

LatinoSCHOOLS

cultural experiences



ECUADOR May 2024

- **May 5 - 17, 2024 (*subject the change*)**
- **10 - 20 students**
- **Airport transportation**
- **Host family accommodation in single & double rooms**
- **Meals according to itinerary**
- **Spanish classes and trip to the Galapagos Islands**
- **Weekday activities/excursions according to itinerary**

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c u l t u r a l e x p e r i e n c e s

SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

“Quito - *Franciscan* capital of Ecuador, *Luz de América*, ancient capital of the northern realm of the Incan empire, *Patrimonio de la Humanidad* - lies at 2,800 meters above sea level in a high valley at the base of Mount Pichincha about 15 miles south of the equator. Why is it called “Franciscan”? Its full and formal name is “San Francisco de Quito”, reflecting both its Spanish and Incan origins. Franciscan monks accompanied the Spanish conquistadors and founded one of America’s first Catholic churches (begun in 1584), in what is now called the Plaza de San Francisco, in the heart of colonial Quito. Furthermore, the word *Franciscan* as an adjective in the Spanish language denotes peacefulness, a quality for which Quito was known for many years. The name “Quito” is derived from the name of the indigenous group, the *Quitus*, which dominated that region of the Andes before their conquest by the Incas.

Luz de América, the “Light” or “Beacon” of America, refers to the fact that the city council of Quito was the first in *Hispanoamérica* to declare its independence from Spain. In colonial times Quito had the reputation as a renowned political and cultural center in all of what is now called Latin America. It has been an artistic, architectural and literary center for many years. Quito’s Spanish founding was made on the ruins of the Incan capital’s northern domain.

In the early 1980s, Quito was designated by UNESCO of the United Nations as *Patrimonio de la Humanidad* in recognition of the preservation of its colonial heritage, essentially expressed in the architecture of the old city.

Located in the inter-Andean valley, Quito is a city of sun and sky, surrounded by mountains, with three snow-capped volcanoes in view on a clear day. Its climate has been described by many as eternal spring, due to its location close to the equator at high altitude. It has a daily average temperature of about 65° F, with daytime highs around 75° F and early morning lows around 45° F. Absolute highs reach 85° F and lows about 40° F on rare occasions. The seasons are called winter and summer, terms that refer to rainy and dry seasons rather than variations in temperature. Some say that the climate at this altitude in the Andes includes all four seasons each day because of the wide variation in temperature. At 3:00 a.m. winter begins, between 6:00 and 9:30 you have spring, from 9:30 until 4:00 p.m. you are in summer and the you begin fall. Even the rainy season normally includes sunny mornings.

Slightly over a million people live in present-day Quito. As is typical of Latin American cities, the population density is high, relative to U.S. standards. But, somehow, Quito retains a small city atmosphere -probably because you can still walk to many places you need to go. Ownership of a car is not a must. Distances are short and the bus system is quite extensive.

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While having a smaller feeling, Quito has plenty to offer culturally. Movies, theater, symphonic concerts, folk music clubs, book stores, *discotecas*, *salsotecas*, museums, art galleries, antique stores, arts and crafts stores, tourist attractions and good food abound. There are even jazz bars, country and western bars, and sports bars which cater to foreigners.

The variety of cultural opportunities available may even lull you into believing that Quito is a lot like the United States. Not so! Quito is a blend of modern and traditional culture, with strong Spanish, indigenous, U.S. and northern European influences. It has stark contrasts between colonial and modern architecture, rich and poor neighborhoods, “upper” and “lower” socioeconomic classes. It is cosmopolitan and small-town (almost rural) at the same time. Where else have you seen a cow or a horse or a pig grazing in the middle of a four-lane highway in the middle of town?

Many of these contrasts are directly related to the massive migration of *campesinos* from country to city in modern Latin America. In this sense Quito can certainly be considered to be representative of many Latin American urban areas - without the magnitude of problems related to massive population centers found especially in Mexico and Brazil or even Ecuador’s port city of Guayaquil.

As the capital city of Ecuador, Quito has relatively good communication links to the rest of the country. It is the financial, political and administrative center of the country. After the Galápagos Islands, it is the most visited tourist center of Ecuador. Travel by land and air to other points in South America and the world is easier than from most other locations within the country. Its location makes it ideal for access to most other areas of the country, including beaches, mountains, and the Amazon basin. For visitors, especially visitors who enjoy shopping, Quito is Ecuador’s most important marketing center for the country’s artisan products, lying very close to some of the major production areas and indigenous markets. While life in Quito is not the least expensive within Ecuador, it was considered as recently as four or five years ago to be the cheapest capital city in the world when expenses are calculated in dollars.

Mountains and valleys, volcanoes, rivers, and varied plant life provide spectacular scenery in the area of Quito. Picturesque scenes abound. Don’t forget your camera!”*

* Description by Manchester College

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS

ECUADOR, MAY 5-17, 2024

Sunday

Arrive Quito at hours with #.... Airport pick up / meet host families

Monday

9:00

Host families bring the students to LatinoSchools, Quito for welcoming Placement test with the Dir. of Studies (Oral Proficiency Interview OPI and grammar test)

General orientation about the Ecuador trip (maps, guides, packing list for every tour and important information will be provided).

9:30 to 12:30

City tour of Quito. Walking tour around the center of Quito. Independence square, with the Presidential Palace and the Cathedral. Visit the church and monastery of San Agustin (1580) and San Francisco (1535) with its breathtaking gilded altars, considered the finest example of baroque art in America.

12:30

Welcome lunch

14:00 to 16:00

Intensive Spanish classes

Return to host families for supper



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Tuesday

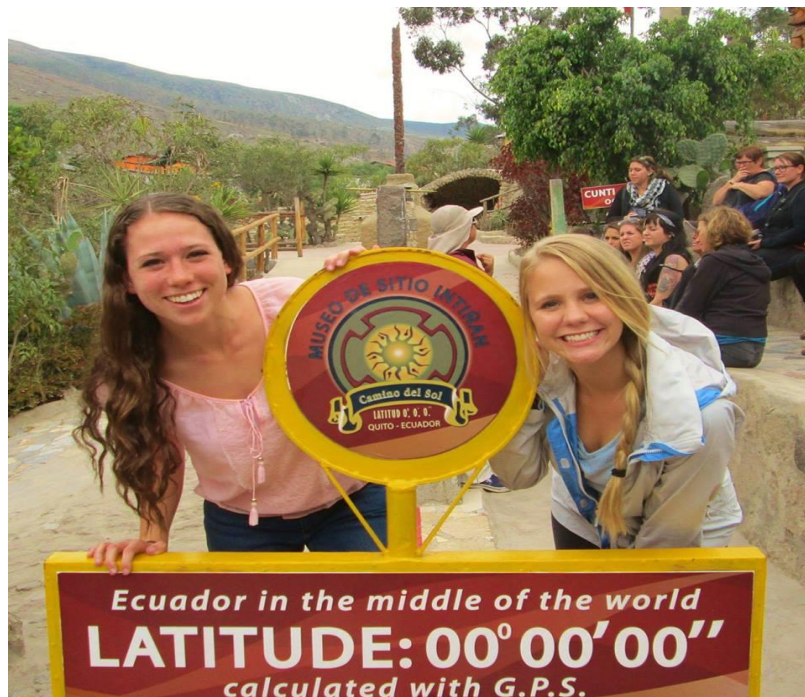
9:30

Visit to the Monument of the Middle of the World. We will start at the northern part of the city heading up to the “Middle of the World City”, where the monument that divides the Northern Hemisphere from the Southern Hemisphere will be visited. It was built during the XVII century when a French Expedition defined the precise location of the equatorial line. A fabulous Ethnographic Museum will also be visited in order to understand the great diversity of cultures and indigenous groups in Ecuador. See how water spins, how you can stand an egg on a nail, learn how you can lose pounds in seconds all at Latitude 0. Just 30 minutes north of Quito is the monument that celebrates the measurement of the earth, just as important the Equator line determined the naming of the country of Ecuador that could of also had the name of Reino de Quito. (kingdom of Quito)

Free time for lunch

14:00 to 16:00

Intensive Spanish classes



Wednesday

9:30

Visit to La Basilica and Virgen of Quito. The Basilica del Voto Nacional is the largest neo-Gothic church in South America. In 1883, started the construction of a massive basilica in the heart of Quito, Ecuador. The church is 460 feet long and 115 feet wide, with its two frontal towers reaching a height of 377 feet.

Outside, meanwhile, is a series of gargoyles that might look more familiar than the fantastical grotesques that normally adorn the facades of churches and cathedrals.

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14:00 to 16:00 Free time for lunch
Intensive Spanish classes



Thursday

9:00 We will visit the Botanical garden. This is a great off-the-beaten-path destination. It is dedicated to show more than 2000 plants. The bonsai museum and also an entire greenhouse filled with carnivorous plants. All students just love it!

It is impressive and pleasant to walk among colorful plants, orchids, butterflies, birds...in short, in the tour of the Botanical Garden the visitor learn about the forms of plant life that exist in the different ecosystems of the country.

Visit the reptile museum. This place is ideal for students. This rescue reptile exhibit is located in La Carolina park and a short walk from the Botanical Gardens. It is a small place but full of venomous and non-venomous snakes found in Ecuador (except for the one corn snake that is from North America). Good descriptions of where the snakes are found within Ecuador. There are also a small display of frogs, turtles, iguanas, and caimans. Students would enjoy seeing 2-3 dozen different reptiles and amphibians, knowing your admission goes to their care and research.

13:00 Free time for lunch

14:00 to 16:00 Spanish classes

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Friday

9:30 Depart for trip to Pichincha volcano (active volcano right next to the city of Quito with 4,800 meters – 15,360 feet). You will visit this place taking the brand new cable car and will enjoy one of the most wonderful panoramic view of the city of Quito, the surrounding valleys and up to 6 volcanoes (Cotopaxi, Cayambe, Antisana, Rumiñahui, Cotacachi and Pichincha itself), getting the name by Alexander Von Humbolt in 1802 as the Avenue of the volcanoes. Bring warm clothes for this visit.

13:00 Lunch at Quito school

14:00 to 16:00 Spanish classes



Saturday

8:00 Departure to Otavalo Indian Market. All over the Andean highlands, scattered in the valleys and mountains, you will find numerous markets displaying everything from wool textiles, native fruits and fresh vegetables to jewelry, ceramics, baskets, wood carving, native paintings, embroidery, tools and even animals! The market in Otavalo is one of the most well-known markets in the country. It is a rich cultural site where locals meet with their friends and relatives to catch up on news and practice the ancient art of bargaining. It will capture your senses making you feel as if you've stepped back in time.

14:00 Lunch at the indigenous home and have the opportunity to try "cuy" (Guinea pig)

15:00 Visit the town of Cotacachi, world renowned for the quality of leather goods.

Dinner with host family

Sunday

Departure to Mindo, only two hours northwest of Quito. This region is ideal for birdwatching (this place has 263 recorded species of birds and this list continues to grow!) Simply sit in the dome and admire the multitude of hummingbirds the feeders in a flurry of activity.

Hike on the cloud forest and then visit to chocolate and butterfly farm

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Lunch and return to Quito
Dinner with host family

Monday

Transfer to Quito National airport to the Galapagos Islands

DAY 1: Arrive to Baltra Island – Afternoon visit to Highlands Santa Cruz (Tortoise Reserve & Lava Tunnels).

Upon arrival to Baltra Island, private transfer In to Puerto Ayora, about 40 minutes drive. Check In at Hotel. Time to unpack and lunch at local restaurant.

PM: Afternoon visit to *Charles Darwin Station* to learn about the conservation and preservation of the islands. Dinner. Overnight at Puerto Ayora.



Tuesday

Early breakfast at hotel. Private transportation heading to Sierra Negra Volcano, about 18 km long route. Upon arrival to the flank of the volcano passengers can choose between horseback riding or moderate hike up to the crater of Sierra Negra at 1500m and the crater diameter of 9km, the second largest on earth, continue downhill to Volcano Chico to admire the view of Alcedo and Wolf volcanoes. Box Lunch. Return to the hotel .

PM: Afternoon short boat ride to the small Islet Tintoreras within Isabel Harbor basin, to observe the endemic Galapagos Penguins, the only penguin that lives in equatorial region, pelicans, blue footed boobies. Walk across the islet to admire the bizarre lava formations, walking along the trail you can observe colonies of marine iguanas between the rocks or under the mangroves. Passengers can practice snorkeling or kayaking through crystalline turquoise water inhabited by white-tipped reef sharks, marine turtles, sea lions and marine iguanas. The rest of the afternoon is at your disposal to enjoy the beach. Dinner.

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Wednesday

A 45 minute boat ride west of Puerto Villamil and experience the unique tunnels created by Sierra Negra. An amazing and exciting site to visit, the Tunnels are characterized by above water and underwater lava bridges, tunnels and arches. This site is unique and only found in Isabela. You will be able to enter the area to explore some of these formations up-close. Keep your eye open for turtles, penguins, blue footed boobies, sea lions and sharks which can be regularly seen passing through. After cruising through the formations, put on your snorkel equipment and prepare to be “wowed.”

Snorkel within the site:

Dive through underwater tunnels or swim beneath the extensive, sharp lava bridges, swim with penguins, turtles and schools of endemic fish,

Snorkel outside of the site: swim with penguins, sting/eagle rays, fish, turtles and sharks while being closely observed by blue footed boobies gathered on the rocks!

PM: Ferry to Santa Cruz Island, check in hotel & dinner at local restaurant



Thursday

Early breakfast and hop on our bus to Galapagos airport

Continue the road to Baltra Island and transfer out to airport.

Arrival to Quito and transfer to Quito international airport at 21:00 hours

Return from Quito to USA