

## Welcome to Ecuador

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 boater'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 an outstanding 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 kayaking 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. There is so much classic whitewater available in close proximity to our private riverside lodge, that often the only difficulty is choosing which rivers to paddle! While the exact itinerary will be tailored to match the ability and interests of each group, we maximize time spent boating and exploring. We'll kayak both the clear azure waters of steep, continuous upper-Andean creeks and the thundering drop-pool play runs of the Amazon tributaries. You'll find breathtaking, lush jungle canyons and sparsely populated valleys full of birds, butterflies and orchids. After each day of paddling, 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, but 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 which rivers to kayak each day. Possible rivers to paddle include the Quijos, Piatua, Cosanga, Oyacachi, Misahualli, Jondachi, Jatunyacu, and Anzu.

**RATING YOUR SKILLS** - Our goal is to provide you with the best paddling vacation you've ever had! That means helping you paddle up to your potential with a smile on your face. Our trips are designed for kayakers currently paddling at these skill levels (i.e., if you are signing up for a Class IV trip, you should be a ***solid Class IV paddler***). All trips include continuous rivers and creeks, and we gladly offer tips to refine river strategies, technique, and play skills. **However, these are not classes to prepare paddlers for the skill level indicated so you should arrive ready to paddle runs at the designated level.** To ensure that you don't get in over your head, and don't hold back your group, make sure you rate your skills somewhat conservatively. **Be sure your roll is tuned up for the trip.**

*(We find that most people honestly and realistically evaluate their skills and we choose rivers based on the ability level of the group **and** the trip people sign up for. If an individual has overstated their skills and cannot safely run these rivers, we may have to ask them to sit out a day or two rather than holding back the entire group).*

***Most of the runs we do are remote, without frequent road access. Most people that have paddled with us in the past have expressed that the rivers were pretty challenging so this is not the time to push your level. Choose a trip where your skills will be consistent with the rest of the group so that everyone has fun and gets to boat to their potential.***

**BOATS** - Upon signing up for a trip you can select your boat of choice. This is a first come (by deposit), first choice system. The list includes Dagger, Wave Sport, Pyranha, Liquid Logic, Jackson, Zet and Bliss-Stick. Remember that you will be boating on remote rivers. Advice from a past Ecuador paddler is: "Choose a boat you know; this isn't the time to try something brand new." Bring whatever specialized outfitting that you need (i.e foot foam for play boats, or butt pads for creek boats). We provide the glue, and all boats have a back band and the stock outfitting.

**RIVER EQUIPMENT - BRING YOUR PERSONAL PADDLING GEAR AS CARRY-ON LUGGAGE** – This includes float bags, helmet, PFD, sprayskirt, footwear, capilene, and drytop. Put your paddle in a ski bag or, better yet, a SportTube. If traveling with a group, you should combine paddles together so that just 1 person can check them. Your guides carry throw ropes, rescue gear, first aid kits, and spare paddles; we like everyone to carry their own throw bag **AND FLOAT BAGS**, but you do not need to bring your own rescue gear, first aid kit or spare paddle (*you are, of course, welcome to if you like*). You should bring an extra capilene top and a couple of energy bars to carry in your dry bag each day (see our packing list). Also be sure you have good, sturdy river footwear. The runs are remote and we need to be prepared for anything.

**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 Quijos Valley the average air temperature is 70-80 degrees F (20-26 C) and river temperatures range in the high 50s or low 60s F (10-15 C); drytops with a light layer are the norm here. Shorts or pants and a light fleece are nice in the evenings at our lodge as things cool off significantly when the sun goes down. In the Napo Valley near Tena, because of an elevation drop, the water and air temperatures are even warmer; most people wear short-sleeved paddling jackets or capilene tops not for warmth, but for sun protection. Daytime temperatures are in the upper 80's F (30 C) and the water is quite warm as well (probably high 60's or low 70's F, or 15-20

C). In the evenings, shorts or long pants and a T-shirt are comfortable wear. We recommend wearing long nylon pants while paddling in Ecuador. Sand flies are sometimes a problem and we find that long pants work better than bug spray against them.

**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, but 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 kayaking itinerary, we'll do our best to substitute something just as unforgettable.

In general, Ecuador 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 have programs to help in certain areas such as education and conservation, so if you would like to make a donation let us know.

**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://hosteriasancarlostabela.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 please email us immediately at: [info@smallworldadventures.com](mailto:info@smallworldadventures.com)**