

GAP SEMESTER

60-Day North Carolina to Ecuador

DATES: APRIL 7 – JUNE 6, 2025 | TUITION: \$13,895 | AGES: 18+

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ▶ **Outdoor Skill Development:** Experience a transformative journey backpacking in the rugged Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina to rafting in the Amazon and exploring the lush, biodiverse rainforests of Ecuador, this semester focuses on developing technical outdoor skills while fostering personal growth, teamwork, and leadership
- ▶ **Earn College Credit & Outdoor Certifications:** Participants can earn valuable college credits, along with certifications in Wilderness Medicine and Leave No Trace (LNT)
- ▶ **Cultural Immersion in Ecuador:** Students will explore the rich culture of Ecuador, including stays with local communities, engaging in service-learning projects, and participating in sustainable development initiatives

WHY TAKE THIS COURSE?

- ▶ **Unmatched Global Experience:** Embark on a life-changing journey from North Carolina's scenic mountains to the heart of Ecuador's rainforests. This course offers an immersive blend of adventure, cultural exchange, and hands-on learning in diverse environments, preparing you for both academic and personal growth.
- ▶ **Leadership & Certification Opportunities:** Gain critical outdoor and leadership certifications like Wilderness First Responder (WFR) and Leave No Trace (LNT) while earning transferable college credits. This course equips you with essential skills for future academic, career, and outdoor pursuits.

WHERE YOU'LL BE:

- ▶ Pisgah National Forest
- ▶ New River
- ▶ Cotopaxi National Park
- ▶ Amazon River Basin
- ▶ Quito, Ecuador

TRIP INCLUDES:

- ▶ All lodging and transportation during the trip
- ▶ Equipment for all activities
- ▶ Up to two (2) dedicated NCOAE field instructors
- ▶ Meals, admissions, and gratuities
- ▶ Flight to Ecuador
- ▶ Shuttle to/from airport (if driving, contact NCOAE for drop-off/pick-up locations)



Scan QR code for more info.

** For complete itinerary details, see reverse side*



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Gap Semester — North Carolina to Ecuador

Itinerary *(Subject to change)*

- ▶ **Days 1-5: Orientation and Wilderness First Responder (WFR) training.** The first 5 days of your course are spent completing your WFR certification. In the evenings, there will be time for final trip logistics.
- ▶ **Days 6–13: Multi-day Backpacking Trip.** Explore the Pisgah National Forest and Shining Rock Wilderness, as you ford rivers and hike through a majestic forest landscape, while learning to manage the risks in these environments. You may see black bears, white-tailed deer, majestic hawks, and more. Practice leadership skills, Leave No Trace, map and compass use, plant and animal identification, and backcountry cooking — while preparing and eating wonderful food we prepare ourselves.
- ▶ **Day 14: Solo Experience.** Any outdoor course would be incomplete without a solo experience to allow time for processing. During your solo, you'll have time to reflect and enjoy a solitude only found in wilderness. An NCOAE solo experience is a rite of passage that sets you up for success!
- ▶ **Day 15: Summit Black Balsam Knob,** a 6,240-foot peak in the Pisgah National Forest. Once on top, you'll help the group determine how long we can stay based on weather conditions.
- ▶ **Days 16–17: Flex Days.** Visit town and prepare for your upcoming river trip
- ▶ **Days 18–22: Multi-day river trip.** Practice your paddling skills and learn the basics of river ecology, as you travel along an iconic North Carolina river. Navigate your kayaks downstream, as you discover how to read the currents of the river and participate in training on swift water rescue techniques. You'll camp along the river each night.
- ▶ **Days 23–24: Resupply.** Spend time preparing for the final leg of the North Carolina portion of your course.
- ▶ **Days 25–28: Our next few days will be spent Rock Climbing.** Learn the skills necessary to summit mountains, while managing the risks in these environments. Lessons will include an introduction to rock climbing including equipment, knots, belay systems, anchor systems, and more.
- ▶ **Days 29–30: Trip Logistics.** Return to NCOAE's campus for dinner, showers, and a campfire. Finish packing for the Ecuador portion of your course.
- ▶ **Day 31: Depart for Quito Ecuador.** After airport pickup, we'll drive 30 minutes outside of Quito to our basecamp. Spend the first in-country days at Palugo farm, a permaculture project integrating sustainability, community, and adventure. In the mornings, rise with the sun to help with daily farm tasks; splitting firewood, cleaning, gardening, and animal care.
- ▶ **Days 32–32: Learn about sustainability in a mountain environment** and continue to help with farm activities.
- ▶ **Days 34–36: Cultural Immersion Homestays.** Head north, gaining altitude as we travel to an indigenous community, in the mountains. Nestled below Volcán Imbabura, spend a few days in the homes of locals, helping work their land and learning about these mountain people.
- ▶ **Day 37: Volcán Imbabura and Otavalo Market.** Climb Volcán Imbabura in the morning. Then, spend the afternoon exploring Otavalo market, one of Latin America's largest indigenous craft markets.
- ▶ **Days 38–39: Expedition Preparation.** Finish packing and preparing for your Amazon expedition.
- ▶ **Days 40–42: Multi-day Amazon trip.** Travel by bus to the Amazon basin. As you descend from 9000ft to 3000ft, travel from snowcapped volcanoes, to cloud forest, to the magical green of the Amazon basin. Paddle out onto the river, home to an array of life. You'll camp at night on the riverbank, where toucans nest.
- ▶ **Days 43–44: Cultural Immersion in the Amazon basin.** Travel downriver to a remote Kichua community. Spend a few days with locals, rising early to drink wayusa tea and share dreams. Help harvest crops and learn to carve pilche bowls, in hammocks by the fire while gaining a deeper understanding of the “Lungs of the Earth”. Learn from this traditional, indigenous culture. Discover the changes which they face today and the impact you can have by supporting community tourism, reforestation, and quality education.
- ▶ **Days 45–46: Chocolate Farm Visit.** Your journey continues, as we make our way to a jungle permaculture cacao farm.
- ▶ **Days 47–48: Re-supply.** Return to basecamp to rest and prepare. Learn about technical gear, glacier travel, ice climbing, and high altitude living.
- ▶ **Days 49–50: Volcán Pichincha Hike and Quito Visit.** Rise early to climb Volcán Pichincha as we acclimatize again to the high Andes environment. Then, explore Quito – walk through its old streets, enjoy traditional dishes, and visit vibrant markets.
- ▶ **Days 51–56: Trekking Cotopaxi National Park and Antisana Ecological Reserve.** Climb high above the tree line, as you explore the area's rugged landscape. Trek along Volcán Sincholagua, as you refine your backpacking skills during this multi-day trek. Whatever the Andes throws at you, you will learn to safely enjoy it with grace and style.
- ▶ **Day 57: Summit Attempt.** On our last morning we will set off before dawn and attempt a final 'graduation' summit of Volcán Antisana. From here, you'll enjoy magnificent, 360-degree views, of the Inter-Andean valley.
- ▶ **Days 58–59: After a hearty breakfast, hike a short distance to the trailhead.** Return to Palugo Farm to clean-up, shower, and dinner. Then, visit a local hot spring for a soak. Lastly, we'll debrief the course, celebrate our individual and group accomplishments, and share a one-of-a kind graduation before departing.
- ▶ **Day 60: Departure from Quito, Ecuador**