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Ecuador Animal Rescue

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: Ecuador Animal Rescue **Trip Code:** ECAR **Duration:** From 2 weeks

Trip Highlights

- Help improve the lives of sick, injured and abused animals
- Get up close to parrots, coatis, caiman, monkeys and more!
- Enrich your animal knowledge and expertise
- Take a morning walk into the jungle at sunrise- highly recommended!
- Brush up your Spanish skills

Overview

Volunteer in Ecuador and become a key member of this vitally important, over-worked rescue and rehabilitation centre. You will be caring for illegally captured, abused and injured animals.

Alongside the enthusiastic staff, you will help look after the animals and educate visitors. You'll prepare food for the residents, clean and build enclosures, monitor and record animal behaviour and help to keep the centre open. You may even be lucky enough to assist in captive breeding programmes, rescues and releases. Viva Ecuador!

Destination Info

Ecuador is a relatively unexplored country located in the northwest 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.

The Animal Rescue Centre is 35km away from Puyo, a beautiful city in the east of central Ecuador, and capital of the province of Pastaza. Also known as El Puyo, it is about an hour away from the rescue centre by bus and is considered to be one of the gateways to the Amazon rainforest.

Itinerary

The Amazon rescue centre strives to rescue, rehabilitate and release wild animals native to the Amazon Rainforest of Ecuador. Therefore we work mostly with a wide diversity of small mammals, many different species of monkeys, a wide range of birds and some reptiles and small felines.

The role of the rescue centre is very important towards conservation in the Ecuadorian Amazon, taking on rescued animals and providing them a better quality of life, with the goal of re-introducing them to their natural habitat, giving them a second chance at freedom.

The project offers you the unique opportunity to experience life in the Amazon whilst helping to secure the future of the forest, its people, and its animals. Not only will you have the chance to actively contribute to the rehabilitation and release of animals directly back into the wild, but you will also be able to work alongside and help a local indigenous community.

The animals at the centre are likely to include caimans, charapa turtles, aussie parakeets, parrots, tucan, coatis, kinkajous, tayras, squirrel monkeys, tamarinds, tigrillos, boas and other South American species.

Please bear in mind that numbers of animals at the centre fluctuate over the course of the year depending on demand for rehabilitation, which animals arrive and which have been released. The cleaning and feeding duties need to be done twice a day, which will involve close contact with the animals. You will also be involved with a large amount of physical work around the sanctuary, which may involve the cleaning and repairing of enclosures, as well as the building of new ones, repairing steps to allow access around the jungle, collecting bamboo in the Amazon and the general construction and maintenance of the park.

It is important to keep improving existing facilities to provide a natural environment for the animals and improving the process of rehabilitation so please feel free to share your ideas and be prepared to be as flexible as possible. In addition, you may have the unique opportunity to get involved in the supervised release of any animals back into the wild.

Ecuador Animal Rescue

At the centre a number of activities are performed directed towards wildlife conservation in the Amazon. These include:

- the rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals
- reforestation campaigns of native tree species
- maintenance of botanical gardens of Amazonian flora
- environmental education programmes in local schools
- increasing local awareness of conservation issues
- participation in environmental events and promoting ecotourism as an alternative source of income amongst others.

The rescue centre welcomes volunteers to help with the centres' day-to-day activities, work on existing projects of enclosure enrichment, botanical studies in our forest, or help create new projects like new environmental awareness programmes in the local schools, building new islands as fenceless sanctuaries for the animals to name a few.

Volunteers require no previous experience with animals, though it is a perfect place to practice and learn for budding zoologists, animal carers and vets. Volunteers need to love the natural world, have the motivation to help and to learn, a willingness to get stuck in to projects, and a friendly personality.

Regular duties are the daily cleaning of all the enclosures and exterior areas where the animals live and the preparation / distribution of the food to all the species of animals sheltered at the centre. In particular seasons, volunteers regularly go on walks to collect wild fruits and leaves for the animals to include in their diets.

Activities vary each week a lot depending on the needs of the animals and the centre at the time. All volunteers have to participate in the wide variety of projects planned for the centre, from building bigger and better enclosures for the animals (a continuous all year round task), improving access paths to enclosures and continuous animal observation.

07:30-08:00 Breakfast with the other volunteers
08:00-08:30 Morning meeting
08:30-12:00 Morning work
12:00-15:00 Lunch - time to rest and relax
15:00-17:00 Afternoon work
17:00-18:30 Dinner
18:30 onwards Free time to go to Puyo and/or enjoy the surroundings

Please note: itineraries and activities are subject to change

Accommodation

You'll stay in basic shared dormitory-style bedrooms (4/5 per room). The showers are basic too – hot water is not guaranteed! There are large communal grounds overlooking the Amazon. The kitchen is fully equipped and there is a fantastic area to build a fire. There is no washing machine, but the local community offers a laundry service, which will cost you a few dollars per bag!

Programme Services and Facilities

Puyo is your closest city, 10km from the centre, with a regular bus service. Here you will find plenty of shops, restaurants, bars, banks (where you can change travellers' cheques) and a museum.

Internet

There are Internet cafes in Puyo where you can expect to pay about $5 an hour.

Telephone

There are no telephone facilities at the centre so you will need to head into Puyo to make your calls. You should consider getting yourself an International Phone card as it is probably the cheapest option.

The international dialling code for Ecuador is +593. To place an outgoing, direct-dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164.

Laundry

With no electricity for washing, the local community offer a laundry service, which will cost you a few dollars per bag!

Meals

Food is not included. Budget an extra US$15-$20 per week towards a food kitty. You'll buy food at the local market and all muck in with the cooking making for an awesome communal experience.

What's Included

- All accommodation
- A detailed orientation on arrival
- 24-hour Emergency help
- Full support prior to departure from your personal travel advisor
- Detailed information pack prior to departure

What's Not Included

- Food (volunteers contribute US$15-20 per week and buy food at the local market)
- All international flights
- Travel insurance
- Any extra activities and excursions
- Alcoholic beverages/extra snacks
- Airport transfers (budget approx $35 USD each way)

Additional Information

Orientation

You will receive a full orientation from the on-site staff when you arrive at the project. Throughout your stay in Ecuador you will have the full support and guidance of the project staff. You will be provided with competent assistance and help with any questions, or advice, you may need during your stay.

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.

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
- 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
- A 3-Season Sleeping bag (especially useful when on weekend excursions)
- Mosquito Net (if required)
- Personal toiletries (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket (you are in the rainforest!)
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers
- Warmer clothing for winter
- Swimwear
- Towel

Medical Kit

- Medicines
- First Aid Kit (e.g. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

Minimum Age

Minimum age 17 years with parental consent, maximum decided on health of potential participant.

Flights

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

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

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

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.

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 Pacífico 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 passportsand 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

USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: 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 dias!*
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

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 tipple 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 Vietnam, please see the link below:

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 comemorative 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.

Galapágos 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 make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended 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.

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