

## Welcome to Ecuador -Rafting

We're glad you decided to join Small World Adventures to paddle the magnificent whitewater of Ecuador. In the following pages we have tried to provide you some information that will help you plan your trip. Please let us know if you are uncertain about any details.

**ECUADOR and the RIVERS** - Ecuador is much more than a river runner's mecca. This small country, the size of Colorado, is renowned for its colorful indigenous markets, world-class alpine peaks, rugged coastline and the incomparable Galapagos Islands. As one of the most species-rich nations on earth, Ecuador offers a unique glimpse into the natural environment. Combine this with the diverse cultural blending of Spanish and indigenous heritages and you have the perfect backdrop for a winter rafting adventure. Warm weather boating (similar to early summer in California and Colorado) in remote tropical cloud and rainforests is what you can expect from your Ecuador vacation.

We are proud of our small, intimate trips, which are normally limited to twelve guests. There is so much classic whitewater available that is so close together that often the only difficulty is choosing which rivers to paddle! While the exact itinerary will be tailored to match the experience and interests of each group, we will maximize time spent rafting and exploring. You'll find breathtaking, lush jungle canyons and lightly populated valleys full of birds, butterflies and orchids. After each day of paddle rafting, a short drive brings us back to our base lodge where we have time to enjoy a hot shower, delicious dinner and a comfortable night's sleep.

The rivers are primarily rain fed and the water levels can be dynamic. Too little water has never been a problem in the areas that we boat. When the rivers come up we sometimes need to change our plan for the day to another river. We have been running the rivers of Ecuador since 1993 and we rely on this experience to decide what rivers to run each day. Possible rivers to paddle include the Quijos, Cosanga, Misahualli, Jatunyacu, Napo, Jondachi, Hollin, and Anzu.

Most of the runs we do are remote, without road access so you need to be ready for anything. Most people that have paddled with us in the past have expressed that the rivers were pretty challenging and we recommend, but don't require, that rafters have experience. If you have a group of seven or more and want an easier or harder trip let us know and we will work with you to create an appropriate schedule. We also can combine kayakers and rafters on these trips so if you have friends who kayak and you want to vacation together this is a perfect trip. We can also accommodate friends or family who want to stay dry and not raft.

**WEATHER AND CLIMATE** - The paddling conditions here in the dry season are wonderful! The locals say, "In the dry season it rains every day, and in the rainy season it rains all day!" The rivers rise and fall quickly. Therefore, to take advantage of the best levels, we paddle in two different areas of the country. In the north the average air temperature is 65-80 degrees and river temperatures range in the 60s; shorty wetsuits and paddle jackets are the norm here. In the south, because of an elevation drop, the water and air temperatures are even warmer. In the evenings, shorts or long pants and a T-shirt are comfortable wear.

**BEING IN ECUADOR** - Traveling in a developing country can be fascinating and frustrating at the same moment. Our goal is to maximize the former and minimize the latter without insulating you from the experience. Nonetheless, a certain "roll-with-the-punches" attitude will go a long way in making your trip fun and memorable. This is adventure travel. We'll work hard to provide you with an incredible experience. It is possible that the roads could become impassable for a spell or the rivers raging. Then we just have to make the most of the situation. If we can't follow our planned itinerary, we'll do our best to substitute something just as unforgettable. In general it is a more conservative country than the US but since it is a popular tourist destination, the Ecuadorians have seen "gringos" before. We try hard to not offend the culture; however, something like wearing shorts is not a big deal in most places for both men and women. Spending

a little time with the locals usually turns out to be a great experience for everyone. Giving children candy or money often does more harm than good (their dental plans are not good). We are developing programs to help in certain areas such as education and conservation, so if you would like to make a donation let us know. We also collect used clothing and shoes and distribute it to nearby local villages.

**MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS** - The Atlanta Center for Disease Control provides free information for travelers at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or you can call your local Public Health Department. Give the Health Department sufficient time to order and give you any vaccinations for which you need an update. We suggest you consult with your doctor and consider the following medications: tetanus, hepatitis A and B, yellow fever, typhoid fever, and anti-malarial medication. Some of our past guests have taken every shot and medication and a fair number have done nothing. Make sure you consult your doctor and make a personal decision that you are comfortable with. We're careful with our food and water and very few folks have intestinal problems. If you have a delicate GI system, check with your doctor about taking Pepto Bismol® prophylactically. Adding swim ear to your med kit is a good idea also. Be sure to bring any prescription meds that you may need. Vaccinations are definitely a personal choice, so make sure you educate yourself as much as possible so you can make the best decision for yourself.

**LODGING** – You are responsible for your own lodging near the Quito airport on the first and last nights of the trip and for your airport pick up. We recommend the Hosteria San Carlos <http://hosteriasancarlostababela.com/>. See our Quito hotel info sheet for more on this. You need to make sure you book an airport pick up with your hotel. Most hotels near the new airport offer an airport pick up for a small fee (usually around \$5). If you want to use the Hosteria San Carlos, our office will be happy to book your hotel room and pick up for you, just let us know.

Small World will cover your lodging for the rest of your trip with us. While traveling in Tena we will usually stay in a riverside lodge, and of course while in the Quijos valley we will stay at our own luxurious riverside lodge and cabins. You will love the beautiful rooms and gardens, fantastic food, and peaceful setting. For light sleepers or heavy snorers, securing a single room during the trip is usually possible. Just let us know and add \$200 to the cost of the trip.

There is free wireless internet at our lodge and at the hotel we use in Tena. It can sometimes be unreliable, but hey, you are on vacation! All hotels use regular 110 electricity so you should not need to bring an adapter.

**GETTING TO ECUADOR** – Nowadays, we find that the internet has the cheapest airfare out there. Our favorite online sites are [www.lowfares.com](http://www.lowfares.com), [www.cheapoair.com](http://www.cheapoair.com) and [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com). You should arrive by the first night (Saturday) of the schedule or before. Your departure is usually the following Saturday night (make sure the flight leaves after 8pm because we will be kayaking this day) or Sunday morning unless you decide to stay longer. Folks who arrive a day early report that they enjoyed the extra time getting settled and exploring the country before jumping onto the rivers. **Check with your airline about possible baggage limitations near the holidays.** Some airlines impose a luggage embargo on excess luggage during the holidays; but “normal” baggage (your bag and paddle bag) should not be a problem, but it’s always nice to check ahead of time.

**POLITICS AND SAFETY** - Ecuador has experienced a peaceful democracy for decades. In our years here we've traveled extensively and have found the people to be open, friendly and curious about us. Using common sense regarding personal belongings when traveling, we find Ecuador a secure place to travel, work, and play. Just as in North America, the big cities have more petty crime than the small towns, so be smart when walking around Quito or any other large city. Drunk gringos are especially easy targets for pick pockets so take taxis if you are out late at night in Quito. It's also smart to leave your passports and large

amounts of money back at the hotel. Take only what you need out on the town (if you have to go out). In Tena and Borja we feel good walking around there day and night. If busing around the country before or after your trip, just make sure to keep an eye on your belongings. If you are traveling with expensive items (camera, laptop, etc...) keep these things in your lap while on the bus. You don't need to be paranoid, just be cautious and smart!

**VISAS and PASSPORTS** – For *most* (if you are unsure, check before you travel) nationalities, you don't need a pre-arranged visa if you are staying for less than 90 days. You will need a valid passport and will be issued a free tourist visa and card upon arrival in the Quito airport. **Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months AFTER your travel dates.** The tourist card is just a slip of paper but you need it when you leave so don't lose it. Bring a photocopy of the important pages of your passport as well as a couple extra pictures. A copy of your birth certificate is good to have in case you lose your passport. Keep all these items separate from your valuables.

**MONEY** – Everyone and everything in Ecuador operates on cash. Credit cards are usually not accepted in the places where we will be traveling. Bring cash for your expenses, and just be careful with it while you are traveling. All normal expenses during the trip are covered except personal purchases, the first and last night's hotel stay, drinks, and tips. Tipping 10% for services in Ecuador is normal, so feel free to do it. Drinks here are cheap, so depending on how much you like to drink, \$2-\$10 per day should cover you. Ecuador uses the US dollar as the official currency so there is no need to change money when you arrive. Old worn bills are sometimes not accepted though, so try to bring newer ones. Small bills are handy also, as even a \$20 can be impossible to break. **We do not recommend traveler's checks.** They are nearly impossible to cash once you leave Quito. ATM machines are now available in Quito, Tena, and there is even one in El Chaco (near the lodge).

### **TRAVEL TIPS** –

- Bring any essential gear with you as carry-on luggage.
- Ecuador lies in Eastern Time Zone and does not observe daylight savings.
- Have a couple \$1 bills handy to cover airport tips.
- Cash is king in Ecuador. So bring cash, and bring small bills

**TRAVEL INSURANCE?** We recommend purchasing travel insurance just in case you have to cancel your trip at the last minute. It's also a great idea to check with your health insurance provider to make sure they will cover you while outside of the country. If not, you can usually find some sort of travelers' health insurance to cover you on your trip. Your local travel agent can usually recommend someone and you can find agencies on the Internet as well, e.g.

<https://www.worldnomads.com/>

<http://www.utravelpro.com/>

**STUFF TO BRING DOWN FOR LOCALS AND THE LODGE** – Many people ask us what they can bring down for locals or for the lodge. We have a program set up to distribute clothes to local people in need. If you have used or new T-shirts, short sleeved shirts, pants or shoes in good condition especially in small through large sizes we can get them to people that need them. Of course the guides enjoy current magazines, and anything that has news in it. There is a group of aspiring local kayakers in the Quijos valley which we are trying to encourage as well as a women's kayaking group in Tena. We lend them boats and gear as well as give them the occasional free lesson. Their only access to equipment is through us so if you have a piece of gear (especially one of the four essentials, accessories, or paddling jackets) you would like to donate we will be sure to get it to them.

**KEEP US INFORMED - Be sure that we have your latest flight schedule. If you miss a flight or have last minute flight changes try to contact our office in the (970) 309-8913. Also, notify us by email at: [info@smallworldadventures.com](mailto:info@smallworldadventures.com)**

