



COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

& PACKING

GUIDELINES

Ecuador: Comparative Ecology and Conservation  
Spring 2024

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# 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 to 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 Bolívar) 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 presidents. Former President Rafael Correa set out to boost economic growth and modernization. In an April 2007 referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved his call to rewrite the Constitution. In November 2007, a Constituent Assembly was established to elaborate this new Constitution (the 20th in Ecuadorian history)..

On April 2021, Guillermo Lasso was elected President, indicative of a more conservative regime for the next four years. His main challenges are the COVID-19 epidemic, combating corruption, and addressing poverty, inequality, and power abuse. His agenda also includes improving the economy

and international relationships with a new government image.

Since 1972, petroleum produced in the Ecuadorian Amazon has become the country’s main resource and one of the main environmental problems.

## CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

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 – 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 40°F 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 90°F 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.

Here are some basic tips to keep in mind:

- **Greeting:** always greet with enthusiasm (not observing this rule is considered rude). Saying “buenos días, tardes, or noches,” depending on the time of the day, is a must.
- **Informing your homestay family at all times about where you are and respecting your family hours.** This is also a must for any type of family in Ecuador. Failing to adhere to this rule is



considered highly disrespectful and is a source of stress and discomfort for the families.

- **Take responsibility of your own safety.** Like in any Latin American country, individuals need to be attentive at all times about their safety, mostly in cities. Try to go around in groups (with other students, family members, etc.) whenever possible. Be aware of your personal belongings in crowded streets, buses, etc.
- **Restrict or avoid the use of alcohol.** Even though in Ecuador in certain conditions the use of alcohol is largely admitted and encouraged, students need to remember that they are not part of the culture, so they could face major risks (theft, injuries, or even sexual abuse). Most of the major problems at study abroad programs are related to the use of alcohol or other drugs.

## DIET

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally (including with your host family) from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

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). Breakfasts consist 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 our office prior to the start of your program. 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 critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

Based on evolving conditions of the pandemic including higher vaccination rates, increased protection with many individuals from previous infections, lower rates of serious illness associated with positive cases, and the removal of vaccine mandates in most SIT locations, SIT no longer requires vaccination to participate on programs except for locations where host country governments require it.

However, we strongly encourage students to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 per CDC recommendations. SIT continues to closely monitor COVID-19 conditions in each program location and will advise students on any location-specific COVID-19 requirements and regulations prior to and during their program.

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, illness and accident insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document and [Student Handbook](#).

While Ecuador is relatively safe, you should be prepared to take the same precautions as you would in any large city or foreign environment. You will be expected to follow all rules and advice of program staff relating to health and safety. Some recommendations include the following: Before departure, make photocopies of all important documents and credit cards; leave one copy at home (and tell someone where it is) and bring one along with you kept separate from the originals. Bring a money belt or some other safe means to carry your walkaround money and valuables. The program has a safe place to store passports and other items. If you plan to bring expensive valuables/equipment (electronics, cameras, computers, etc.), consider buying extra insurance for them. Every student should bring a whistle for safety in the cities and while in the forest.

There are parts of Quito that are not safe and should be avoided, as will be discussed further in orientation. Even in “safe” parts of the city petty crime is always a possibility. It will be very helpful if you refrain from wearing eye-catching jewelry,

phones, or watches and publicly using digital music players and other symbols of wealth. In general, keep a close eye on and awareness of your belongings, particularly in bus stations and busy/crowded situations. Traveling on cross-country buses is generally very safe but also requires vigilance.

There are excellent healthcare facilities and pharmacies available in major cities in Ecuador, and there are also good private clinics in many smaller cities and towns. In general, private clinics and hospitals are better than state-owned healthcare facilities. The program staff has information concerning healthcare resources for most any need, including dental, vision, and mental health care. Nevertheless, you should bring an adequate supply of any medications you use regularly.

Malaria is not found in many areas of Ecuador due to the high elevation. Malaria is **not** present in Quito. However, malaria does exist in coastal areas and the lowland rainforest. Prevention of malaria is possible with personal protective measures including prophylactic medication and minimizing exposure to mosquitoes. Please refer to the [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for more information. You should consult your doctor to discuss malaria prophylaxis options. Program excursions include a total of 8 days in malarial areas (Amazon region). **If you think you might choose to conduct your ISP on the coast or in the jungle you need to calculate 4 more weeks of potential malaria exposure. Do not expect to purchase malaria preventive medication in country, as it is not always available (particularly Malarone and/or Doxycycline).**

Counseling and psychiatric care are not utilized in Latin America in the same way as in the United States. If you have used counseling services on a



regular basis, SIT advises that you discuss the specifics of this program with your mental health professional as early as possible prior to departure. In some cases, students have elected to maintain a phone or email relationship with a provider in the US, though the practicalities of time differences and program demands may make such a relationship difficult to maintain on a regular basis. Program staff can also recommend several English-speaking mental health professionals in Quito.

## HOMESTAYS

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.**

On this program, you will be staying in two 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

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

Due to the pandemic we suggest students walk whenever possible, and to be in communication with local SIT staff for suggestions of alternative options to avoid public transportation, in particular the crowded bus lines, etc. SIT Staff will provide students 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.

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. Anyways 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

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 wifi. If needed, during orientation SIT Study Abroad staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls

Since you will obtain a local phone number, do not purchase an international plan for your US phone number unless you have a dual SIM smart phone. A local SIM card for your unlocked smartphone will cost approximately \$10. Students will be responsible for maintaining minutes 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.

## 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.

For this program, only **DHL and FedEx services are available in country**. The Ecuadorian Postal Service vanished, so sending packages via regular mail is no longer an option. 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.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail then please inquire with local program staff **PRIOR** to any package being sent to Ecuador for specific instructions on how to do so.

## MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

**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 on 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.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages.**

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from **US\$1200 to \$1,500.** 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, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

<b>Personal spending (from past student suggestions):</b>	\$1,050
<b>Books, printing, supplies:</b>	\$70
<b>Up-front medical costs:</b>	\$60/visit
<b>Potential ISP travel</b>	\$200
<b>Cell phone costs:</b>	\$100
<b>Typical Internet café usage:</b>	\$1-2/hour
<b>COVID-19 Test(s)</b> (may be required for entry; subject to change and costs may vary)	\$100-250
<b>Estimated total:</b>	\$1,500-1,750



## 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 section of the [Student Handbook](#).

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program 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.

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. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

Given the current global health situation, SIT advises against independent travel. If a student wishes to travel independently, they must submit a request that will be reviewed by the Academic Director and the Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing Regional Manager. SIT reserves the right to deny independent travel requests. Further details regarding the current independent travel protocols can be found here:

<https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well->



[being/risk-management/covid-19-risk-management-protocols/](#)

Travel outside of Ecuador during the 15-week program (other than for medical or family emergencies or program-sponsored excursions) is strictly prohibited according to the [Conditions of Participation](#), which you signed. No student will be authorized to leave Ecuador before the final evaluation session. Your oral report at this session is an integral part of your final ISP grade.

# 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. Most students find that a large internal frame backpack and a smaller daypack/duffel are the most convenient choice of luggage. Bring a smaller bag for carrying your books and personal items (such as a school backpack).

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.

Ecuadorians wear conservative, formal clothing and in general, you will benefit by doing likewise. When going out at night, most young Ecuadorians wear formal clothing and a nice jacket (especially leather shoes — they never wear sandals). Ecuadorians do wear jeans, but they are always neat and new-looking. Rarely do you see Ecuadorians in tennis shoes and fleece jackets, as their idea of informal dress is more formal than ours.

Also, bear in mind that Ecuadorian host families appreciate it when their student dresses appropriately for weddings or other 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. Shorts and tank tops are fine in the field, but are not acceptable in town! Runners should bring long pants/sweats and tops with coverage. The more skin that is covered the more easily you will avoid unwanted attention from both people and from bugs. 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 boxes, 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 is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.

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. <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>. In Ecuador the voltage is 110V (same as in the US). Outlet adapters (3-prong to 2-prong) can easily be purchased in Ecuador if necessary.

## 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 ask students not to give gifts to the rural homestay. We suggest one or two gifts that the Quito family can enjoy; you do not need a gift for each member. 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 gifts from your college bookstore. 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!**

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

# PACKING LIST

## GENERAL

- 1 dressy outfit suitable for important meetings (including a nice pair of shoes and nice jacket)
- Shorts - for the Galápagos only
- 2-6 "in the field" outfits (2-3 quick-drying pants, 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 (10-14 day supply; bring enough for a little over a week in boots during Amazon excursion)
- Warm pajamas or nightgown
- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes for class
- 1 pair hiking boots and/or sneakers for hikes and playing sports/running
- 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)
- Bathing suit (not bikini)
- 1 bath/beach towel
- 1 or 2 skirts/cotton dresses/formal pants
- 2-4 light cotton casual pants, dress 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 dressy blouses or shirts -light cardigans or cover-ups are the perfect amount of layers for nights in Quito
- 1-2 nice shirts (button-down)

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card/International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (see the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document for more information)
- Proof of Yellow Fever vaccination (may be in your WHO card)
- Proof of Covid19 vaccine and/or booster encouraged
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- Bring all the visa papers that you were given (needed in Ecuador)
- Proof of health insurance (print Summary of Benefits found here: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/student-insurance/> )

## HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- 2 tubes of sunscreen - at least SPF 15 (available but expensive in Ecuador)
- A towel
- 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 eye glasses or contacts and plenty of saline solution and cleaning fluid
- Malaria medication for 8 days in malarial areas (Amazon), as recommended by your doctor

before the trip. If you think you might choose to conduct your ISP in a malarial area, you should plan to bring an additional 4 weeks supply. **Do not expect to purchase malaria preventive medication in country, as it is not always available (particularly Malarone and/or Doxycycline).**

- To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 you should come prepared with an appropriate number of face masks\*. Some individual venues may still require masks for entrance. The CDC recommends a close-fitting and protective mask that is comfortable for daily use.

## 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 and the Amazon Rainforest)
- Waterproof backpack cover

## 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