

ecuador fact file



ecuador embassy in uk	Website: http://ecuador.embassyhomepage.com/ Address: 3 Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 0LS Telephone: 020 7584 1367 Facsimile: 020 7823 9701
british embassy in ecuador	Address: Gonzalez Suarez 111 and 12 de Octubre, Quito. Telephone: (02) 560 670 Facsimile: (02) 560 730
area	283,560 square kilometres
population	12 million
capital	Quito
language	Spanish (Official) Quechua (Native American)
tipping	Better restaurants add 15% tax and 10% service charge to the bill. Cheaper restaurants don't include tax or service charge and tipping is not necessarily expected. If you want to tip your waiter, do so directly – don't leave money on the table.
bank opening hours	Monday to Friday 09.00–13.30. In some cities, banks may stay open later or open on Saturday, especially if Saturday is market day.
post office hours	Monday to Friday 09.00–17.30; usually an hour of this time is taken for lunch.
office opening hours	Most are family operated and owned, therefore opening times do vary.
shops opening hours	Monday to Friday 09.00–13.00 and 15.00–19.00
time (+/- GMT)	Five hours behind GMT
electricity	120v 60Hz with a flat 2 pin plug
public holidays	February or March – Carnival time. 1 st May (Labour Day), 24 th May (Battle of Pichincha), 10 th August (Independence Day), 9 th October (Guayaquil's Independence Day), 2 nd November (All Souls Day), 6 th December (Quito's Independence Day), 25 th December, 31 st December.
telephone	The international dialling code for Ecuador is 00 593. In Quito you can make cheap international phone calls from phone booths or many internet cafes. You will have the opportunity to make phone calls from Tambopaxi lodge, on Day 8. Alternatively, you can buy a phonecard for \$4 useable in many phone kiosks in petrol stations, on street corners and even at Cotopaxi refuge. Please check with your mobile phone provider if your network & contract enable you to have coverage in Ecuador however in January 2005 mobile phones even with worldwide coverage and being 3 or 4 band did not work in Ecuador. Charity Challenge has an emergency Satellite Phone available on all expeditions at a cost of £3 per minute.
photograph	Always check expiry dates on camera film. You will have the chance to recharge your digital camera batteries at the lodges.
postal	Most letters sent from Ecuador arrive at their destinations, sometimes in as little as a week to the USA or Europe. Incoming mail is another matter. Some letters take as long as two months to arrive, and a few never do.
currency	Formerly the Sucre (100 centavos), the Ecuadorian currency moved to the US Dollar in February 2000. As at August 2009, the pound was worth US\$1.65. IMPORTANT! - a large number of near perfect counterfeit US \$100 bills have entered Ecuador from a neighbouring country. To prevent the circulation of these bills, Ecuador's commerce and banking system is no longer accepting \$100 bills. Do not to take US \$100 bills with you as these will not be accepted, cashed or changed, even at banks. Participants are advised to carry smaller denominations of US bills instead.
credit cards	ATMs are generally OK. Credit cards and travellers cheques are reliable, particularly when buying dollars from the bank. Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted. As much as 10% commission can be added when using a credit card.
travellers cheque	There is little difference between exchange rates for cash and travellers cheques.
passport/visa	You must hold a full ten-year passport with at least six months to run from the end of your expedition. No visa is necessary for British Citizens for stays of up to 90 days. Also see Travel

Tips.

gifts and souvenirs

Souvenirs are good, varied and cheap. In markets and smaller stores, bargaining is expected; though don't expect to reduce the price by more than about 20%. It is difficult to bargain in established stores.

duty free

One litre of alcohol and 300 cigarettes are allowed duty free.

vaccination and health

Nomad Travel Stores Medical Centre recommended the following vaccinations: diphtheria; tetanus; hepatitis A; typhoid; yellow fever. Vaccines sometimes advised: rabies; hepatitis B; tuberculosis. Please take further advice from your GP. Malaria precautions are essential in most areas below 1500m, all year round. There is no risk in Guayaquil, Quito or Galapagos Islands. Avoid mosquito bites by covering up with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers especially after sunset, using insect repellents on exposed skin and, when necessary, sleeping under a mosquito net. Check with your doctor or nurse about suitable antimalarial tablets. It is imperative that you drink at least 3–4 litres of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration and to combat the effects of altitude sickness. Also see High Altitude Health notes and general Health notes.

risks

Be careful when buying medication – the expiry date may have passed or correct storage conditions may not have been followed. Bogus drugs are common and it's possible that drugs which are no longer recommended elsewhere are still being dispensed in parts of South America.

hospitals/pharmacies

Good and widely available in urban areas. Please ensure that any medication that you regularly take will not have side effects at high altitude.

water

Purify all tap water or buy bottled water. Also see Health notes.

climate

The country has a wide range of climates due to the varying elevations.

temperature

The Costa is generally hot and humid, with a mean annual temperature of about 26c. On the Sierra, the temperatures range from 7c to 21c. Quito has an average annual temperature of 13c. The Oriente is warmer and more humid than the Costa - temperatures here approach 38c.

rainfall

Annual rainfall is approximately 80inches/2030 millimetres

geography

Ecuador is located in North-Western South America. The country includes the Galapagos islands in the Pacific, about 965 kilometres West of the mainland. Colombia borders Ecuador to the North-East, Peru is to the East and South and the Pacific Ocean is to the West and North-West.

culture/customs

Every rural region has its own traditional clothing, colours and fabrics. Generally people from coastal areas wear bright colours, such as white, yellow and red, while those from the highlands prefer blues, browns and blacks.

do's & don'ts

- ? Do use the handshake when greeting someone. Close friends might 'kiss the air' with their lips lightly brushing the other person's cheek (one kiss on the left cheek). Men often embrace if well acquainted.
- ? Do carry identification documents at all times. Keep separate photocopies of all personal documents like passports in a plastic bag to protect against damage from damp.
- ? Do pack all of your luggage yourself and do not carry items through customs that do not belong to you. It is advisable to padlock your rucksack or bag when travelling through the airport system however if you are travelling via the US any padlocked bags will be opened as per local security regulations.
- ? Don't whistle to get someone's attention or point with the index finger, it is considered impolite.
- ? Don't get involved with drugs. Drug traffickers face long prison sentences in Ecuador (16 years).