

The Heart of Travel
Authentic & Ethical Adventures in Latin America



TRAVEL IN ECUADOR

Welcome Packet
Ecuador, 2017-18

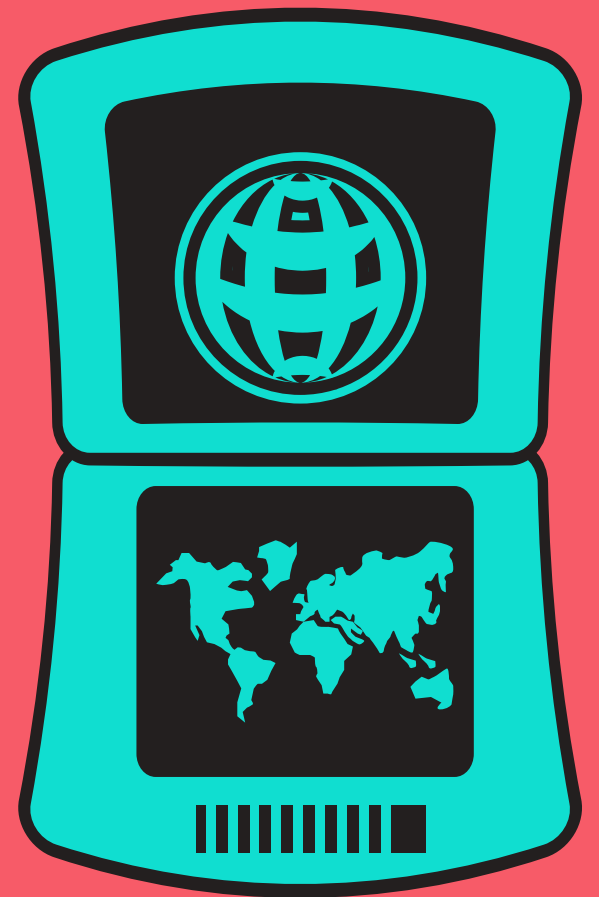
CREATED BY THE HEART OF TRAVEL

FLIGHTS, IMMIGRATION, TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS



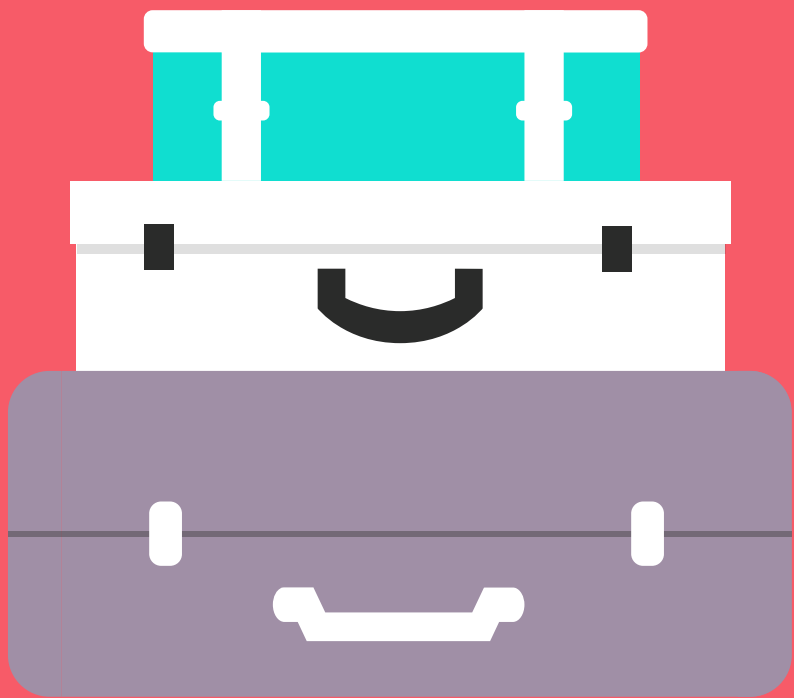
A variety of commercial airlines offer daily flights in and out of Quito from major U.S. cities like LA and Houston. We recommend searching for flight options on Google Flights and then booking directly with the airline or via a third party site, like Cheapoair. Online check-in will be available for most of these flights. Please arrive to the airport 2.5 - 3 hours early.

All tourists need a passport valid for at least six months beyond their travel dates. Upon entry you will have to complete a customs form, state tourism as your purpose of travel, mark nothing to declare and for your foreseen address put the name of your hotel in Quito, Ecuador. This form will be stamped along with your passport and must be kept together with it, as you will likely need to present it when leaving the country. Once you clear immigration head to baggage claim and then pass through customs with your form in hand and then you're free to exit the airport. We will be waiting outside for you!



Ecuador doesn't require any specific vaccines, such as yellow fever, in order to enter the country. However, we recommend being up to date on all of your shots and discussing any potential health concerns pertaining to travel in Ecuador with your doctor.

HOW TO PACK IN ECUADOR



We recommend traveling with a large backpack or a light weight roller case, but keep in mind there may be times where you have to walk 5 - 10 minutes on cobblestone roads or dirt terrain with your baggage. Make sure you have a separate day pack to take on excursions!

In Ecuador seasons are defined more by rainfall than by temperature. The warm rainy season lasts from January to April, and May through December is characterized by a cooler, drier period. You can comfortably stroll out on a glorious Quito afternoon in shorts and a T-shirt, but you'll need to take your wool sweater in case the clouds roll in. Galapagos is on the Equator but the weather is not tropical, and it has dry and warm pleasant weather.



SUGGESTED PACKING CHECK LIST

- 1-2 pairs of shorts
- 4-5 cotton t-shirts/long sleeved shirts
- 1 pair of long trousers/pants
- Comfortable hiking pants/shorts
- Jacket or sweater for when it gets cold!
- Hat with a good brim
- Comfortable hiking/walking shoes
- Comfortable sundress/skirt
- Sandals/flats for walking in the city
- PJs
- Sunglasses
- Camera
- Spanish/English dictionary
- Swimsuit
- Water shoes
- Daypack
- Sunscreen
- Chapstick/lipstick with sun protection
- Personal Medication + Toiletries
- Powerbank to charge devices
- Hand sanitizer
- Luggage lock
- Device with alarm clock
- Insect repellent
- Ear plugs
- Rain jacket (rainy season)

TRAVEL TIPS



Schedule an appointment with your doctor or travel nurse to discuss the upcoming trip.



All major credit cards are accepted at restaurants, hotels, shops, and even at some of the market vendors! Let your bank know you're traveling!



Mind your step while exploring the city as the cobblestone streets are notorious for tripping people up a bit, especially after a couple cervezas.



Contact your cellphone provider to discuss options for international plans for Ecuador.



Quito has an elevation of 9,350 and someone flying to Quito from sea level experiences an elevation change of nearly two miles in a matter of hours. We advice you take some medicine for altitude sickness, take it easy and adjust slowly!

CURRENCY

Ecuador uses the U.S. dollar as their currency so that makes things easy. You can bring cash or get money out at an ATM.

Debit and credit cards are also accepted widely in larger cities. Don't forget to call your bank and let them know you will be traveling to Ecuador!

HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS



Tap water is not safe for drinking. Use purified water only. We will provide water to refill your bottle on the van! The tap water is fine for showering and brushing your teeth.



All the places we eat at are clean and safe in terms of food handling. Still, you may experience mild traveler's diarrhea. If it persists please let your program director know.



Most of our lodging will have a safe to lock up valuable items. If your room doesn't, ask your program director to help you find an alternative to safely store any valuable items.



Dress modestly and don't display excessive jewelry or flashy items that call attention to you.



During the daytime it is safe to walk around the towns and cities on your own. Nevertheless, we recommend walking in groups at night and taking a cab if you're far from the hotel.

CULTURAL ETIQUETTE

As with travel to any foreign destination, it's important to remember that you are a guest in that country. You're likely to encounter social and cultural differences and we ask that you remain respectful, open minded and willing to learn about the country you are visiting. Travel is a great privilege and therefore it comes with responsibility. Locals are extremely friendly and welcoming to visitors and we hope you make new friends on this trip. Here are some things to keep in mind!

- Don't photograph people's faces without permission.
- Tipping, while not required, is greatly appreciated. 10% is standard.
- Cat calling on the street is more culturally accepted in Ecuador. Unless you feel threatened of physical assault, it's best to ignore it, look ahead and continue walking.
- Tourism is a large part of the economy and we encourage you to buy from local vendors to support the local economy. However, you should never feel pressured to do so. A polite "no gracias" is fine!

WANT TO LEARN MORE BEFORE YOUR TRIP?



Recommended Books

FICTION

The Old Man Who Read Love Stories by Luis Sepulveda

Antonio José Bolívar Proaño's wife has died and he is left alone in a El Idilio, an Amazonian village in Ecuador. Jungle expert that he is, he now spends his time with reading romance novels, that the traveling dentist brings him. His simple reading days get interrupted when an ocelot is endangering the village and it falls to him to catch the beast. *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* is both a sad love story and a simple fable, but it is also an account of civilization versus nature in our modern day lives.

GALAPAGOS

The Galapagos Affair by John Treherne (Mystery)

If the life of the Wittmer family isn't curious enough for you how about eccentric Dr. Ritter? He and his friend Dora Strauch were actually the first settlers on Floreana. Or Baroness Wagner-Bosquet who not only ruled over her two younger lovers with a leather crop but also terrorized her neighbors? Her mysterious disappearance was soon known as The Galapagos Affair and gave the island an air of scandal and danger. You can also watch it on Netflix!

The Boy on the Back of the Turtle: Seeking God, Quince Marmalade, and the Fabled Albatross on Darwin's Islands by Paul Quarrington (Memoir)

If the title doesn't already make you fall in love with this book Paul Quarrington's writing surely will. *The Boy on the Back of the Turtle* is equal parts travelogue and memoir as he retells his travels to the Galapagos with his daughter and his father. With wit and humor, he describes his journey to the islands, speaks about science versus God and of course, about quince marmalade.

WOMEN POWER

Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru

This book is a contemporary collection of 24 female writers from the Andean countries. They give an inside into women's lives which are usually hard and often even quite haunting, especially for a reader from a very different world. Stories about love, life, and loss are told from local heroines that are strong and wise despite the hardship life sometimes brings.

Floreana: A Woman's Pilgrimage to the Galápagos by Margaret Wittmer

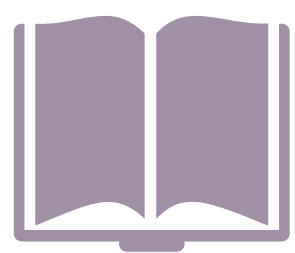
This autobiography of German-born Margaret Wittmer describes her pilgrimage to Floreana, a small island in the Galapagos. Here she makes a new life with her husband and step-son, raises two babies and gets chocolate from Franklin D. Roosevelt. Her account about an impossible life is humorous and despite a crazy baroness, volcanos, and wild bulls in the neighborhood does her love for this little lost paradise shine through in every word.

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

The Latin Road Home by Jose Garces

While this memoir and cookbook travels through Cuba, Spain, Mexico and Peru as well, his culinary journey starts in Ecuador. He shares recipes and memories from his childhood home, giving an inside of his upbringing and the culture of Ecuador. Home cooking and street food are featured and recipes are shared in both, English and Spanish, for more authenticity. Perfect to get excited about ceviche or to recreate your favorite dishes after the trip!

WANT TO LEARN MORE BEFORE YOUR TRIP?



Recommended Books

Living Poor by Moritz Thomsen

With almost 50 Moritz Thomsen sells his pig farm to join the Peace Corps in Ecuador. For four years he tries to make a little Ecuadorian village a better place and fails. Living Poor is an account of his own experience with the Peace Corps, his new life and the people of Ecuador, equally heartbreaking and inspirational.

The Queen of Water by Laura Resau

Based on a true story, we meet Virginia, an indígena from an Andean village in Ecuador. While her life is hard, working on the fields like an adult, it takes a turn to the worse when she is taken as a servant to a mestizo couple. Only seven years old at the time, she is basically working as a slave for them. The Queen of Water recounts the horrors, but also her survival – this book was written in cooperation with her.

CULTURE

The Panama Hat Trail: A Journey from South America by Tom Miller

The Panama Hat is without a doubt South America's most famous piece of clothing. How the name came along when it originates from Ecuador and its rise to international fame is only part of this story. This book, while perhaps a bit dated by 2017 (we'll have to see once we get there), does a great job of exploring every step in the long process of turning Ecuadorian straw in the 3rd world into luxury hats in the 1st world. There are plenty of interesting asides along the way, and Miller is always willing to stop and put things in perspective, whether it was currency exchange rates or relations from one Ecuadorian city to another. The Panama Hat Trail is more a fascinating account into the culture and people of Ecuador and the urgent question of what guinea pig really tastes like.

HISTORY

In the Shadows of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995 by Steve Striffler

This book tells the story of how Ecuadorian peasants gained, and then lost, control of the banana industry. Providing an ethnographic history of the emergence of subcontracting within Latin American agriculture and of the central role played by class conflict in this process, Steve Striffler looks at the quintessential form of twentieth-century U.S. imperialism in the region—the banana industry and, in particular, the United Fruit Company (Chiquita). He argues that, even within this highly stratified industry, popular struggle has contributed greatly to processes of capitalist transformation and historical change.

The Ecuador Reader: History, Culture, Politics by Steve Striffler

Encompassing Amazonian rainforests, Andean peaks, coastal lowlands, and the Galápagos Islands, Ecuador's geography is notably diverse. So too are its history, culture, and politics, all of which are examined from many perspectives in The Ecuador Reader. Spanning the years before the arrival of the Spanish in the early 1500s to the present, this rich anthology addresses colonialism, independence, the nation's integration into the world economy, and its tumultuous twentieth century. Interspersed among forty-eight written selections are more than three dozen images.

WANT TO LEARN MORE BEFORE YOUR TRIP?



Recommended Films

CULTURAL ISSUES/DRAMA

Ratas, Ratones, Rateros (1999), **Crónicas** (2004), **Such is Life in the Tropics** (2016) by Sebastian Cordero (R)

In the eyes of the world, ‘Ecuador’ and ‘cinema’ are usually not thought of in the same breath. All that changed due to the efforts of one ambitious auteur who was so taken by a viewing of “Raiders of the Lost Ark” at age nine that he went on to study film at USC: Sebastian Cordero.

First, his 1999 debut with the gritty, Scorsese-like urban allegory “Ratas, ratones, rateros” at the age of 27 saw the feature accepted into 14 international film festivals – a record for an Ecuadorian film, obtaining seven nominations and two awards in the process. “Cronicas” went on to earn nine film festival awards across the world, and was the first to feature internationally-recognized actors such as John Leguizamo and Alfred Molina. His latest film, “Sin muertos no hay carnaval”, (“Such is Life in the Tropics” for the North American market) was Ecuador’s official submission to the Academy Awards in the foreign-language film category.

The success of Cordero’s films had so much impact in Ecuadorians, that he inspired a new generation of local filmmakers and film enthusiasts, who persuaded the Ecuadorian government to pass a “film law” in 2006 in order to subsidize the creation of a national film industry.

COMEDY/ROAD MOVIE

How much further (2006) by Tania Hermida

Tania Hermida’s debut feature remains the biggest box office success in Ecuador so far for an Ecuadorian film. A “road” movie, and a gentle comedy, the story focuses on two young women – one Ecuadorian, the other Spanish – on the 458-kilometer (285-mile) journey from Quito to Cuenca when their bus breaks down. The Ecuadorian is in a rush to interrupt a wedding, yet along the way they meet a variety of eccentric locals.

DARK COMEDY

Prometeo Deportado (2007) by Fernando Mieles

Fernando Mieles’ absurdist comedy, inspired by the works of Spanish filmmaker great Luis Buñuel, takes as its theme the racial, economic, and social divisions of Ecuadorian society. Various Ecuadorians from all strata of society are blocked in an airport in their attempts to enter an unnamed European country, and forced to put up with each other in a waiting lounge.

Cuando me Toque a mi (2008) by Victor ArreguÍ

This moody masterpiece courtesy of director Víctor Arregui – based on a novel by Alfredo Noriega – revels in morbid humor in its showcasing of the life of a mortician in Quito, but not without a degree of twilight sadness. The bodies he receives include that of a woman, her husband, and her lover.

AVAILABLE ON NETFLIX

The Galapagos Affair by Dayna Goldfine, Dan Geller

See BOOKS section.

Ecuador

This documentary profiles Rafael Correa, who was elected Ecuador's president in 2006 and transformed the country into a participatory democracy.