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*IIEPassport Focus....*



# Ecuador

## Ecuador Fast Facts

### Population:

13,710,234 (July 2003 est.)

### Capital:

Quito

### Currency:

U.S. Dollar

### Religions:

Roman Catholic, Other

### Languages:

Spanish, Amerindian Languages

### Major Events:

Easter (Spring)

Carnival (Spring)

Corpus Christi (June)

Independence Day (August 10)

Christmas (December 25)



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# Ecuador at a Glance...

**Land and Climate:** Ecuador, located on the Pacific Ocean, between Colombia and Peru, has four different climate zones. You will find coastal lowlands, Andean mountains and highland, Amazonian Jungles in eastern Ecuador, and the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific. The Andes have caused earthquakes and landslides, and there is even some volcanic activity in the two ranges surrounding Ecuador's central valley, which is home to the bulk of its population. The lowlands experience floods, and there are periodic droughts in Ecuador as well.

Over 300 species of mammals can be found in Ecuador, and there are 58 species of bird that can be found there as well. There are also many species of fish, including the electric eel, stingray



and piranha, swimming in the waters of the Galápagos Islands. Ecuador has two primary seasons, wet



and dry, but local weather can depend greatly on where you are at the time.

**History:** While it is believed that South America was originally settled around 12,000 B.C., modern Ecuadorian history begins with the Incas around 1450 A.D. and the Spanish arriving in 1526.

Independence from Spain was not achieved until Simón Bolívar conquered the Spanish rulers almost 300 years later in 1822. Since that point, Ecuador's internal politics have been unstable and has been marked by civil unrest.

The past century has seen more military rule than civilian democracy. There were border disputes with Peru from 1941 until the Rio de Janeiro Treaty of 1942 was recognized in 1998. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then-president Jamil Mahuad decided to replace the Ecuadorian sucres with U.S. Dollars in an effort to "dollarize" the Ecuadorian economy, an unpopular decision. Ecuador's current president, Guastavo Noboa, took office on January 22, 2000, and has worked to stabilize Ecuador's economy.

**Culture:** Ecuador's culture is largely rooted in its history, and this is reflected in its art. Even back to the days of the Incas, pottery, sculpture and gold and silver work have been favorite pastimes of the Ecuadorian people. Music is also important in Ecuadorian culture, with the sound of flutes and percussion being most prominent.

**Things to Do:** Ecuador boasts warm weather year-round, giving its visitors ample opportunity to explore the country. Snorkeling and scuba diving are common excursions on the coast, and mountain climbing can be enjoyed in the mountain region. There are tours of many of the natural attractions

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in Ecuador. Explore the Avenue of Volcanoes, and see active volcanoes up close. Sightsee in Quito and Cuenca, two of the oldest and prettiest cities in the country. Learn about Ecuador's history while shopping in pre-Incan marketplaces. You can even take a trip into the Oriente Province, the Amazonian jungle.

**Education:** Ecuador's educational system is similar to that of the United States. Children begin primary school at the age of six, and study there for six years. Once primary school has been completed, usually around age 12, basic secondary school begins. This three-year program marks the end of compulsory education in Ecuador. However, there is roughly a 92.5% literacy rate in Ecuador, and many of its residents continue on to diversified secondary school until they turn 18, and then they can enroll in one of the 34 universities in Ecuador for further education.



## Online Resources

### CIA Factbook:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

### Lonely Planet:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

### StudyAbroad.com:

<http://Ecuador.StudyAbroad.com>

### UNESCO.org:

<http://www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data/ec.rtf>