**Ecuador Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipes.htm) The Serranos (people from the Sierra) like to eat meat, corn and potatoes, while "Costenos" (people from the coastal regions)... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/family.htm) Ecuadorians place great importance on the family. Older members of the family are treated with respect and kindness. A household... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/fashion.htm) Clothing in rural areas is varied depending upon the region. People familiar with native dress can often tell roughly where... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/visiting.htm) Visits from family and friends are frequent in Ecuador. When families gather for a meal and conversation, visitors are always... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/visiting.htm)

**Ecuador Facts**

Ecuador stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | Quito |
| Government Type | republic |
| Currency | USD |
| Population | 15,439,429 |
| Total Area | 109,483 Square Miles 283,561 Square Kilometers |
| Location | Western South America, bordering the Pacific Ocean at the Equator, between Colombia and Peru |
| Language | Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua) |

Map of Ecuador



**Ecuador Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

Ecuador straddles the Equator, its namesake, on the west coast of South America. Two north-south ranges of the Andes Mountains divide the country into three distinct sections: the Costa, a belt of tropical lowlands 10–100 miles wide along the Pacific coast, where Guayaquil, the major city, is located; the Sierra, a highland plateau 3,000–10,000 feet high, where Quito is located; and the Oriente, jungle lowlands east of the Andes that make up about half the country’s area. In addition, the Galapagos Islands (Archipelago de Colon) lie 640 miles off the coast. The nine main islands are inhabited by some 15,000 people and an amazing variety of wildlife that has fascinated scientists ever since Charles Darwin visited there in 1836.

Most of Ecuador is covered by equatorial forests. The rest consists of cultivated agricultural areas, some arid scrubland near the coast, and barren mountain ranges with 22 peaks over 14,000 feet high. These peaks include Chimborazo (20,561 ft.) and Cotopaxi, which is the second highest active volcano in the world (19,347 ft.). The spectacular array of snowcapped volcanoes stretching north and south of Quito has been called the "Avenue of Volcanoes," and on a clear day the view from an airplane is breathtaking. On the Pacific slope the principal rivers are the Esmeraldas and the Guayas. Eastern Ecuador is part of the Amazon watershed. Its principal rivers are the Napo and Pastaza Rivers. None of the Amazon tributaries in Ecuador are navigable by oceangoing vessels.

**Geography - note**

Cotopaxi in Andes is highest active volcano in world

**Ecuador Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | South America |
| Total Area | 109,483 Square Miles 283,561 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 106,888 Square Miles 276,841 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 2,595 Square Miles 6,720 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 1,249 Miles 2,010 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 3,295 Square Miles 8,534 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Colombia 590 km, Peru 1,420 km |
| Coastline | 1,390 Miles 2,237 Kilometers |
| Geographic Coordinates | 2 00 S, 77 30 W |
| Terrain | coastal plain (costa), inter-Andean central highlands (sierra), and flat to rolling eastern jungle (oriente) |
| Highest Point | 6,267 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Chimborazo 6,267 m |
| Lowest Point Location | Pacific Ocean 0 m |
| Natural Resources | petroleum, fish, timber, hydropower |

**Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Because of variations in altitude, Ecuador has a variety of climates. The lowlands are generally hot and humid. Temperatures on the coast are moderated by the Humboldt Current to a range of 65°F to 90°F. Temperatures in the Sierra are generally cool, ranging from 35°F to 75°F. Due to the altitude and thin air, temperature in direct sunlight can reach 85°F at midday. In the evenings it can range from pleasantly cool to very chilly. The tallest mountains are always snowcapped, but it never snows in the inhabited altitudes, although it hails occasionally. During the Sierra dry season, from June through September, gusty winds are common.

In Quito the temperature pattern rarely changes from day to day or month to month. Mornings are cool and crisp, and midday is agreeably warm, unless skies are overcast. Fog and mist may occur in the mornings or evenings as low-lying clouds spill over the sides of the valley. Since Quito is such a short distance from the Equator, sunrise and sunset vary only slightly from 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Average annual rainfall in Quito is 50 inches, with 43 inches falling from October through May, and 7 inches from June through September. Relative humidity averages 75%. Occasional tremors are registered in the area; these may or may not be perceptible to residents. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are infrequent but do remain a possibility.

**Ecuador Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | Because of variations in altitude, Ecuador has a variety of climates. The lowlands are generally hot and humid. Temperatures on the coast are moderated by the Humboldt Current to a range of 65°F to 90°F. Temperatures in the Sierra are generally cool, ranging from 35°F to 75°F. Due to the altitude and thin air, temperature in direct sunlight can reach 85°F at midday. In the evenings it can range from pleasantly cool to very chilly. The tallest mountains are always snowcapped, but it never snows in the inhabited altitudes, although it hails occasionally. During the Sierra dry season, from June through September, gusty winds are common.  In Quito the temperature pattern rarely changes from day to day or month to month. Mornings are cool and crisp, and midday is agreeably warm, unless skies are overcast. Fog and mist may occur in the mornings or evenings as low-lying clouds spill over the sides of the valley. Since Quito is such a short distance from the Equator, sunrise and sunset vary only slightly from 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Average annual rainfall in Quito is 50 inches, with 43 inches falling from October through May, and 7 inches from June through September. Relative humidity averages 75%. Occasional tremors are registered in the area; these may or may not be perceptible to residents. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are infrequent but do remain a possibility. |
| Terrain | coastal plain (costa), inter-Andean central highlands (sierra), and flat to rolling eastern jungle (oriente) |
| Natural Resources | petroleum, fish, timber, hydropower |
| Natural Hazards | frequent earthquakes, landslides, volcanic activity; floods; periodic droughts |
| Irrigated Land | 3,295 Square Miles 8,534 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | deforestation; soil erosion; desertification; water pollution; pollution from oil production wastes in ecologically sensitive areas of the Amazon Basin and Galapagos Islands |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands   signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements |

**Ecuador Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 15,439,429 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.4% |
| Urban Population | 67.5% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | Guayaquil 2.287 million; QUITO (capital) 1.622 million |
| Nationality Noun | Ecuadorian(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Ecuadorian |
| Ethnic Groups | mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 65%, Amerindian 25%, Spanish and others 7%, black 3% |
| Languages | Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua) |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 2.13% |

**Ecuador Medical Information**

Adequate medical and dental care is available in the major cities of Ecuador. In smaller communities and in the Galápagos Islands, services are limited, and the quality is generally well below U.S. standards. Ambulances, with or without trained emergency staff, are in short supply in cities, but even more so in rural areas.  
  
Pharmacies are readily available in any city; however, you might find that the availability of some medications is sporadic, and formulations and brand names will differ from products available in the United States. Narcotics and tranquilizers are extremely limited in availability. Pharmacists sometimes dispense medications without requesting a prescription. These individuals may have little training and often prescribe broad-spectrum antibiotics. Consider any advice from them accordingly. Folk healers and traditional markets in some parts of the country offer herbal and folk remedies. You should exercise caution when exploring these remedies, as the formulations can be questionable and some components may interact with other prescription medications.  
  
Many tropical diseases are present in Ecuador, including malaria, dengue and yellow fever (which are transmitted by mosquitoes at lower altitudes), leishmaniaisis (transmitted by sand flies), chagas disease (transmitted by triatomine bugs) and tuberculosis (transmitted from person to person via respiratory droplets). To protect yourself from insect-borne diseases while at lower altitudes, use insect repellants, clothing treated with permethrin, and bed nets.   
  
In Ecuador, yellow fever is found only in the Amazon basin. Ecuadorian authorities might require you to show a certificate of yellow fever vaccination when entering or leaving this area, or when continuing travel to other areas of South America. If possible, you should obtain a yellow fever vaccine prior to departure from the United States. You can also obtain the vaccination in Guayaquil from the Jefatura Provincial de Salud, Panama y Padre Aguirre, (tel): 04-230-3160, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The vaccine is free if you do not need an international certification; otherwise it costs $10.40. Antimalarial medication significantly reduces the risk of contracting malaria. There are no vaccines or prophylactic medications for dengue, leishmaniaisis or chagas. If you become ill with fever or flu-like symptoms during or after travel in a high-risk area, you should promptly seek medical attention. Note that the onset of these diseases may be delayed by up to a year.   
  
Your Health and High Altitudes: If you travel to Quito (elevation: 9,400 feet) or other highland areas, you will typically require some time to adjust to the altitude, which can adversely affect your blood pressure, digestion, and energy level. Mountain climbers in particular should be cautioned not to underestimate the time required to adjust before beginning a challenging climb at altitude. Consult with your personal health care providers before undertaking high-altitude travel, as there are medications available to help combat the effects. If you have heart or lung problems or the sickle cell trait, you may develop serious health complications at high altitudes.

**Ecuador Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 7.3% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 5.03 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 21.4% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.6 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | 1.69 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 18.48 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 15.07 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 21.73 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 6.2% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 2.33 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 72.7% |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 110 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.4% |
| HIV Aids Deaths | 2,700 |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 37,000 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 13.6% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 75.2% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 91.6% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 16.9% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 86.5% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 75.9% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | high |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever and malaria |

**Ecuador Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime is a severe problem in Ecuador. Crimes against U.S. citizens in the past year have ranged from petty theft to violent offenses, including armed robbery, home invasion, sexual assault, and several instances of murder and attempted murder. Very low rates of apprehension and conviction of criminals – due to limited police and judicial resources – contribute to Ecuador’s high crime rate.   
  
“Secuestro Express” Taxi Assaults: Robberies and assaults against taxi passengers, known locally as “secuestro express” continue to present a significant safety concern, especially in Guayaquil and Manta, but also with increasing regularity in Quito. Shortly after the passenger enters a taxi, the vehicle is typically intercepted by armed accomplices of the driver, who threaten passengers with weapons, rob passengers of their personal belongings, and force victims to withdraw money from ATMs. Increasingly, victims have been beaten or raped during these incidents.  
  
In the Guayaquil area, you should call to order a taxi by phone or use a service affiliated with major hotels. If you must hail a taxi on the street, seek out those that are officially registered and in good condition. Registered taxis in Ecuador are usually yellow, display matching unit numbers on their windshields and doors, feature a taxi cooperative name on the door, and are identified with an orange license plate. Still, be aware that passengers have been victimized even in taxis that meet these criteria. U.S. officials associated with the U.S. Consulate in Guayaquil are forbidden from hailing street taxis.  
  
If you become a victim of express kidnapping and/or robbery, cooperation with the assailant usually results in the best outcome, as nothing material is as valuable as your life. Following a criminal incident, U.S. citizens are encouraged to immediately file a police report with the local authorities and to inform the American Citizens Services Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Quito or the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil.  
  
Violent Robberies: Armed or violent robberies can occur in all parts of Ecuador, not just the major cities. Many travelers have been robbed after using ATMs or when exiting banks. Travelers should avoid withdrawing large amounts of cash at one time from banks and ATMs, and should use ATMs in protected indoor areas like well-guarded shopping malls. In some cases, robbers have used motorcycles to approach their victims and flee the scene. Tourists have also been robbed at gunpoint on beaches and along hiking trails.   
  
Non-Violent Robberies: Pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, robbery, bag-slashing, and hotel room theft are the most common types of crimes committed against U.S. citizens in Ecuador. They occur throughout Ecuador and incidents have increased significantly in recent years. Pickpockets and other petty thieves are particularly active in airports, restaurants, on public transportation, in crowded streets, bus terminals, public markets, and grocery stores. Backpackers are frequently targeted for robbery, as are travelers carrying laptop computer bags. On buses, luggage stowed below the bus or at a traveler’s feet is sometimes stolen. Thieves in Ecuador often distract the victim, sometimes by purposefully spilling liquid on the victim and pretending to help the victim clean it up, while accomplices snatch the victim’s bag or pick the victim’s pocket. To lower your risk of these or other non-violent crimes, leave valuables in a safe place, or don’t travel with them. Make use of hotel safes when available, avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that you will need on each outing. Stay alert to pickpockets when in crowds and when taking public transportation, and be conscious that distractions can be created to target you.  
  
Carjacking and Thefts from Vehicles: To avoid carjacking or theft from your vehicle while you are stopped at intersections, drive with your doors locked and windows rolled up. “Smash and grabs” occur when thieves break into parked vehicles, but have also been known to occur in slow-moving or stopped traffic, particularly when cars are driven by females in the car alone. Do not leave anything of value in plain view in a car, including sunglasses, sports equipment, purses, briefcases or valuables. Always be aware of your surroundings, and try to travel in groups.  
  
Sexual Assault: Incidents of sexual assault and rape have increased, including in well-traveled tourist areas. Criminals generally target women who are alone, and use alcohol or incapacitating drugs on unsuspecting tourists to rob and/or sexually assault them. These so-called date-rape drugs disorient the victim and can cause prolonged unconsciousness and serious medical problems. To lower your risk, travel in groups, don’t leave food or drinks unattended in public places, and never allow a stranger to give you a drink.  
  
Murder: Since September 2009, at least four U.S. citizens in Ecuador have been victims of murder. In most cases, the victims and alleged perpetrators personally knew each other. Investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators is the responsibility of the Ecuadorian government, and do not proceed with the speed and thoroughness we are accustomed to in the United States. Although the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulate General monitor and encourage these investigations, our ability to intervene is extremely limited. The Ecuadorian government has established an emergency hotline that callers can use to inform police about murders or contract killings. The number is 1-800-DELITO (1800 335486).  
  
Credit Card Fraud: Increasing numbers of U.S. citizens in Ecuador have fallen victim to fraud related to their credit or debit cards. “Skimming,” the theft of credit card informationduring an otherwise legitimate transaction, is most likely to occur in restaurants or bars, where the skimmer takes the victim's card out of the owner’s view. To avoid skimming, take the credit/debit card to the register yourself and never let the card out of your sight. Also, be sure to monitor your bank account or credit card statement frequently.  
  
Staying Alert in Quito: Stay particularly alert for crime on the crowded streets of south Quito, at the Panecillo, the Historic District, and in the areas of El Tejar, Parroquia San Sebastian, Avenida Cristobal Colon, and Gonzalez Suarez. Quito’s Mariscal Sucre district, a popular tourist area with restaurants, bars, hotels, hostels, and shopping, is increasingly a site of crimes; reported incidents in recent years range from petty theft and sexual assault to shootings. In Mariscal Sucre, travel in groups when possible, avoid hailing taxis off the street or using unofficial taxis, and exercise caution in the early morning hours. Outside the city, stay alert if hiking to the summit of Pichincha, as violent crime has been known to occur there.  
  
Staying Alert in Guayaquil and Elsewhere on the Coast: In Guayaquil, visitors should exercise extreme caution in the downtown area and the southern part of the city. Tourist sites such as the Christ statue (Sagrado Corazon de Jesus) on Cerro del Carmen, the Malecon 2000, and Las Peñas, though well-patrolled by police, are still targeted by criminals hoping to prey on unsuspecting tourists. There have also been reports of armed robberies at restaurants in the fashionable areas of Urdesa and Samborondon.  
  
At the airport in both Quito and Guayaquil, arriving passengers have been targeted by armed robbers who follow them from the airport to rob them. Cases have been reported involving multiple vehicles that cut off and intercept the victim as well as just a single motorcycle rider who robs the victim while they are getting out of their car. The perpetrators appear to focus on travelers who are returning from overseas trips laden with gifts and large amounts of cash.

**Ecuador Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Ecuador, you are subject to Ecuadorian laws even though you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. Criminal penalties will vary from country to country. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States. For example, you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is also a crime prosecutable in the United States. If you break local laws in Ecuador, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what’s legal and what’s not where you are going.   
  
If you are arrested in Ecuador, under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and customary international law, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Outside of Quito and Guayaquil, awareness of international protocols is uneven. If you are arrested in Ecuador, request that the Ecuadorian authorities do this on your behalf. Please note, however, that the U.S. government has no authority to intervene in Ecuadorian legal matters.   
  
Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal to bring back into the United States, if you purchase them, you may also be breaking local law.   
  
Drug Trafficking: Each year, approximately 20 to 25 U.S. citizens are arrested by Ecuadorian authorities for attempting to traffic drugs between Ecuador and the United States, or between mainland Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands. Many of those arrested claim not to have known they were transporting drugs. Under no circumstances should you ever accept gifts, packages, or suitcases from anyone you do not trust and know well. If you are arrested for drug trafficking, you can expect to serve a lengthy period in pre-trial detention, and if convicted you will likely be sentenced to a long prison term and fined heavily. In nearly all cases, U.S. citizens convicted of drug trafficking in Ecuador must serve their sentences in Ecuador, where conditions of confinement are harsh and far below U.S.

**Ecuador Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 76 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 79 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 73 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 26 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 25 Years |
| Median Age | 26 Y |

**Ecuador Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua) |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 91% |
| Literacy Male | 94% |
| Literacy Total | 91% |

**Ecuador Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 4.4% |
| Literacy - female | 91% |
| Literacy - male | 94% |
| Literacy - total population | 91% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |

**Ecuador Age of Population**

Age 0-14: 29.0 %Age 15-24: 18.7 %Age 25-54: 38.7 %Age 55-64: 6.9 %Over 64: 6.7 %Highcharts.com

**Classroom**

Children are required to wear a uniform to school. In fact, each year before school begins, each child must buy 3 uniform sets, 2 pair of shoes, a change for gym clothes, and various other school charges. This cost of approximately $200 per years can be very challenging or often even impossible for families who make only a few dollars each day. Sometimes children must take turns going to school every other year because of the cost of attending school. Other families pool their resources and send only one child out of five or more, which is very hard for those who get left behind. Furthermore, children who attend in small villages receive a vastly inadequate education—not because the teacher isn’t trying but rather because she may be poorly trained and have very sparse resources for a class that is too large.

Schools in the poorer areas usually do not have enough desks or other basic classroom resources. Some will not even have adequate running water. There are many volunteer projects sponsored by international groups who are working to improve the educational facilities and system in Ecuador, but it is a very large problem that is not easily fixed.

**Education Culture**

 Although 90% of adults in Ecuador are literate, government and education leaders alike agree that there is much the country can do to better prepare its children for the future. In recent years, educational budgets have increased to provide better technology for the students and increased incentives for the teachers.

Perhaps because of the economic challenges that Ecuador faces, private schools have become a very important part of the educational fabric of the country: 65% of the education in the country is public, and 35% is private. Not all private schools are designed for the wealthy, however. Admittedly, some are, but many have also been founded by well-meaning individuals and groups who simply want to provide a better education for Ecuador’s children. Thus, international and national groups have created humanitarian opportunities for volunteers and dedicated teachers to teach in small villages in difficult circumstances in addition to creating upscale, technologically savvy schools focused on preparing the next generation of business and civic leaders for Ecuador.

Ecuador has two main schedules for the school year: children in the highlands follow a traditional schedule of two months off during the summer. However, in the coastal regions, children attend from April through December, and have the rainy season of January through March off.

If students are fortunate enough to be able to move on from the basic educational programs offered, the country has over 50 universities and 350 technical institutes available for further study. Approximately 1% of children from rural areas will attend a university, compared to 5% from the cities. Obviously, leaders of the country would like to improve that statistic as they move forward into an increasingly complex world.

**Learning**

Children are required to attend school from age 6 to 14; however, that requirement is enforced differently depending on local conditions. Three out of every four children in the cities will attend school through the 6th grade; in rural areas, only one out of every three will graduate from 6th grade. Unfortunately, only about half of all students enroll in secondary schools, and nearly one out of every five students will drop out of school between the ages of 12 and 17 in order to work.

Classes are taught in Spanish, the national language. Subjects include math, science, history, geography, Spanish, English, music, technology (when resources allow), and physical education. Like many Latin American countries, the quality of education can vary widely throughout the country, with money being the most important influence. In communities with more money, the schools have better resources; in poor villages, the local school can struggle to even provide the most basic education.

**To School**

School generally begins at 7:30 in the morning and is done at around 12:30 in the afternoon. Kids will usually walk or ride a public transportation bus to school, depending on how far from the school they live. Because they are not required to attend the school closest to their homes, they sometimes ride the bus 1.5 to 2 hours to and from the school in order to attend the one that they feel suits their needs best.

The government provides breakfast at school for the students, such as a simple bowl of oatmeal. Lunch is also available at the school, consisting of tuna, rice, and something prepared by parents. Parents take turns preparing food for the lunch.

For schools that do not have a food program, students return home to eat. A typical lunch at home might begin with a bean-and-potato soup, followed by a rice dish containing a fried egg, cheese, or chicken.

**Ecuador Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | Quito |
| Country Name | Ecuador |
| Local - Long | Republica del Ecuador |
| Full Country Name | Republic of Ecuador |
| Local - Short | Ecuador |
| Government Type | republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 0 13 S, 78 30 W |
| National Holiday | Independence Day (independence of Quito), 10 August (1809) |
| Constitution | 20 October 2008; this is Ecuador's 20th constitution |
| Legal System | civil law based on the Chilean civil code with modifications |
| Suffrage | 18-65 years of age, universal and compulsory; 16 and other eligible voters, optional |

**Ecuador Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Rafael CORREA Delgado (since 15 January 2007); Vice President Jorge GLAS Espinel (since 24 May 2013); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Rafael CORREA Delgado (since 15 January 2007); Vice President Jorge GLAS Espinel (since 24 May 2013)   cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president   elections: the president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a four-year term and can be re-elected for another consecutive term; election last held on 17 February 2013 (next to be held in 2017)   election results: President Rafael CORREA Delgado reelected president; percent of vote - Rafael CORREA Delgado 57.2%, Guillermo LASSO 22.7%, Lucio GUTIERREZ 6.8%, Mauricio RODAS 3.9%, other 9.4% |
| Legislative Branch | unicameral National Assembly or Asamblea Nacional (124 seats; members are elected through a party-list proportional representation system to serve four-year terms)  elections: last held on 26 April 2009 (next to be held in 2013)  election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PAIS 59, PSP 19, PSC 11, PRIAN 7, MPD 5, PRE 3, other 20; note - defections by members of National Assembly are commonplace, resulting in frequent changes in the numbers of seats held by the various parties |
| Judicial Branch | National Court of Justice or Corte Nacional de Justicia (according to the Constitution, justices are elected through a procedure overseen by the Judiciary Council); Constitutional Court or Corte Constitucional (Constitutional Court justices are appointed by a commission composed of two delegates each from the Executive, Legislative, and Transparency branches of government) |
| Regions or States | 24 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia); Azuay, Bolivar, Canar, Carchi, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, El Oro, Esmeraldas, Galapagos, Guayas, Imbabura, Loja, Los Rios, Manabi, Morona-Santiago, Napo, Orellana, Pastaza, Pichincha, Santa Elena, Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Sucumbios, Tungurahua, Zamora-Chinchipe |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Alianza PAIS movement [Rafael Vicente CORREA Delgado]; Democratic Left or ID [Dalton BACIGALUPO]; Ethical and Democratic Network or RED [Martha ROLDOS]; Institutional Renewal and National Action Party or PRIAN [Vicente TAIANO]; Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement - New Country or MUPP-NP [Rafael ANTUNI]; Patriotic Society Party or PSP [Lucio GUTIERREZ Borbua]; Popular Democratic Movement or MPD [Luis VILLACIS]; Roldosist Party or PRE [Abdala BUCARAM Pulley, director]; Social Christian Party or PSC [Pascual DEL CIOPPO]; Socialist Party - Broad Front or PS-FA [Rafael QUINTERO]; Warrior's Spirit Movement [Jaime NEBOT] |
| International Organization Participation | CAN, CELAC, FAO, G-11, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA, Mercosur (associate), MIGA, MINUSTAH, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, OPEC, PCA, UN, UNAMID, UNASUR, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNMIL, UNMISS, UNOCI, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador or CONAIE [Humberto CHOLANGO]; Federation of Indigenous Evangelists of Ecuador or FEINE [Manuel CHUGCHILAN, president]; National Federation of Indigenous Afro-Ecuatorianos and Peasants or FENOCIN [Luis Alberto ANDRANGO Cadena, president]; National Teacher's Union or UNE [Mariana PALLASCO] |

**Ecuador Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $157,600,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $91,410,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 4% |
| GDP Per Capita | $10,600.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 5.9% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 35.1% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 59% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 33.1% |
| Inflation Rate | 3.3% |
| Labor Force | 4,590,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 27.8% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 17.8% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 54.4% |
| Unemployment Rate | 5% |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $14,480,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | -2.5% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 44.9% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 40.5% |
| Major Industries | petroleum, food processing, textiles, wood products, chemicals |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 3.6% |
| Agriculture Products | bananas, coffee, cocoa, rice, potatoes, manioc (tapioca), plantains, sugarcane; cattle, sheep, pigs, beef, pork, dairy products; balsa wood; fish, shrimp |
| Currency Code | US dollar (USD) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 8% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 227,599 |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate | 8.7% |

**Ecuador Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Ecuador has substantial petroleum resources, which have accounted for 40% of the country's export earnings and one-fourth of public sector revenues in recent years. Consequently, fluctuations in world market prices can have a substantial domestic impact. In the late 1990s, Ecuador suffered its worst economic crisis, with natural disasters and sharp declines in world petroleum prices driving Ecuador's economy into free fall in 1999. Real GDP contracted by more than 6%, with poverty worsening significantly. The banking system also collapsed, and Ecuador defaulted on its external debt later that year. The currency depreciated by some 70% in 1999, and, on the brink of hyperinflation, the MAHAUD government announced it would dollarize the economy. A coup, however, ousted MAHAUD from office in January 2000, and after a short-lived junta failed to garner military support, Vice President Gustavo NOBOA took over the presidency. In March 2000, Congress approved a series of structural reforms that also provided the framework for the adoption of the US dollar as legal tender. Dollarization stabilized the economy, and growth returned to its pre-crisis levels in the years that followed. Under the administration of Lucio GUTIERREZ, who took office in January 2003, Ecuador benefited from higher world petroleum prices, but the government has made little progress on fiscal reforms and reforms of state-owned enterprises necessary to reduce Ecuador's vulnerability to petroleum price swings and financial crises. The government is using oil revenues to pay off Ecuador's massive foreign debt and has secured a new standby agreement with the IMF.

**Ecuador Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $17,370,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | petroleum, bananas, cut flowers, shrimp |
| Top Export Partners | US 40.3%, Colombia 5.8%, Germany 5.4%, South Korea 5.3%, Italy 4.6% |

**Ecuador Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $17,650,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | consumer goods, industrial raw materials, capital goods |
| Top Import Partners | US 26.8%, Colombia 13.6%, Brazil 6.5%, Venezuela 5.7%, Japan 5.7%, Chile 4.2% |

**Ecuador Flag**

The inspiration and design for the Republic of Ecuador's flag came from the well known forerunner of South American Independence, General Francisco Miranda. It was then adopted by the Republics of Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. These three countries formed a confederation from 1822 until 1830, the year in which they each became separate nations.  
The flag has remained the same for the three sovereign states with only slight differences distinguishing one flag from the others.

**Ecuador Flag Description**

three horizontal bands of yellow (top, double width), blue, and red with the coat of arms superimposed at the center of the flag; similar to the flag of Colombia, which is shorter and does not bear a coat of arms The symbolism of the colors is as follows: Red stands for the blood shed by the soldiers and martyrs of the independence battles. Blue represents the color of the sea and sky. Yellow symbolizes the abundance and fertility of the crops and land.

Ecuador flag



**Ecuador Interesting Facts**

* When a girl turns 15 there is a great celebration and the girl wears a pink dress. The father puts on the birthday girls first pair of high heels and dances the waltz with her while 14 maids and 14 boys also dance the waltz.
* A village named Vilcabamba is known as the “sacred valley.” The inhabitants claim that people here usually live more than 100 years. Although this claim has never been conclusively proven, the elderly villagers are healthy and active, and many people in their eighties work alongside much younger people.
* Abdalá Bucaram, president of Ecuador 1996-97, has performed as a pop singer and released albums of his music.
* Although Ecuador is a Catholic country, common-law marriages are accepted as legal marriages.
* Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of bananas.
* Even though Quichua is the first language for many indigenous communities in Ecuador, it is not taught as a separate language in most schools.
* In 1630 an Indian named Loja discovered that the sap from the quina tree (called quinine) could be used to treat people with malaria. This drug was used by British troops in India. Most people do not know that this drug is found in Ecuador and think it is from Asia.
* In December, there is a festival in Quito at which bullfighting takes place.
* In Ecuador it is considered polite to say hello and goodbye to every person at a party or a social gathering. Those who do not are seen as not placing enough value on relationships.
* In English one commonly says "no" by grunting or "uh-uh" which may cause some confusion if you are talking to an Ecuadorian, because in Ecuador, "uh-uh"; means yes.
* Jefferson Pérez was the first Ecuadorian to win a gold medal at the Olympics. He won for race-walking at the Atlanta Games in 1996.
* Maps sold in Ecuador show different boundaries from those sold in Peru. This is because of the long dispute between the countries as to who really owns the Amazon headwaters.
* One of the largest cathedrals in South America is located in Ecuador. The Catedral de la Inmaculada (Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception) is in Cuenca and was built between 1885 and 1967. It holds up to 10,000 people and its altar is a free-standing golden arch with a statue of Christ.
* Quichua words that have been adopted into the English language include condor, Inca, llama, pampa, and quinine.
* The creation of pottery has a long history in Ecuador. Pottery figurines discovered in the village of Valdivia date from 3300 B.C. Most of the figurines are of women. The originals can be seen in museums, but potters in Valdivia also make similar figures today.
* The first official School of Fine Arts was established in 1822 by Simón Bolívar. It's first director was the sculptor Gaspar Sangurima. Simón Bolívar was so excited by this sculptor's work that he created the center and made him the director.
* The Quichua tradition of dried meat or charqui, has given us the English word jerky.
* The straw hat known as the Panama hat is actually an Ecuadorian creation. It is made of fine palm fronds, woven so tightly that the hat can hold water. The town of Montecristi produces the best hats. The hats got their name because workers on the Panama canal wore them.
* The world's most active volcano is Sangay. Since 1937, it has erupted once every twenty four hours on average. It once erupted more than 400 times in a single day.

**History of Ecuador**

*Winged god cast in gold and platinum (La Tolita culture)*

THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, Ecuador has displayed a continuity in traditional cultural and economic patterns as well as in social and political interaction among the country’s highly heterogeneous social groupings. Modern patterns overlay the traditional, making present-day Ecuador a veritable living museum of its varied, rich heritage. Pre-Columbian Ecuador is reflected in the persistence of native languages, customs, and economic activities among a considerable, though diminishing, number of communities in the Sierra (Andean highlands) and the Oriente (eastern region). The legacy of three centuries of Spanish colonial rule is also pervasive and includes a social inequality that largely coincides with race, rural land tenure patterns, and the nation’s dominant European cultural expressions.

Analysts of Ecuador’s postindependence political history have pointed to a number of persistent ingredients. Regionalism is especially prominent, particularly as expressed in the struggle for power between the Sierra, represented by Quito, and the Costa (coastal region), represented by Guayaquil. Regionalism has coincided with the party struggle between the Quito-based Conservatives and the Guayaquil-based Liberals. Personalism, from the political prominence of military caudillos in the early years of the republic to the civilian dictators and the populists of more recent times, has been another persistent theme since independence.

Perhaps the most consistent element of Ecuador’s republican history has been its political instability. In just over a century and a half, there have been no fewer than eighty-six changes of government, making for an average of 1.75 years in power for each regime. The 1979 Constitution is Ecuador’s seventeenth national charter. Ecuador’s political instability is a product of the struggles mentioned above combined with the important political role maintained by the nation’s armed forces. The longest periods of civilian, constitutional rule were between 1912 and 1925 and again between 1948 and 1961. Governmental institutions, as a result, have had little opportunity to mature into established expressions of civilian, democratic rule.

Ecuadorian economic history has displayed marked cycles of "boom" and "bust" based on the rise and fall of particular export products. The longest-lasting "boom," between the last years of the nineteenth century and the early 1920s, resulted from Ecuador’s near monopoly on the production and exportation of cacao. An onagain , off-again banana boom punctuated the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, whereas the oil boom--the most pronounced as well as the shortest of all the boom periods--lasted from 1972 until 1979. The sudden end of the oil expansion coincided with the onset of a foreign debt crisis bred by massive foreign borrowing by two successive military governments (1972-79) and by Jaime Roldós Aguilera’s regime (1979-81).

Although petroleum revenues brought about significant social change by generating a sizable middle class, the widely anticipated political changes were less apparent. The populist Roldós and Conservative León Febres Cordero Ribadeneyra (1984-88) represented traditional elements, although other prominent postboom personalities, such as Osvaldo Hurtado Larrea (1981-84), did espouse more modern, center-leftist ideologies. Still, prosperity from petroleum strengthened the state’s traditionally weak fiscal hand and promised to tilt the regional balance of power significantly toward the nation’s capital.

The intensity of the political struggle, commonly played out between the president and Congress during periods of civilian rule, did not seem to diminish after 1979. Perhaps the central unanswered question of the 1980s, however, was whether the armed forces would persist in their historically active political role, or would be content to operate from the sidelines without directly intervening in the political process.

**Ecuador History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ecuador Year in History | Ecuador Timeline |
| -3500 | **First evidence of permanent settlements.** |
| 1400 | **Incas invade Ecuador region.** They conquer earlier inhabitants. |
| 1526 | **End of the Incan Empire.** Spanish conquistadors overthrow the Incas. Ecuador comes under Spanish rule. |
| 1531 | **Spanish sailors land on the Ecuadoran coast.** Led by Francisco Pizarro, they land en route to Peru, where they eventually defeat the Incas. |
| 1822 | **Spanish rule in Ecuador ends.** The Spanish are defeated in the Battle of Pichincha. |
| 1830 | **Ecuador gains independence.** |
| 1941 | **Peru invades the Amazonian of El Oro.** The two countries go to war. Contention continues through much of the 20th century. |
| 1948 | **Banana trade brings prosperity.** |
| 1963 | **Military rule begins.** |
| 1970 | **Velasco suspends constitution.** He begins to govern as a dictator. |
| 1972 | **Oil production starts.** Ecuador emerges as a significant oil producer; General Guillermo Rodriguez Lara becomes president after overthrowing Velasco. |
| 1979 | **First governmental elections in decades.** |
| 1981 | **Border war with Peru erupts.** Ends with international arbitration. |
| 1998 | **Ecuador and Peru sign a peace treaty.** Ends their border dispute. |
| 2002 | **Protests bring oil production to a near standstill.** The protesters, mostly indigenous people, demand that more of the oil revenues should be invested in their communities. |
| 2006 | **Protests over proposed free trade agreement with United States.** |
| 2008 | **Ecuador renews diplomatic relations with Colombia.** |
| 2010 | **Julian Assange** Ecuador invites Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in Ecuador. |
| 2013 | **President Rafael Correa** President Rafael Correa wins a third term. |

**Ecuador Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| August 10th | **Independence Day** Independence of Quito |
| December 25th | **Christmas** The Christmas meal may include *pernil* (baked pork), chicken, *pristiños* (molasses pastries), *canelazo* (spiced hot liquor with cloves, cinnamon, and sugar), and *anizado* (anise-flavored brandy).  Gifts are opened on Christmas Eve.  Shortly into the new year families remove their images of the Christ Child from their *Pesebres* (Nativity Scenes) and carry them to church for a Mass, which is termed *El Paso del Niño* (The Step of the Child) |

**Ecuador Meals and Food**

Recipes from Ecuador

* [Braised and Pan-Fried Pork - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/braised-and-pan-fried-pork.htm)
* [Ecuadorian Corn and Purple Potato Salad - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/ecuadorian-corn-and-purple-potato-salad.htm)
* [Encocado - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/encocado.htm)
* [Fanesca (Spring Soup) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/fanesca-spring-soup.htm)
* [Lettuce and Potato Salad - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/lettuce-and-potato-salad.htm)
* [Lima Beans with Aji Chiles - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/lima-beans-with-aji-chiles.htm)
* [Peach Tres Leches - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/peach-tres-leches.htm)
* [Pollo en Salsa de Almendras (Chicken in Egg and Almond Sauce) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/pollo-en-salsa-de-almendras-chicken-in-egg-and-almond-sauce.htm)
* [Puteria de Mariscos - Appetizer](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/puteria-de-mariscos.htm)
* [Red Pepper and Garbanzo Bean Salad - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/red-pepper-and-garbanzo-bean-salad.htm)
* [Seviche - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/seviche.htm)
* [Sopa de Tomates Con Platanos (Tomato Soup with Bananas) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/sopa-de-tomates-con-platanos-tomato-soup-with-bananas.htm)
* [Traditional Black Bean Soup - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/traditional-black-bean-soup.htm)
* [Vinaigrette - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Ecuador/recipe/vinaigrette.htm)

**Ecuador Recipes and Diet**

Ecuador food and meal customs

**Diet**

In Ecuador the most important meal of the day is the midday meal. The Serranos (people from the Sierra) like to eat meat, corn and potatoes, while CosteÃ±os (people from the coastal regions) prefer fish, rice and beans. Soup is served at both lunch and dinner and hot bread is a popular snack.

Ecuadorian dishes include seco de chivo (goat stew), patacones (green bananas fried in oil, mashed and refried) and humitas (sweet corn tamales). Ceviche is fish or seafood marinated in lime juice and seasoned with onion, tomatoes, chili and cilantro. It is sometimes served with cangil (popcorn). Ecuadorians boil their coffee until it is thick and strong. They also enjoy a hot drink called api, made from ground corn.

Ecuador produces many different kinds of fruit, including citrus fruits of all kinds, mangoes, papayas, melons, tamarinds, custard apples and passion fruit. Naranjilla is a fruit that is unique to South America. It looks like a crab apple but yields a delicious juice that is often served for breakfast. Ecuador is also famous for its bananas. The yellow variety that are exported are called guineos, but there are also miniature bananas called oritas, green cooking bananas called verdes and red bananas called magueÃ±os.

Special foods are served on holidays and during fiestas. On Good Friday a special fish soup is made with 12 grains that symbolize the 12 apostles. Every year, on All Souls' Day, most families share colada morada. This is a syrupy drink made from flour and fruits.

The Quichua tradition of dried meat or charqui, has givenÂ Americans the English word jerky.

In 1630 an Indian named Loja discovered that the sap from the quina tree (called quinine) could be used to treat people with malaria. This drug was used by British troops in India. Most people do not know that this drug is found in Ecuador and think it is from Asia.

**Meals**

The Serranos (people from the Sierra) like to eat meat, corn and potatoes, while "Costenos" (people from the coastal regions) prefer fish, rice and beans. Soup is served at both lunch and dinner.

**Ecuador Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua)

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Quechua**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Merry Christmas | Sumaj kausay kachun Navidad ch'sisipi |

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Ecuador Clothing and Fashion**

Clothing in rural areas is varied depending upon the region. People familiar with native dress can often tell roughly where a person is from based on what they wear. Western style of clothing is worn is worn in urban areas.

Many Otavalo men wear their hair in a *Shimba* (long braids). Their clothing of a blue poncho, a fedora, or felt hat, and white calf-length knickers.

Otavalo women dress in a white blouses, a blue skirt and shawl with layers of necklaces of predominantly gold beads, and red coral bracelets.

Mestizo women wear hand-woven cloth skirts and straw hats, the women also wear *serapes* (long shawls). Highland natives prefer to wear clothing of blue, brown, and black.

**Dating, Family and Children Ecuador**

**Dating and Marriage**

Teen aged Ecuadorians generally socialize in groups. Girls must ask for permission from their parents to go out alone with a boy. At 15, girls may have a quinceÃ±era (party) celebrating a girl's passage into "womanhood". This includes a Catholic ceremony and a party with food, drinks and dancing. Dating usually begins after this phase in a young girl's life. Women usually marry by their early twenties. Most families want their children to finish school before they get married.

Although Ecuador is a Catholic country, common-law marriages are accepted as legal marriages.

**Family and Children**

Ecuadorians place great importance on the family. Older members of the family are treated with respect and kindness. A household is made up of a husband and a wife and their unmarried children, and sometimes members of the extended family. Aged parents often live with their youngest son and his wife. Traditionally, the youngest son stays in the parents' home with the expectation that he will take care of his parents in their old age.

Ecuadorians also form ties to unrelated people through the system of compadrazgo (godparents). Compadres are chosen by the parents of a child at the child's baptism. Compadres have financial obligations towards the children and are also expected to provide support and advice throughout the child's life. For example, a young couple may ask their godparents for advice if the marriage faces problems.

In Ecuador, women are generally responsible for care of the children and the household. Men take a less active role in child-rearing and housekeeping. In recent times, however, the roles of women and men are changing. For example, in urban families men may share household work if their wives are working outside the home.

**Ecuador Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

Quichua is recognized as an important part of the Ecuadorian culture, but is not an official language. This language was derived from the Inca language.  Even though Quichua is the first language for many indigenous communities in Ecuador, it is not taught as a separate language in most schools. Ecuadorians who live in the coastal areas tend to talk more quickly than those who live in the Sierra highlands.  The North American response of saying no by grunting “uh-uh”  may cause some confusion when talking to an Ecuadorian, because in Ecuador, “uh-uh” means yes.

**Gestures**

It is common to shake hands when meeting someone and when saying goodbye. Ecuadorians may lift their chins to tell you to go "up the street" and lower their chins to say "down the street."   
  
In Ecuador a bus driver may draw a circle in the air with an index finger to say â€œSorry, the bus is full.â€ However, yawning, whistling, pointing or yelling a name to get someone's attention may be considered rude. Women who are close friends may kiss each other in greeting, while men will embrace.

**Visiting**

Visits from family and friends are frequent in Ecuador. When families gather for a meal and conversation, visitors are always welcome. Even if unexpected guests arrive during a meal, they will be offered a full meal. As guests are leaving they may be offered a gift.  In Ecuador it is considered polite to say hello and goodbye to every person at a party or a social gathering. Those who do not are seen as not placing enough value on relationships.

**Cultural Attributes**

Ecuadorians are a warm and hospital people who value family. People from the highlands "Serranos" who reside in the higher, rural part of the country generally behave in a more formal reserved way. Coastal people "Csotenos" are more open and liberal.

**Students Life in Ecuador**

**Mornings**

Ecuadorians in general eat three meals a day, breakfast being the lightest of the three. Breakfast usually consists of a breadlike pastry and a drink, often coffee for teenagers and adults. A common breakfast food is an empanadas, which is bread dough with cheese or meat rolled inside it and then baked. Empanadas also serve as a popular snack at anytime during the day.

**School**

School generally begins at 7:30 in the morning and is done at around 12:30 in the afternoon. Kids will usually walk or ride a public transportation bus to school, depending on how far from the school they live. Because they are not required to attend the school closest to their homes, they sometimes ride the bus 1.5 to 2 hours to and from the school in order to attend the one that they feel suits their needs best.

The government provides breakfast at school for the students, such as a simple bowl of oatmeal. Lunch is also available at the school, consisting of tuna, rice, and something prepared by parents. Parents take turns preparing food for the lunch.

For schools that do not have a food program, students return home to eat. A typical lunch at home might begin with a bean-and-potato soup, followed by a rice dish containing a fried egg, cheese, or chicken.

**Classroom**

Children are required to wear a uniform to school. In fact, each year before school begins, each child must buy 3 uniform sets, 2 pair of shoes, a change for gym clothes, and various other school charges. This cost of approximately $200 per years can be very challenging or often even impossible for families who make only a few dollars each day. Sometimes children must take turns going to school every other year because of the cost of attending school. Other families pool their resources and send only one child out of five or more, which is very hard for those who get left behind. Furthermore, children who attend in small villages receive a vastly inadequate education—not because the teacher isn’t trying but rather because she may be poorly trained and have very sparse resources for a class that is too large.

Schools in the poorer areas usually do not have enough desks or other basic classroom resources. Some will not even have adequate running water. There are many volunteer projects sponsored by international groups who are working to improve the educational facilities and system in Ecuador, but it is a very large problem that is not easily fixed.

**Student Learning**

Children are required to attend school from age 6 to 14; however, that requirement is enforced differently depending on local conditions. Three out of every four children in the cities will attend school through the 6th grade; in rural areas, only one out of every three will graduate from 6th grade. Unfortunately, only about half of all students enroll in secondary schools, and nearly one out of every five students will drop out of school between the ages of 12 and 17 in order to work.

Classes are taught in Spanish, the national language. Subjects include math, science, history, geography, Spanish, English, music, technology (when resources allow), and physical education. Like many Latin American countries, the quality of education can vary widely throughout the country, with money being the most important influence. In communities with more money, the schools have better resources; in poor villages, the local school can struggle to even provide the most basic education.

**After School Activities**

Sports in Ecuador are usually organized by leagues rather than schools, so schools offer very few sports or similar extracurricular activities.

On the other hand, private schools, especially for Americans and Europeans living in Ecuador, are very likely to provide clubs for the arts, media, and sports. In such schools, students can participate in musicals, band, choir, dance, handicrafts, chess, swimming, basketball, soccer, and many other activities. These schools are expensive and are simply not available to most of the Ecuadorian population.

**Student Free Time**

Regardless of where they gather, young Ecuadorians are friendly and outgoing. They enjoy social experiences. Young children play marbles, skip rope, and play hopscotch. They also enjoy a guessing game called rayuelz.

Soccer is the most popular sport in Ecuador. Volleyball and track are also favorites. Volleyball is played differently in Ecuador than in the United States. There are only three players on each team, and the ball is heavier. Tennis, basketball, volleyball, and track are also quite popular women’s sports.

Families enjoy camping on weekends and holidays in the national parks. In the Andes mountains, mountain climbing is popular for all ages.

**Evenings**

 Families are very important to the social and economic lifestyle of Ecuador. Although children love to spend time with friends, the majority of their youthful evenings will be with family at home. Multiple generations will live together in the same home, eat together at meal times, watch TV together, and socialize together. Children are respectful of the older members of their family, and the elderly are included in all parts of the family’s activities.

Men are very much the head of the Ecuadorian family, and women often do not enjoy as many rights or privileges as they do in the United States or Europe. This is especially true in middle- or lower-income families that are more likely to preserve the traditions of the past.

Ecuador is the world’s largest exporter of bananas, so bananas are part of most typical meals, along with other wonderful fruits that grow plentifully throughout the country. For the wealthier families, pork is also a common part of many meals. A lot of food is fried, often in butter, vegetable oil, or pork fat. Starches form a large portion of the diet, as rice, potatoes, bread, noodles, and bananas are somehow included in most meals. Eggs, dairy products, and chicken supplement these staples. (Lunch and dinner are often very similar in the basic foods that are prepared.)

In larger towns and cities, Chinese restaurants are quite common and provide a common place for families who have the money and desire to eat out.

**Education Culture**

 Although 90% of adults in Ecuador are literate, government and education leaders alike agree that there is much the country can do to better prepare its children for the future. In recent years, educational budgets have increased to provide better technology for the students and increased incentives for the teachers.

Perhaps because of the economic challenges that Ecuador faces, private schools have become a very important part of the educational fabric of the country: 65% of the education in the country is public, and 35% is private. Not all private schools are designed for the wealthy, however. Admittedly, some are, but many have also been founded by well-meaning individuals and groups who simply want to provide a better education for Ecuador’s children. Thus, international and national groups have created humanitarian opportunities for volunteers and dedicated teachers to teach in small villages in difficult circumstances in addition to creating upscale, technologically savvy schools focused on preparing the next generation of business and civic leaders for Ecuador.

Ecuador has two main schedules for the school year: children in the highlands follow a traditional schedule of two months off during the summer. However, in the coastal regions, children attend from April through December, and have the rainy season of January through March off.

If students are fortunate enough to be able to move on from the basic educational programs offered, the country has over 50 universities and 350 technical institutes available for further study. Approximately 1% of children from rural areas will attend a university, compared to 5% from the cities. Obviously, leaders of the country would like to improve that statistic as they move forward into an increasingly complex world.

**Ecuador Sport and Recreation**

FÃºtbol (soccer) is the favorite sport in Ecuador. Volleyball and track are also popular. Ecuadorian volleyball is played differently from the way it is played in North America. The ball is heavier and there are three players on each team.

Many Ecuadorians enjoy a game called pelota national. Two teams hit a small ball back and forth, and a third team stands between, trying to stop the ball. Pelota is less popular with young people but is still played by older people.

In Ecuador, young children play marbles, skipping rope and hopscotch. They also play a game called Rayuelz, which is a guessing game played in a small group. La Ronda is another popular game in which children create a sing-along. Taking turns, each child continues the song, which is completed when the last child has taken his or her turn.