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Ecuador Spanish Language School

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: Ecuador Spanish Language School **Trip Code:** ECSL **Duration:** From 1 week

Trip Highlights

- Experience the culture of one of South America's friendliest countries
- Work on your Spanish skills with one-to-one sessions tailored to your level
- Unleash your inner Latino spirit with a whole host of optional extras from salsa to cooking classes!



Overview

If you're looking for an unforgettable experience then Ecuador really will deliver! Study Spanish in Ecuador to kick off your time in Latin America.

Spending time at the language school is the best and most exciting way to learn the language, experience the local cultures, make friends and meet new travel companions. You'll spend 4 hours a day perfecting your conversation, comprehension or writing and then the rest of the day is yours to put what you've learnt into practice!

Destination Info

The language school is located in Ecuador's vibrant capital of Quito. The ancient capital of the northern realm of the Incan Empire, Quito is a staggering 2,800 metres and sits at the base of the awe-inspiring Mount Pichincha. Known as 'Luz de América': the light of America, Quito has been renowned as an artistic, architectural and literary centre since colonial times and is home to theatres, galleries, museums and restaurants as well as some incredible scenery!

Itinerary



The language school was founded in 2000 and is situated in a great location in modern Quito. The school is an institution created to offer personalised instruction in a group setting in the learning of Spanish as a second language.

You will be working with the teachers in groups, which allows your conversational language skills to improve naturally as you interact with the rest of the group. Particular emphasis is placed on flexibility as you can pick the areas you wish to focus on, such as conversation, comprehension or writing. All of our teachers are native speakers with a university degree in Spanish and have a minimum of ten years experience in teaching Spanish as a second language.

The courses at the school are suitable for beginners and for advanced students. Once you have completed 300 hours or more you can gain a certificate from the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (internal certificates for courses of shorter duration will be issued on request).

Classes are held Monday through to Friday from 8.30-12.30 or 13.00-17.00 so you can choose between morning or afternoon lessons.



A cultural event is usually arranged once a week. In the day you can visit museums, galleries and cultural centres. In the evenings you can go out to restaurants, bars, music concerts, theatre, etc. These trips give participants a chance to learn more about Ecuadorian culture, but also give them the chance to get to know other students and

teachers better, and of course, to practice their Spanish.

Once a week we organise salsa and merengue classes. If you want to take a professional dance course you can attend any of the best salsa schools in Quito (at your expense).

Once a week one of our teachers prepares a typical Ecuadorian dish with the students. This is a practical way to learn how to make some of the meals that you may have enjoyed eating whilst in Ecuador. You will see the kinds of ingredients used, and some of the traditional cooking methods. It's a sociable event which gives you the opportunity to chat with other teachers and students in the school, and above all, to practice using the Spanish that you have learnt in your classes.

Accommodation

During your time as a volunteer you will stay with an Ecuadorian host family. These families are carefully selected to ensure clean, comfortable and safe lodging and provide you with a fantastic opportunity to practice your Spanish. The host family will provide you with a shared bedroom (a single room is available at extra cost and subject to availability). Host families are also a great opportunity to interact with other participants which are taking Spanish classes as well, or are placed on different projects and will share their experiences with you too.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

You will have plenty of access to the Internet in Quito, so keep an eye out for the nearest Internet café, or ask one of our onsite staff. There are a lot of these cafes around the Mariscal area of the city. Due to the large amount of competition expect to find prices as low as \$0.50 an hour. In fact, Internet is now available in most places, right down to remote villages, so there are no excuses not to e-mail, especially seeing as you are unlikely to spend more than \$3 an hour wherever you are!

Telephone

Try the local Internet cafes for phones and cheap calls home. Please note that your mobile phone may not work in Ecuador, as the frequency differs from that of European phones; therefore it may be necessary for you to purchase a local sim card when you arrive.

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 dial +44 1892 516164.

Laundry

There are laundry facilities in your accommodation, though you may need to take/buy your own washing powder. Some families would rather you don't use their washing machines in case they damage your clothes, if this is the

case then they will show you to a laundry facility close by. You should budget a few dollars each week if this is the case.

Meals

The host family will provide you with two meals a day (breakfast and dinner).

What's Included

- Spanish classes throughout your stay Monday to Friday four hours per day
- Home Stay Accommodation
- Two meals per day (lunch not included)
- Afternoon Latin Dance classes (mainly Salsa)
- A detailed orientation on arrival
- Latin American cooking classes
- 24-hour Emergency assistance
- Full support prior to departure from your personal travel adviser
- Arrival airport transfer



What's Not Included

- Flights
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Lunches
- Items of a personal nature
- Additional activities over and above the planned itinerary inclusions
- Return airport transfer (budget approx \$35 USD)



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, which will include detailed information about Ecuador and the surrounding area. The orientation will also cover all the relevant information about your project, including safety issues, to ensure that you feel safe and secure.

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
- A 3-Season Sleeping bag (especially useful when on weekend excursions)
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mosquito Net (if required)
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers etc.
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

Clothing

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

Medical Kit

- Personal medicines
- Sunscreen
- First Aid Kit (ex. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Mosquito and insect repellent

Minimum Age

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

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 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.

FAQs

1. What if I've studied Spanish before?

Not a problem! You will take a small test before you start your language lessons to see what level of Spanish you currently have and then we will match you with a level of tutoring that will enable you to improve on your level, be it complete beginner or expert.

2. Can I join as a complete beginner?

Yes. This language school will be perfect for anyone with any level of Spanish, including those who haven't even learnt any Spanish before.

3. How many people will I be studying with?

Your lessons will be one-to-one tutoring so you will get the very best tailored education to your needs, focusing on aspects you want to learn or work on and taking everything at your pace. If you'd like to learn in a group you can request this but this will only be allowed if more than one of you want to study together and a group won't usually exceed 3.

4. What will I do at the weekends?

You can do lots of things in Quito and you'll never be bored or short of things to do! You can visit tourist attractions such as Baños (a small town at the foot of the Tungurahua volcano), Otavalo (the most famous indigenous market in Ecuador, surrounded by beautiful countryside), Cotopaxi (one of Ecuador's most famous volcanoes), Papallacta (thermal springs, where you can relax in steaming water whilst enjoying views of the Andes). Our team can also help you to organize trips to the Amazon or the Galapagos Islands.

5. How many hours a day do I study for?

You will study for 4 hours per day at the school. Usually this will be 2 hours in the morning and 2 in the

afternoon but this can vary. After formal tutoring you have free time to do some more practicing and study and you'll have lots of opportunity to practice at home with your homestay family.

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

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 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

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 tiple 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 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.

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