

Conservation and Spanish Studies in Ecuador

Week 1: Arrival and Program Orientation: Quito, Ecuador

Departing from LAX or Miami, you'll fly south with your group to Ecuador's capital city - Quito! Explore UNESCO world heritage sites in Latin America's best preserved historic district, taste your first flavors of South America cuisine at local markets, and ride the gondola up Pichincha volcano for a breathtaking view of the city. Staying in a cozy guest house, the group will spend 3-4 days setting the foundations for an incredible journey ahead. We'll learn more about the program and our fellow group members, and discuss strategies for staying safe and healthy while traveling.

Weeks 2-3: Agriculture and Economy: Ecuadorian Coast

Traveling by bus to the Pacific coast, we'll spend the next two weeks on two very different farms. At Las Delicias, we dive into Spanish study while learning about large scale banana farming. Living on a family farm, the group will study Spanish in the mornings, and spend afternoons helping harvest, sort, and pack bananas for export. During free time, we'll enjoy day hikes, swimming, and exploring the local area. The following week, the group travels to a small scale permaculture farm. Here we'll learn about organic agriculture and sustainable practices while helping with planting, weeding, and harvesting. We also visit with local fisherman and craftspeople and learn about the diverse economies of this small community.

Week 4: Spanish and Homestays: Tungurahua Province, Ecuador

Traveling inland to the town of Baños de Agua Santa, on the slopes of Tungurahua volcano, we'll meet our homestay families and continue with Spanish immersion. Afternoons will be spent volunteering with an after school program at a local school. We'll also learn about the impact of tourism on the local economy, and how local communities are addressing pressures of globalization. Spend down time exploring the Rio Pastaza, discovering the breathtaking waterfalls of El Pailón del Diablo and Agoyán, and soaking in the hot springs for which the town was named.

Week 5: Trekking

Spend 5 days exploring the majestic Andes mountains in central Ecuador, trekking around the Quilatoa loop trail. Starting with a view of the azure colored waters of the crater lake Laguna

Quilatoa, we'll hike from village to village as we loop through rolling hills and mountain trails, past small farms, follow rivers, all while staying in local guest houses along the way.

Week 6: Environmental Conservation: The Amazon River Basin

Heading east down the slopes of the rugged Andes Mountains, the group will now explore the renowned Amazon region. Partnering with a local NGO (Arajuno Foundation), we'll be learning through service by engaging in projects to help prevent riverbank erosion, protect river turtle nesting sites, and maintain a healthy river ecosystem. The group will also have the opportunity to hike and swim in this amazingly biodiverse and beautiful part of the world.

Week 7: Spanish and Homestays: Imbabura Province, Ecuador

Head from the Amazon jungle to the Andean highlands. With Mojanda volcano as our backdrop, the group will live with local families and discover a slower pace of life in this remote Andean highland village. In addition to continuing our study of Spanish (and practicing with our host families), we'll learn about local crafts and music, visit the indigenous market, discover the wide variety of foods grown in the regions, and have ample opportunities for hiking near local lakes and waterfalls.

Week 8: Agriculture and Mining Economies: Intag Valley Region, Ecuador

Heading into the cloud forest of the western Andes, the group will visit two different communities who are dedicated to preserving the health and biodiversity of the region. We will discuss local efforts to convert to organic farming, engage in reforestation projects and planting native trees, and learn about the impacts of mining and resource extraction on this fragile ecosystem. These communities are strong in their determination to preserve one of the most biologically diverse areas on Earth; an amazing region that is home to the rare Andean spectacled bear and the elusive jaguar.

Week 9: Student Directed Travel!

Having learned the basics of responsible travel, your group will put these newly acquired travel skills to use in this final week of program! The student group will plan, organize and implement the adventures this week - how we get there, where we'll stay, how we manage the budget, and what we do are up to the group to decide. You'll end Student Directed Travel back in Quito, and spend a final few days celebrating and reflecting on all we've learned thus far.

****Carpe Diem reserves the right to make changes to the program at any time, and indeed has the responsibility to do so in some instances; changes may be required to provide the best possible experience, protect the safety of participants, or respond to changes in weather or political conditions.***