SIT SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
STUDY ABROAD

Ecuador: Comparative Ecology and Conservation

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is now Ecuador was once a federation of different cultures (called the Kingdom of Quito), which eventually became part of the Northern Inca Empire at the end of the XV Century, when Atahualpa was the last emperor. The Spanish conquest, which began in 1531, quickly eliminated the entire Empire after Francisco Pizarro killed Atahualpa.



The Spaniards arrived in the Inca City of Quito in 1534 and in 1717 the territories of Quito became part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (Northwest South America). Finally, the Spaniards and the *mestizos* born in New Granada gained their independence from Spain (led by Simón Bolivar) in 1822 and created the Gran Colombia Federation. In 1830, the federation was broken into 3 countries: Colombia (including Panama), Venezuela, and Quito. The former name of Quito was then changed to the "Republic of the Equator" (*República del Ecuador*). Between 1904 and 1942, Ecuador lost territories in a series of conflicts with its neighbors. A border war with Peru that flared in 1995 was resolved in 1999.

Ecuador marked 40 years of civilian governance in 2019, although the period has been marred by political instability. The emergence of the indigenous population as a politically organized constituency has added to the democratic volatility of the country in recent years. Protests in Quito contributed to the mid-term departure of Ecuador's three democratically elected

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presidents. In an April 2007 referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved a call to rewrite the Constitution. In November 2007, a Constituent Assembly was established to elaborate this new Constitution (the 20th in Ecuadorian history).

In November 2023 Daniel Noboa was elected President, indicative of a more conservative regime. His main challenges are combating corruption, violence, and addressing poverty, inequality, and power abuse. His agenda also includes improving the economy and international relationships with a new government image. In February 2025 President Daniel Noboa was reelected until 2029.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Quito: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)				
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
72/50	72/50	70/50	70/50	70/50
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
74/50	72/48	72/48	72/48	

Ecuador is one of the most ecologically and biologically diverse countries in the world. There are no less than 18 distinct ecological systems to be found in Ecuador, a country the size of the state of Colorado. It has four distinct geographical and climatic zones: the coastal plain with a tropical climate and rich agricultural land; the Andean highlands at about 8,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level (Chimborazo, the highest peak, soars to over 20,000 feet above sea level); the eastern jungle in the upper reaches of the Amazon where Ecuador's oil reserves are found; and the Galápagos Islands, 600 miles off the coast.

The rainy season in Quito begins in October and may continue until June. October, November, March, and April are usually the months with more rainfall. However, rainfall, and indeed the rainy season, varies from constant rain to severe drought according to the zone you are in – the weather is very unpredictable.

In the highlands (including Quito) it is said that one experiences all the seasons of the year each day. In the early morning it is spring. By the afternoon it is warm enough to enjoy summer clothes. In the evening it is autumn and there is a chill in the air. Late at night and in the early hours of the morning it is very cold, getting down to 40ºF and sometimes even lower. It is, in fact, not dissimilar to northern New England in early spring or late autumn. Remember that, at various times, you will be both in higher, colder regions and in lower, warmer ones.

Forests in Ecuador’s coastal plain include tropical rainforest in the north and tropical dry forest in the south. The tropical humid Amazon forest is located east of the Andes. Both are hot (and,

in the rainforest, very humid), with temperatures often reaching into the 90ºF range. The Galápagos Islands normally have a hot and dry climate, with cooler weather typically from July to November. The cloud forests are comfortably cooler than the rainforests and warmer than the highlands with seasonally heavy rains.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Ecuador is a multicultural country; each of the four regions, the Coast, Andes, Amazon and Galápagos, present a variety of customs, which gives Ecuador an exceptional cultural richness. Even within the regions there are differences derived from rural or urban conditions. The local homestays we utilize in Quito and the rural Cloud Forest, also present marked variations among them. These differences are analyzed during orientation week and throughout the semester in more detail.



LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in-country. Special or restricted diets may not always be fully understood by your host family, although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

Ecuadorian food is extremely diverse, reflecting the various ecological zones and cultures. The everyday diet varies by region (for example, more seafood is eaten by the coast) but typically consists of rice, potatoes, fresh fruit, vegetables, and occasionally red meat, chicken, or seafood. The diet can be heavy on starches, especially in the *sierra* region. Lunch is the main meal of the day and typically consists of a soup, a *segundo* (second) of rice, potatoes, maybe a vegetable, beans, chicken or eggs, and fresh fruit juice. Some Ecuadorian specialties that you are sure to encounter include *locro de papa* (potato, cheese, and avocado soup), *llapingachos* (mashed potato and cheese pancakes), ceviche (marinated seafood stew), and an abundance of fresh fruit and fruit juices.

Typically, breakfast and dinner are eaten at home, while lunch may be eaten out (for those who can afford to). Breakfast consists of juice and fruit, bread, and perhaps eggs. Dinner might be similar to lunch but in smaller proportions. There are numerous Ecuadorian and other South American restaurants in the larger cities, as well as many Chinese and other cuisine options. Students should avoid food prepared and sold on the street as well as juice and water that has not been boiled or filtered. Bottled water is readily available in most areas.

Students adhering to a vegan or kosher diet may have significant difficulty eating a balanced diet in Ecuador, as many dairy/egg products are regularly consumed, and vegetables are not a staple. Vegetarians should be fine, especially if they are able to be flexible; be aware that even non-meat dishes may be cooked with lard, beef broth, etc. Also, vegetarians should be aware that “vegetarian” in Latin America is usually assumed to mean avoidance of red meat; you may still be served fish and chicken unless you specify. Students should take special care of their food allergies and restrictions during excursions.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform the office of Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing prior to the start of your program (studenthealth@sit.edu). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends you do research prior to departure about the health, safety, and security specifics of the country(ies) you plan to visit. Consult the U.S. Department of State website and search their Countries and Areas Archive for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control Traveler’s Health page to see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to

departure. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's webpage.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team. Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read the Safety, Security, and Health document and Student Handbook on your program's predeparture page.

HOUSING

As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a "home" may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities, and expectations.

Each program's homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**



We seek to foster increased cross-cultural understanding in students by immersing them in local culture through daily life in a new family and community. Students are expected to assume roles as family members, respecting and following host family norms around communications, visitors, and activities of daily living.

On this program, you will be staying in 2 homestays: one in Quito for eight weeks and then one in a rural area of the cloud forest for three days. Students should bring or purchase their own personal items such as towels, shampoo, toothpaste, and soap.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during orientation/launch and while on excursions. When you are not staying with host families (i.e. during orientation, excursions, etc.) you will stay in a variety of accommodations including hostels, private homes, reserve lodges, small hotels, and a boat (in the Galápagos Islands). During the ISP period, some students may stay with a new family in the area where their research takes place, or in other accommodations arranged with the help of program staff.

TRANSPORTATION

SIT Staff will provide students with safer transportation options, including our reliable local transport providers. There are also numerous taxis, but be sure you are in a group (at least 2 or 3 people). Taxis use daytime meters but at night the price is haggled over and agreed upon before you get in the taxi. In addition, rideshare apps like uber may be used for transportation

For traveling outside Quito please coordinate first with our local SIT Staff as they can arrange the safest solution of going to other locations. Working with our well-known and reliable transport providers is usually the safest option. Inter-city bus routes generally leave from a bus terminal called Quitumbe located in the south of a city or from another bus terminal called Terminal de Carcelén in the north of the city. There are many types of buses and even the most comfortable (and safest) are generally inexpensive.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

Visit our Contact & Communication page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Cell Phone Policy

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wi-fi. If needed, during orientation SIT staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card and acquiring minutes for calls and texting. Failure to maintain a working phone capable of making and receiving calls/texts will be considered a conduct violation and a breach of our student code.

Students will be responsible for maintaining enough available time on their phones and reasonable phone usage should cost about $25 per month. If you do not have an unlocked smartphone, a smartphone can be purchased locally and will cost upwards of $200. We have been advised that phones need to support the frequency bands 800, 850, 900 or 2100 MHz to work in Ecuador so please check this is the case with your phone. Net-to-phone service (approximately US$.25 per minute to the US) is available at many Internet cafés, allowing you to make very inexpensive international phone calls.

Host families strongly prefer that you receive calls rather than make them. Students will also have access to the internet while at the SIT program center. Email and Internet access are also available through Internet cafés in urban areas. The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the

US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.



Packages should be sent to the following address via ***DHL, FedEx, or UPS***:

Student Name
EIL Ecuador
Hernando de la Cruz N31-37
Quito, Ecuador, 170508

MONEY

The US Dollar is the official currency of Ecuador, so you will not need to convert money. You will notice that some locally-minted Ecuadorian coins circulate alongside US coins, but all banknotes will be US dollar bills.

We advise that you bring a couple hundred dollars in cash (in small bills) and leave the rest of your money accessible through an ATM card. Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country. Credit cards (VISA, American Express, MasterCard) will work in many stores in Quito, although there may be a surcharge that can be up to 8%. However, even if you plan to use an ATM card you should also bring cash. It is very complex and expensive to wire money from the US to Ecuador, so bring and/or have access to (via ATM card) enough money for the entire semester. Do not bring traveler's checks, as they are difficult and time-consuming to exchange.

Very few Ecuadorian businesses will be able to make change for larger bills ($20 bills and higher). Please bring small denominations such as $1, $5, and $10 bills. *Do not bring $50 or*

$100 bills. If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check the costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

We suggest that you budget between US $1,800 - $2,000 for out-of-pocket costs not covered by the Tuition and Housing Fees. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program. Please carefully consider your personal spending habits when creating your out-of-pocket expense budget. Some items to consider are meals not provided by the program, textbooks, Independent Study Project or Internship-related expenses not covered by the program, interpretation services, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Use the average estimates below as a guide to help you plan for out-of-pocket expenses.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	1,050 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	175 USD
Up-front medical costs:	500 USD
Potential ISP travel expenses:	200 USD
Estimated total:	1,925 USD

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Solutions (BCBS), which you can read more about on our Participant Insurance page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

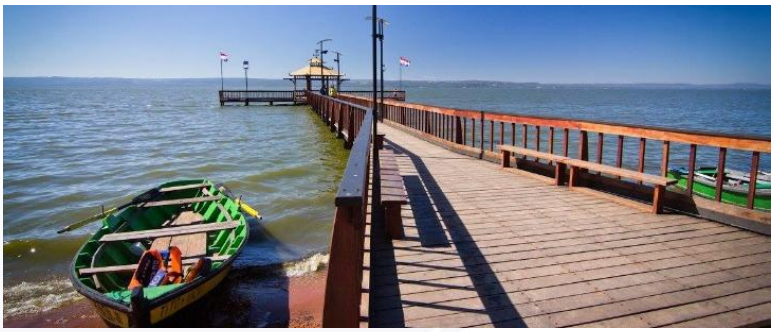
SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation Policy.

If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full Independent Travel policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, cancelation fees, change fees, and any other costs associated with independent travel. We highly recommend you wait to book any independent travel until AFTER arriving on program and receiving the final academic schedule from your program.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist.



CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

SIT maintains a Code of Conduct and clear institutional policies regarding student behavior through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Visit the policy page for detailed policies around academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, attendance and participation, credit hours, equal education opportunities, grading, housing, independent travel, prohibited activities, religious holiday observance, sexual harassment and misconduct, and withdrawal among others.

Packing Guidelines

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.



If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration

(http://www.tsa.gov) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Jeans with holes, sloppy T-shirts, and tank tops are discouraged while you are in Quito. People in offices, environmental agencies, etc., are apt to be more responsive if the visitor shows respect by dressing well.

Young people in Quito wear informal or semi-formal clothing and in general, you will benefit by doing likewise. Ecuadorians do wear jeans with a t-shirt (also blouse or shirt), but they are always neat; you see young people in tennis shoes and fleece jackets, but their idea of informal dress is a little more formal than ours. At night, young Ecuadorians wear semiformal clothing and a nice jacket. In Quito people do not use flip-flops, so avoid wearing this during your stay; sneakers during the day are fine.

Also, bear in mind that Ecuadorian host families appreciate it when their student dresses appropriately for more formal family gatherings. It is alright to wear casual clothes during excursions to the Amazon and the Galápagos — wool sweaters and parkas in the Páramo (above 12,000 feet) and cooler cotton (i.e. quick-drying) in the Amazon and Galápagos. For all excursions, field clothes are more necessary than casual clothes, such as quick drying pants. Shorts and tank tops are fine in the field or the gym but are not acceptable in town! Runners can bring shorts, long pants/sweats and tops. The more skin that is covered the more easily you will avoid unwanted attention from both people and from bugs, and can avoid sunburn. You will encounter varied climates, and most homes do not have central heating or air conditioning, so dressing in layers is a sensible solution.

EQUIPMENT

Due to the field-based nature of the program it is important to bring some field equipment with you. Please be sure to bring a decent pair of binoculars (an 8 x 42 is the best for our activities), a hand lens, a compass, flashlight, and a whistle. Consider the option of bringing a small tape/digital recorder to record lectures, interviews, and bird or monkey calls. If you have a strong focus on one field of study, bring any specific items applicable to your particular interests such as insect equipment, a tape measure, pH paper, botany books, etc. Students

will be carrying out an individual field ecology project and thus may want to bring equipment relating to their theme of interest (i.e. botany, entomology, etc.).

One of your assignments includes maintaining a natural history-oriented field journal. You can get spiral-bound notebooks in Ecuador, which work fine for classroom notes but are not ideal for a field journal. The blank books sold at major bookstores make great journals (some students even recommend having two). The rough, take-in-the-mud notebook should be small and easy to carry. Naturally, those write-in-the-rain small notebooks are best, though pencil on a cheap notebook works almost as well and saves you money.

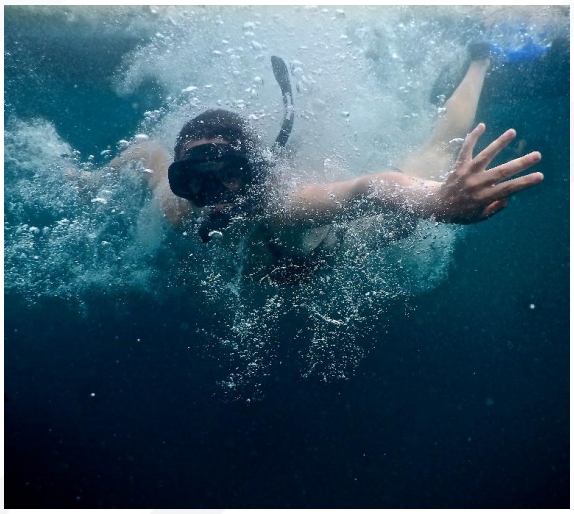
Students do NOT need to bring mosquito netting, tents, or sleeping bags (the only possible exception being a planned ISP in a very rural area, in which case you may want a compact sleeping bag; useful but not at all necessary).

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft (SIT insurance does not cover personal property).

Internet access is good throughout Quito and smaller cities. Small towns and rural areas do not have good access. The cost of renting time on a computer with high-speed Internet access is about US $1/hour in the *centros de computación* (Internet cafés). In smaller cities, Internet access can cost up to $2 per hour, and in the Galápagos even more.

It is recommended that you bring a laptop for word processing, or for Internet activities such as frequent emailing or Skype. You will be able to leave your laptops at your homestays in Quito during the excursions. Past students have found it quite helpful to have a laptop for assignments and during the ISP period, but you must be prepared for the risk of damage or theft that carrying such expensive equipment involves. Regularly backing up your files is highly recommended.



Consider bringing a computer that you would be willing to then donate to a rural school in Ecuador. This is a request from the grassroots locals asking us to support the education of rural *campesinos.* Should you have access to an extra used laptop or desktop computer, we highly encourage you to bring it along to donate. Ask around, your friends and family may have an extra one that you could pack in your bags. Though a few computers have been given thus far, the appreciative response is overwhelming and many more are needed. SIT students have had many years of rewarding experiences in rural Ecuador and our reciprocity in the form of computer donations is highly desired.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/.

GIFTS

As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy. You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Pack a couple of small gifts for children, such as small games, bubbles, or a Frisbee. Even if your homestay family does not have small children, chances are that you will engage with children in your homestay community. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will

discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, music, or souvenirs from your college bookstore as gifts. You may have small children or siblings your age in your homestay. Extra T-shirts and music can be brought as general gifts for people you meet outside of your family.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Almost everything can be found in Quito, though at times some searching is needed. Many typical US brands of hygiene products and toiletries are available in Ecuador, though often only in major cities in large supermarkets or shopping malls. Such imported items cost more than you would pay in the US. Quality local brands are also readily available. You will likely find it easier to plan on purchasing some small items once you are here, such as toothpaste or deodorant. Bring some to get you started, but you do not have to bring enough for the entire semester. School supplies are widely available and inexpensive, especially around the high schools and universities. Electronics are among the most expensive items found in Quito.

Your host family will most likely wash your clothes with theirs, or provide you alternative options for laundry. During the ISP period you may need to find a laundry service or hand wash items. Laundry soap, etc., can be easily purchased in Ecuador.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/.

Don’t miss the Packing List on the next page!

Packing List

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

Packing List sample:

GENERAL

- 1 dressy outfit suitable for important meetings (including a nice pair of shoes and nice jacket)
- 2-3 Shorts - for the Galapagos only
- 2-6 “in the field” outfits (2-3 quick-drying pants, 4-5 lightweight t-shirts or button-up long sleeve field shirts). Note: specialized professional field clothes are expensive in Ecuador
- Underwear (10-day supply, cotton recommended for excursions)
- Socks (10- to 14-day supply; bring enough for a little over a week in boots during Amazon excursion)
- 2 Warm pajamas, 2 cool pajamas or nightgown
- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes for class such as sneakers
- 1 pair hiking boots for hikes
- 1 pair sandals, such as Tevas for the Galapagos
- Wet weather shoes/sandals (could be one of above pairs)
- 1–2 warm, neat sweaters/fleece
- Warm jacket
- Woolen or fleece hat and gloves (mostly only used in the Páramo, 3-days long excursion)
- Raingear (umbrella, raincoat, rain cover for backpack)
- 1-2 One-piece Bathing suit (a bikini for the Galapagos)
- 1 bath/beach towel
- 2–4 light cotton casual pants, or good jeans
- 3–5 long and short-sleeved t-shirts for use in Quito
- 3–7 short-sleeved t-shirts and a few long-sleeved blouses (bug & sun protection) for use on field excursions
- 1–2 light cardigans or cover-ups are the perfect number of layers for nights in Quito

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- 2 passport photos
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- 2 tubes of sunscreen - at least SPF 15 (available but expensive in Ecuador)
- Sunglasses (with UVA/UVB protection) and hat
- Insect repellent - natural or with DEET up to 10% for use on skin, though up to 100% DEET (Permethrin) can be used only on clothing, and anti-itch ointment for stings and bites.
- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly including birth control (drug use other than for medical purposes are strictly forbidden on your program and strict penalties are in effect)
- Small first-aid kit with bandages, hydrogen peroxide, moist towelettes, and over-the-counter drugs for minor pain, insect bites, diarrhea, anti-itching, and motion sickness, as approved by your doctor; extra eyeglasses or contacts and plenty of saline solution and cleaning fluid

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- An open, unlocked smart phone (see Phones section for more details)
- Mid-size day pack (having a pack that can fit a week's worth of items for excursions is very helpful but you also need a smaller day pack for school and possibly for your laptop)
- Travel alarm clock
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Camera and charger, or batteries/film
- Whistle (a safety must-have), perhaps on a cord to hang from neck
- Durable water bottle
- **Binoculars are mandatory**: light-weight, high powered model, 8x42 is the best (the first number is the strength, the second is width of field)
- Hand lens or magnifying glass
- Journal (1–2 bound blank books) for natural history field notebook assignment
- Homestay family gifts (local specialties from your state, coffee table book, photos from home)

- Specialized equipment and resources—some of the course work is designed and developed by each student and thus can be in any area of special interest to you. If you think you may want to study a topic that needs specialized equipment, field guides, or software, bring these with you because in Ecuador they are not readily available and/or are expensive. Equipment may include GPS, bug boxes, tape measures, pH paper, soil/water analysis kit, etc. – any special and useful tool needed for field study in your particular area of interest.
- Zip-top storage bags or dry-bags to protect valuables, etc. (the dry bags are essential in high-humidity areas such as the Cloud Forest, the Galápagos Islands, and the Amazon Rainforest)
- Waterproof backpack cover
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector

OPTIONAL

- Donation equipment: computers, cameras, recorders, etc. (in good condition) for rural areas education and projects, see examples http://www.decoin.org/
- Fold-up umbrella
- Rain-proof field notebook (ziplock OK)
- Underwater camera/casing for snorkeling in the Galápagos
- Colored pencils, watercolors, and other art supplies (useful for field notebook)
- Pocket knife (packed in your *checked* luggage!)
- Rain boots only if you have very large feet (great boots available in Ecuador up to size 13)
- College or university ID
- Small tape recorder for interviews and for recording wildlife is useful
- Pocket-sized Spanish/English dictionary
- Waterless anti-bacterial hand soap/cleansing towelettes
- Sleeping bag and pad (such as Thermarest) if you are thinking about doing research in a very remote area or like sleeping outdoors