

# A Journey to Ecuador

**A Brief Travel Guide for FIBUSPAM Volunteers**

*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service to others.*  
**-Gandhi**

## **Introduction**

Ecuador is a captivating country located in northwest South America. This enchanting land is known for its ancient cultures, unique ecosystems, and friendly people. Although Ecuador is blessed with a special beauty, the country is afflicted by poverty, a lack of health care, and social disparities. FIBUSPAM is a non-profit public charity that brings healthcare and hope to the people of Chimborazo Province, Ecuador. FIBUSPAM invites you to journey to Ecuador and experience this special country. We thank you for taking the time to visit Ecuador and for volunteering at our clinic in Riobamba. Know that your work will have a lasting impact on the patients we serve.



## **About FIBUSPAM**

FIBUSPAM, Ecuador was founded by Paul R. Martel in 2007 and evolved into a fully-equipped medical clinic in Riobamba, Ecuador, with the goal of providing free healthcare to the poorest of the poor. The clinic originally served at-risk populations to provide prevention and treatment of communicable and chronic diseases, such as malnutrition, parasitic infections, and complications from exposure to ash originating from the local volcanos. In 2011, the clinic expanded to establish two operating theaters with the goal of delivering free surgical services to those in need. FIBUSPAM is currently treating tens of thousands of patients a year and is performing an average of twenty surgical procedures a month. FIBUSPAM also serves the community through its mobile medical clinics, which provide care to the most remote areas of the region on a regular basis. FIBUSPAM, USA was founded in 2014 to support the work of FIBUSPAM in Ecuador. FIBUSPAM, USA received its tax exempt status in July of 2014.

FIBUSPAM provides life-changing medical services and hope through our primary care, dentistry, ophthalmology, and multi-specialty surgical programs. We perform an average of 250 cataract surgeries a year, often curing blindness. We also provide surgical services that correct disabilities such as cleft lip and palette, ear and throat conditions, vascular and skin deformities, and disabilities resulting from serious injuries. FIBUSPAM has a permanent in-country medical staff and also works through international medical volunteers. The communities that we serve have a deep-rooted trust and respect for FIBUSPAM.

The majority of the people we serve are Puruhā, a pre-Incan indigenous group that is native to the Andean region of Ecuador. Nearly 70% of this community live in extreme poverty, and 28% of children suffer from malnutrition. The majority of the people we serve have little or no access to medical care and public health services due to racial discrimination and socio-economic factors. Within this community, curable diseases and correctable injuries are left untreated leading to further medical complications and personal despair.

Our community-centered approach involves integration within the local population and ensures that all patients are treated with the utmost respect, dignity, and medical professionalism. FIBUSPAM has access to the most remote indigenous communities in the region and is able to identify, treat, and provide ongoing care to individuals and families who would not otherwise have access to medical treatment.



## Staff

FIBUSPAM, Ecuador is operated by a group of skilled administrators, medical staff, and volunteers. The majority of our employees are from Riobamba and were raised in the Puruhā culture. We also have fulltime physicians from Cuba, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

FIBUSPAM, Ecuador's Executive Director, David Guacho, graduated from Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo and has led our foundation since its inception in 2007. He is a respected

humanitarian and tireless defender of children and the poor. His dreams, energy, and commitment to FIBUSPAM have no limits.

FIBUSPAM, USA is led by Executive Director, Sarah Marjane, and a motivated Board of Directors who are dedicated to supporting the work of FIBUSPAM in Ecuador.

FIBUSPAM's staff and volunteers welcome you to Ecuador and are happy to make your volunteer experience as rewarding and impactful as possible.



## **Volunteering in Ecuador with FIBUSPAM**

FIBUSPAM welcomes groups of students, adult volunteers, and international medical missions to participate in our service programs on a regular basis. Volunteers enable us to advance our mission and serve the health and social needs of Ecuadorians living in extreme poverty.

### *Adult and Student Volunteers*

Components of our student and adult volunteer programs include the supervised assistance of patients at our local clinic and the service of families in need within the indigenous community. Examples of volunteer tasks include: assisting in administering patient eye chart exams, interacting with and supporting families during the patient intake process, assisting with facility improvement projects at the clinic site, and providing support with neighboring schools projects.

Many adult and student volunteer groups are able to participate in our mobile medical clinics and help us provide care to remote communities. In the mobile medical clinic setting, volunteers may facilitate patient intake, assist in measuring and recording patient vital signs, provide direct assistance to FIBUSPAM's dentist, or conduct initial vision screening.

Oftentimes, FIBUSPAM combines international medical missions with volunteer trips which provide non-medical volunteers a hands-on experience by facilitating the surgical care of hundreds of Ecuadorians in need.



### *International Medical Missions*

In addition to our family health practice and dental and ophthalmology clinics, FIBUSPAM has an ambulatory surgical center that includes two well-equipped OR's and a two-bed recovery room which is available for use by our foreign teams. We are accredited and have a fully functioning back-up generator located in our clinic in case of power outages. We currently support several foreign teams in the areas of ENT, general surgery, and eye surgery.

FIBUSPAM's Ecuador-based staff provides excellent follow-up care after teams leave to ensure that patients have a continuum of medical care. Our team has significant experience and networking capabilities throughout Ecuador to both identify patients for international teams and to manage the bureaucratic infrastructure that allows international surgical teams to work successfully in Ecuador.

As you prepare for your medical mission to Ecuador, please be in touch with FIBUSPAM staff to agree on the type and number of patients that you seek to treat, as well as the equipment and medications that you intend to bring to Ecuador. FIBUSPAM staff will lead the process to ensure that you have proper customs clearance to bring your medical supplies into Ecuador and a provisional medical license to practice in Ecuador. All international teams must obtain

independent liability to practice in Ecuador and participate in our International Medical Mission Program. FIBUSPAM staff can recommend insurance brokers which can help you obtain such a policy at an affordable rate.



### **General Packing List**

We recommend that you pack as light as possible and that you NOT bring personal valuables on your trip. Here is a brief list of some required items, as well as items you may want to bring.

- Passport
- Money belt or neck pouch
- Bank card, credit card, and cash
- Backpack or daypack
- A heavy sweater or light jacket as nights can drop into the 50's in Riobamba
- A bathing suit and towel as you may have the opportunity to enjoy local hot springs
- Comfortable clothes for walking and performing volunteer work
- If you are on an international medical mission or you wish to enter the OR bring scrubs.
- Pajamas

- Undergarments
- Socks
- Light raincoat or umbrella
- Any medications prescribed by your doctor
- Watch
- Personal hygiene items
- Hand sanitizer
- Plastic bags for separating dirty and clean clothes and shoes
- Notebooks and pens/pencils
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Camera
- In areas outside of the hotel and the FIBUSPAM clinic, toilet paper may not be available. It is advisable to bring some with you to store in your backpack.
- Some travelers like to bring small toys, stickers, bubbles, coloring books or other items to give to children or teens who are being treated at the FIBUSPAM clinic.
- Some volunteers bring clothes and shoes that they no longer need and donate them to FIBUSPAM patients.
- Donations of unopened bottles of multi-vitamins, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and feminine hygiene products are in high demand and are always welcomed at the FIBUSPAM clinic.
- FIBUSPAM also accepts donations of used cellphones and used laptop computers that are gifted to FIBUSPAM patients for use in school.

If you plan on going on any excursions apart from your volunteer work at the FIBUSPAM clinic you may consider packing some of the following items.

- For trekking in the Andes bring a set of warm clothes; for trekking in the Amazon bring light-weight pants and shirts that will keep you cool and protect your legs and arms from getting scratched by branches or bitten by mosquitos.
- If you are going to the coast of the Amazon, bring mosquito repellent. Repellent isn't necessary for the Andean region of Ecuador.
- Small first-aid kit
- Sunscreen
- Flashlight with batteries
- Sandals
- If you plan to go to the Galapagos or on coastal fishing trips, you may want to bring motion sickness pills.





## **Notes for Travelers**

### *Documents and Visas*

Email yourself copies of your important documents such as your passport and credit card numbers. You will be able to easily access this information in case they are lost or stolen.

Citizens of most countries, including the U.S., Europe, and China are not required to obtain a visa prior to arriving in Ecuador.

### *Electricity*

Ecuador's electrical current is 110 volts 60 cycles – the same as North America – so adapters for North American equipment are not needed.

### *Internet and Communication*

Internet and Phone – Ecuador has reliable internet connections throughout the country. Your American smart phone may not pick up these networks or may be able to “roam”; however, you may be able to purchase a local SIM card to use the internet on your phone and make local and international calls.

High-speed internet is available for use at the FIBUSPAM clinic and at most hotels including Hotel Zeus. Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp, and other video chatting services will work on these networks.

“Cabinas” or cyber cafes are also available for internet use and international calls.

### *Money*

Ecuador uses the US dollar, so no currency conversion is needed. Many vendors in Ecuador accept only cash in small denominations (\$1, \$5, \$10 and sometimes \$20 bills). Most vendors do not accept \$50 and \$100 bills. Credit cards are usually only accepted by hotels and some restaurants. ATMs are available, although we recommend that you bring mostly cash.

### *Safety*

As when visiting any foreign country, international travelers should be mindful of their surroundings at all time. Overall, Ecuadorians are friendly and warm towards foreigners but travelers should be cautious of strangers and never walk alone at night. We recommend always walking with a group, and to use only taxis recommended by your hotel or arranged by FIBUSPAM staff. Although petty crime and pickpocketing are uncommon, we recommend that you do NOT bring personally valuable items.

### *Health Concerns*

No vaccines are required to enter Ecuador. However, if you plan to travel to the Amazon jungle, we recommend that you consult with your local physician to determine if you should update your vaccinations or take malaria prophylaxis.

Riobamba and the FIBUSPAM clinic are at an altitude of about 9,035 feet above sea level. Altitude sickness begins to effect some individuals at 8,000 feet above sea level. Some travelers experience mild discomfort upon arrival to Riobamba and others are unaffected. If you think you may be prone to altitude sickness, consult your doctor or bring altitude sickness medication with you. Altitude sickness usually passes in a day or so.

Please advise FIBUSPAM staff if you have any food allergies or require a special diet so we can accommodate your needs.

Although cases of the Zika virus have been reported in Ecuador, the mosquito that transmits the Zika virus, the *Aedes Aegypti*, does not live in the high altitude of the Andes. If your trip is limited to areas in and around the Andes, you need not worry about the mosquito-borne transmission of the Zika virus. Likewise, risk of transmission in the Amazon and coastal regions of Ecuador is relatively low although you should take caution in these regions if you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant.

### *Transportation*

Ecuador has two international airports, one in Quito (airport code OIU), and one in Guayaquil (GYE). Riobamba is about a 3 ½ - 4 hour drive from both airports; however, we recommend flying into Quito as it is easier to adjust to the altitude of the Andes when you land in the high-altitude city of Quito, rather than landing at sea-level and driving to high altitude.

Note that Quito Airport is located about an hour outside of the city. We recommend staying in hotels near the airport rather than in the city of Quito upon your arrival and departure to avoid congested city traffic.

Public transportation such as taxis, buses, and trains are available throughout the country. Please contact FIBUSPAM staff if you need help arranging an independent trip.



### ***Riobamba***

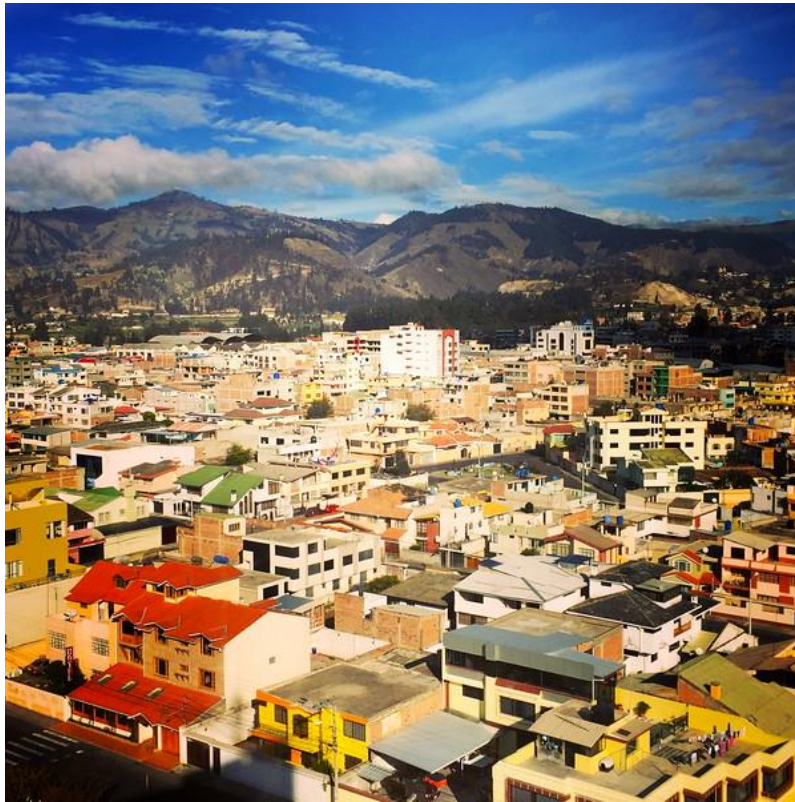
Riobamba is the capital of the Chimborazo Province and is home to the FIBUSPAM Clinic. Riobamba is 120 miles south of Quito and is an important regional transport center, as well as being a stop on the Pan-American Highway.

Riobamba is located in the center of the country in the sierra region within close proximity to the Chimborazo volcano. Like many cities in Ecuador, Riobamba has a nearly constant temperature year-round with a wet and dry season. Its altitude (9,035 feet) and closeness to Chimborazo give the city a cool annual climate with temperatures ranging between the high 50's to low 70's.

The region surrounding Riobamba was inhabited by the Puruhá nation before the advance of the Incas during the late 15th century. The Puruhas presented a fierce resistance to the Inca's quest of conquering present-day northern Ecuador. This compelled the Inca Huayna Capac to pursue an alliance in order to pacify the tribes who sided with Condorazo, the general of the Puruha nation.

On August 15, 1534, Riobamba was established in the San Miguel plains by Diego de Almagro as the first city in modern-day Ecuador. In 1563, the city became part of the Spanish Empire's newly-formed Royal Audience of Quito. The city was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1797, but rebuilt a few years later 8.7 miles from its original location. The city still retains much of its architecture from the Spanish period.

In the Ecuadorian War of Independence, Riobamba first declared independence on November 11, 1820 but was soon retaken. The city finally became part of an independent Gran Colombia in 1822, and then a separate Republic of Ecuador in 1830.



### **Climate and Geography**

Ecuador is home to four distinct ecological regions, La Costa (Pacific coastal plains), El Oriente (eastern rainforests), La Sierra (mountains), and the Galapagos Islands. The Ecuadorian coast, La Costa, features beautiful beaches and is well known for whale watching from April to September. Some Ecuadorian beaches are also popular surfing destinations. The largest city in Ecuador, Guayaquil, is also on the coast.

The Ecuadorian Amazon, El Oriente, lies in the northeast and contains thousands of unique plant and animal species, as well as a few indigenous tribes that still live solely off the land.

The Andes Mountains, La Sierra, run down the center of the country, like a backbone, and contain several active volcanos. Ecuador's capital, Quito, is nestled in the Andes, and Riobamba and the FIBUSPAM Clinic are also located in this region of the country.

Ecuador is home to the Galapagos Islands which is a volcanic island chain in the Pacific Ocean made famous by Charles Darwin's research and its unique ecosystem.

The climate of Ecuador varies by region due to differences in altitude and, to a degree, in proximity to the equator.

The coastal lowlands in the western part of Ecuador are typically warm with an average temperature of 77 °F. Coastal areas are affected by ocean currents, and between the months of January and April are hot and rainy.

The weather in La Sierra is consistent to that of a subtropical highland climate. The average temperature during the day is 66 °F, which generally falls to an average of 50 °F at night. There are only two distinct seasons in the country--the dry and wet season. As Ecuador is primarily in the southern hemisphere, the dry season (winter) runs from June to September, and the wet season (summer) is from October to May.

Ecuador enjoys 12 hours of direct equatorial daylight 365 days a year as its land mass is on or near the equator. However, the climate you will experience depends largely on where you are within the four distinct geographical areas—the Sierra (mountains), the Oriente (eastern rainforests), the Costa (Pacific coastal plains), and the Galapagos Islands.



### ***Culture and People***

In general, Ecuadorians are warm and friendly and very welcoming to tourists. The first thing to realize about Ecuadorian culture is that it is not one single culture. Instead it is a whole range of cultures mingled together representing every level of this very stratified society. Ecuador has about 15.75 million inhabitants, and its religions are comprised of 80% Catholic, 11% Protestant, and the remaining 9% are a combination of other religions.

Ecuador's official language is Spanish, but Quichua, an Incan language, is spoken by the Indian population. Besides Spanish, ten native languages are spoken in Ecuador. English is the most spoken foreign language among tourism service providers and professionals.

Long before the Spanish conquered Ecuador and even before the rise of the Incan civilization, the diverse native cultures of the region had rich musical traditions. Music played an important role in the lives of the ancient Andean people, and archaeologists have found musical instruments such as drums, flutes, trumpets and other musical artifacts in ancient tombs.

Present-day Afro-Ecuadorians are famous for their marimba music and their many musical and dance festivals.

Ecuadorians have a distinctive type of dress. The men and especially the woman in each region of Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands can be easily identified by their dress as it displays the unique cultural diversities that are characteristic of that particular region.



### ***Food***

Ecuadorian cuisine is diverse, varying with altitude and associated agricultural conditions. Pork, chicken, beef, and *cuy* (guinea pig) are popular in the mountainous regions, and are served with a variety of carbohydrate-rich foods, especially rice, corn, and potatoes. A popular street food in mountainous regions is *hornado*, consisting of potatoes served with roasted pig. Some examples of Ecuadorian cuisine include *patacones* (unripe plantains fried in oil, mashed up, and then refried), *llapingachos* (a pan-seared potato ball), and *seco de chivo* (a type of stew made from goat). A wide variety of fresh fruit is available, particularly at lower altitudes, including *granadilla*, passionfruit, *naranjilla*, several types of banana, *uvilla*, *taxo*, and tree tomato.

The food is somewhat different in the southern mountainous areas, featuring typical Loja food such as *repe*, a soup prepared with green bananas; *cecina*, roasted pork; and *miel con quesillo*, or "*cuajada*", as dessert. In the rainforest, a dietary staple is the *yuca*, elsewhere called cassava. The starchy root is peeled and boiled, fried, used as a bread, in frozen yogurt, and in a variety of other dishes. Many fruits are available in this region including bananas, tree-grapes, and peach-palms.

Most regions in Ecuador follow the traditional three-course meal of *sopa* (soup) and *segundo* (second dish), which includes rice and a protein such as beef, poultry, pork, or fish.

Then dessert and coffee are customary. Dinner is usually lighter and sometimes just coffee or *agua de remedio* (herbal tea, lit. "remedy water") with bread.

*Aguardiente*, a sugar cane-based spirit, is probably the most popular national alcohol. *Canelazo* is a popular drink made from *aguardiente*. Drinkable yogurt, available in many fruit flavors, is popular and is often consumed with *pan de yuca*. One traditional non-alcoholic beverage is *pinol*, made from *machica* (toasted barley flour), *panela* (unrefined sugar), and spices. Another traditional non-alcoholic beverage is *colada morada*, which is made with black corn flour, sweetened with *panela*, and flavored with fresh fruit, herbs, and spices.



### ***Brief History of Ecuador***

Evidence of human inhabitants in Ecuador dates back to 10,000 BC, and agricultural communities are recorded as early as 3,000 BC. Early Ecuadorian civilization boasts some of the continent's oldest known pottery.

As years progressed indigenous civilizations grew. Notably, during the rule of Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, the Incan people began to build an empire and conquer other indigenous nations. The three ancient cultures of present-day Ecuador resisted the Incan invasions for a while, but eventually the Incas conquered this land and imposed their language, Kichwa (official language). The country was eventually colonized by the Spaniards in 1532 during a period in which the Incan Empire was struggling due to wars between its leaders.

For almost 300 years Ecuador was ruled by Spanish governors from Peru and later from Colombia, and as a result, their architecture, religion, and language were assimilated into the culture. This period of Spanish rule ended in 1822, when independence was achieved for the country of Ecuador.

Simon Bolivar united Ecuador to Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela to form The Gran Colombia. This great nation only lasted for 8 years as local interests affected the union and the liberator's dreams vanished.

In 1830 Ecuador became a Republic and has remained since, although it has faced some economic and political difficulties that have stagnated development. Dictatorships and many coup d' état have been part of Ecuador's recent history, and Ecuador is still struggling to stabilize its economy.



### ***Economy***

The economy of Ecuador is based mostly on exports of oil, bananas, shrimp, gold, and other primarily agricultural products, as well as money transfers from nearly a million Ecuadorian emigrants employed abroad. In 2002, oil accounted for about one-third of the public-sector revenue and 40% of export earnings. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of bananas and a major exporter of shrimp. Exports of non-traditional products such as flowers and canned fish have grown in recent years. Industry is largely oriented to servicing the domestic market.

Deteriorating economic performance in 1997–1998 culminated in a severe financial crisis in 1999. The crisis was precipitated by a number of external upsets, including the El Niño weather phenomenon in 1997, a sharp drop in global oil prices in 1997–1998, and international emerging market instability in 1997–1998. These factors highlighted the government of Ecuador's unsustainable economic policy mix of large fiscal deficits and expansionary money strategy, and, subsequently, resulted in a 7.3% contraction of GDP, annual year-on-year inflation of 52.2%, and a 65% devaluation of the national currency in 1999.

On January 9, 2000, the administration of President Jamil Mahuad announced its intention to adopt the U.S. dollar as the official currency of Ecuador to address the ongoing economic



crisis. Subsequent protest led to the 2000 Ecuadorian coup d'état which saw Mahuad's removal from office and the elevation of Vice President Gustavo Noboa to the presidency.

The government under President Noboa confirmed its commitment to convert to the dollar as the cornerstone of its economic recovery strategy, successfully completing the transition from sucres to dollars in 2001. Following the completion of a one-year standby program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in December 2001, Ecuador successfully negotiated a new \$205 million standby agreement with the IMF in March 2003.

### *Government*

Ecuador's political situation today is deeply rooted in the country's tumultuous history. The Republic of Ecuador's political system is a representative democracy. The government is divided into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. There is also an autonomous electoral agency called the Tribunal Supremo Electoral. Ecuador is separated into 24 provinces each of which is further divided into administrative cantones and parroquias.

In 2008, President Rafael Correa dissolved the Congress and convened a special constitutional assembly which wrote a new Ecuadorian Constitution. The proposed constitution went to referendum in September of 2008, and was approved by a wide margin.



## **Things to Do Around the Clinic and Riobamba**

If you have a heart for adventure and exploration, there is plenty to do in just a few hours range from FIBUSPAM's Clinic. If you are part of a guided tour, your itinerary may include some or all of the following activities. If you are part of a medical mission team or an independent traveler, please feel free to ask FIBUSPAM's staff to help you arrange some or all of the activities below.

### ***Mt. Chimborazo***

Chimborazo is an inactive volcano located just 15 minutes from the clinic. Its last known eruption is believed to have occurred around 550 AD. With a peak elevation of 6,268 meters (20,564 ft.), Chimborazo is the highest mountain in Ecuador. While not being the highest mountain above sea level worldwide, its location along the equatorial bulge makes its summit the farthest point on the Earth's surface from the Earth's interior and the closet point on Earth to the sun.

Trekking Mt. Chimborazo is an excellent afternoon adventure and a truly Ecuadorian experience.



### ***The town of Baños***

Baños de Agua Santa, commonly referred to as Baños, is a city in eastern Tungurahua Province, about an hour and a half from FIBUSPAM.

Baños is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Ecuador due to its amazing natural beauty (it is home to more than 60 waterfalls) and its plethora of available adventure sports. Locals and visitors alike enjoy rafting, kayaking, canoeing, bridge jumping, hiking, biking and horseback riding.

Baños is located on the northern foothills of the Tungurahua volcano, at an elevation of 1,820 meters (5,971 feet). Its volcanic activity has been characterized by frequent powerful ash explosions and lava flows that can be regularly seen. Volcanic hot springs feed a pool in Baños which is most relaxing before the crowds arrive in mid-morning.

The city is also a Roman Catholic religious center, as Catholic tradition holds that the Virgin Mary appeared at a nearby waterfall. A sculpture of the Virgin, called *Virgen de Agua Santa*, was placed in the cathedral.

Baños is also known as the "Gateway to the Amazon", and it is the last big city still located in the mountains before reaching the jungle and other towns that are located in the Amazon River basin.

Baños is known for its production of taffy or melcocha in Spanish which is made from local sugar cane, and is also known for its small shops that sell the town's famous wooden parrots made of balsa wood.

A trip to Baños can be a nice day trip or weekend excursion.



## Things to do around Ecuador

### *La Sierra-In and Around the Andes*

In addition to the activities in and around Riobamba, the Ecuadorian Andes offer a unique opportunity to experience life in Ecuador and the beauty of this unique mountainous region.

## *Quito*

Quito, formally San Francisco de Quito, is the capital city of Ecuador, and at an elevation of 9,350 feet it is the highest official capital city in the world. The historic center of Quito has one of the largest, least-altered and best-preserved historic centers in the Americas and is one of the city's main tourist attractions. Quito was designated as an UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 1978.

The central square of Quito is located about 25 km south of the equator; the city itself extends to about one km of zero latitude. A monument and museum marking the general location of the equator is known locally as "Mitad del Mundo" (the middle of the world), to avoid confusion, as the word "ecuador" is Spanish for the word "equator".

In addition to Mitad del Mundo and the historic center, Quito offers a variety of tourist attractions including cable cars which provide a spectacular city view, historic churches, and a vibrant artisan market.

Quito is a three-hour drive from Riobamba.



### *Quilotoa Lagoon*

Quilotoa is a water-filled caldera and the most western volcano in the Ecuadorian Andes. The 2-mile-wide caldera was formed by the collapse of this now inactive volcano following a catastrophic VEI-6 eruption about 800 years ago. This eruption produced pyroclastic flows and lahars that reached the Pacific Ocean and spread an airborne deposit of volcanic ash throughout the northern Andes. The caldera has since accumulated an 820 feet deep crater lake, which has a greenish color as a result of dissolved minerals.

In addition to simply enjoying this fantastic view, tourists may trek around the crater on trails with varying difficulty or enjoy a boat ride on the crater itself. This lagoon is about 2.5 hours from Riobamba and is best visited on the way to or from the FIBUSPAM clinic.



## *Otavalo*

Otavalo is world-famous for its indigenous population, the so-called Otavalos, many of which are travelling around the world to sell their famous handicrafts or play in Andean Folk music groups. The Otavalos are considered the most economically successful indigenous group of Latin America, and many of the grandest houses and largest pickup trucks in Otavalo are owned by Otavalos. However, a great percentage of the Otavalos, especially in the surrounding villages, live in poverty and are victims of racial discrimination. Otavalos are easily recognized by their traditional dress: white pants and a dark poncho for men; a dark skirt and a white blouse with colorful embroidery and colorful waistband for women. Both sexes wear their hair long (the men usually braided).

Otavalo is home to a world famous artisan market where indigenous and mestizo people from Otavalo and surrounding villages sell their handicrafts. You will find a wide range of weavings, jewelry, clothes, wood and stone carvings, paintings, Panama hats, and some products from neighboring Peru and Colombia. Although Saturday is the main market day and the whole town is filled with little stalls, there are plenty of stalls open at Plaza de Ponchos on any day.

Otavalo is about 4.5 hours from the FIBUSPAM clinic but is only 1.5 hours from Quito and is a great way to end or begin a trip to Ecuador.



### *Papallacta Hot Springs*

The town of Papallacta is famous for its natural volcanic hot springs which have become one of Ecuador's most famous tourist attractions. This extensive series of pools sits in a forest at the foot of a line of Andean mountains. Trees reach out over the water and bromeliads cling to their branches drawing in steam. The pools are of varying temperatures and depths – from knee-high to neck-high. Water pours from the ground between a bath like 30C and a scalding 70C, and the temperatures in the pools range from 36C to 40C, a difference that is more than noticeable as you move between the pools.

The minerals in the springs are said to have natural health-giving qualities, assisting against the likes of rheumatism, allergies and swelling. In Ecuador, however, it has never been tradition to supplement this with other spa-like treatments. So bathers simply lounge about, circulating from cooler to warmer patches, or simply letting the water move around them as they lay back, staring into the canopy and the mountain slopes. This area is also a popular place from which you can view hummingbirds.

Papallacta is about 3.5 hours from Riobamba and is a great way to start or end a trip with FIBUSPAM.



## *Cotopaxi*

Cotopaxi is an active stratovolcano in the Andes Mountains, located in Cotopaxi Province, about 30 miles outside of Quito. It is the second highest summit in Ecuador, reaching a height of 19,347 feet and is one of the world's highest volcanoes. Since 1738, Cotopaxi has erupted more than 50 times, resulting in the creation of numerous valleys formed by mudflows around the volcano. Cotopaxi's most recent eruption was on August 15, 2015. Tourists and locals alike are welcome to hike in and around Cotopaxi National Park to get a first-hand experience with an active volcano. Note that travelers should check with local officials before touring Cotopaxi to make sure that the park is open as it routinely closes during eruptions and anticipated volcanic activity.





## ***Cuenca***

The city of Cuenca is the capital of the Azuay Province and the center of the city is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Trust site due to its many historical buildings. Cuenca is well known for its stunning architecture, tourist attractions, hotels and night activities.

This area's compactness, grid-like layout, and numerous readily identifiable monuments make it easy to navigate. Outside this area the city can be confusing, as there are dozens of narrow colonial streets with similar buildings.

Cuenca is about 4.5 hours from the FIBUSPAM clinic.



## ***Inka Pirka***

Inka Pirka is an archeological site and Inca ruins located just outside of Cuenca. These are the largest known Inca ruins in Ecuador. The most significant building is the Temple of the Sun, an elliptically shaped building constructed around a large rock. The building is constructed in the Inca way without mortar, as are most of the structures in the complex. The stones were carefully chiseled and fashioned to fit together perfectly. The Temple of the Sun was positioned so that on the solstices, at exactly the right time of day, sunlight would fall through the center of the doorway of the small chamber at the top of the temple. Most of this chamber has fallen down.

Inka Pirka had long been settled by the Cañari indigenous people, who called it *Hatun Cañar*. As the Inca Empire expanded into southern Ecuador, the Inca Túpac Yupanqui encountered the Cañari "Hatun Cañar" tribe and had difficulty in conquering them. In a second attempt, he used different political strategies, marrying the Cañari princess and improving the Cañari city of Guapondelig, calling it Pumapungo (nowadays Cuenca).

The Inca and Cañari decided to settle their differences and live together peacefully. The astronomical observatory was built under Inca Huayna Capac. They renamed the city and kept most of their individual customs separate. Although the Inca were more numerous, they did not demand that the Cañari give up their autonomy.

The castle complex is of Cañari-Inca origin. The objective of its construction is uncertain. The complex played an important role as a fortress and storehouse to resupply troops on route to northern Ecuador. At Inka Pirka a complex underground aqueduct system was developed to provide water to the entire compound.

The people had numerous ritual celebrations on the complex. Gallons of a local fermented drink were used in these festivals. As sun and moon worshippers, they tried to be as close to their gods as possible. The weather changes rapidly, within minutes, ranging from calm and sunny one minute to rainy, windy, and cold another minute. This climate volatility is typical year round. The people felt strongly that this was the place where the gods had led them, regardless of the climate.



### *El Oriente- The Amazon Jungle*

Ecuador has the highest concentration of biodiversity in all of the world, mainly due to its claim to the Amazon jungle, the Galapagos Islands, as well as the high-altitude Andes and low-lying coast line. Experiencing the Amazon jungle is a very taxing but rewarding experience that can be done from many places in Ecuador. Additionally, FIBSUPAM serves a few jungle communities on an annual basis.

### *Tena*

Tena, the capital of the Napo Province, is a city in the Amazon rainforest. Known as the “cinnamon capital” of Ecuador, and originally founded by missionary explorers, Tena has emerged as a major commercial center of Ecuador. It is home to a regional hospital and many tourist-related businesses, including a small airport and a vital bus terminal. Tena is a popular launching point for jungle, kayaking and rafting tours in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest region.

Tena is less than two hours from Riobamba.



### *Coca*

If you're interested in a more intense jungle experience, try launching from Coca which is a 7-hour drive from Riobamba or a quick flight from Quito. From Coca, you can trek into untouched jungle where you are more likely to see wildlife in addition to spectacular fauna. FIBUSPAM visits an indigenous tribe from the outskirts of Coca on an annual basis.



### *La Costa- Costal Ecuador*

Coastal Ecuador is home to beautiful beaches and breathtaking cloud forests. It has holds the history of rich coastal indigenous peoples and is home to the largest city in the country, Guayaquil. Travelers can also find many nature reserves and haciendas that are available for touring. The coast of Ecuador as many attractions and travelers can spends weeks exploring its beauty.

## Montañita

Montañita is a small town on coastal Ecuador about 2 hours northwest of Guayaquil. Translated as "little hill," it became famous very slowly, decades ago, as a place for surfing with only a few rustic fishermen houses and one or two surfers' tents in the summer. In the 1960's, Montañita was the place where many foreign people linked with the "hippie movement" became enamored and decided to settle permanently. A popular destination for surfers from around the world and considered one of the best beaches in Ecuador's southern coast, Montañita is a town located on the Peninsula of Santa Elena.

About a half an hour outside of Montañita travelers can experience a beautiful waterfall and nature reserve called Dos Mangas that isn't to be missed.

High season for tourism peaks in January and hits its low in June. Each February, Carnival is held in Montañita. Water sports that draw tourists and locals to Montañita include bodyboarding, scuba diving, and windsurfing.



## *Salinas*

The westernmost city on mainland Ecuador, Salinas, is an important tourist center. Salinas is Ecuador's largest coastal resort and offers ample water sports, boating, and delicious seafood. Whale watching and deep sea fishing tours are also launched from Salinas. Ecuador's only mainland sea lion colony is also viewable from Salinas.



## *Agua Blanca*

Agua Blanca is a private coastal community within Machalilla National Park hosting archeological remains of two of the most ancient civilizations in South America, the Monteño and Valdivia, along with trails and a sulfur lagoon. The trailhead after the main gate takes you through a 5km trail along the riverbed and ends before the museum.

From the museum, a guide will take you through a short nature trail with a couple of river crossings. Since it is an easy, flat trail it is recommended you wear sandals. At the end of this trail is the sulfur lagoon. You're encouraged to jump in, so bring your swimwear. Mud is routinely collected from the bottom of this pool so guests can apply their own facial mud masks. There are bathrooms and a facility to change and shower next to the lagoon.

Once you are finished relaxing in the lagoon, the guide will return you to the museum through another path which contains a lookout point.



### *Isla de la Plata*

Isla de la Plata is a small island off the coast of Manabí, Ecuador, and is part of Parque Nacional Machalilla. It can be reached by boat from the city of Puerto López which is about an hour north of Montanita. On the island, there is a large diversity of animal species. For example, several species of booby, including the blue-footed booby, red-footed booby, and the Nazca booby. Another species found here is the South American sea lion. Dolphins, like the pantropical spotted dolphin can be found in the water near the island.

Guided tours are given on a couple of different hiking trails. There are many attractive rock beaches on the island where you can see many forms of wildlife and plant species. An Incan Shrine is also located on the island.

Isla de la Plata is commonly referred to as the “poor man’s Galapagos” as many species that are found in the Galapagos also exist on Isla de la Plata.





## *Guayaquil*

Guayaquil is the largest and the most populous city in Ecuador, with around 2.69 million people in the metropolitan area, as well as the nation's main port. The city is the capital of the Ecuadorian province of Guayas. Guayaquil is located on the western bank of the Guayas River, which flows into the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Guayaquil. Guayaquil is home to many popular tourist attractions including its historic center, iguana park, Malecón 2000, and Las Peñas.

Parque Seminario (also known as Parque de Las Iguanas or Iguana Park) located on 10 de Agosto Avenue and Chile Avenue, is home to many iguanas, some of which approach 5 feet in length. Tourists and locals alike often feed mango slices to the iguanas from park vendors.

The Malecón 2000 is a boardwalk that lines the river Guayas and contains many points of interest and indigenous flora. Las Peñas is a neighborhood in the northeast corner of the city center and is the artistic center of the city. Many of the area's 400-year-old houses have been converted into art galleries, and several notable artists have studios in the area. If you climb the hundreds of steps through the Las Peñas neighborhood you can reach a beautiful lighthouse and lookout on top of the hill. It is certainly worth the climb.



## *Galapagos Islands*

The Galapagos Islands are a natural wonder in themselves, and if you have time it is certainly worth a visit. The Galapagos are home to a number of unique fish and animal species which are very tame due to the lack of inhabitants and development on the island. The islands are well protected and only a certain number of tourists are allowed to visit at the same time. All tourists must be accompanied by a licensed guide.



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*Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers.  
The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently.  
They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo.  
You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them.  
But the only thing you can't do is ignore them.  
Because they change things. They push the human race forward.  
And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.  
Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are  
the ones who do.*

***-Unknown***