



T: 1-800-985-4852  
 E: info@realgap.com  
 P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

## Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



**Trip Name:** Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers    **Trip Code:** ECAT    **Duration:** From 4 weeks

### Trip Highlights

- Living and working in an Amazonian rainforest - wow!
- Learning about local cultures and visiting botanical gardens in your free time
- Gaining confidence handling the classes and watching as your pupil's confidence grows with your help
- White-water rafting, jungle trekking, hiking past waterfalls and other great optional activities available



### Overview

This programme offers a fantastic and unique opportunity for you to help teach English to children in rural schools to assist them in their future development, helping to support and maintain healthy communities in the rich, biodiverse Ecuadorian Amazon.

You can try out your teaching skills and benefit these children by providing a balanced and constant learning environment, so that they can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure that they can find work after leaving school. This is a fantastic programme for anyone wanting to work with children in South America and give them a chance for a better future.

### Destination Info

Ecuador is a relatively unexplored country of South America between the Pacific Ocean and the Amazon jungle. Ecuador was named after its position on the Equator and is bordered by Colombia, Peru and the Pacific Ocean.

Visitors can explore the four regions of Ecuador: the Oriente (Ecuadorian Amazon), Sierra (Andes Mountains), Costa (Pacific Coast), and the Galapagos Islands. You can see Ecuador's highest active volcano, Cotopaxi; explore Otavalo the world famous indigenous market and activities could include horse riding in the Andes, white

# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers

water rafting along mountain rapids as well as visiting the exquisitely beautiful Machalilla National Park.

During the programme you will be based along the Arajuno Road between the small city of Puyo and the community located at Kilometre 35 of the road that extends to the town of Arajuno in the Amazon Rainforest in Central Ecuador.

## Itinerary



While the schools in the area do get government funding, they do not have the resources to provide English instruction, and local knowledge of the language is limited. Volunteers help fill this gap by providing English instruction - with support from project coordinators - and building local capacity. Additionally, the schools have very little money to buy resources. The help of volunteers allows the project to notably increase the annual budget of the schools, which can, in turn, fund the supply of essential educational materials and school infrastructure maintenance and improvements. The project also campaigns to supply additional equipment to the jungle schools, such as the Book Campaign, working to build up a mobile library to benefit the school children along the road.

Another issue faced by the schools is a lack of teachers. Although numbers at each school are not particularly high, it is normal for one teacher to be teaching 30 children of all different age groups and levels all at once. Volunteers allow schools to be split into classes, allowing the teacher to focus on one age group at a time, while the volunteers can take specific classes, broadening the children's education immensely. In line with this, the project works to a structured curriculum with the jungle schools to make sure that volunteer teaching has the utmost benefits for the children. To make it easier for one volunteer to pick up where another left off and build on previous work, the use of structured lesson plans is central to a volunteer's time on the project.

Building a stable learning environment is really important for the jungle community children as it will give them so many more prospects in the future and this is what the teaching project is aiming to do.

# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers



You will primarily be working in the classroom in the mornings, rotating through a pre-defined weekly schedule that has been drafted by the local school district, covering up to five of nine schools the project works in along the Arajuno Road. Prime examples of the schools that you will be working at are:

**Km 35 School** – Located at 35 km along the road, this school serves a small, roadside community and has around 30 students a year. The school has two classrooms, a nursery and a storeroom and modern toilets that are sometimes out of use. One teacher often teaches all 30 children at once.

**Esfuerzo 1 School** - Located approximated 3km in from the Arajuno Road along a dirt road, this school is situated on the edge of a small community. Approximately 25 students attend the school and are typically split between two teachers, combining several grade levels at once. Apart from the two classrooms, the school has access to a community building, flush toilets, a dirt playing area, and in recent years have started raising chickens and have started a school garden.

As a volunteer, your normal teaching day will start before 7:30am to ensure that you arrive at the schools in time to teach. The journey time from your volunteer accommodation to the schools varies between 15 and 45 minutes, walking is required to reach some of the schools due to their remote nature (most days there will be an on-road school that doesn't require any walking and one off-road school that does require some walking) .

Classes generally start at 7:30am and end at 12:30pm, although these hours may vary slightly at some schools. During this time there is normally approximately 4 hours of actual teaching time each day when you will be teaching English, with the support of the project coordinators, using the national curriculum and weekly lesson plan as a guide.

Once you have finished teaching for the day, you and your fellow volunteers will return to the volunteer accommodation to modify the lesson plan for the following school and prepare for the lessons. There may also be the opportunity to help out with afternoon activities, alternatively you can use the time to visit local attractions and explore the local area.

# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers



Ecuadorian school terms are now running from September until the end of January and mid-February until early July. Volunteer opportunities don't stop with the holidays though. As the children tend to have very little to do during the holidays, the project runs a summer camp that gives them the chance to have a bit of creative freedom! The summer camp focuses on arts, sports and music as well as giving volunteers the opportunity to try out a few of their own ideas.

Community Projects also run throughout the year, but what kind of projects these will be depends entirely on funding and what needs doing within the communities at the time.

## Accommodation

During your time at the volunteer programme you will be staying in basic but comfortable volunteer house in Puyo. There are dorm rooms along with a kitchen, bathroom and communal areas and several hammocks. The volunteer house is a social environment and will give you the chance to relax and unwind during your free time as well as getting to know other volunteers from other schools and what is going on in different communities and the local area.

## Programme Services and Facilities

The volunteer accommodation is on the outskirts of Puyo. Small shops are located down the street from the volunteer house. In Puyo, you will find plenty of shops, restaurants, bars, banks (where you can change travellers' cheques) markets, rivers and botanical gardens.

## Internet

There is no Internet at the schools due to its location in the middle of the rainforest! However there is wifi internet connection at the volunteer accommodation which you are free to use on either your personal device or the project's computers.

## Telephone

While the coordinators have a mobile, this is just for emergencies, and there is often little to no cell signal in the jungle. Incoming phone calls can be received at the volunteer house through the conventional phone line or the

# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers

internet. Outgoing phone calls should be made at a phone cabin in Puyo or through your Skype account, or similar service. You should consider setting up a Skype account or the like, or getting yourself an International Phone card as these are probably the cheapest options.

The international dialling code for Ecuador is +593.

## Laundry

Handwashing can be done at the volunteer house, however there are several good, low-cost laundry services in Puyo where you can pay to have your washing done for you.

## Meals

Food costs are included in the project price and volunteers take turns to prepare evening meals.

## What's Included

- Arrival airport transfer from Quito Airport
- All accommodation
- All food
- Orientation on arrival
- 24 emergency contact in both Ecuador and UK



## What's Not Included

- International Flights
- Personal Travel Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, luxury items and spending money
- Transport between the volunteer accommodation and project



## Is This Trip For You?

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

## Additional Information

## Orientation

You will be given an orientation upon arrival. This will include detailed information about Ecuador and the surrounding area. The orientation will also cover all the relevant information about the project and the work that you will be doing, including safety issues, to ensure that you feel confident and happy in your new surroundings.

## What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore you may not need all of the listed items on your travels. In addition, it is worth noting that you can buy lots of the above in Ecuador and at a very cheap price and there will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets and towns.

## Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Cash for airport departure tax (around \$42)
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your GP about necessary immunisations)
- Guidebook on country - recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

## General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Notebook and pen / diary
- Torch / Extra Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Water bottle - at least one litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Personal Toiletries (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Books, cards, music etc.
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

## Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket and or umbrella
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers
- Warmer clothing for winter
- Swimwear
- Towel

## Medical Kit

- Personal medication
- First Aid Kit (e.g. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)

- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

## Minimum Age

Minimum 18 years.

## Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

## Flights

Your flight to Ecuador should arrive at Quito Airport (UIO) on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

To book your flights, please contact us on 01273 647219 and we'll help you find a great quote.

**Please note:** If you are flying to Ecuador via the USA you will need to obtain Travel Authorisation by registering online through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) no later than 72 hours before departure. This is compulsory and will cost USD\$14 to register. To register, please visit: [www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov](http://www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov)

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

## FAQs

**1. Do I have to have any teaching experience or qualifications?**

No, you will be helped for the first few days by a coordinator whilst you are there and then you will be able to take the classes yourself.

**2. Do I need to speak Spanish?**

It is not essential but it would help if you have some knowledge of it beforehand.

**3. How many volunteers are there?**

There can be up to 8 volunteers in the volunteer house, as well as additional home-stay and local volunteers.

**4. Can I take stationary and other useful items for the school?**

Yes, you are more than welcome to bring project donations with you. Please give these to your coordinator.

**5. Are there things to do at the weekend?**

Yes! There's plenty to do at the weekends. Your coordinator will be able to advise you the best things to do.



# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers

## Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

## Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

## Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

## Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

## Money Matters

In Ecuador the currency is the US Dollar (USD; symbol \$), which is divided into 100 Centavos (the same value as the US Cent). The coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Cents and 1 Dollar. Notes come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Dollars.

Though the denominations and values are the same as the US Dollar, Ecuadorian coins do differ in appearance and bear the images of famous Ecuadorians rather than US presidents. Make sure you change your bills at banks where you can as loose change can be hard to come by when you're out and about.

Credit cards are accepted in larger towns and cities (only MasterCard is accepted on the Galapagos) and ATMs are available almost everywhere. Bancos del Pacifico and Bancos del Pichincha have MasterCard/Cirrus ATMs. Bancos de Guayaquil and Bancos La Provisora have Visa/Plus ATMs.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$4.29  
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$1.00



Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.85

Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.51

## Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For stays of up to 90 days, citizens of most European countries, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are not required to hold a visa.

For all other nationalities and queries on longer stays or for the most up to date information on passports and the Reciprocity Fee, please consult your nearest Ecuador Embassy or High Commission.

## Cultural Considerations

### Greetings

Pleasantries are taken seriously in Ecuador, despite the fact that greetings are usually informal. It is polite to always say "Buenos Días" upon entering a building or when meeting somebody, and to say "con permiso" when leaving or passing someone. You should address people in the polite "usted" form and show additional respect for older people. If you know the person then it is customary to shake hands or kiss in greetings. Any kind of conversation is usually preceded by small talk, and being able to speak at least basic Spanish will go a long way with the locals and demonstrate your keenness to fit in.

### Gestures

Many gestures are used in Ecuador. A common one is the lifting of the chin to indicate "up the street" when giving directions, and the lowering of the chin to indicate "down the street" - useful for any traveller to know! Body language is considered an integral part of speech in Ecuador, so it is a common and often fundamental part of everyday speech, which can sometimes be hard for foreigners to understand. It is important to remember that as a general rule, Ecuadorians tend to be much more physical than other cultures and greetings generally involve a lot of body contact.

### Saying "no"

A Latino always wants to help you and it's considered impolite to say 'no' or 'I don't know'. Whatever you ask, always expect to get an answer, even if it is not correct. The best thing to do is to ask three different people the same question and if you always get the same answer it's probably right!

### Taboos

Latinos are not used to discussing 'sensitive' subjects with strangers (a stranger is anyone who is not family or they haven't known for ten years). Although nosiness is common, certain subjects are taboo, for example: abortion, casual sex, social politics, etc. Listen first to get used to the norms.

## Social Hierarchy

The family is hugely important to Ecuadorians. Elderly people often live with the youngest son and his wife, and it is common for three generations of families to be living together under the same roof. It is a way to increase the household income and to help one another. Can you imagine living with all of your relatives every day? As you would expect, older people are treated with great respect.

Women are traditionally responsible for bringing up the children, although this has begun to change in recent years. However, men are still very proud of their machismo and view whistling at women as a compliment. Ladies, take it in your stride. You may be subjected to catcalls and the best way to deal with these is simply to ignore them! Dress more formally than you would normally or even wear a wedding ring and talk about your husband.

## Religion

In Ecuador the predominant religion is Roman Catholic. The Indigenous population blends Catholicism with its traditional beliefs.

## Clothing

It is important to remember, especially for female travellers, that the kinds of clothes you feel comfortable wearing in your own country may not be an acceptable form of dress in Latin America. Short skirts for example, will invite unwanted attention. Just use your common sense and adapt your style in accordance with your surroundings. In Quito for example, and at the project, you should avoid wearing shorts, flip-flops, tank tops, and so on. Cover up for your own safety, and in respect of the local culture and customs.

On the Galapagos Islands you can expect to dress as you would for the beach e.g. flip-flops, shorts etc. - however even this should be more conservative beachwear. Avoid really short shorts and tops.

With the warm climate and humidity, we advise that you pack a selection of lightweight layerable clothing. As the evenings can get quite cool, a jumper or jacket is advisable. Always bear in mind the activities you will be doing when you are packing.

## Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Ecuador and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Ecuador. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Ecuador has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

## Tipping

A 10% tip is customary at restaurants and hotels and is usually included in the bill. Tips are not necessary (but always welcome) in small restaurants or for taxis. Hairdressers expect 20%, and a couple of dollars is normal for

airport/railway porters.

## Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

## Safety

Although Ecuador is safer than other countries in the region, there have been reports of increased problems as a side effect to drug trafficking in Colombia. The majority of Ecuador is safe to a traveller who uses common sense. Pickpocketing is common in crowded places. Armed robbery is still unusual, but parts of Guayaquil have a reputation for being dangerous.

Here is a list of general precautions:

- Don't walk around alone after dark
- Don't carry valuables
- If your luggage is ever searched by the police make sure you are present
- Make sure your luggage is locked when travelling by bus or aeroplane. Don't leave unlocked valuables in your hotel room.
- Always carry your passport or a copy of it with you because sometimes the police make passport checks
- Avoid taking night buses through the Guayas province unless you have to. Armed robberies occur a couple of times every year.
- In Quito, don't walk up the series of steps and paths to the Virgin (the Pancillo), since assaults are common. Take a cab and don't take any valuables.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

USA: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Australia: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

## ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

## Language Guide

Spanish is the official language of Ecuador. Quechua, Jivaro and other indigenous languages are also spoken.

Here are some choice Spanish words/phrases. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello - *Hola!*

Good day - *Buenas días!*

How are you? - *Como estas? ('Como estas usted?' if you need to be extra formal!)*

Goodbye - *Adios*

Please - *Por favour*

Thank you - *Gracias*

I don't understand - *No entiendo*

I don't speak Spanish - *No hablo espanol*

Sorry/excuse me - *Lo siento*

Where is...? - *Donde esta...?*

The bill please - *La cuenta por favour*

## Food & Drink

Lunch (almuerzo) is the big meal of the day. Rice and potatoes are common staples of the diet throughout the country. Local food is usually not spiced, but it's popular to add aji (red pepper sauce) to make it hot. If going to the coast, try some of the interesting coconut dishes.

You should not drink tap water (including ice) unless it's boiled or bottled. Remember, most fruit juices are made with unboiled water. Be careful around dairy products and milk. Hamburger meat is not always safe. Make sure that uncooked vegetables are cleaned with purified water or peeled. Be careful with seafood and avoid undercooked meat. Remember, it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Typical dishes:

Cuy - Whole roasted guinea pig

Locro - A soup of stewed potatoes and cheese topped with avocados

Cacho - A croissant-like pastry

Lechón - Whole roasted pig (also called chancho)

Ceviche - Fish, shrimp, clams or mussels marinated in lemon with popcorn and roasted corn or sliced onions

Humitas - Sweet corn tamales (often served for breakfast with coffee)

Patacones - Fried plantain slices served with fish and rice

Seco Stew - Chicken, beef, lamb or goat served with rice

Yaguarlocro - Potato soup with blood sausage

Llapingachos - Fried mashed potato and cheese pancakes

Remember to let us know before you depart if you have any special dietary requirements.

## Drinks

# Ecuador Amazon Teaching Volunteers

The usual soft drinks as well as local soft drinks and fruit juices are available everywhere (make sure you get jugo puro (pure juice) and not con agua (with water) as the water used is not usually boiled). You will only be able to find decent coffee in the better restaurants. Alcohol-wise the local beers are Club, Pilsener and Malta, which are all good. The local wine, on the other hand, should be avoided; they are often made from bananas! For a less expensive option, go for Chilean, Argentinean or Peruvian wines (rather than European), if it is your tipples of choice. Rum and the local firewater, aguardiente (sugar cane alcohol), are popular and cheap.

## Public Holidays

To view a list of the public holidays for Ecuador, please see the link below:

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays/ecuador/](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/ecuador/)

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. Many schools, government offices, stores and banks are closed on National Holidays. Please note that there may be slight date variations for some of the holidays each year and that the list is not exhaustive. The Ecuadorian Government have been known to introduce new bank holidays or commemorative days at short notice.

Banks are open from 9am to 1.30pm. Shops are open until 7pm (12pm on Saturdays), but close for lunch from 1pm-3pm.

## Weather

Ecuador's climate varies from region to region and can be unpredictable!

Highlands: Rainy season - October to May (heaviest rain in April) with a mini-dry season around Christmas. Dry season - June to October. Quito and Cuenca have spring-like, pleasant temperatures all year round, averaging 15°C-24°C during the day, and 4°C-10°C at night and early in the morning.

Galapagos and Coast: Hot and rainy season is December to May. It doesn't rain all the time but do expect heavy downpours that can cause havoc with communications. Temperatures average around 31°C but it often gets hotter.

The Oriente: Relatively tropical and rain is pretty much a year round constant but temperatures remain high meaning that any time of year is perfect for a visit!

## Time

Ecuador is five hours behind GMT and the Galapagos is an hour behind mainland Ecuador.

## Electricity

In Ecuador the electric system is 127 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept this voltage you will need an adapter.

Outlets in Ecuador generally accept 1 type of plug:



Flat blade plug

## Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

## Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

**Phone:** 1-800-985-4852

**Email:** [info@realgap.com](mailto:info@realgap.com)

**Post:** Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

**Web:** [www.realgap.com](http://www.realgap.com)