

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON ECUADOR



**Geography:** Ecuador is a Spanish-speaking country about the size of Colorado. Ecuador is a republic in the north-west corner of South America high up in the Andes Mountain Range, which borders Columbia in the north, Peru in the east and south, and a Pacific coast in the west. The Galápagos Islands in the Pacific, about 600 miles (965 km west of the mainland also belong to Ecuador. Ecuador, so named due to its positioning on the equator, has an area no

larger than 98,985 square miles (283,560 km<sup>2</sup>) and is thus the smallest Andean state. Quito is the country's capital and has approximately 1.6 million (July 2005 est.) inhabitants (U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm>). Cuenca has an approximate population of 400,000.

**Population:** The population of Ecuador is 13,547,510 with an annual population growth rate of 1.5% (July 2006 est.). A variety of ethnic groups are found in Ecuador (indigenous 25%, mestizo—mixed Indian and Spanish 65%, Caucasian and others 7%, African 3%). Religious freedom is recognized although Roman Catholic is the predominant religion (95%). Spanish is the official language but indigenous languages, especially Quichua, are widely spoken. Legally, children ages 6-14 are supposed to attend school, but enforcement varies. Ecuador has a literacy rate of 92%, life expectancy of 76.42 years, and an infant mortality rate of 22.87/1,000 (2006 est.) (The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ec.html>).

**Terrain:** Ecuador consists of jungle east of the Andes, a rich agricultural coastal plain west of the Andes, high-elevation valleys through the mountainous center of the country and an archipelago of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean. The Galápagos Islands are comprised of 13 larger and 100+ smaller islands, featuring many volcanic peaks, most of which are extinct.

**Climate:** Although Ecuador lies on the equator, the country has a wide range of climates owing to the varying elevations. Temperatures are mild year-round in the mountain valleys and hot and humid in coastal and Amazonian jungle lowlands.

**Government:** Present-day Ecuador (anciently the northern part of the Inca Empire) is a republic that gained its independence from Spain May 24, 1822, at which time Ecuador became part of

the Republic of Gran Colombia, which also included Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama, only to become a separate republic in 1830 and be renamed the Republic of Ecuador. A constitution was established August 10, 1998. Ecuador is divided into 22 provinces and has a democratically elected government.

**Economy:** Ecuador has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of \$32 billion (2005 est.) and a per capita GDP of \$2,424 (2005 est.), increasing from \$2,304 (2004 est.). Natural resources in Ecuador include petroleum, fish, shrimp, timber and gold. Bananas, seafood, flowers, coffee, cacao, sugar, tropical fruits, palm oil, palm hearts, rice, corn and livestock are some of the agricultural products. An estimated \$7.2 billion (2005 est.) of the GDP comes from petroleum, bananas, shrimp, coffee, cacao, hemp, wood, fish, cut flowers, with those items being exports for the country (U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm>).

**Currency:** Ecuador adopted the U.S. dollar in 2000. U.S. coins and Ecuadorian coins (which are equivalent to the value of the U.S. coins) are both used presently.

**Miscellaneous:** Ecuadorians celebrate the New Year by burning dolls in the streets on New Year's Eve. The dolls symbolize the year has ended. In February or March Carnival is held. Easter, Labor Day (May 1), and the Ecuadorian Liberation Day (May 24) are official holidays. However, the most important holiday is Independence Day (August 10), which commemorates the revolution of 1809. Whenever a new president has been elected, he has to take the oath of office on May 10. The independence of Guayaquil is celebrated on October 9. A common custom is visiting cemeteries on All Souls' Day (November 2). Many believers put little "guaguas de pan" made of bread dough on the gravestones to honor the dead. The independence of Quito (December 6) is celebrated with big festivals, bull fights and sporting events.

**Cuenca:** Cuenca is the third largest city in Ecuador. It is located in the Sierra, the highlands of Ecuador at about 8200 ft. (2500 m) above sea level. The city's cobblestone streets, towering cathedrals and marble and whitewashed buildings give it a colonial air. Cuencanos, known for their traditional demeanor and conservative cultural values, match their 18th century surroundings.



The city of Cuenca is located in the Southern sector of the Ecuadorian Andean Mountain range, built on the ruins of the old Guapondélig of Cañaris and Tomebamba Inca ruins, which means "great valley of the sun." The majority of the city is located on flat areas, surrounded by mountains.

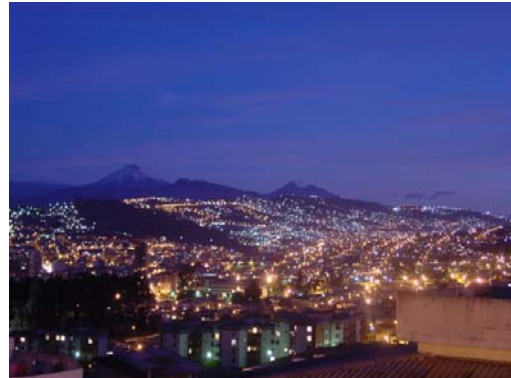
A few minutes from Cuenca is Ingapirca (left), ruins of the Inca and Cañari cultures.

Like the rest of the Ecuadorian Andes, Cuenca enjoys a mild climate year-round. There are two noticeable seasons: the dry season, which usually affects Cuenca between June and

September. During the rest of the year it is variable rainy, with heaviest rains coming during the months from October through December, and March through May. During the rainy season, mornings are typically sunny and afternoons cloudy with light, periodic showers (Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuenca%2C\\_Ecuador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuenca%2C_Ecuador)).

**Quito:** Quito is the capital city located in northern Ecuador. The city's elevation is 9,300 ft. (2,850 m) above seal level, making Quito the second highest capital city in the world. The area of Quito is approximately 112 square miles (290 km<sup>2</sup>). Due to its altitude and location, the climate in Quito is mild to cool, fairly constant all year round. The city experiences only two seasons: summer (the dry season) and winter (the rainy season).

Quito is located 15 miles (25 km) south of the equator. A monument marking the equator is known locally as "Mitad del Mundo" (middle of the world). Quito is located in the Guayllabamba river basin. The eastern part of the basin is surrounded by a number of volcanoes. In the background of this photo (right) of Quito at dusk are the volcanoes (left to right) Cotopaxi, Pasochoa and Rumiñahui (Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quito>).



### More Information

You can look for more information about Ecuador at these web sites.

#### General Information:

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1106.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1106.html)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecuador>

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ec.html>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/south-america/ecuador-and-the-galapagos-islands/>

<http://www.usembassy.org.ec/English/IndexEN.htm>

<http://ecuador.org/>

Cuenca: <http://www.municipalidadcuenca.gov.ec/>

Quito: <http://www.quito.gov.ec/>

Map of Ecuador: <http://ecuador.america-atlas.com/>

### References

U.S. Department of State, The (2006). <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm>

Wikipedia (Cuenca) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuenca%2C\\_Ecuador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuenca%2C_Ecuador)

Wikipedia (Quito) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quito>

World Factbook, The (2006). <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ec.html>