

## ECUADOR TRAVEL INFORMATION

### **REQUISITES:**

You are responsible for your passport (valid at minimum through March, 2021), your trip insurance, your flights to and from Quito, your packing and tips. This trip is moderately active with some hiking/walking over rough terrain. You know best about your ability. There will be options of not participating in hikes or activities as you wish. Check the detailed daily itinerary for details on fitness levels for activities. Contact Trip Leader Beth Wiegandt (YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com) for questions about daily activities and recommended physical ability. This trip is not guaranteed to be 100% accessible for those with mobility needs/aids.

### **TRIP LEADERS:**

Beth Wiegandt is the Your Outdoor Classroom Instructor for Camp Bethel. Beth has traveled extensively, including wilderness trips. Alex Bentley is from Salem, VA but now lives as a researcher and eco-tourism guide at SKIS in Ecuador.

*Questions: Contact Beth Wiegandt at YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com or 540-556-2594*

## Ecuador Travel Tips:

### **Visa and Passports:**

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your return date. There is no additional charge for a visa to enter Ecuador as a US citizen.

Currency:

Ecuador uses the US dollar, so that makes it easy. ATMs are readily accessible in Ecuador. Travelers checks are recommended but need to be changed out at banks or hotels as needed. Small bills are appreciated. You may not be able to get change back for large bills. Artisans and shop owners expect you to barter and you will get a better bargain if you buy multiple items from the same place.

Safety:

Ecuador on the whole is a very safe country to visit. Visitors should be alert and protect their valuables when around town and especially in crowded market places – This includes not visibly carrying or using your phone publicly. Exploring on your own at night is something that you should ask your concierge about, as it depends on your location. Always heed their advice about areas to be concerned for your safety. More details on safety will be covered during orientation at the beginning of the trip.

### **Health:**

We will be travelling through all of the regions in Ecuador. As such, it is recommended to have the following:

- measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)
- diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis
- varicella (chickenpox)
- polio
- tetanus
- Yellow Fever
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- A Malaria preventative (please note that Chloroquine is ineffective in Ecuador)

You should consult with your doctor regarding what would work best for you. Malaria pills (Doxycycline) can be obtained in Quito as well (often for much cheaper than in the US), but you will need to procure that on your own once you have arrived.

**Altitude** can be a factor in some of the higher regions. This can make you lightheaded and tired more easily until you are acclimated. Also, alcohol can affect you more rapidly at high altitudes. It is best to allow yourself to acclimate slowly and stay hydrated to avoid ill effects at altitude. If you suspect that you may be susceptible to these effects, we suggest coming prepared with altitude sickness pills.

**Water:**

Tap water can be untrustworthy in many places, but fortunately we will have access to bottled water everywhere we're traveling to. We will also have a couple of water filters. Bring a bottle that can be filled with filtered or treated water. Travel size UV caps can be economical, easy to use, and rechargeable. There are also good travel filters available if you wish to have your own. Drinking water at SKIS is collected from rain barrels and boiled. We've never had any sickness resulting from the water or food at SKIS.

**Food: (see detailed itinerary for included meals)**

In most of the towns/cities that we'll visit, there will be typical American food options (pizza, burgers, sandwiches, etc). However, the Ecuadorian cuisine is so tasty you may not want to deviate from it at all! Ecuadorian bread is to die for. Ceviche and other seafood is unbelievably good. We will visit markets that have food vendors who will noisily vie for your attention and serve you scrumptious potato pancakes and fresh juice made of fruits you've never heard of. If your stomach has proven reliable with street food in the developing world on past trips, you may feel comfortable sampling the various foods offered by street vendors. It is best to acclimate slowly when introducing yourself to street foods and especially drinks made with ice/unfiltered water to avoid digestive complications. If you're really feeling adventurous you may want to try "Cuy," a relished treat from the Andean highlands - Guinea Pig! We will also have access to supermarkets where we'll stock up on snack food. Don't worry, you will not be at a loss for culinary experiences and you will not go hungry!

For our 2 days at SKIS, three meals a day are provided. Food consists of typical Ecuadorian cuisine- soup, rice, eggs, salad, beans, plantains, fruit, chicken and beef, and occasionally fish. Mamita Gloria, the cook, is very accommodating of vegetarians and other dietary restrictions. A typical breakfast consists of eggs, rice, fruit, granola and/or bread. Lunch is almost always served with a delicious soup, accompanied by some combination of rice, corn, beans, yucca, potatoes, chicken/beef/pork/fish, sometimes eggs, plantains, other vegetables and more. You may have never been served popcorn with your soup before, you'll find that it's a killer combo. Dinner is often served with soup as well, and consists of some combination of the foods previously mentioned.

**Language:**

Spanish is the official language in Ecuador. We will have daily Spanish lessons that can help you with each day's activities. Your guide will be fluent in English as well and can help with translation.

**Etiquette:**

All Interactions start with good morning/evening/day. Then you can begin your business.

If you take a taxi, negotiate the price before you leave so there are no surprises in the price charged.

Businesses and taxi drivers expect you to haggle – don't feel bad about it!

Tipping for meals is not expected in Ecuador. Tips for guides and tour divers are appreciated.

Checks need to be requested when dining. Any wait staff can assist you with your needs, you don't have to wait for the person who first helped you.

Seat yourself – most establishments do not have a hostess.

Be polite. Learn greetings and other simple phrases and try out your Spanish. Folks will be glad to help if you try!

More details on etiquette will be covered during orientation!

**Electronic devices:**

Ecuador uses the same voltage and receptacles as the US. In most places, you will be able to charge items overnight at our accommodations.

**Accommodations:**

With the exception of Sumak, we will be staying in hotels/hostels with double occupancy rooms and private bathrooms. Please notify us if you would like to arrange for single occupancy. This may not always be possible to accommodate and will require an upcharge to the listed price for the trip. The accommodations in Sumak are as follows: All guests are housed on cot-style beds on the open 2nd floor of the main building. Linens are provided, as well as shared flush toilets and showers (2) with hot water available. The main building at SKIS is a three story, open sided structure. The bottom level is used for dining, instructional courses, field training, processing field samples and general work space.

**Transportation:**

Most of our journey will be in private buses or vans with a driver and guide accompanying us. There are a few short journeys where we will utilize open air buses (Chivas) that are great for sightseeing. These will be just for our group, rather than for the general public.

**Packing:**

A suggested packing list is at the end of this document. A more detailed packing list will be shared after registration, including over the counter first aid items for international travel.

**Trip Highlights:**

- Straddle the equator in Quito
- Explore the Ruta de las Cascadas (Waterfall Route) in Baños
- Swing out at the top of the world Casa del Arbol
- Spend time at the Sumak Kawsay in Situ (SKIS), a center for environmental education and research
- Visit the indigenous community of Yaku Runa
- Learn to make (and then get to eat) local foods
- Climb the highest volcano, Chimorazo
- Visit Omaere Ethnobiological Park
- See the whale migration at Puerto Lopez
- Explore the rich diversity of the land and waters of Isla de la Plata

**Itinerary Outline:**

Day 01: Arrive Quito

Day 02: Transfer to Baños. Explore Baños

Day 03: Morning Activity Choice of a) Zip Lining (moderate active level) or b) vehicle/walking tour of 4+ waterfalls on the Ruta de Las Cascades (Waterfall Route); afternoon Casa del Arbol

Day 04: Visit the Hot Springs giving Baños its name. Transfer to Sumak visiting Mera Butterfly garden along the way.

Day 05: Environmental studies at SKIS – herpetology, cave survey, birdwatching, etc.

Day 06: Transfer to Puyo visiting caverns along the way.

Day 07: Visit indigenous community of Yaku Runa and Omaere Park.

Day 08: Transfer to Chimborazo, stopping to kayak/canoe the Puyo or Pastaza River

Day 09: Climb Chimborazo for a picnic. Visit a local Alpaca farm and community tourism project.

Day 10: Transfer to Puerto Lopez. Explore the city on your own.

Day 11: Explore Machalilla National Park, a diverse area for flora and fauna.

Day 12: Explore Isla de la Plata, including a whale watching tour, snorkeling, and time on the beach.

Day 13: Transfer to Quito.

Day 14: Ride the Teleferico (gondola) up the side of Pichincha Volcano for spectacular views. Explore Quito.

Day 15: Visit Mitad de Mundo (Latitude 00 0.000) and Transfer to Airport for flight home (must be booked to leave after 2 pm)

Trip is brought to you by "Your Outdoor Classroom - Travel," a program of Camp Bethel (Fincastle, VA) led by Beth Wiegandt.

**Base Cost:**

\$1650 for double occupancy in hotels. (For single occupancy options, you must contact Beth Wiegandt.) Please see following for a list of what is included and exclusions in this price. \$800 deposit is due ASAP to reserve your space and no later than May 20, of which \$300 is non-refundable **at any time** and the remaining \$500 is non-refundable after July 2. Your \$850 balance is due no later than August 6. All deposits and payments count toward your total fee. NOTE: \$300 of your initial deposit is non-refundable at any time, and the remaining \$500 is non-refundable after. NO REFUNDS AFTER July 2. (Trip insurance is strongly recommended.)

**Ecuador Amazon to Coast details; included in \$ fee:**

- Beth Wiegandt is your general trip organizer and liaison who will accompany you once you arrive in Quito on September 12 and through departures on September 26.
- Scientist and ecotourism guide from SKIS, Alex Bentley, accompanying the group for the entire trip. Alex has spent time in all of our sites and has a wealth of knowledge of the culture, flora, and fauna of Ecuador. He is enthusiastic to share this knowledge with us.
- Transfers from Quito Airport to Hotel.
- Hotel Accommodations double occupancy with private bath in each city nearby to points of interest/shopping for exploration. Exception being SKIS where there are dorm accommodations in the Jungle.
- Luggage storage during our time at SKIS – luggage will await us in Puyo. Duffle bags will be provided for your necessary belongings while at SKIS.
- English Speaking City Guides and driver for tours in Ecuador.
- Luggage handling for all transfers.
- All entrance fees and activity fees for listed sites/group activities on itinerary.
- All meals as listed in daily itinerary (14 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 8 dinners).
- Prior to your trip, Beth Wiegandt will provide guidance and tips for what is required for international travel to Ecuador.

**NOT Included in your fee (exclusions):**

- Flight to and from Quito (arrive September 12; depart AFTER 2:00 pm on September 26).
- Meals not stated on the itinerary.
- Alcohol purchases with meals/other.
- Additional snacks or incidentals
- Gratuity for drivers, and guides. (suggested total tips is 6-12% of trip cost)
- Personal purchases.

**Your Assumption of Risk and Responsibilities:**

- You must submit a completed, "Participant Authorization and Assumption of Risk Form" that states you have read this list, and are aware of the risks.
- If Camp Bethel cancels this trip, your deposit and Trip Fees will be fully refunded.
- You are responsible for all other costs not included in your Trip Fee (exclusions), and you are responsible for insuring against any other unforeseen cancellations, incidents, accidents, illness, or costs.
- You are responsible for securing travel insurance. Considerations: airline ticket cancellation refund; trip cancellation refund; airfare; baggage loss; accidents; emergency evacuation and rescue; plane crash; bus crash; theft/robbery; natural disasters; landslide; flooding; avalanche; political disturbance in the country; warfare; and other incidental travel costs.

- You are responsible for your personal health insurance during this trip. You should consider insuring for "worse-case-scenarios" of illness or injury, and you should know how your insurance would provide care in case of illness or injury while away from the United States. Considerations: injury; insect bites; rock fall; thunderstorm/lightning; "Traveler's Sickness;" individual health problem; illness or injury that requires an emergency service such as helicopter rescue and other means of transportation.
- It is your responsibility to have all proper immunizations and vaccinations, and to be physically and mentally ready prior to and during the trip. This includes consulting your physician, having a proper check up, and securing necessary medication.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE BUREAU of CONSULAR AFFAIRS information for Ecuador is posted at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Ecuador.html>
- Trip Leader Beth Wiegandt will work with our guides in Ecuador to minimize risks throughout the trip.

Questions: Contact Beth Wiegandt at [YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com](mailto:YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com) or 540-556-2594

## **RECOMMENDED PACKING LIST**

*A detailed packing list will be provided after registration, including over the counter first aid items for international travel.*

### **Clothing**

- Cold weather hat
- Sun hat/ball cap
- Bathing suit
- Short sleeve shirts (2-3 pairs)
- Non-cotton, long sleeve field shirts - light, breathable, and quick drying (1-2 pairs)
- Field pants that can get dirty - do not bring jeans for this purpose (1 pair)
- Shorts (1-2 pairs)
- Jeans or kakis
- *bring boots.*
- Socks and underwear (5-6 pairs of each)
- A warm base layer
- Rain jacket
- Light-weight, disposable poncho
- Winter jacket
- Sneakers
- Rubber boots are essential for time spent in the jungle. *\*We will get your shoe size and provide these boots to you upon arrival. Therefore you do NOT need to*

### **Other**

- Headlamp (and extra batteries)
- Eco friendly soap (such as Dr. Bronner's)
- Field daypack
- Water bottle/bladder for 2+ liters
- Sun screen (REEF FRIENDLY PLEASE)
- Sun glasses

### **Optional**

- Book and/or journal
- Pocket knife
- Binoculars
- Camera
- Travel towel
- Mosquito repellent (mosquitos are not too bad at Sumak or Puyo, but you might consider bringing repellent if you are particularly sensitive to bug bites)
- Altitude sickness pills (Quito=10,000 ft elevation, we will be going up to around 13,000-14,000ft on Chimborazo)