

# Welcome to NCOAE Ecuador!

## TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

Your course will begin at the Mariscal Sucre International Airport located 18 kilometers east of Quito in Ecuador's Tababela parish.

The information below will help you organize your travel arrangements to and from your course. Begin your preparations as soon as possible, as it can take weeks or even months to obtain your passport, and secure your travel arrangements.

We recommend that you spend some time researching the geography, history, politics, culture, and languages of Ecuador. For the most current information on Ecuador and the surrounding regions, you might find the CIA World Fact Book information useful: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ec.html>

**ITINERARY** — Expedition travel requires some degree of itinerary flexibility due to unforeseen events and adverse conditions. Below is the intended beginning and ending itinerary for this course, subject to change as needed to account for unexpected events.

**THE FIRST DAY:** After a morning pickup at the Mariscal Sucre International Airport (airport code UIO), we'll drive 30 minutes outside of Ecuador's capital to our basecamp, located in the foothills of the Andes. We will be home-basing at Palugo Farm, and the real fun will start there! Once at our base, you will plan, prepare, pack, and learn the last minute details of your course.

**THE LAST DAY:** The day before we return home, we will recuperate, reorganize, and rest at Palugo Farm. This is where we will de-issue and clean gear and complete post-course formalities. From there, we will return to the Mariscal Sucre International Airport where your journey home will begin.

### ► **Logistical Information:**

**WHERE:** We will all meet in Ecuador at the Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO). Your return airport will also be UIO.

**WHEN:** Plan to travel with NCOAE to and from the airport. Contact our travel agent for specific arrival and departure times for your flights. We will contact you with precise time and locations to meet upon your course enrollment. You can view specific information about the Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) at <https://www.aeropuertoquito.aero/es/>

**HOW:** All Travel Arrangements for NCOAE International programs are managed and facilitated by NCOAE's trusted travel agency professionals, Travel Associates. Travel Associates is a bespoke travel agency staffed by MaryJo Palmer and Heidi Cunningham, both seasoned Travel Advisors with years of experience behind them. MaryJo and Heidi are based in Woodstock, VT but assist with customers based around the world. While Travel Associates specialty is luxury travel, they are highly skilled at complex itineraries and can provide guidance on everything from upgrades to Visas to Travel Insurance. Upon enrolling in an NCOAE program, you will need to contact MaryJo or Heidi either 800-640-4137 or 802-332-3511, or by email at [maryjo.palmer@travelassociates.us](mailto:maryjo.palmer@travelassociates.us) and [heidicunningham@travelassociates.us](mailto:heidicunningham@travelassociates.us) to secure your travel arrangements.

### ► **If delayed:**

If it becomes evident that you will not arrive on time, contact NCOAE at (910) 399-8090 immediately.

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**PASSPORTS & VISAS:** You are entering Ecuador as a **tourist, not a student**. You'll need a valid passport, with an expiration date greater than six months from your planned date of departure, for the duration of your stay in South America. US citizens can find information on obtaining a passport at [www.state.gov/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel).

U.S. citizens traveling to Ecuador do not need a visa for stays less than 90 days in any 12-month period.

Non-US citizens should check with the nearest Ecuadorian consulate to see if they require a visa or not. We require that all students who need visas for Ecuador obtain one prior to their course. We recommend checking with your airline, too, to confirm what documents are required for entering Ecuador and to confirm that your travel dates will work. Please contact the Ecuadorian Embassy for details and to get the latest requirements, because they are subject to change: <https://ec.usembassy.gov/visas/nonimmigrant-visas/faq-and-contact-info/>

If you wish to stay more than 90 days within a year, go to an Ecuador consulate in your home country and apply for the 12-IX visa. Often referred to as the Tourist, Commercial or Sports Visa, this allows you to stay in the country for up to 180 days in a year.

If your U.S. passport is lost or stolen in Ecuador, you must obtain a police report in order to replace your passport at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, and then obtain a "Movimiento Migratorio" from an Ecuadorian immigration office in order to leave the country. Refer to this link for more information: <https://ec.usembassy.gov/visas/nonimmigrant-visas/niv-test/lost-and-stolen-ppts/>

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to Ecuador enroll in the Department of State's **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** ( <https://step.state.gov/step> ). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the **State Department's website** ( <http://travel.state.gov/> ), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the **Country Specific Information for Ecuador:** <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Ecuador.html>.

For additional information, please refer to the "Traveler's Checklist" <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/checklist.html> page.

Contact the **U.S. Embassy in Ecuador** ( <https://ec.usembassy.gov/> ) for up-to-date security information. The U.S. Embassy in Quito is located at Ave. Avigiras E12-170 y Ave. Eloy Alfaro (next to SOLCA) Quito, Ecuador and is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM and from 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM except during holidays. Important telephone numbers to contact the embassy: From abroad: **+593-2-398-5000**; From other Ecuadorian Provinces: **02-398-5000**; From Quito and other cities within the Province of Pichincha: **398-5000**.

You may also contact the U.S. Consulate in Quito on weekdays via e-mail at [ACSQuito@state.gov](mailto:ACSQuito@state.gov)

### ► **Official language:**

Ecuador's official language is Spanish and is spoken throughout the country, although for many indigenous people it is their second language. Besides Spanish, ten native languages are spoken in Ecuador. Various dialects of Quechua are spoken in the highlands, while in Amazonía several indigenous languages are spoken, including Kichwa, Shuar, and Wao. English is the most spoken foreign language amongst tourist providers and professionals.

### ► **Official currency, and money concerns:**

Contact your bankcard and credit card security departments and let them know when and where you'll be traveling abroad. Otherwise, you risk them canceling your card while you're traveling.

The United States dollar (USD) is the official currency of Ecuador. This means if you are traveling to Ecuador from the United States, you can just bring your own money from home without needing to exchange it. If you are coming to Ecuador from a country other than the United States, you can exchange your money for US dollars at your local bank before traveling. To find the current exchange rate, visit: <http://www.x-rates.com>, <http://www.xe.com>, or visit your favorite currency exchange website.

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Once in Ecuador, you'll be able to withdraw funds at banks and ATMs. An effective way to access cash is through the automatic cash machines (ATMs). Cash advance machines are increasingly common, and often have the best exchange rate. If you bring money in travelers' checks keep a record of when you exchange them in a separate location from the checks themselves. You cannot reclaim Travelers' Checks unless you know which numbers you have spent. Traveler's checks are a safe way to carry money in Ecuador, although they are becoming increasingly less relevant in the world of ATMs. You can buy and cash these checks at most banks. Visa and American Express also offer traveler's checks.

### ► Personal Expenses:

Once your course is in the field, there will be little opportunity to spend money. Former students have recommended bringing a small amount of travel money (\$100-\$500 in small bills, but there will be ATM's available for money withdrawal) for the drive to and from your course area, as well as any trips into town we may take. Once your course has begun, there may not be an opportunity for you to change money. Your personal expenses, pre- and post-course, depend entirely on your style of travel. Ecuador costs about the same as the U.S. for comparable tourist facilities.

During your course — from the morning of the course start date until the afternoon of the final day of the course — NCOAE will cover the cost of food, transportation, and instruction, as well as the group equipment indicated on the equipment list. You are responsible for the cost of a meals, as well as the costs of lodging on the nights before the course start date, and all expenses before arrival and after departure from Quito. **You are also responsible for personal medical bills, and evacuation expenses if you need to be evacuated from the field, and for bringing personal equipment listed as *must bring* on the course equipment list.**

### ► Health concerns:

Ecuador has a comprehensive national health system. Excellent medical care is available in urban areas and regional hospitals and emergency rooms exist throughout the country. A visit to a general practitioner costs \$25 to \$35, while a visit to a specialist runs anywhere from \$30 to \$80. Pharmacy prescriptions are also economical. It is critical that you visit a travel medicine specialist or a doctor familiar with travel medicine to answer your questions and make specific recommendations for you. The best time to see the doctor is at least 4-6 weeks before your trip. Advice on finding a Travel Health Specialist is available on The Center for Disease Control website for traveler's health is: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/see-doctor>

***You must see a doctor and have all appropriate vaccinations that are recommended for you for the areas we'll be visiting to be allowed to participate in your NCOAE course.***

Vaccinations should be recorded in the official document "International Certificate of Vaccination" available from the U.S. Public Health Service or its equivalent in other countries, or from your doctor. This is also a good place to record your prescriptions, eyeglass needs, medical problems such as allergies, and any other information of a medical nature. Please record your blood type on the front page of this booklet.

**ROUTINE IMMUNIZATIONS** — It is advised that all international travelers have their routine immunizations up to date. These include:

- ***Tetanus and diphtheria toxins:*** You must have a current tetanus immunization for your course.
- ***Measles, Mumps and Rubella:*** Persons born after 1956 should have a documented history of immunization.
- ***Poliovirus vaccine:*** Immunization is strongly recommended for adults traveling in South America. Two types of poliovirus vaccine are available, and whether you require a booster or a full primary course will depend on your previous immunizations. Again, check with your doctor.

The following vaccines are also recommended:

- ***Hepatitis A:*** either vaccine (Havix or Twinrix) or Imune Globulin.
- ***Typhoid:*** Vaccinations are recommended for travelers going off the usual tourist itineraries.

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CDC and NCOAE provide general vaccination recommendations, but only your travel health doctor can give you specific advice that takes your personal factors into consideration. Recommendations for vaccines and medicines depend on many factors that are specific to each person. Be sure to give your doctor all needed information honestly and accurately so they can make appropriate recommendations.

Examples of these factors include:

- Where you are traveling within a foreign country, or countries
- The length of your NCOAE trip
- The types of activities you might do
- Other personal matters such as your age, your personal medical and vaccination history, and current medical condition

Follow the advice of your doctor by getting all the shots and medicines that are recommended for you.

### **DO NOT PET STRAY ANIMALS**

We will be in remote areas where immediate medical attention is often many days away.

Echinococcosis or hydatidosis disease results from being infected with the larvae of the tapeworm *Echinococcus Granulosus* and is found most commonly in dogs that consume the viscera of infected sheep. Infection results in the formation of cysts in the liver, lungs, kidney and spleen. This condition is also known as cystic hydatid disease and can usually be successfully treated with surgery. In some cases it can be fatal.

Humans are usually exposed to these eggs in one of two ways:

1. By directly ingesting food items or drinking water that is contaminated with stool from an infected animal.
2. By petting or having other contact with cats and dogs that are infected. These pets may shed the eggs in their stool, and their fur may be contaminated. They may also contaminate other objects, such as harnesses or leashes, which can also spread infection.

Three steps can help prevent echinococcosis and other diseases as well:

1. After handling pets, always wash your hands with soap and warm water.
2. Do not eat wild fruits or vegetables picked directly from the ground without careful washing or cooking.
3. Treat or boil all non-tap water.

**MEDICINES** — You must bring a supply of all prescription and non-prescription medications that you take on a regular basis along with you on your NCOAE course. Your supply should include enough quantity to last for two to three weeks beyond the end date of your NCOAE trip. Check the **Transportation Security Administration**: <https://www.tsa.gov> website for updates on permitted and prohibited items, including medicines that you are allowed to carry onto an airplane.

**HIGH ALTITUDE CONSIDERATIONS** — High altitude considerations – The low oxygen levels found at high altitudes can cause problems for some travelers who are going to destinations higher than 8,000 feet above sea level. The best way to avoid getting sick is to ascend gradually, but if you have to ascend quickly, medicines such as acetazolamide, sildenafil, and others are available to help prevent altitude illness signs and symptoms. For more information, visit your travel health doctor, and the CDC website for altitude health information. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/the-pre-travel-consultation/altitude-illness>

### ► **Insurance:**

NCOAE provides all trip participants with basic insurance coverage for medical evacuation. We highly recommend all participants purchase additional no-fault travel insurance that covers medical expenses and trip loss / cancellation.

NCOAE's travel programs are true "adventure travel", as such the unexpected may occur.

We recognize that deciding on the right insurance policy can become confusing, so we've created this listed to assist you in understanding a few options for this type of insurance. We are not insurance professionals, therefore recommend you address specific questions with your insurance agent and thoroughly understand any policy you purchase.

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The following companies provide options for travel insurance:

1. **RIPCARD** – [www.ripcard.com](http://www.ripcard.com) offers comprehensive travel insurance coverage.
2. **TRAVEL GUARD** – [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com) Includes Adventure Sports coverage.
3. **WORLD NOMADS** – [www.worldnomads.com/](http://www.worldnomads.com/)
4. **INSUREMYTRIP** – [www.insuremytrip.com/](http://www.insuremytrip.com/)

**HEALTH INSURANCE** – Many health insurance plans do not cover problems you may incur abroad. Contact your health insurance company to learn if you are 100% covered while traveling in South America. If not, check with the travel insurance companies above to learn about their gap coverages for medical care and medical evacuation.

### ► **Insect-borne diseases:**

Bugs (like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) can spread a number of diseases in Ecuador. Many of these diseases cannot be prevented with a vaccine or medicine. You can reduce your risk by taking steps to prevent bug bites.

#### *What can I do to prevent bug bites?*

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent (see below).
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- Stay and sleep in air-conditioned or screened rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors

#### *What type of insect repellent should I use?*

- **FOR PROTECTION AGAINST TICKS AND MOSQUITOES:** Use a repellent that contains 20% or more DEET for protection that lasts up to several hours.
- **FOR PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITOES ONLY:** Products with one of the following active ingredients can also help prevent mosquito bites. Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection.
  - DEET ( <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/deet> )
  - Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin)
  - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or PMD
  - IR3535
  - Always use insect repellent as directed.

#### *What should I do if I am bitten by bugs?*

- Avoid scratching bug bites, and apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce the itching.
- Check your entire body for ticks after outdoor activity.

### ► **Baggage and Equipment:**

Please check directly with the airline for baggage limitations and allowances. Most international flights allow two 50lb. pieces, so you should be well within your limits. You will be able to store luggage at NCOAE's Ecuador basecamp while you are in the field. Please keep it to a reasonable amount, as our space is limited, and keep in mind that we cannot guarantee security. If any checked luggage does not arrive, please file a claim for lost luggage at the airport where it did not arrive. We can use the claim number to help track the luggage.

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### ►Telephone Service:

To call a phone in Ecuador from the USA, dial (011) for an international call, (593) for Ecuador, and the area code. Quito is (2). Then dial the rest of the phone number. Landline numbers with the area code, are 8-digits and cellphone numbers, with the area code, are 9-digit.

Ecuador has reliable phone service. Major companies include Claro (Telcel), Movistar, and CNT. Mobile networks are diverse and include GSM 850 MHz (largest) as well as CDMA (Bell South's old network before being acquired by Telefónica Spain which rebranded Movistar), TDMA63. CNT is the state-owned firm and uses CDMA.

You will need international roaming activated on your cell phone plan if you want to use your cell phone. Cell phone companies offer a variety of international calling plans, including day passes with are typically about \$10/day. Phone calls **MAY NOT BE MADE WHILE IN THE FIELD**. Any calls must be made on "in-town," off-course days, such as when you are in the airport before and after the course. Once the course leaves for the field, you will not be able to make or receive any phone calls until that leg of the course.

### ►Pre- and Post-Course Travel Considerations:

Ecuadorian customs and social minimum impact will be discussed specifically during the course, but the following guidelines will get you started with being sensitive to traveling in a different culture. Ecuador is generally regarded as a safe country in which to travel, but there are thieves and con men worldwide. Avoid traveling alone at night.

The Ecuadorian legal system requires authorities to issue specific written arrest orders prior to detention, and a judge must charge a suspect with a specific criminal offense within 24 hours of arrest. You are presumed innocent until proven guilty and have the right to an attorney. You must carry identification on your person at all times and police are well within their rights to ask you to produce it.

The Ecuadorian people have a rather distinctive dress code. It is influenced by the cultural diversity that can be found in the various regions of Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. Bring clothing that is respectful of the culture in which you'll be traveling. Arrive with a clean change of clothes suitable for either warm or cool weather.

With regards to greetings, people shake hands when meeting for the first time. When walking in the street, making eye contact and offering a greeting is common, especially in smaller towns. When greeting a closer friend, the exchange is more involved. Typically men that are friends will shake hands and pat the shoulder, or offer an "abrazo", or small hug and women often will give a small indirect kiss on the left cheek.

Consider that you are visitors to Ecuador and guests of its people and are expected to act appropriately in that role. **You are a representative of your home country, and of NCOAE. As such, we expect you to be an upstanding representative.**

### ►Still have questions?

Call NCOAE at (910) 399-8090



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