

Typical Daily Schedule

7:15 a.m. – Morning Exercise and Yoga

- **Location:** On the farm

8:15 a.m. – Breakfast

- **Options:** Bagels, oatmeal, cereal, pancakes, egg burritos, fruit, and juices

8:45 a.m. – Community Meeting

- **Activities:** Check-in, news updates, quote of the day

9:00 a.m. – Morning Farm Chores

- **Duties:** Watering vegetables, collecting eggs, herding cows and horses

10:00 a.m. – Environmental Science Lab

- **Focus:** Readings, case studies, documentaries

11:00 a.m. – Outdoor Leadership

- **Topic:** Theory and philosophy— principles and practice of outdoor leadership, portfolio work

12:00 p.m. – Lunch

- **Duties:** Meal prep, cooking, cleanup, inventory update

12:45 p.m. – Prep and Pack

- **Focus:** Preparation for afternoon activity

1:00 p.m. – Afternoon Activities

- **Options:** Technical training & skills development in mountain biking and rock climbing

3:30 p.m. – Environmental Science Study Hall

- **Tasks:** Portfolio work, reading new chapters

4:30 p.m. – Outdoor Leadership Study Hall

- **Task:** Portfolio work, readings /research

5:30 p.m. – Dinner

- **Duties:** Meal prep, cooking, cleanup, inventory update

6:15 p.m. – Time

- **Options:** Explore campus, journal, rest

7:00 p.m. – Debrief

- **Activities:** Closing circle, review of tomorrow's agenda, camp sweep

8:15 p.m. – Free Time

- **Options:** Hang out, brush teeth, make phone calls

9:30 p.m. – Cabin Check-In

- **Final tasks:** Head back to your cabin and stoke the fire before bed

ECUADOR — A Day in the Field

A day in the field during our Ecuador semester is an immersive blend of adventure, cultural exchange, and academic exploration. Students rise at dawn, greeted by the sounds of the vibrant Ecuadorian landscape, as they prepare for a day of thoughtfully planned field-based activities.

Whether backpacking through the Andes Mountains or rafting along the Amazon River, the day begins with a hearty breakfast, followed by a group review of the day's itinerary. This includes a comprehensive overview of relevant field-based coursework, safety protocols, environmental stewardship, and cultural respect, and setting a purposeful and focused tone for the day ahead.

The morning is dedicated to engaging with Ecuador's diverse environments and rich cultural heritage. Students may find themselves hiking through lush cloud forests, learning at a local family-owned farm, or participating in Spanish language immersion. Farm work is approached not merely as manual labor but as an in-depth study of sustainable agriculture, offering firsthand insights into the connection between the land and the local communities.

Instructors lead discussions on sustainability, local ecosystems, and the complexities of conservation in Ecuador. These discussions are integrated with real-time field observations and experiences, making the learning process both immediate and academically enriching.

Midday brings a well-deserved break for lunch, often featuring meals prepared with locally sourced ingredients. This pause is a time for reflection, community-building, and cultural exchange. Students have the opportunity to practice their Spanish with local community members or engage in meaningful conversations among themselves. The afternoon continues with further exploration or skill-building activities, such as mastering traditional farming techniques, honing navigation skills, or practicing wilderness first aid — all contextualized within Ecuador's rich natural and cultural environment.

As the day progresses, the focus shifts to leadership development, a central component of the NCOAE experience. Students take on leadership roles, making decisions and guiding the group through the day's challenges, all while striving to communicate in Spanish whenever possible. This hands-on leadership training is underpinned by outdoor leadership theory and is supported by NCOAE faculty, who provide instruction, mentorship, and constructive feedback.

The day concludes with the setting up of camp, preparation of a communal dinner, and a group evening debrief. This debrief is an essential academic and reflective component of the experience, providing a structured environment for students to review the day's activities, share insights, and plan for the next day. It is also a time to discuss the challenges encountered, the lessons learned, and the personal growth achieved throughout the day.

Throughout the day, there is a strong emphasis on cultural exchange, sustainability, and personal development. Students are encouraged to be mindful of their impact on both the environment and the local communities, fostering a deep respect for Ecuador's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The program's focus on extensive field-based coursework and real-world application ensures that students leave with a profound understanding of both the ecological and cultural landscapes they have explored.