

ECUADOR

Ecuador, officially the Republic of Ecuador, is a country located in the northwestern side of South America. Colombia on its north, Peru on its south and east and the Pacific Ocean on its west. With an area of 256,370 km² (including the Galapagos Islands that also belong to Ecuador), is the country with the highest concentration of rivers per km² and its territory is a part of the Amazon. It is divided from north to south by the mountains of the Andes and has 70 volcanoes.

The government of Ecuador is divided into five branches: the executive, legislative, judicial, electoral power and the power of citizen participation. The country is divided into 24 provinces; Quito that was declared a cultural heritage site by UNESCO, is the capital, the political and economic center of the country. Guayaquil is the most populous city and has the most important port of Ecuador.

Ecuador is a country with an ethnically diverse population; Amerindians and mestizos are the major ethnic communities, however, you can find descendants of Spanish colonists or mulattos (African descent turn of former slaves brought from Africa). Ecuador's official language is Spanish, though in some regions languages prior to the colonial period as Quichua and Shuar are still spoken. According to surveys, 90% of the Ecuadorians are Roman Catholic, although in recent years groups of Protestants, Evangelicals, Mormons have been growing and practicing New Age practices.

Oil makes up 40% of its exports, which in its turn, balances the economics and financials of the country. Despite being a country of great wealth in natural resources, Ecuador presents great social and economic imbalances in population. Still, it is a country which is growing economically every year and ascending in the human development index established by the United Nations.

Before traveling to Ecuador, you have to take into account:

Vaccination:

The only mandatory vaccine to travel to Ecuador is the yellow fever in case you are coming from a country where the disease is endemic . On the other hand, other vaccines are recommended such as Hepatitis A and B, yellow fever (in areas east of the Andes but does not include the cities of Quito and Guayaquil and the Galapagos), typhoid and tetanus.

The best way to have more information, is to visit your nearest international vaccination center.

Visa:

Visa for Ecuador is not required for most of the citizens; you will receive a 90 days visa upon your arrival to the airport, or to the country's land borders. The 90 days visa is granted as long as the passport is valid for longer than six months upon your arrival to the country. This requires a passport, an application form filled by yourself and 30\$ which is the price of the visa and should be paid in cash on the airport upon your arrival.

<http://www.mmrree.gob.ec/servicios/visas.asp>

Weather:

Ecuador is divided from north to south in full by the Andes mountain range, which has allowed distinct ecosystems develop. Its western regions are influenced by the currents of the Pacific Ocean, while the east is comprised entirely by the Amazon. Both the east and west have warm temperatures and are areas with high humidity; and both are given two seasons: rainy and dry. However, in the mountains the landscapes are very different and temperatures can become below freezing.

In the coast, the rainy season is between December and May and between November and April in the area of the Sierra (the Andes) and from January to September in the Amazon. The Galapagos are characterized by different climate (among other things because they are quite far from the American continent).

Currency:

Until the year 2000, the currency of Ecuador was the Ecuadorian Sucre, but under President Jamil Mahuad the Sucre was replaced by the US dollar with an exchange rate of 25,000 Sucres. Currently, the official coins in circulation are 100, 500 and 1000. As for the paper money, there are 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000.

The best option is to travel with Dollars and change once you get there , either in the airport or at any exchange office in the city.

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/es/>