



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION GUIDE



International Affairs Office

UNIVERSIDAD
ESPÍRITU
SANTO

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Useful Numbers:

- **Taxi Cabs:**
Official UEES Taxi Service: *Limousine Service* - 0978817751 / 0995382312
- **UEES Clinic** 04 5015999 / 0939802094 info@ueesclinic.med.ec

General Emergency Numbers:

Policía Nacional (Police): Samborondón 04-202-4180

Bomberos (Fire Department): Samborondón 4 2024794 / 4 5024319

Defensa Civil (Civil Guard): Guayaquil 04-2422037

READING: Short Intro to UEES

The full name is *Universidad de Especialidades Espíritu Santo*, known locally as UEES.

The name Espíritu Santo (Holy Spirit) was adopted since the founders of the University were Catholic. However, UEES was **created as a multicultural, pluralistic and non-denominational institution** from its very beginning. Students and Faculty from all different religious have been accepted and there is no discrimination for reasons of ethnical background or religious affiliation in our University.

The University was approved on January 15, 1993, proclaimed as law on November 18, 1993. UEES opened its doors to students in October 1994.

UEES is an autonomous, not for profit institution dedicated to the social well-being of the society which it serves. Its mission is *“to serve society by developing persons of excellence and professionals of the highest quality”*. It achieves this goal by preparing individuals for leadership in their chosen fields of study, as well as in the area of social service. Education in the humanities, social sciences, science and technology are essential to this mission, which is summarized in the motto, **“Science, Service and Ethics”**.

UEES consists of nine major academic divisions: International Studies; Economics and Management; Law, Policy and Development; Liberal Arts; Communication; Computer Systems; Architecture and Civil Engineering; Tourism and Hotel Management; and Graduate Studies and Continuing Education. Currently there are 4,500 students enrolled in the academic programs of the University. UEES is committed to the development of Samborondón and Guayaquil, a bustling urban center with more than 2,500,000 inhabitants, and coastal Ecuador, the delicate ecological setting which surrounds the city.

UEES is **one of only a few truly bilingual Higher Education Institutions** in Ecuador. All students are required to study English and all students must pass at least three courses taught in English in their major before graduation. The establishment of the International Careers Program (ICP) in 1998 further strengthened UEES' commitment to fostering bilingualism. Students admitted to the ICP are able to complete all of their course work in English, a factor which improves their ability to transfer to programs at colleges and universities around the world.

The ICP is a division of the **Faculty of International Studies**. This academic unit also is home to the School of Foreign Languages, where ESL, Italian, French and Japanese courses are taught, and the International Affairs Office, where students from abroad are received and served, and where UEES students receive guidance concerning international study opportunities. The IAO offers a full program for **Spanish as a Second Language** that includes Integrated Language classes at all levels, plus Conversation, Writing, Literature, and Special Topics in Spanish for students with specific needs to improve their Spanish language proficiency. UEES has entered into agreements with universities in Canada, Australia, Italy, France, Japan, the United States, and elsewhere.

An important component of UEES is the Research Center. This unit has conducted studies concerning unemployment in Guayaquil, student attitudes, the Ecuadorian economy, and the rice, banana, and shrimp sectors. The “Center” periodically publishes research efforts of UEES faculty. Finally, UEES students are required to participate in a professional development internship and a **Service Learning internship**. In the latter, they put what they have learned into practice, acquire important work experience, and refine their knowledge and skills. The community service internship also provides students with valuable work experience, and enables them to contribute to the development of local communities in need.

PART I. Basics & Survival Information

Duration: 15 minutes.

A. Welcome to Ecuador!

Before we arrive at the hotel, a few key points:

- Do not drink tap water. Drink only bottled water and beware of ice in cold drinks.
- Toilet paper should be placed in the rubbish, not in the toilet.
- Secure your passport, and other valuables (e.g. money, credit card, etc) at all times:
 - When traveling outside the city, if you carry these items with you, preferably in a money belt or hidden pouch.
 - At all other times, keep your passport and other valuables locked in a safe place (e.g. hotel safe, suitcase or dresser), and carry **only a photocopy** of your passport and a small amount of money.

During the next few days:

- ❖ Be on time so we can stick to the orientation schedule.
- ❖ When you leave the hotel, go in pairs or small groups. Stay with your small group.

When we get to the hotel:

- ✓ Please help to unload the luggage.
- ✓ In case of an emergency, please contact a staff member.
- ✓ Get to bed early tonight—we have an early start in the morning. Please be ready on time!

Ask questions if you have them. The program staff is here to help you.

PART II. Health, Safety & Ecuadorian Law

Duration: 1 hour, 30 minutes.

A. Health

1. Cleanliness

Public spaces are often dirty and may contain germs to which you are unaccustomed. Wash your hands often – with soap – and avoid touching your eyes and mouth. This will reduce your chance of getting sick.

2. The sun

The sun is intense close to the Equator, especially at high altitudes, so you will burn quickly and easily. **Wear high factor sun block and a hat** to protect yourself.

3. Differences in food

- Your body may need time to adjust to unfamiliar food.
- Avoid eating food from street vendors or exceptionally dirty restaurants.
- Eat fresh salads only if you are certain that the vegetables have been cleaned properly (e.g. in a good restaurant or your host family's house).
- Eat fruit only if you can peel it or if it is prepared by your host family.

4. Health concerns

- If you are feeling sick, tell a staff member **immediately**. Also, be sure to communicate to us any health conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, etc). These details will be treated with strict confidence, but it is VITAL that we are aware, as we may be the ones providing information to a doctor or nurse (if you are not conscious).
- Common ailments include dehydration, traveler's diarrhea, vomiting, fever, flu, dog bites, ankle sprains, open wounds, etc.
- If you are taking, or plan to take, any medication (whether prescription or over-the-counter) please let us know and follow the directions provided.
- If you have any allergies or special dietary needs, please be sure to let us know.
- If a dog bites you, there is a small chance that it could have rabies. The first thing you should do is get away from the dog. As soon as possible, wash the bite with both **soap and water** for several minutes (the stronger the disinfectant in the soap, the better). Contact a doctor and our office immediately. If treated, rabies is curable, do not wait for symptoms to appear. We can help you get the rabies shots that you might need.

B. Safety

1. Being a foreigner

- You will ALWAYS be treated differently here, although this can be both positive (people may be exceedingly friendly or respectful) or negative (you will be seen by some as a target).
- Maintain a low profile to avoid attracting unnecessary attention. Avoid loud conversations or arguments in public.
- **Dress conservatively** (e.g. no shorts or tight-fitting/revealing clothing).
- Travel light and take only what you need with you (the less the better). Hold your backpack close to your body (tuck it under your arm).
- Use a money belt or pouch to carry valuables and important documents.
- Carry only a photocopy of your passport and keep the original locked in a secure place. *Exception: when traveling outside the city, always carry your passport with you (hidden under your clothing), as you may need to show it to law enforcement officers.*
- Act confident and purposeful when walking down the street.
- Make informed decisions about where you are going, with whom you are going and for how long you will be out, and inform others of those plans.

2. Crime

- Most crimes in Ecuador are of a non-violent nature (e.g. pick pocketing or stealing unattended backpacks). However, in Guayaquil there have been several cases of armed robberies or kidnappings. If anything of this nature happens to you, **offer no resistance** and call an IAO staff member as soon as you can.
- It is assumed that all foreigners are rich; therefore, you are a target (*the fact that you are able to travel here makes you wealthier than many Ecuadorians*).
- Though crime exists in Ecuador (as it does everywhere), it is not necessary to be fearful or paranoid. Instead, **act confident, exercise caution and always be aware of your surroundings**.
- Should you become the victim of a crime, please inform an IAO staff member immediately. We may need to question you, and any witnesses, in order to inform ourselves and to facilitate the completion of an incident report. In doing so, we will do our best to maintain your confidentiality.

3. Demonstrations and strikes

- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
- Strikes, whether legal or illegal, typically involve a police and/or military presence. Water or tear gas may be used to disperse demonstrators.
- Demonstrations may occur day or night and typically take place in public spaces such as the main plaza (e.g. 9 de Octubre in Guayaquil) or main streets in the city center.

4. Nightlife and moving about the city

- Plan your outings ahead of time, and inform your host family of those plans.
- **Never walk alone at night.** Go out in groups of 3-4 people that you know well.
- Take a taxi to your destination and back home, especially at night. Use only a radio taxi company recommended to you by IAO (see the Emergency Contacts List). In other towns and cities, use only official marked taxis.
- **Do not leave anyone from your group alone** at a bar or disco.
- Never leave your drink unattended and do not accept drinks from unknown people (drugs have been placed in the drinks of unsuspecting people).

- Never accept anything handed to you in the street by a stranger, including flyers. Drugs such as scopolamine have been used to make people compliant and rob them.
- If you are at a party or bar and a fight breaks out, remove yourself (and your group) immediately.
- Enjoy yourself, but be cautious.

5. Independent Travel

- Your program allows for a certain amount of independent travel. While we want you to enjoy this experience, you need to take measures to keep yourself safe.
- More travelers die each year in road traffic accidents than any other way (more than snakes, spiders, disease, earthquakes, etc.). The risk increases significantly at night, which is after 7pm in Ecuador. Avoid taking night buses where possible, get up early to travel instead. Otherwise, use only reputable bus companies from the official *Terminal Terrestre*.
- Certain places in Ecuador which are popular with foreigners can be relatively dangerous due to their party culture and geographic isolation. Criminal gangs have been known to target tourists. Please exercise particular caution in the following places: the “Mariscal” district in Quito; Montañita and other beach resorts; Cerro Mondango in Vilcabamba.
- **Do NOT walk alone at night on the beach:** there have been incidents where travelers (both male and female) have been sexually assaulted in those circumstances.
- Other locations can be dangerous due to natural hazards: the sea currents are very strong along the coast of Ecuador, so do not bathe alone; Baños de Agua Santa in Ambato sits under Tungurahua Volcano, which has erupted several times in the last years and Ecuador experiences earthquakes and tremors.
- Finally, adventure sports such as bungy jumping, go-karting and rafting have grown in recent years in Ecuador, but bear in mind that many of these activities are largely unregulated, and that they may not respect worldwide safety standards.

C. Ecuadorian law

1. Jurisdiction and laws

- ❖ While you are in Ecuador, you are subject to its laws and regulations, which may differ significantly from those with which you are familiar.
- ❖ If you are arrested in Ecuador, you will not be afforded the rights and protections available to individuals under the law of your country.
- ❖ In Ecuador, persons charged with crimes are considered guilty until proven otherwise.
- ❖ Cocaine, marijuana, opium and other drugs are illegal in Ecuador.

2. Arrests, punishments and prisons

- ❖ Arrested individuals may experience prolonged pre-trial detention without bail, especially in drug-related offenses (although this has improved slightly).
- ❖ Persons violating Ecuadorian laws—even unknowingly—**may be imprisoned or deported.**
- ❖ Punishments for similar offenses may be more severe in Ecuador than in other countries (e.g. in Ecuador, a foreigner caught in possession of illegal drugs will be charged with international drug trafficking).
- ❖ Drug-related penalties are strict, and offenders can expect heavy fines and lengthy jail sentences.
- ❖ Prison conditions in Ecuador are sub-standard.

3. Illegal activity among program participants

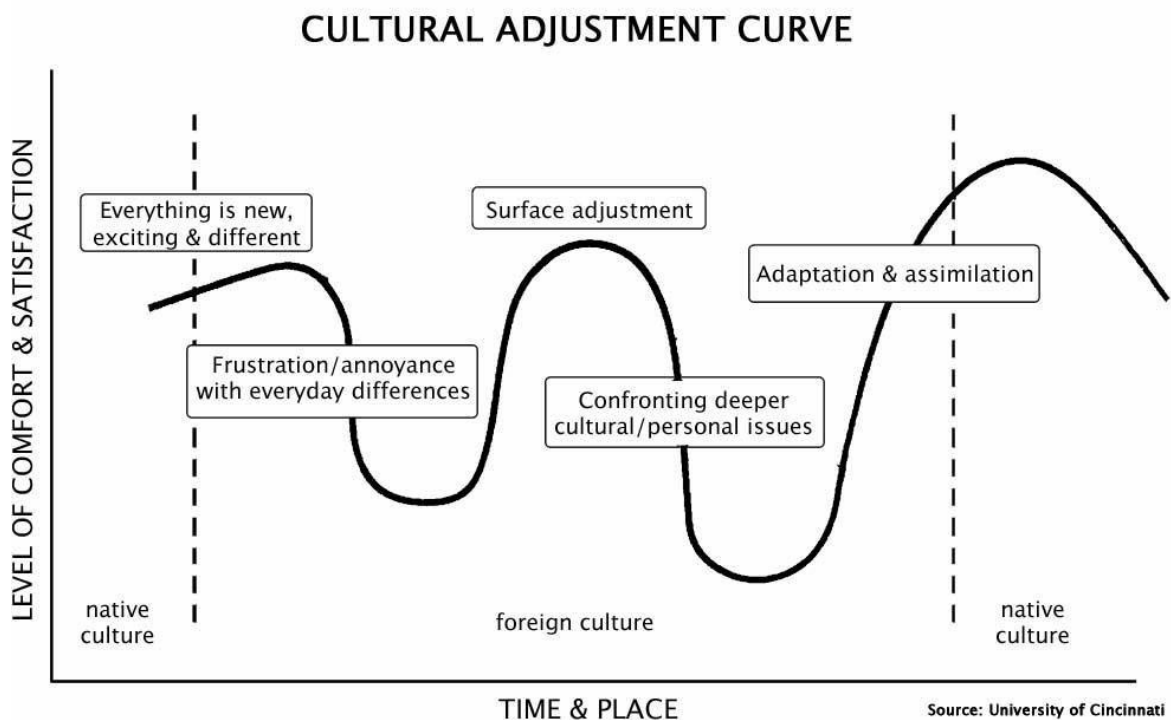
- ❖ If you engage in illegal activity (e.g. possessing or using illegal drugs), you put the entire group at risk; therefore, IAO has zero tolerance policy. If you are caught, you will be expelled from the program and sent home at your own, or your parents', expense. (*Refer also to "Code of Conduct" in Part IV.*)
- ❖ If you are aware, or have observed, that another student in the group has engaged in illegal activity, report the situation to a staff member immediately. We will do our best to protect your identity.

PART III. Cultural Adjustment

Duration: 1 hour, 30 minutes.

A. Cultural transition

Culture shock is a term used to describe the psychological disorientation experienced when you leave your familiar surroundings and are immersed in a foreign culture. During this cultural transition, you may experience a plethora of emotions, as shown by the *Cultural Adjustment Curve*:



As this diagram indicates, you may fluctuate between feelings of excitement or euphoria and those of anxiety, anger, irritability, etc. Homesickness and reactive depression are also common symptoms. All these emotions are normal responses to the disorientation caused by the unfamiliar surroundings of your new environment, and they are part of adjusting to a foreign culture. Remember that everyone goes through these changes at a different pace.

B. Easing your cultural transition

- Maintain a sense of humor about yourself and others. If the waiter gives you a strange look when you order a plate of *jabón* instead of *jamón*; just laugh at yourself and realize that everyone makes mistakes.
- Get involved: take an active role in learning about your new community and what it has to offer. Take advantage of your time here. Remember that what you get out of your time in Ecuador is directly related to what you put in.
- Examine any feelings of anxiety and confusion, try to discover the underlying causes rather than blocking them out.
- Keep an open mind: avoid making judgments about the way things are done (*words such as “right” and “wrong” indicate judgment*). Try whenever possible, without compromising your safety, to have a personal experience here that does not involve other people from the same culture as you.
- Refrain from making negative statements about people in the new culture, and avoid other participants who express such sentiments.
- Talk with Ecuadorians on a personal and cultural level. Discuss your observations, confusion, etc. and listen to what they say about why things are done *“that way.”*
- Have patience: you won’t become fully adjusted overnight. In fact, expect that it will take several weeks, or months, to reach the latter stages of adaptation and assimilation.
- Escape into a comfortable world if you need to – keep a journal, watch a movie, talk with peers – this can help you process and ease into your environment.
- Remember these three words as a guide to your time here:
 - Observe
 - Record
 - Enjoy

C. Adjusting to your new social setting

1. Words and phrases

In Ecuador, you will encounter a plethora of new words and phrases, which may include the following:

<i>siga no más</i>	go ahead
<i>coma no más</i>	dig in (start eating)
<i>no sea malito</i>	be nice (usually for asking a favor)
<i>mijito/mijita</i>	my son/my daughter (diminutive forms of <i>mi hijo/mi hija</i>)
<i>ñaño/ñaña</i>	brother/sister
<i>¡qué chévere!</i>	that's cool!
<i>¡qué bestia!</i>	I can't believe it/that's awful/that's unbelievable

2. Greetings

In Ecuador, it is important to **greet every person** when you enter a room and acknowledge each person again before you leave. This will go a long way toward being accepted into the culture. In most situations, people greet each other as follows:

- Men typically shake hands with each other.
- Between a man and a woman, and between two women, a light “kiss” on the person’s right cheek is customary (*more accurately, this involves touching right cheeks and making a brief kissing sound in the air*).

Keep in mind that greetings may vary, depending on the situation:

- **In the family:** Greet your family—and guests—as described above when you enter the house and say good-bye when you leave.
- **On the street/in public:** If you encounter a friend, stop and greet one another and have at least a brief chat, then bid farewell before continuing on your way.
- **In a social setting** (e.g. at a restaurant, party or disco): Greet each person to whom you are introduced, or whom you already know, and be sure to say good-bye before you leave.
- **In a store:** When you enter, greet the store attendant with “*Buenos días*” (or “*Buenas tardes*” in the afternoon). As you leave, say “*Gracias*”.

3. Formality of Speech

It is important to remember in Ecuador that “*Usted*” is commonly used.

The “*Tú*” form is rarely used and is reserved for friends, family members and people who have a well-established relationship.

It is *always* better to first refer to someone as “*Usted*”, as this will convey your respect for the person. Wait until someone asks you to use “*Tú*” before switching over. “*Tú*” is often used in a demeaning or insulting manner.

4. Key points to remember as you adjust:

- ❖ You are not the first person to experience culture shock. Everyone deals with culture shock differently and others have gone through exactly what you are dealing with. **Come visit us in the IAO office if you want to speak to someone about these adjustments.**
- ❖ The beginning is always the hardest part. Give yourself time to adjust before giving up on language difficulties or cultural differences. You’ll be amazed how differently you may feel about things after giving yourself some time to adjust!
- ❖ Don’t be afraid to make mistakes when speaking Spanish. Take advantage of this unique time in Guayaquil to immerse and challenge yourself linguistically.

- ❖ If you have problems with your host family, please communicate with them. If you cannot or do not feel comfortable doing so, speak with one of the IAO team who will support and assist you.

D. Gender and Sexuality Issues

Interactions between men and women in Ecuador are significantly different than in many of your home countries. These, affect both men and women.

Women should be aware of the following:

- **Gringas** (as foreign females are often called) are presumed to be easy or loose (*think the Hollywood stereotype*).
- In Ecuador, “no” sometimes means “yes.” Ecuadorian men generally will assume that if you want to go out (especially alone), you want to have sex.
- Be aware that wearing tight-fitting, or otherwise revealing, clothing that will attract additional attention (*you’ll be getting plenty of attention as it is*).
- Ignore *piropos* (cat calls): do not smile, get angry nor react in any other way. Just keep walking.
- Although it happens infrequently, a few women have faced uncomfortable situations with men in their host families. **If anyone or anything in your host family makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, speak to us immediately.** It is important for you to follow your instincts and change the situation.

Sometimes it can be overwhelming and exhausting to always get so much unwanted attention. There is no right or wrong way to cope with this.

Men should also be aware of the following:

- **Machismo** is still very much alive and well in Ecuador. Although this usually has more effect on female participants, it can also affect men in unpleasant ways, especially when alcohol is involved. It is a better idea to avoid confrontation, especially in bars.
- Unnecessary risks are sometimes taken, especially with motor vehicles. Male drivers will often disregard traffic rules, especially when they are out with friends. Competition can also be taken to an extreme – whether with alcohol or sport. Please do not submit to pressure to take risks that you normally wouldn’t.
- Women are often disrespected both in their presence and out of earshot. This can be offensive to men as well as women, especially when the woman is a good friend. This can be hard to deal with. However, this is a cultural trait in Ecuador and no matter how much one protests it, it is going to be hard to change. Often, to avoid confrontation, it is better to just ignore it.

AIDS and other STDs exist in Ecuador, but people do not talk about them. Condoms and other forms of protection are generally looked down upon (and, therefore, are not commonly used). Please remember, as you would anywhere, to take precautions with any sexual activity – no matter how low you perceive the risk to be.

Homosexuality is rarely openly acknowledged in mainstream Ecuadorian society. The homosexual community is therefore largely restricted to certain social outlets which may be located in more dangerous areas of the city.

Personal Space

The concept of personal space is viewed very differently in Ecuador than it is in many of our home countries. You may notice this quickly. Many foreigners in Ecuador can feel uncomfortable in situations where someone is standing particularly close to you when speaking, or breathing over your shoulder when waiting in line behind you. People in Ecuador are more used to being in close proximity with strangers. However, you are the best judge of what is right and what is not. Be aware of the way people here view personal space, but if you are uncomfortable and the alarm bells go off, don't chalk it up to cultural differences, make an effort to change the situation.

E. Additional Logistics

1. Money

ATM machines are common throughout Guayaquil and accept most international cards. On occasion, people have been refused a withdrawal at ATM machines, but on checking their home account have found that the money was deducted. If your transaction fails, be sure to check with your home bank account immediately.

Be sure to put your money in a safe, hidden place after using an ATM. Do not leave cash lying around, *even in your room in your host family's house.*

2. Taxis

During the day taxis should only cost a \$2.50 for a short trip in Samborondón, if you go into the city it will cost around \$4.00. If you have any problems with the official UEES taxi service, please contact an IAO staff member immediately.

At night, taxi fares increase, usually by \$1.00 per trip.

Do not get in a taxi that has anyone besides a driver in it.

Do not use yellow taxis or unknown taxis if at all possible while in Guayaquil. Yellow taxis are generally safe in Quito and Cuenca.

3. Mail

Samborondón does not have a post office but there are a number around the city. You will find them in the airport, the bus terminal and by the iguana park.

4. Mobile Phones

We advise you to get a phone while you are here in Ecuador, for your convenience and safety. The most cost-effective thing to do is to buy a pre-paid SIM card.

The cheapest phones are around \$30. It is also possible to buy a used phone at the *BAHIA* (black market), but these usually aren't much cheaper and are not very reliable.

The main companies here are Claro, Movistar and CNT. A SIM card usually comes with about \$3 credit, which you can recharge at many minimarkets.

PART IV. Program Overview & Code of Conduct

Duration: 30-40 minutes.

A. Overview of UEES

- Not-for-profit University, founded in 1993.
- A variety of programs for Ecuadorian students.
- Lots of overseas study opportunities for Ecuadorian students.
- Spanish language and International Careers Programs for international students.
- IAO coordinates services for international students and visiting faculty members. If you have questions, or if you experience any problems, come to us.

Support that IAO can provide you with

- The staff is here to help you. Our office is in Building A. We are happy to speak with you at any time. Please let us know if you need any advice or have any problems.
- In our office, we have a wide variety of resources – both human and material:
 - If you would like **ideas** for weekend activities, need **help** communicating with your home stay family, have scheduling difficulties or anything else, **please come and speak to us.**
 - Also, in our office are a wide variety of **brochures about activities, museums, restaurants, shops** etc in the Guayaquil area. Please come to learn more about the city.
 - IAO's library has books in both Spanish and English that you can borrow.
- Your UEES student card will give you **discounts** in restaurants and shops throughout Guayaquil.
- In case of an emergency, IAO has an **emergency telephone number** which is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. Do not hesitate to call: **0985-276879**
- If you have any suggestions for us, or problems that are unresolved, please let us know. Again, we are here to help make your stay in Guayaquil as safe, educational and enjoyable as possible, so please keep us informed!

B. Academics

1. Time Management

- To get the most from your experience, it is crucial that you prioritize your time.
- Try to fill your time here with experiences - believe us when we say you will never look back on a siesta as a treasured memory! This is your time in Ecuador, perhaps your only one: make the most of it.

2. Attendance Policy

- UEES expects students to attend every class and field trip. Points may be deducted for each absence in class, and students may even be withdrawn from class for excessive absences (*refer to course syllabi for further details*).
- The number of absences allowed to UEES students is strictly to cover instances of illness (*which is unfortunately a reasonably common occurrence amongst recent arrivals*) or other emergencies. Please note that if you exceed the number of absences (even in the case of illness) you will not be permitted to pass the course and your credits will not transfer to your home university. Therefore, you should not “use” this policy for anything but emergencies.

C. Code of Conduct

1. Key points:

- Alcohol abuse is a violation (*defined as any use of alcohol that interferes with your primary task of being a student*)
First violation: Student will receive a written warning.
Second violation: Student will be expelled from the program and sent home at own, or parents', expense.
- Drug use/possession or other illegal activity is prohibited and IAO has a **zero tolerance** policy - any violation will result in expulsion.
- Failure to conduct oneself properly as a student at UEES is considered a violation, for example;
 - i. failure to follow IAO orientation guidelines or verbal/written instructions from IAO staff and/or the Dean of the Faculty.
 - ii. lack of respect for fellow students, teachers, the Dean, IAO staff, guides or lecturers.
 - iii. irresponsible behavior which jeopardizes your personal safety and/or the safety of others.
 - iv. failure to respect and follow guidelines outlined by your Host Family.
- **Consequences will vary according to the severity of the violation** – they are at the discretion of the Academic Counsellor at your home institution and IAO Director. Students may be expelled for these types of violations.
- For more details, consult the Student Conduct Agreement that formed part of your application.

2. Expulsion:

- A student who is expelled from the program will not be eligible for a refund, nor will they receive academic credit for any coursework in progress. Expulsion decisions will be made by the Academic Counsellor at your home institution and the IAO Director. Their decision will be final.

PART V. Host Families

Duration: 1 hour.

A. What host families provide

- ✓ Bedroom
- ✓ 3 meals a day
- ✓ Light laundry service

B. IAO policies

- Families are screened by our staff and evaluated by students.
- Each family may host only one student at a time.
- Families should speak only Spanish with our students (except in an emergency).
- International phone calls are not to be placed - even with a calling card.

C. In case of illness

- Let your host family know if you are not feeling well.
- Contact us if you need to see a doctor. We can arrange the appointment and accompany you.

D. CULTURAL & PRACTICAL ADVICE

So you're going to live with a host family? For many students, this thought evokes both **exhilaration** and **anxiety**. On the one hand, it's exciting to meet new people and to learn firsthand about their culture, but it can also be nerve wracking.

Questions such as *What will they be like? What will they feed me?* may be racing through your head.

Our advice is intended to assist you in making the most of your homestay by building on that excitement and by easing the anxiety you may be feeling.

Rest assured that there is nothing abnormal or unusual about feeling nervous before meeting your host family. To some degree, every student before you have been apprehensive in one way or another. Your host family may be just as nervous to meet you—after all, they are inviting a complete stranger into their home. Together, you will overcome that anxiety and learn from each other.

We are confident that your experience in Guayaquil will be enjoyable and filled with lasting memories. Like many of our alumni, you may keep in touch with your host family over the years, and you may even have the opportunity to visit each other—either in Guayaquil or in your own home!

1. EACH HOST FAMILY IS UNIQUE

As in your own country, families in Guayaquil may share common characteristics, but each one has its own distinct structure, habits, etc. Some families may be single parent households, some families have children, while others do not. Your host siblings may be your age, younger or older. Your host family's home may be a small house or a large one, or it could be an apartment.

Keep in mind that **every family is unique** and so every student's experience will be unique. Resist temptations you might feel to compare your host family with those of other students you meet at UEES (particularly those comparisons involving judgments). Such comparisons are unfair and may be detrimental to your experience.

Communication is the key to building a successful relationship with your host family and to helping you adapt more quickly to Ecuadorian culture. It is natural that, at first, you may not be able to understand everything that your family is saying (*even advanced students may*

require an adjustment period before becoming comfortable with the local accent and vocabulary). However, it is important to try to communicate with your host parents and siblings as much as possible. Your family will appreciate your efforts.

Your host family wants to get to know you. They want to know if you are doing okay, if you are comfortable, if you need something, how your classes are going, what you notice is different in Ecuador, etc. **Talk to them!**

Remember that you are here to learn Spanish and about Ecuadorian culture. Time will fly by faster than you can imagine! Therefore, take advantage of every moment you are here and build a friendship with your family.

If there is anything you do not understand, something you are not sure of, or if you have any doubts, questions or problems, please do not hesitate to ask your family. By communicating with them, you can avoid misunderstandings later on.

2. GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS

In Ecuador, it is very important that you always **greet every person** when you enter a room and acknowledge each person again before you leave. We cannot emphasize how important these greetings are; they will go a long way toward being accepted into the culture. Greetings are not made verbally nor with an impersonal wave of the hand - *even to a large group*.

3. EMOTIONS AND PERSONAL SPACE

In general, **Ecuadorians are expressive**. When conversing, they use lots of gestures and facial expressions to display feelings and to emphasize a point. You may also notice that they make eye contact with each other to a greater degree than you may be accustomed. When having a conversation with an Ecuadorian, you may feel that your personal space is being invaded - Ecuadorians tend to stand very close to each other. As well, it is common for Ecuadorians to place a hand on the shoulder or arm of the person with whom they are speaking. When standing in line or walking down a crowded street, do not be surprised if people brush past you without apologizing or excusing themselves. This should not be considered rudeness; rather, it **exemplifies a concept of personal space that may be very different** from your own.

4. FAMILIES IN GUAYAQUIL ARE CONSERVATIVE

Catholicism is a major influence in Ecuador. You may notice certain Catholic rituals and prayer recitations in which your family participates. Most families also attend *misa* (mass) on the weekend. You should respect these religious customs and feel free to participate with your family if you want to (*your family may well invite you to go with them to mass, though you should not to feel obligated to do so*).

Generally speaking, **people in Guayaquil dress conservatively**. It is rare to see people wearing shorts in the city unless they are doing some form of exercise or participating in an athletic event. Overly revealing or tight-fitting clothing would also not be appropriate to wear.

Be respectful of your family's concerns for your safety and well-being (this is especially relevant for female students). Don't be surprised, therefore, if they ask you questions about your schedule, when you are planning to come home, how late you might be out, if you are hungry/cold/comfortable, etc., or if they remind you to take along a sweater. Please be considerate if they give you a curfew. Remember, you are their host child, and they are concerned about your well-being.

5. ARROZ CADA DÍA

It is common for families to eat their meals together, and it is expected that every member of the household (and sometimes extended family members) be home at mealtime. What you may consider as merely an occasion to stuff food in your mouth is considered **family**

time in many households. The entire family may wait for every person to come home before they begin to eat. For these reasons, it is of paramount importance to be courteous and arrive home *on time* for every meal. Be sure to communicate delays or changes to your schedule *in advance*. One of the most common frustrations expressed by host families is that their host child has not let them know if s/he is running late or simply not coming home for a meal, and the family has been left waiting (not to mention concerned about the child's safety). In Guayaquil, **lunch is the largest and most important meal** of the day.

In general, the kind of food you may expect at each meal may consist of the following:

- Breakfast: continental style with tea or coffee (usually *café con leche*), juice, fruit, bread, cheese.
- **Lunch:** soup & a main dish of meat/chicken served with a generous portion of rice and freshly-made fruit juice.
- Dinner: lighter than lunch, generally with the same basic types of food.
- Drinking water: families have been asked to serve you boiled or purified water. Outside drink bottled water only.

6. THE BATHROOM

The sewage system in Guayaquil, as in most places in Latin America, is not designed to handle toilet paper or other foreign objects. **Place toilet paper in the trash basket**, which you usually find located conveniently next to the toilet. Your family will explain which type of shower they have and how to use it.

7. THE TELEPHONE

In Ecuador, there is a charge for every outgoing telephone call, even for local calls within the city. You may use your host family's telephone to make quick, local calls within Guayaquil only. Please be respectful of the amount of time you spend on the phone, since it can get expensive. **Long distance and international calls may not be made.**

8. LAUNDRY

Your host parents will inform you of the laundry schedule, where you should put your dirty clothes, etc. Please note that not all families have washing machines, and very few have dryers. Instead, it is common for the host mother, or a housekeeper, to wash the clothes by hand, after which they will be hung outside to dry and then ironed before being returned to you. Because of this, keep in mind that **it may take a few days to get your clothes back**, so you will need to plan accordingly (in other words, don't wait until all your clothes are dirty before handing over your laundry).

9. DRESS IN THE HOUSE

In general, it is not acceptable to walk around the house in your pijamas and/or barefeet. Therefore, be sure that you are always dressed outside your bedroom and that you wear shoes or slippers at all times.

10. HOUSEKEEPERS

In Ecuador, where labor is inexpensive, it is common for families to employ someone to assist with the household chores. This is usually a woman, referred to as the "*empleada*". She may live-in, or come to the house only on certain days of the week. Her duties might include cleaning the house, washing clothes, cooking, taking care of younger children, etc. **If you need the Housekeeper to do something for you, ask your host mother first.**

11. YOUR BEDROOM

Most Ecuadorian mothers take pride in a **neat and clean house**. Be sure to make your bed every day and keep your room tidy. Cleaning of the floor and changing of sheets may happen while you are out, so be sure to lock away any valuables.

12. INVITING FRIENDS TO YOUR HOME

You are welcome to invite your friends to visit you in your home but you must **consult your host family in advance** - especially with regard to obtaining approval for the day and time. In Guayaquil, visits are usually conducted in the living room or sitting room, and guests rarely go into other parts of the house, especially not the bedrooms. If you would like to show your visitor the rest of the house, ask your host parents first if this would be okay. If a visitor of the opposite sex is in your bedroom, **never close the door** during their visit; this would be considered inappropriate - as you read above, families tend to be fairly conservative.

13. SPEAK ONLY SPANISH IN FRONT OF YOUR HOST FAMILY

When you are with friends from your native country, please **refrain from speaking English** or any language other than Spanish in front of your family. This is considered rude since they may not be able to understand what you are saying and likely will presume that you are talking about them.

14. WHAT TO CALL YOUR HOST PARENTS

You can start out by calling them "*señor*" and "*señora*," which shows respect. However, don't be surprised if they ask you to call them by their first names.

15. SAFETY AND AWARENESS

Keep your valuables (money, passport, jewelry, etc) in a **secure place**, i.e. locked in a drawer or suitcase. When you are outside of your home, **be careful** with your belongings at all times. Keep valuables such as cameras, purses, watches, jewelry, wallets and sunglasses in a secure place on your body (whenever possible, it is advisable to conceal them). Carry backpacks and bags in front of you, especially if you are in a crowded place or riding public transportation. Remember, because you are a foreigner, **you are considered rich** (even if you think of yourself as a poor college student); consequently, you are a target for thieves. **Never leave your belongings unattended**, regardless of where you are—thieves can strike quickly.

16. FINAL THOUGHTS

- Keep an **open mind** and be **flexible**.
- Be **sensitive** to cultural differences. Allow yourself time to **adjust** to your family and culture.
- **Obey** your family's rules (e.g. curfews) and understand the reasons behind these regulations (ie, concern about your safety and well-being).
- If you don't understand something, **ask**. This will help you to avoid misunderstandings later on.
- Let your family know what you **need** and what you **like**.
- Observe and **participate actively** with your family in the culture.

Your host family has received an orientation and is prepared to welcome you into their home. Their top priority is to help you adjust to, and feel comfortable in, your new environment. We have asked the host family to help you with other things you need to know: how to get to UEES *and home again*, how to get in *and out* of the house (you should also receive a house key), when meals are served, how the laundry system works, how to operate the hot water in the shower, other household and family rules, etc. If you have any questions about how something works, please ask your family first. If you have any other questions or problems, do not hesitate to contact our Coordinator. In case of an emergency (after hours), please call the cellular phone number. We are here to support you and to help you have a successful homestay.

Part VI. Service-Learning

Duration 15 minutes

A. What is Service Learning?

"Service-learning is an educational methodology which combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation for community work, and deliberate reflection. Students participating in service-learning provide direct and indirect community service as part of their academic coursework, learn about and reflect upon the community context in which service is provided, and develop an understanding of the connection between service and their academic work. These learning experiences are designed through a collaboration of the community and the institution or academic unit/program, relying upon partnerships meant to be of mutual benefit."

Gelmon, Sherrill B., Holland, Barbara A., Driscoll, Amy, Spring, Amy, & Kerrigan, Seanna (2001). *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques*. Campus Connect: Brown University, Providence, RI., p. v.

B. Activities of Service-Learners:

- Attend classes and provide voluntary service to a community organization for a specified amount of time.
- Address community-identified needs during their service placement.
- Are involved in activities at the community site that provides meaningful experience and can be reflected upon personally or in the classroom.
- Read articles and books to become more informed about the issues addressed at the service site.
- Engage in critical reflection on the service experience and its cultural overtones.

C. Outcomes of Service-Learning:

- Learn from individuals with a variety of different backgrounds and experiences. Learn what life is like in another part of the world and about the struggles that many faces on a daily basis.
- Examine your own values, attitudes, and beliefs about the world.
- Experience the realities of community organizations as part of your learning.
- Develop leadership skills.
- Understand the economic, political, and cultural structures of our society and the impact these structures have on people.
- Gain experience in your academic and/or future career field.
- Increase understanding of the four facets of service:
justice, compassion, diversity, and social responsibility.

D. Requirements for a successful Service Learning experience:

- ✓ *Openness:* You need to maintain an open mind in order to learn from your service site and the people you will be working with. There is never one way, or a right way, to do something.
- ✓ *Flexibility:* You may find it challenging to adapt to the work environment or (lack of?!) schedule. Try to stay flexible while developing a level of structure for yourself.
- ✓ *Patience:* It takes time to adapt to a new environment and in some cases different ways of doing things. Try to be as patient as you can and remember that others may be adapting to you as well.
- ✓ *Perseverance:* You may fit into the flow of things right away, or it might take some time. Don't give up and try to stick it out and overcome some of the challenges.
- ✓ *Consistency:* Your service site will be depending on you to show up at a particular time and day, depending on your schedule. It is important to be consistent in order to make a valuable contribution and to truly integrate yourself into the organization. You are making a commitment and need to fulfill your responsibility.
- ✓ *Motivation:* In some organizations you need to take the initiative and get involved, making work for yourself or simply asking lots of questions. It's important to try to maintain a level of motivation and remember why you are there, and the value for both you and the service site.
- ✓ *Initiative:* Not every organization will have a specifically defined set of tasks or role for you that will result in something for you to do every day. This you can see as a problem or an opportunity: to leave your mark, to be creative, to contribute something unexpected.

Part VII. Survival Spanish

A. SURVIVAL VOCABULARY

Español	Ingles
¿Dónde está...?	Where is...?
¿A qué hora... (sale el bus)?	What time... (does the bus leave)?
Aniñado	Spoilt, snobby, having ones own way
Buena gente / linda gente	Nice person
Caer bien / caer mal	To like or to dislike (eg <i>ella me cae bien</i> – I like her)
¿Cómo llego a...?	How do I get to...?
¡Cómo No!	Of course / certainly / why not
¿Cuándo?	When?
Cuánto antes	As soon as possible
¿Cuánto es?	How much is it?
Después	After
Antes	Before
Echar a llorar/ reír	To break out crying/ laughing
En cambio	On the other hand
Estar de ánimo / tengo ánimo para	To be in the mood for...
Hacer caso de / hacer caso omiso de	To pay attention to / to pay no attention to
Hervida	Boiled
Ida y vuelta	Round trip
No cabe duda de que	There is no doubt that
No es cosa suya	It's none of your business
No hace falta	It's unnecessary / not needed
¡No me digas!	You don't say / really
Algo para picar	Something to eat or nibble
Ponerse en la cola	To wait ones turn
¿Por qué?	Why?
Por si las moscas / por si acaso	Just in case
Purificada	Purified
Qué bruto	How stupid or what an idiot
¿Qué hay?	What's up? What's new?
Roncar	To snore <i>¿tu roncas?</i> (do you snore?)
Salir de compras	To go shopping
Tener buen diente	To have a good appetite
Tener en cuenta	Keep in mind
Tengo hambre / me da hambre	I'm hungry / it makes me hungry
Tengo sed	I'm thirsty
Ya era hora	It's about time

B. Guayaquil slang

Español Guayaca	Ingles
Ñaño/a	Brother/Sister
Mis viejos	My Parents
Panas	Friends
Una man / un man	A woman / a man
Chévere	Cool
Bacán	Amazing
De ley	For sure
Dame chance	Give me an opportunity / a second
Cholo	Poor
Choro	Thief
Chuchaqui	Hangover
Chupar	To drink alcohol
Farrear	To party
Farra	Party
Una persona fresca	A chilled person
Guayaco	A person from Guayaquil
Harto	A lot
Joder	To annoy / to fool around
Que fue loco	What's up dude
Simón	For sure
Super	Very
Pelada/pelado	Girlfriend / Boyfriend
Trago	Drinks (alcohol)
Estoy chiro	I'm broke/skint
Biela	Beer
Eres pilas	You are smart
Pilas para mañana	Don't forget about tomorrow

C. WORDS AND PHRASES TO WATCH OUT FOR!

Español	Ingles
Perra	A female dog, however it can also mean “bitch” or “prostitute”. If you want to talk about a dog, always use the masculine form – perro.
Trabajar como un burro	Works like a horse, works hard. Be careful not to translate “works like a dog” as “trabajar como un perro” because that would mean the opposite. A dog is considered lazy, not a hard worker.
Gringos	While in Mexico this term has somewhat of a derogatory meaning, here in Ecuador this is a common term for all foreigners. Don’t feel insulted to be called this. It is not meant as an insult.
Tu madre	This is an insult. Try to avoid all expressions with “tu madre”
Mi sentido pésame	Means “my deepest sympathy” (when someone dies). Don’t use the word “simpatía” or “simpático” as these are not correct translations. Also, while “ <i>pesar</i> ” means grief or sorrow, “ <i>a pesar de</i> ” means “in spite of, although, even though”. Also, instead of the word “ <i>muerte</i> ” which is too strong when talking about death, the word “ <i>fallecido/fallecida</i> ” should be used.
Bachiller	Not a bachelor in sense of a single man. This means that a person has graduated from high school. A “bachiller” is one who was awarded a degree upon completion of a “bachillerato”, an advanced secondary school education.

D. ECUADORIAN FOOD

Ecuadorian food is quite different to other Latin American countries and generally is not spicy. Whilst in Ecuador, we recommend that you sample the following culinary delights:

Typical dish	Description
Fritada	Pork meat with garlic and onions, cooked until the water dries up.
Hornado	Roast pig.
Llapingacho	Potato patties, filled with cheese and made with “achiote” (a vegetable dye). Even tastier with a fried egg and avocados. Generally served with hornado.
Bonitisimas	Cheese filled patties made with corn flour and potatoes. Try with coffee.
Tamales (Tamal)	A steamed corn meal dough with or without filling. Ecuadorian tamales are usually wrapped in corn husk or achira (aka Canna) leaves. Usually the tamales are filled with pork, chicken, cheese or raisins.
Humitas (also called Choclotandas)	This is another type of tamal which is prepared with tender corn (<i>corn is choclo in spanish</i>), cheese, eggs and butter and rolled in a corn leaf.
Ají	hot sauce - a must with Ecuadorian dishes. It will be served in a small dish prepared with onions and sometimes with “CHOCHOS” a type of bean, eaten raw and of white color.
Empanadas de morocho	An “empanada” is a deep fried pastry turnover. Morocho is a type of white corn and this empanada is usually filled with a meat mixture.
Empanadas de queso	Prepared with wheat flour and filled with cheese.
Empanadas de verde	Prepared with green plantain and filled with cheese.
Locro	Locro is the most typical soup in Ecuador. It is prepared with potatoes, milk and achiote. There are different types: “de queso” (cheese), “de mote” (corn)
Ceviche	Ecuador’s signature dish. Seafood which is marinated in lemon juice and onions. Ceviche can be made of fish (<i>de pescado</i>), shrimp (<i>camarones</i>), shellfish (<i>concha</i>), squid (<i>calamari</i>), or all of the above (<i>mixta</i>).
Tostado	Fried corn kernels and is usually served with Ceviche
Canguil	Popcorn (which may also be served with Ceviche).
Pan y pastas	Bread and pastries.
Maduros fritos	Fried sweet plantain.
Helados	As there is a variety of fruit, there is also a variety of ice cream. . There is a very special type: HELADOS DE PAILA. It is an ice cream prepared in a big copper pot that lies over a bed of ice.

E. TRANSLATION OF COMMON DISEASES AND ILLNESSES

English	Español
Allergy	Alergia
Arthritis	Artritis
Asthma	Asma
Bite	Picadura
Bronchitis	Bronquitis
Chicken pox	Varicela
Cold or flu	Resfriado / gripe
Conjunctivitis	Conjuntivitis
Cough	Tos
Dengue fever	Dengue
Diarrhea	Diarrea
Diphtheria	Difteria
Ear ache	Dolor de oído
Fever	Fiebre
German measles	Rubeola
Severe stomach cramps	Cólicos severos
Gastro	Gastroenteritis
Headache	Dolor de cabeza
Heart attack	Ataque al corazón / infarto
Hepatitis	Hepatitis
Malaria	Malaria
Measles	Sarampión
Meningitis	Meningitis
Mumps	Paperas
Near-sightedness	Miopía
Pneumonia	Pulmonía
Polio	Polio
Rabies	Rabia
Rash	Erupción de la piel
Smallpox	Viruela
Sore throat	Dolor de garganta
Spots	Manchas rojas en la piel
Tetanus	Tétano
Tonsilitis	Amigdalitis
Typhoid	Tifoidea
Whooping cough	Tosferina
Yellow fever	Fiebre amarilla

Part VIII. SHORT GUIDE TO GUAYAQUIL & ECUADOR

A. GUAYAQUIL

Guayaquil has undergone quite a facelift in the past two decades. Previously there was little to attract tourists to Guayaquil and the heat, dirt and danger were reasons enough to stay away. Now the regenerated waterfront and city center have more than enough to keep you occupied for a couple of days. Guayaquil's 3km-long **Malecón** and the renovated artistic district of **Las Peñas** are great achievements. Add to this a re-organized public transport system, a new airport, new museums and policed pedestrianized zones, it's no wonder that Guayaquil has won a United Nations award for development. Just be aware that the heat, as well as pollution from heavy traffic, can make sightseeing an uncomfortable experience. Try to do sightseeing either early morning or late afternoon.

**Outside the regenerated center, Guayaquil is far from picturesque and the city remains dangerous for tourists in places, particularly at night.*

Getting Around

There are three main options for getting around the city: public buses, Metrovía and taxis. Public buses are uncomfortable but useful for simple journeys. Avoid them at night and at peak times when they are packed. A better option for getting between the bus terminal, the airport and the city center is the new Metrovía (\$0.35) trolley bus system. There are plenty of **taxis** but none of them use a meter so negotiate the price first. **Never take an unmarked cab.** You should pay \$2-3 for short journeys around the city.

Malecón 2000

This 3km public space is easily the highlight of the city – enclosed, pedestrianized and patrolled by security guards so safety is not a problem. The best point to enter Malecón is **La Plaza Cívica** at the end of 9 de Octubre. Here you're greeted by the impressive sight of **La Rotonda**, a statue of South America's liberators, José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar, shaking hands in front of a semi-circle of marble columns. The monument is stunning when lit up at night and it's fun for two people to whisper into the pillars at opposite ends and hear the voices carry. Walking south from La Rotonda is the 23-metre Moorish **Clock Tower**, constructed in 1931. Just south of the Clock Tower, the **Henry Morgan** is docked, a replica of a 17th century pirate ship. Keep walking to reach the **Plaza Olmedo**, with its contemplative monument of José Joaquín de Olmedo (1780–1847), the first mayor of Guayaquil. Further down you can cross the road and enter the bustling **Bahía black market**. Walking north from La Rotonda, past the children's play area, is a stunning set of **botanical gardens** with more than 300 species of coastal vegetation. At the north end of Malecón is a new **IMAX** theatre, the first of its kind in South America and the best place in the city to watch movies with a disorientating 180-degree screen. Below the cinema is **Museo Guayaquil en La Historia** (open 10am-6.30pm daily) which condenses a compact history of the city, from pre-history through to the present day, into 14 dioramas. Unlike many of the city's museums, the entire tour is available in English. The north end of Malecón culminates in the spacious new **Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo** (MAAC) which has an exhibition on "10,000 years of ancient Ecuador", as well as an enormous collection of pre-Columbian ceramics and an extensive modern art exhibition. A couple of blocks inland along Calle Loja is the huge, enclosed **Mercado Artesanal**, which has a wide selection of traditional handicrafts and indigenous clothing. Prices are slightly higher than in the Sierra and of course haggling is obligatory.

At the opposite end of 9 de Octubre (a 20-minute walk or short taxi ride), is the **Malecón del Salado**, next to the Estero Salado, a tributary of the river Guayas. Walk onto the bridges which tower over 9 de Octubre for great views of the river, take a boat trip or simply relax in one of the riverside restaurants.

Las Peñas, Cerro Santa Ana and Puerto Santa Ana

Rising above the north end of Malecon is the colorful artistic district of Las Peñas. Up to the right is the historic, cobbled street of Numa Pompilio Llona, named after the Guayaco who wrote Ecuador's national anthem. There are several galleries as well as the Asociación Cultural Las Peñas. The street leads from old to new, reaching swanky Puerto Santa Ana.

For spectacular views of Guayaquil and the surrounding area, climb the 444 steps up Las Peñas to **Cerro Santa Ana**. Due to the heat, the walk is best done early morning or late afternoon. On the way, there's a wide selection of craft shops, restaurants, cafes and bars. At the top of the hill in the Plaza de Honores is a new colonial-style chapel and the **Lighthouse** based on Guayaquil's first built in 1841. There's also the open-air **Museo El Fortín del Santa Ana** which holds the foundations of the Fortress of San Carlos which defended the city from pirates, as well as original cannons and replicas of Spanish galleons. The highlight is the sweeping panoramic view – to the north lies the intersection of the rivers Daule and Babahoyo with the Guayas and to the south downtown Guayaquil and, across the river, the protected reserve of Santay Island.

Parque Seminario and the Cathedral

Three blocks behind the grand Palacio Municipal is the small Parque Seminario, also known as Parque Bolívar or, more aptly, Parque de Las Iguanas. Here you can enjoy the unique experience of observing dozens of urban iguanas which descend from the trees to rest in the sun. The iguanas are unconcerned by people, but don't try to touch them. There's also a small pool filled with turtles. At the center of the park is an imposing monument of liberator Simon Bolivar on horseback. The huge white Neo-Gothic **Cathedral** towers over the west side of the square. Originally dating from 1547, it has been destroyed by fire several times and was reconstructed in 1948.

Museo Municipal

One block southwest from the park is the Museo Municipal, the oldest museum in Ecuador and still the city's best. Highlights include a model of colonial Guayaquil and original cannons and muskets from the colonial era. Upstairs is a room of portraits of Ecuadorian presidents, nicknamed "room of thieves" by more cynical citizens, plus a small exhibition of contemporary art.

Parque Histórico Guayaquil

In Entre Rios, close to UEES, the Parque is well worth the trip. Created out of the natural mangroves on the banks of the Daule, the **wildlife zone** provides a snapshot of the Ecuadorian jungle with deer, tapir, monkeys, sloths, ocelots, tortoises, parrots, toucans and caimans. The smells of the jungle are even recreated with fermenting termite mounds. The **traditions zone** depicts the rural way of life with haciendas, "peasant" houses, crops of cacao, banana, coffee and rice.

Eating, drinking & dancing

Guayaquil has a wide range of restaurants spread around the city. Downtown, most places are either cheap and very basic offering *almuerzos* and *meriendas* or else attached to hotels and rather overpriced. Las Peñas is the most pleasant area to eat close to the center with a cluster of endearing traditional eateries. An alternative is to take a taxi to the fashionable neighborhood of **Urdesa**, where there is a wide range of restaurants along the main street Victor Emilio Estrada. Guayaquileños love to party so it's no surprise that the city has great **nightlife** to rival Quito. But the city can be dangerous at night, so take extra care and use the UEES-approved taxis. Las Peñas has a wide selection of café-bars and Urdesa is also a good place for a few drinks after dinner or to hit the dancefloor on the weekend. Most discos open at 10pm and close around 4am. There is usually a minimum consumption charge of \$10, which includes entrance. Nightlife along Via Samborondón is more expensive with \$20 cover charges common and menus more expensive than in Guayaquil.

B. LA COSTA

Playas

North-west of Guayaquil are the beaches of the self-styled **Ruta del Sol**. The nearest resort is Playas, a slightly shabby but cheap place to soak up the sun. It boasts a very long beach so there is plenty of space (unlike Salinas). **Note that the currents are strong here so take care when swimming.** Regular buses from Guayaquil Terminal Terrestre (1.5-2 hours).

Salinas

Most budget travelers head to Montañita and avoid overpriced Salinas, the resort preferred by affluent Guayacos. On arrival, it looks like a wannabe Miami Beach with high rise apartment blocks and expensive yachts in the harbor. It's worth visiting, at least for a day trip, to walk along the attractive waterfront and swim in the calm waters. The resort has plenty of great restaurants and nightlife if you want to party with rich kids, but you pay more than in other smaller resorts. Buses leave hourly from Guayaquil's terminal (2.5 hours).

Montañita

You'll probably either love or hate Montañita. The core surfing contingent has been joined in recent years by hippies and partygoers, making it the coast's most happening resort for budget travellers. Surfers can enjoy rideable breaks most of the year, frequently 2-3m on good days. It's not the best place to learn but there are plenty of experienced teachers. Montañita has a huge amount of accommodation and where you stay depends mainly on how much sleep you want to get. It seems that almost every building in town has a restaurant, bar or shop downstairs and rooms for rent upstairs but quality is decidedly variable. The center is very noisy and at weekends the partying gets going close to midnight and continues until after dawn. The south end of town is cheapest while the north end is quieter with the best quality mid-range accommodation. There are a few daily direct buses from Guayaquil (four hours) or take the bus to Salinas and change at Santa Elena.

Parque Nacional Machalilla and Isla de la Plata

This is probably the most beautiful stretch of Ecuador's coastline so if you prefer peace to partying and wildlife watching to people watching, this is the place to come. The hub is the fishing town of Puerto Lopez, the base to explore the tropical dry forest of Ecuador's only coastal national park. Highlights include **Agua Blanca**, a village inhabited by some 280 indigenous people and an important archaeological site of the Manteño culture that lived here from 800 to 1500 AD. Don't miss **Playa Los Frailes**, a stunning virgin beach, which is often deserted. Whale watching off the coast of Puerto Lopez is another highlight between June and September.

Isla de la Plata

The island is home to numerous blue-footed boobies, masked boobies and frigate birds and these are the species most frequently on view. There are also red-footed boobies and waved albatrosses, most commonly seen April to October. The island has a small colony of sealions but it's rare to see them. From the landing point in Bahía Drake, there are two circular footpaths around the island, the 3.5km Sendero Machete and the 5km Sendero Punta Escaleras. A day trip to Isla de la Plata can be arranged at several local tour operators on the Malecón in Puerto Lopez.

The Northern Coast

There are a range of good beach resorts further north. The relaxed surfer hangout Canoa is rather like Montañita 10 years ago. In Esmeraldas province, the sleepy village of Mompiche is hard to beat in terms of beauty. Atacames is the loud, brash party resort and rivals Salinas as the country's most popular beach destination.

C. LA SIERRA: the mountains

Quito

At a dizzying elevation of 2850m, Quito is the second highest capital city in the world after Bolivia's La Paz. Its location could not be more dramatic with the active Volcán Pichincha, which covered the city in ash in 1999, looming to the west and Valle de los Chillos descending east towards the Amazon basin. If the altitude doesn't leave you breathless then the architecture surely will. The **Old Town** has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1978 and, thanks to a multi-million dollar refurbishment program in recent years, is more impressive and safer than ever. Sights which should not be missed are the two main squares **Plaza Grande** and **Plaza San Francisco**, the **Presidential Palace** (which has recently opened to the public), the **Cathedral**, the gaudy gold church **La Compañía** and the **Church of San Francisco**. For great views of the city, either take a taxi up to the top of **El Panecillo** or climb the stairs of the gothic **Basilica del Voto Nacional**.

Most visitors stay in the **New Town**, which has a great selection of hotels, restaurants and bars. There are also some great sights such as the **Museo del Banco Central**, arguably Ecuador's best museum with an astonishing collection of pre-Colombian ceramics and artefacts as well as colonial, republican and modern art. Don't miss **La Capilla del Hombre** (Chapel of Man) by Oswaldo Guayasamín, Ecuador's most famous contemporary artist, in the Bellavista district. Quito's newest tourist attraction is the **Teleférico** a cable car ride up to a height of 4100m, from where the views are spectacular on a clear day.

Mitad del Mundo

The most popular day trip from Quito is up to the **Mitad del Mundo** on the Equator, 22km to the north. The center piece is the 30m-high **monument** topped by a brass globe. Although everybody wants to get the photo straddling the Equator in front of the monument, bear in mind that this is not the real Equator, which actually lies approximately 300m along the main road east of the complex at the **Museo Solar Inti Ñan** (9.30am-5.30pm).

Mindo

Snuggled into the cloud forest at a pleasant elevation of 1200m, Mindo is a truly idyllic destination. Whether you want to watch for some of the 400 species of birds and 250 species of butterfly, swing above the forest canopy on ziplines, plunge down the rivers on rubber tubes or simply gaze at the wonderful waterfalls, there's something for everyone here. The cool climate means that this is a far more comfortable region to explore pristine forest than the Oriente. Tourism has developed relatively slowly in Mindo so you can usually avoid the crowds in this endearingly sleepy town, although weekends get busy with day trippers from Quito. It's less than two hours by bus from Quito.

Otavalo

If you love wandering around markets and picking up *artisan* bargains, then you'll love Otavalo. The famous **Saturday market** is easily the best of its kind in Ecuador and possibly in South America, spreading out across the town from the Plaza de Ponchos. Here you can find a wide range of handicrafts, clothing, hammocks, weavings, carvings, jewelry, ceramics and even oddities such as fake shrunken heads. Take your time gauging the prices and then knock them down by a few dollars, but bear in mind that while this is all part of the fun, the extra dollar means a lot more to the locals that it does to you. During the week the town is quieter but the market is open and still offers a better range of artisan wares than in other tourist towns.

D. South of Quito – The Central Highlands

Parque Nacional Cotopaxi

About 60km south of Quito, the cone-shaped **Volcán Cotopaxi** (5897m) is everybody's idea of a picture-perfect volcano, its symmetrical cone-shaped peak dominating the surrounding valley. Luckily for the local inhabitants, it has been quiet since 1904. As well as being Ecuador's most photogenic volcano, Parque Nacional Cotopaxi is also Ecuador's most visited park. The volcano offers a spectacular climb if you are acclimatized, fit and prepared. For a more relaxed experience, the surrounding 33,000 hectares of verdant *paramo* (Andean grasslands) offer great opportunities for trekking and cycling plus wonderful close-up views of the volcano. Inhabitants of the park include deer, rabbits, foxes, pumas and some 90 species of birds, among them the elusive Andean condor.

Lake Quilotoa and the Quilotoa Loop. The luminous turquoise water of the 800-year-old volcanic crater lake Laguna Quilotoa is one of Ecuador's most awe-inspiring sights. On a clear day the sky's reflection in the lake is jaw-droppingly beautiful.

Baños

Locals call it '*un pedacito de cielo*' (a little piece of heaven) and this is no exaggeration because Baños is as close as you can get in Ecuador to a perfect destination. If you're only in Ecuador for a short time, this is one place which is not to be missed. It has an ideal climate at 1820m above sea level, a stunning location set in verdant valley surrounded by steep hills, an excellent choice of hotels and restaurants, great walking and adventure sports including rafting and bungee jumping, plus of course the thermal baths that give the town its name. Be aware that Baños is only 8km from the active Volcán Tungurahua which erupted in February 2008. Luckily, the crater is on the opposite side to the town and Baños has been relatively unaffected.

In town, don't miss the massive church of **Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa** on the main Ambato street. The thermal baths which give Baños its name, are the main attraction for many visitors. The most popular baths are the **Piscinas de la Virgen** at the foot of a small waterfall at the eastern end of Avenida Martínez. The cloudy yellow waters don't look immediately appealing but they are high in minerals and make for a very relaxing soak. The best way to take in the town's stunning setting is to **walk to Bellavista**, high above the town. It's a steep 40-minute climb up a rocky, often muddy path but you're rewarded with spectacular panoramic views over Baños and the Pastaza valley leading down to the Oriente.

The road from Baños to Puyo is one of Ecuador's most beautiful routes, dropping nearly 1000m following the Rio Pastaza down from lush Andean foothills through cloud forest to the edges of the tropical jungle. It's best admired from the saddle of a bike which can be hired from any agency in Baños for \$5 per day. Highlights along the way include the waterfalls of **Manto de La Novia** (Bride's Veil) waterfall and **Pailón del Diablo** (Devil's Cauldron).

Riobamba and The Devil's Nose train ride

As the name suggests, this train ride is not for the faint-hearted, but it's an exhilarating experience. Riobamba is the starting point for this section of the original Guayaquil-Quito railway, completed in 1905. The 100km line stretches from Riobamba south-west via Alausi to Sibambe. The journey is relatively laidback at first with sweeping views of Andean valleys. The final part of the ride is the main act – a hair-raising 800m descent through a series of tight switchbacks carved out of the steep mountainside.

E. The Southern Highlands

Cuenca

Cuenca is Ecuador's third largest city with a population of more than 400,000, but it doesn't feel that big, retaining the atmosphere of a traditional old Andean town. Cuenca is far more relaxing to explore than Quito or Guayaquil. The cobbled streets, charming squares, colonial architecture and magnificent **Cathedral** make the historic center a delight to wander around and it's no surprise that it was declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. The focal point of Cuenca's center is **Parque Calderón**, an elegant square filled with flowerbeds and palm trees, dominated by the towering 18th century **Catedral Nueva**. A 20-minute walk from the center is the **Museo del Banco Central Pumapungo and archaeological site**, easily Cuenca's best museum with colonial art, an archaeology room, an exhibition of indigenous costumes and masks and a display of five *tsantsas* (shrunk heads). Entrance includes access to the ruins of the **Pumapungo archaeological site** behind the museum. Cuenca is also known as the center of the panama hat trade, with many factories offering visits.

Parque Nacional El Cajas

Just 30km north-west of Cuenca, the enormous Parque Nacional El Cajas spans nearly 300 sq km of spectacular moor-like *paramo*. With more than 200 lakes shining beneath rugged hillsides, this is one of Ecuador's most compelling wildernesses, offering great hiking and trout fishing opportunities. However, the wind, rain and fog can often make visits uncomfortable so come prepared with rain-proof gear, snacks, warm clothing and walking boots. Most of the park lies above 4000m so also ensure you are properly acclimatized before you tackle any long hikes. It's best to visit the park with a Cuenca-based tour operator.

Ingapirca

Between Riobamba and Cuenca lies the site of Ingapirca, Ecuador's only major Inca ruins. Sadly, much of the site is little more than stone foundations and it takes imagination and a guided tour to bring it to life. However, it's worth the visit. Points of interest include the calendar stone and sacrificial site, but the highlight is the well-preserved Temple of the Sun, constructed with more than 3000 intricately carved blocks. It's entertaining to stand in the sentry posts of the temple and hear your whispers reverberate through the walls. Just outside the complex is a small museum which houses a small collection of Cañari and Inca ceramics, sculptures, tools and a skeleton found at the site.

Vilcabamba

In the far south of Ecuador, Vilcabamba has been attracting travelers for years in search of relaxation and the apparent secret to a long, healthy life. Although reports of locals living to aged 140 are wildly exaggerated, there seems to be something in the water in the famous 'Valley of Longevity'. Backpackers, hikers and hippies flock here to enjoy the region's perfect climate, spectacular scenery and friendly people. The town itself is not brimming with tourist attractions; the main draw is in the surroundings which offer great hiking and horse-riding opportunities. At the end of the day there are plenty of places to pamper yourself with a relaxing massage. There are plenty of hiking trails around Vilcabamba to keep you busy for a few days. Perhaps the most impressive is up to the jagged **Cerro Mandango** – do not bring valuables, however, as there have been some reports of hikers being robbed. North-east of town is the small **Rumi-Wilco** Nature Reserve (\$2 donation) which has a self-guided trail system. The diverse terrain of **Podocarpus National Park** is reachable from Vilcabamba on day trips or longer stays. Getting to Vilcabamba is, unfortunately, not easy. Buses from Guayaquil take 7-8 hours along some very poorly maintained roads.

F. EL ORIENTE: into the Amazon jungle

East of Quito, the Andes drop dramatically and snow-capped mountains give way to verdant swathes of tropical rainforest stretching some 250km to the Colombian and Peruvian borders. Ecuador's chunk of the Amazon basin, known as the Oriente ("The East"), constitutes almost half of the country's territory, although only five per cent of the population lives here in ramshackle towns and remote indigenous communities.

The Northern Oriente offers the most spectacular opportunities for visitors to encounter a bewildering array of flora and fauna in primary rainforest. The highlights are the two huge protected areas **Parque Nacional Yasuní** and the **Reserva Faunística Cuyabeno**. **Yachana Lodge** is an award-winning ecotourism destination upriver from Coca that uses the income from its tours to fund community education, health and fairtrade initiatives.

Unfortunately, reaching these unforgettable wildernesses usually involves travelling through the decidedly ugly hubs of Lago Agrio or Coca. For those with limited time or who are seeking a more accessible experience, the more pleasant towns of **Tena** and **Puyo** are surrounded by secondary rainforest with opportunities to stay with **indigenous communities**. These tours are recommended, not least because they provide locals with regular income and help to preserve the communities and their territory. The higher elevation of these towns mean that **whitewater rafting** and **kayaking** are popular activities in the river rapids tumbling down towards the Amazon basin. The village of **Misahuallí** – south of Tena – is also a great base, with the option of high-end lodges like Cotacachi and Misahuallí Jungle, or more budget accommodation in the town. The village itself is sleepy – apart from the troop of Capuchin monkeys that live in the main square (be careful of your belongings, as they have been known to steal!) – but from there you can arrange canoe trips on the river, visits to local communities, and to the animal reserve **Amazónico**.