperatures do vary a great deal with altitude: they decrease by an average of nearly 3˚ F for each thousand feet of rise in elevation. The Costa and Oriente are hot, with average temperatures around 76–80˚ F (24–26˚ C)—higher than Minneapolis in July. In contrast, sweaters are often needed in Quito, at over 9,000 feet elevation, which has an average annual temperature (average of daytime highs and nighttime lows) of only 57˚ F (14˚ C). Like Quito, most of the highland basins enjoy very pleasant climates. Higher up, however, the páramos (high-altitude grasslands) are always cold, and permanent snow begins at around 16,000 feet elevation. As elevation rises and the air thins, the daily range in temperature increases; thus the same location might enjoy shirt-sleeve weather during the day, at least when the sun shines, while experiencing bitter cold at night.

Although temperature changes little with the calendar, rainfall is highly seasonal in all regions of the country. The contrasts between the rainy season and the dry season are especially dramatic in the Pacific lowlands. Guayaquil receives 38 of its 43 inches of rainfall between January and April, including 11 inches in March—versus no rain at all in July. The contrasts are only slightly less striking in the Sierra: Quito’s rainfall ranges from seven inches in April to an inch in July. Precipitation is sufficient, and the dry season short enough, to support rainforest in the Oriente, in the northern portion of the Costa, and in other zones of the Costa toward the base of the Andes. In general, precipitation tends to be higher in the north than the south; the contrasts are greatest on the coast, where the climates range from a tropical rainforest regime near the Colombian border to a desert regime by the time you reach the Peruvian border.

You will need an umbrella and good raincoat during your stay in Ecuador.

**Introduction to Ecuador**

Ecuador is one of 18 Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. The linguistic, cultural, and institutional heritage of centuries of Spanish rule gives these countries much in common. Yet each is highly distinct. Comparing economic and demographic indicators, Ecuador appears to be more “developed” than most of the Third World, but less than most of Latin America.

Although dwarfed by the populations of giants such as Brazil (188 million) or Mexico (107 million), Ecuador’s 13 million inhabitants place it eighth in population among Latin America’s 20 countries.

**Economy**

The economic cycles of the twentieth century were associated mainly with three products. The cacao boom began in the latter part of the nineteenth century and lasted until approximately 1925. Its bust cycle was associated with heightened political instability until the banana boom began in the 1940s. Although bananas were in decline by the 1960s, in the early 1970s the vast oil fields of the Oriente came into production. Ecuador joined the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) and rode the high prices of the 1970s to a previously unknown level of prosperity. Then prices declined in the 1980s and the bottom fell out of the boom. Although petroleum is still the dominant product, it declined as a proportion of exports in the 1990s in favor of fish, shrimp, and traditional agricultural exports. Tourism has risen to become the third-largest source of foreign exchange.

Like many petroleum-producing countries, in the euphoria of the 1970s Ecuador borrowed heavily against future oil revenues. When prices declined, it found itself saddled with a crushing debt. Whereas some Latin American countries have overcome the worst of the region-wide debt crisis of the 1980s, Ecuador’s economy still has not recovered. The growth rate is slower than in much of the region, and so far no new product comparable to bananas or petroleum has appeared on the scene as a savior.

Since the early 1990s Ecuador has been in a period of what Latin Americans call neoliberalismo, a shorthand term for a collection of policies which generally include free trade, relatively unfettered foreign capital penetration, a reduction in government regulation of the economy, and privatization of selected enterprises formerly in the hands of the government. Under pressure from multinational corporations, international lending agencies, and Western governments, one Latin
American country after another has embraced neoliberalism. Ecuador has done so more slowly than Chile or Argentina, but it is clearly moving in the same direction, especially in response to conditions set by the International Monetary Fund. The dollarization of the economy in early 2000 represented a new extreme in the move to neoliberal economic policies.

People
Ethnically there is no question that Ecuador is a central Andean country, along with Peru and Bolivia. These three collective heirs to the Inca Empire still have some of the largest indigenous populations in the Americas. Indian is considered a pejorative term in Ecuador; it is better to say indígenas than indios. Although a smaller proportion of the population speaks indigenous languages than in its two neighbors to the south, Ecuador contrasts starkly with the northern Andean countries of Colombia and Venezuela, which have very small indigenous populations. Ecuador clearly belongs to what some observers have called Indo-America, along with Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, and parts of southern Mexico. Policy toward the indigenous peoples in these countries has been a central bone of contention, and approaches have tended to reel between assimilation, cultural reinforcement, and naked exploitation. In recent years Ecuador has become a hemispheric leader in terms of indigenous political activism. Ecuador also has a vibrant Afro-Ecuadorian community.

Quito
Ecuador’s capital is located about three hours south of the Colombian border via the Pan American Highway. It lies within one of the series of highland basins described in the section on geography. This basin consists of an outer and an inner basin; Quito lies in the outer basin, which is higher than the inner basin to the east, separated from Quito by a ridge. The rise from the city to the top of the ridge is only a few hundred feet, but from there it is a drop of about 2,000 feet to the inner basin, which you can see from the ridge top.

As in all Latin American cities, social class contrasts are striking. In Quito you will see some of the country’s most obscene levels of wealth, as well as some of its most heart-wrenching poverty. On the whole, the portion of the city south of the colonial section and Panecillo tends to be poor, whereas the middle and upper classes live mostly in the north. Immediately north of the colonial section are some fine mansions from the earlier decades of the twentieth century. Farther north the city’s modern sections include large zones of high-rise apartment buildings.

Not all of the poor are in the south, nor all of the middle class in the north. Many poor neighborhoods are scattered here and there in the north, including squatter settlements on some of Pichincha’s slopes and larger expanses toward the far northern limits of the city. Similarly, the south does include some middle-class zones.

Lifestyles vary with social class. In the north are shopping centers and supermarkets, in the south, street markets and small shops. You could easily make most of your purchases in the north with a credit card (at a cost), whereas in the south you would find it almost useless. Multinational corporations are much more evident in the north than the south. In the north you are likely to hear rock music; in the south you will typically hear traditional Latin American music. Many people in the north are smartly dressed and look as if they could fit easily into any cosmopolitan city in the world; traditional indigenous clothing or inexpensive Western dress typify the south.

Apart from beggars and street vendors, at first glance Quito’s poverty is largely invisible. You will see few of the sorts of shantytowns that denote cities of other developing countries, both because the cold climate demands more substantial constructions and because the city has been quite successful in repressing squatter invasions. Thus, the poor neighborhoods look much less shocking than in Guayaquil, Lima, or Caracas. Instead, much of Quito’s poverty is hidden behind the walls of crowded multi-family houses. Some of the fine colonial structures in the old center have been converted into tenements which may house 20, 30, or even 50 or 60 separate families, each renting individual rooms while sharing facilities such as toilets and clothes washing basins. Owners sometimes add rental rooms onto houses until tenements develop, even in new neighborhoods. Quito has few alternatives to crowding, whereas in many Third World cities squatter invasions serve as a safety valve for poor populations living in crowded rental conditions.

Malaria
The Center for Disease Control states the following: there is risk for malaria in all areas at altitudes lower then 1,500 meters (4,921 feet). There is no risk in Guayaquil and Quito, the central highland tourist areas, and the Galapagos Islands. If you travel outside of these areas (i.e., the coast) you will be at risk for malaria and should take precautions as suggested by the Center for Disease Control.

A Note on Travel to Colombia
As long as Colombia remains on the US State Department Travel Warning list, students are not permitted to travel to Colombia during the program.
Tips from Students

Past students have compiled the following list of additional information:

- Quito is at a high altitude, over 9000 feet. Take it easy when you first arrive in country.
- Ecuadorians are very polite people. Always greet people with a handshake (common between men) or a kiss on the cheek (common between women or between a man and a woman).
- If you need a cab at night, especially as a woman, call a cab company to your home (or wherever you are) rather than hail one on the street. This is the safest way. Also, if you must hail a cab at night, negotiate the price before accepting the ride, as the meters are turned off after dark and you could end up paying outrageous prices.
- “Ecuadorian” time is different than “American” time. Be patient and flexible. Do not expect people to be on time, or for events to occur when scheduled.
- Things are less methodical/routine than in the US. For example, the buses don’t run on a schedule, and you may be asked to pay as you board, once you sit down, or as you leave, depending on the specific bus. Once again, be flexible.
- Don’t stick your bags under the seat of a bus. It increases the chance of theft.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Carrying spare change is helpful.
- Always travel in groups, never alone.
- Be aware of public holidays.

Temperature (°F) & Rainfall (inches) in Quito & Guayaquil

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Cultural Adjustment

The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process. A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home who may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment; however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your program’s on-site support staff.

Cultural Adjustment Curve

Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn (1963)
Appendix

Packing Checklist

Adapt this checklist to suit your own style and priorities. You will not need all the items on the packing list—they are only suggestions.

Clothing
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- Sandals and/or flip flops
- 1 dress outfit
- 7 pairs of underwear, durable bras
- Lightweight socks
- T-shirts
- Skirts/dresses that extend below the knee
- 2–3 pairs of pants (jeans, khakis, etc.)
- 1–2 long-sleeve lightweight shirts
- 2–3 short-sleeve shirts/t-shirts
- 1 pair sweatpants or athletic pants (lightweight)
- 1 pair shorts (hiking/sport style) for beach and sports wear
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- 1 fleece jacket or lining or lightweight sweater
- Lightweight long-sleeve, long-leg pajamas
- Sun hat/cap
- Scarf and knit hat for chilly weather

Household/Personal Items
- Money belt containing passport, international immunization record, credit card, cash card, any dollars you are taking in cash, etc.
- Umbrella
- Travel alarm
- Charger for US cell phone
- Camera with extra batteries or charger
- Cord to connect your camera to your computer
- Film or digital flashcards (most film/batteries/developing are available in country)
- Ziplock plastic baggies
- Flashlight
- 1 water bottle
- Wristwatch
- Music player
- Contact information of friends/family/academic contacts
- Guide book (e.g. Lonely Planet or Rough Guide)
- Photographs of friends and family, your house, your community, etc.
- Locks for luggage
- Zip/flash drive
- Notarized copy of passport
- Journal

Health Items & Toiletries
- A full supply of prescription drugs in original bottles (in case customs needs documentation); include one prescription for bacterial dysentery and directions for use
- First-aid kit
- Insect repellent (at least 21% DEET)
- Anti-itch gel for mosquito bites
- Condoms, birth control
- Tampons (expensive or unavailable in country)
- Bladder infection medication, yeast infection medication
- Anti-diarrheal medicine
- Pepto-Bismol or similar stomach settler
- Laxatives
- Small packages of tissue or toilet paper
- Pain medicines
- Sunscreen (high SPF)
- Aloe vera gel for sunburns
- Ear plugs
- Sunglasses
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Vitamins
- Hand sanitizer
- All contact lens materials needed for your stay
- An extra pair of glasses and a copy of your prescription
- Sanitary moist wipes
- Toiletries: soap, deodorant, shampoo, and toothpaste are all easily available in country (but take enough for first few weeks); dental floss (take enough for your stay), nail clippers, toothbrush, hairbrush or comb, razor
- Granola bars
- Malaria medication