



Ecuador

Planning a trip to Ecuador and/or the Galapagos Islands? Then you should talk to us...

We offer independent expert advice and the ability to deliver top quality itineraries with the best tour operators that are exceptional value for money. Arranging your travel through The Specialist Travel Consultancy also reduces the time you have to spend researching and planning your trip. And our service is completely free!

Contact us to discuss your travel requirements on **0845 838 7667** or for more information on the service we offer please visit our website: www.thestc.co.uk

We arrange tailor made trips:

- Cultural tours •
- Walking & trekking •
- Geography & Biology tours •
- Spanish Schools •
- Link school visits •
- Adventure Travel & Expeditions •

Facts & Highlights

Country Name: The Republic of Ecuador

Area: 283,560 sq km (109,000 sq miles) including the Galapagos Islands

Population: 12.65 million (2001)

Capital City: Quito (pop: 1.8 million)

People: Mestizo (60%), Indigenous (20%), Caucasian (15%), Black (5%)

Language(s): Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quichua)

Religion(s): Roman Catholic (95%)

Currency: US Dollar (since Sept 2000)

Government: Presidential system of democracy with presidential elections held every four years.

Time: GMT -5 hours



Spanish School: Spend a week in Quito mastering the local dialect.

History: Explore the colonial splendour of Quito and Cuenca.

Indian Markets: Barter for your wares and soak up the atmosphere at a traditional weekly market high in the Andes.

The Amazon: Explore one of the most biodiverse regions of our planet. Walk through the rainforest canopy or explore by dugout canoe.

The Galapagos Islands: Lie side by side with sea lions in this magical archipelago.

Avenue of the Volcanoes: Climb the near perfect cone of Cotopaxi, one of the world highest volcanoes.

The "Devil's Nose": Travel by train from the Andes to the plains down a series of hair-raising switch backs.

Ecuador is the quintessential Andean country that encompasses all that is Latin American – stunning vistas, a rich culture, and spectacular wildlife. Its beauty lies in its small size and extraordinary diversity – from the classical architecture of colonial Quito, you can be high in the hills within a days drive, or exploring verdant rainforest. Schools and colleges considering a visit to Ecuador should be in no doubt that the country can deliver on all aspects of a stimulating cultural tour or an adventurous expedition.

The capital, Quito, the main entry point to the country, is also the access point for the spectacular "Avenue of the Volcanoes". This long valley heading south from Quito is littered with snow capped volcanoes, crater lakes, and gentle rolling hillsides. It is also home to the indigenous heartland of Ecuador and the bustling market towns of Saquisilí and Latacunga, amongst others. Just north of Quito, on the other side of the equator, the more famous market at Otavalo provides for rich pickings before the journey home.

Both Quito and the southern city of Cuenca (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) offer the opportunity of language schools where pupils can stay with local families and attend Spanish classes on a daily basis. These are typically a week in length, but can be tailored to a group's particular needs, both in terms of duration and ability.

If you are looking to include a trek or active phase to a trip then there are many possibilities in and around the Avenue of the Volcanoes, with many peaks in the 4,000m – 5,000m range that are suitable for summit attempts. For those seeking the toughest of challenges, Cotopaxi will more than fit the bill. At 5,897m it is the second highest active volcano in the world and an ideal first summit for those new to mountaineering. While not a particularly technical mountain; crampons, ice axes and ropes are all

needed and the altitude certainly makes the need for appropriate acclimatisation essential. Cotopaxi National Park is the most popular on the mainland, yet almost deserted mid-week, when the views and silence can be (nearly!) all yours.

Trekking in Ecuador, however, is not all about scaling high peaks, there is much to recommend exploring the rolling highlands, complete with terracing, villages and magnificent mountain backdrops.

Ecuador's wildlife comes in all shapes and sizes, from Alpaca in the highlands and Andean Cock-of-the-Rock in the cloud forest and Amazon, to Marine Iguanas and Blue Footed Boobies on The Galapagos. The best way to see the islands is aboard a small cruise vessel. Day walks and island explorations are led by expert naturalists and opportunities for diving and snorkelling abound. It's not a cheap addition to a tour of the mainland, but it is potentially a once in a lifetime experience for those who make the effort to get there. Alternatively, Isla del Plata, just 20 kms off the coast of the mainland is a less expensive option that can be incorporated into a few days rest and relaxation at the end of a trip.

Whatever your requirements, we will work with you in establishing a suitable programme and help you get the most from the fascinating country.



Suggested Itineraries

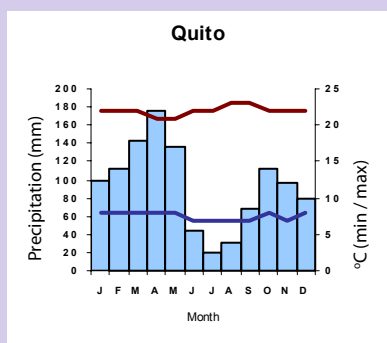
Two weeks

- Day 1** Depart UK. Arrive Quito.
2 Morning briefing; afternoon city-tour.
3 Drive to Ibarra Start the Pinan trek.
4-5 Walking in the Yanaurco region.
6 Climb the extinct volcano of Yanaurco (4560m).
7 End the trek and return to Ibarra.
8 Visit Saturday market at Otavalo, drive to Riobamba.
9 Train journey down the 'Devil's Nose'; return to Riobamba.
11 Drive to Incapirca and explore the Inca ruins. Travel on to Cuenca.
14 Explore Cuenca and fly back to Quito in the afternoon.
15 Depart Quito.
16 Arrive London.

Geography & Climate

For its size, Ecuador boasts an extraordinary array of geographical regions and micro climates. Straddling the equator, it has a tropical climate in coastal regions, becoming cooler inland as you travel high into the Andes. To the east are the hot steaming lungs of the Amazon. The central sierra is dominated by a number of snow capped peaks and volcanoes. Due to its latitude, the highest, Chimborazo, 6,267m, is the point furthest from the centre of the earth. Some 500 miles off the west coast lie the Galapagos Islands, an archipelago of more than 50 islands, volcanic in origin, that supports an unrivalled diversity in wildlife, both on land and in the ocean.

Ecuador's climate on the mainland is similar to that of its neighbours. The main rainy season runs from November to April with the mountains often obscured in cloud, and frequent rainfall. May to September are the best months to visit, with July and August the best for trekking as clear blue skies and sunshine are the norm. The Galapagos Islands can be visited year round but February to May is generally considered to be the best time to visit. July and August tend to be characterised by rougher seas.



Three weeks

As per the two week itinerary, with the addition of a community project in and around Quito, a visit to the coastal region around Puerto Lopez, (including a visit to Isla del Plata) or a visit to the jungle for a possible community project).

1 month

- DAY 1** Depart UK, Arrive Quito.
2/5 Language course in Quito.
6/8 Fly to the Amazon for jungle walks and canoe trips in the company of a native guide and English translator.
9 Return to Quito, drive to Otavalo.
10 Visit the famous market.
11/17 Trekking in and around Cotopaxi National Park, including optional ascent of Cotopaxi (or similar).
18 Short drive to Riobamba, rest of day at leisure.
19 "Devil's Nose" train journey, continue to Cuenca and visit Inca ruins, Ingapirca
20 In Cuenca, return to Quito.
21/24 Community project near Quito.
25/29 Fly to Galapagos, commence cruise.
30 Return to Quito.
31 Return to UK.

Regulations & Red Tape

A full passport, valid for 6 months after your return date, is required for travel to Ecuador. British passport holders do not currently need a visa for stays of up to three months in length. However, travellers must be in possession of a return air ticket, and if entering overland from another South American country a yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required.

National Holidays

- Jan 1:** New Year's Day.
Feb 12: Amazon and Galapagos Day.
Feb 27: National Unity Day.
March/Apr: Good Friday (date varies).
May 1: Labour Day.
May 24: Battle of Pichincha.
Aug 10: Independence Day.
Oct 9: Guayaquil Independence Day.
Nov 2: All Souls' Day.
Nov 3: Cuenca Independence Day.
Dec 25: Christmas Day.
Dec 31: New Year's Eve.

Festivals

Carnival is celebrated the week before Lent and ends on Ash Wednesday. Ecuador's is a similar version of Carnival to Peru but not in the same league as Brazil or some other South American countries. It is celebrated by throwing balloons filled with water, bags filled with flour, or any other "weapon" to hand (even eggs)!

San Pedro and **San Pablo** festivities are held on the 29th of June. It starts the night before with bonfires in the streets and women who want to become pregnant jump over the fires. New Year sees the burning of dummies stuffed with hay and fire crackers – it's a loud and exciting spectacle.

Price Guide

Prices vary enormously depending on the length and style of trip required, as well as the number of participants involved and date of departure. A 2 week trip to Ecuador starts from around £1,900 per person including international flights. An extended month long expedition is likely to cost in the region of £3,200 up to £3,500 or possibly more if taking in the Galapagos Islands. Much depends on the other regions visited, nature of the community project and various other factors.

Useful Addresses

Embassy of the Republic of Ecuador

Flat 3B, Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LS

Tel: 0207 584 2648.

www.ecuador.embassyhomepage.com

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1300

More Information

To discuss the travel and our possibilities Ecuador offers in greater detail, and to get free, impartial advice on suitable tour operators, please contact:

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