This handbook covers many important and relevant topics including: packing, arrival, cultural adaptation, communication with home, money, etc. Please read the handbook carefully – it is assumed that you have read the handbook and most topics will not be covered again. Thank you! Looking forward to welcoming you to Ecuador!
Congratulations on your decision to participate in this program in Ecuador! We hope that you will find the program enlightening, challenging and rewarding. This handbook has been designed to give you some basic information and introduction to concepts that you will find useful when in Ecuador. Some of the information is generic to international travel and some is very specific to Ecuador. Even if you are an experienced traveler please read this entire book. This information has been collected from a variety of sources including students who have participated in programs in the past.

As you may imagine, this booklet cannot cover everything that you will encounter or experience while in Ecuador. However, it should get you off to the right start. Please do not hesitate to ask questions!

This information was compiled from a variety of sources including students that have attended ACLAS, faculty and administrators at Willamette University and Chemeketa Community College and staff and instructors at ACLAS.

Table of Contents

Andean Center for Latin American Studies (ACLAS)
ACLAS Contact Information:  Error! Bookmark not defined.3
Your Program's Contact Information:  Error! Bookmark not defined.3

First thing is first: Things to do right away!
Passport  Error! Bookmark not defined.4
Visas  Error! Bookmark not defined.4
Travel Registration – Required  Error! Bookmark not defined.4

Arrival
Travel Tips  Error! Bookmark not defined.4
Flight delays  Error! Bookmark not defined.4
Orientation  Error! Bookmark not defined.5

Program Overview
At ACLAS  Error! Bookmark not defined.6
Academics  Error! Bookmark not defined.6
Homestay  Error! Bookmark not defined.6
Service Learning  Error! Bookmark not defined.6
Excursions  Error! Bookmark not defined.6

Packing
Luggage requirement considerations  Error! Bookmark not defined.7
Gift ideas for your homestay  Error! Bookmark not defined.8

Settling in
Climate  Error! Bookmark not defined.9
What to Wear  Error! Bookmark not defined.9
Money  Error! Bookmark not defined.9
Budgeting  Error! Bookmark not defined.9
Getting Around  Error! Bookmark not defined.10
Trolleys and Busses  Error! Bookmark not defined.10
Taxis  Error! Bookmark not defined.10
Walking  Error! Bookmark not defined.11
Safety  Error! Bookmark not defined.11
Health Issues  Error! Bookmark not defined.11
Andean Center for Latin American Studies (ACLAS)

ACLAS supports and facilitates educational programs in Ecuador. On this program your “home base” will be ACLAS. We will manage the logistics for your program as well as support through orientations, meeting space, Spanish lessons, any necessary emergency assistance and many other aspects of your program. We cannot wait to welcome you to Ecuador!

Please, do not hesitate to contact the ACLAS staff to ask any questions related to your program.

Make a copy of the following page to give the information to your parents in the US.
ACLAS Contact Information:
Fernando Miño-Garcés, Academic Director – based in Ecuador
Email: fmino@aclas.org
Phone: 593-2-2240-179 OR 593-2-2455-942
Cell: 593-9-99722887 when calling from the US
0999722887 when calling from within Ecuador

General ACLAS Contact Information
Email: aclas@aclas.org
Phone: 593-2-2240-179

Your Program’s Contact Information:
Faculty Director Information:
Nicole Lasswell - based in Irving, TX
Email: lasswell@udallas.edu
Office phone: 972-265-5705
Cell phone (emergencies only): 214-460-8448

Study Abroad Office information:
Mrs. Rebecca Davies, Director Rome Office (Emergency contact)
Email: bdavies@udallas.edu
Office (972) 721-5206
Cell (214) 766-1721

Please contact Campus Safety in an Emergency. They have contact information to reach other program personnel: (972) 721-5305

Who Can I Contact About my Insurance?
For Medical Emergencies, please contact GBG Assist – 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. US/Canada Toll Free: 1-866-914-5333. Worldwide Collect: 1-905-669-4920

How do I make a claim?
Go to GBG.com and click on forms under ‘Our Solutions’. Complete the travel claim form under ‘Claims Forms’. Send completed form along with proof of travel to:

- Online Claims Submissions: eclaims360@gbg.com
- Mail: 27422 Portola Parkway, Suite 110, Foothill Ranch, CA 92610 USA
- Email: eclaims@gbg.com
- Fax: 949-271-2330

Accompanying Student Information:
**First thing is first: Things to do right away!**

**Passport**
If you already have a passport check immediately to make sure that is valid (has not expired) and will not expire for at least 6 months after the date you will return from Ecuador.

If you do not have a passport you must apply for one immediately. Visit travel.state.gov to find out how to apply. Be sure to check how long it takes to process a passport. You will want to have the passport in your hand at least two weeks prior to your departure.

**Visas**
It is unlikely that you will need to apply for a visa to enter Ecuador. However, if you are not a U.S. passport holder or you plan to be in Ecuador for over 90 days it is best to check. Visit the webpage for the Ecuadorian Embassy for more information.

**Travel Registration – Required**
As soon as possible, please register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). You will automatically receive the most current information compiled about Ecuador. You will also receive updates, including Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts (where appropriate). You only need to sign up once, and then you can add and delete trips from your account based on your travel plans if you travel abroad again. You’ll register via the STEP registration page at step.state.gov/step/

When registering, use the following phone number and address information. After you arrive in Quito you can update this information with your host family’s details.

Phone: 593-2-2240179

Address: El Día N37-111 y El Comercio, Quito, Pichincha, Ecuador

**Health Insurance**
It is very important that you understand exactly how you are covered by your health insurance before you depart. Most typical health insurance plans only cover significant emergencies abroad (i.e. broken leg) and not outpatient health care (i.e. sprained ankle, very bad cold, mild allergy attack, etc.). Therefore, you may want to either add insurance coverage to your existing insurance plan or purchase additional ‘study abroad insurance.’ This type of insurance is usually quite affordable (around $20-30 a month) and includes extra perks like coverage for lost luggage. It is likely that your school will either require that you purchase additional insurance or prove that your insurance will cover you when you are abroad – be sure to look into this as soon as possible! It is essential and could be very disruptive if not resolved before you leave.

**Arrival**
You have been given very specific booking instructions for arrival and departure from Ecuador. It is your responsibility to follow these instructions as deviating can jeopardize your ability to participate in the program.

Your Program’s Arrival Instructions:
Travel Tips

When you arrive in the Quito airport, you will go through immigration, get your luggage and then pass through customs. It is likely that there will be many people and long lines. Do not worry! ACLAS knows that there are these long lines and will wait for you. After you’ve collected your luggage and have gone through the proper channels exit through the airport doors and walk straight through the large crowd until you see a large sign saying “ACLAS Welcomes” and then your name or the name of your program or university. There you will be met by ACLAS staff. The ACLAS staff will tell you what to do and where to go. You will then be transported to the ACLAS facilities in Quito. This ride may take up to an hour and a half. At the ACLAS facilities you will meet your homestay family and go home with them.

If you are not traveling as a group, be sure to carry the following information with you at all time: the name, address and telephone numbers of the Director at ACLAS.

Fernando Miño-Garcés
Academic Director, ACLAS
El Día N37-111 y El Comercio
Quito, Ecuador
Cell: 593-9-99722887
Phone: 593-2-2240-179 OR 593-2-2455-942
Email: fmino@aclas.org

Second Contact: Eugenia A. De Mino (eugenia@aclas.org) Cell: 593-9-99815239

Flight delays

Flight delays happen all the time - if your flight is delayed do not worry. The ACLAS staff will have your flight information and will be watching the progress of your flights. However, in addition to this, we ask that you or someone in your group use the contact information above to inform ACLAS of your delay. This is especially important if you miss a flight. Calling Fernando is best (593-9-99722887), but if you only have the ability to email that is okay too (fmino@aclas.org).

Orientation

The day after you arrive in Quito you will attend an orientation at ACLAS. Your host family will know the time of the orientation and will escort you to ACLAS. The following topics will be covered in orientation:

- Cultural adaptation information
- Safety and Security overview
- Living with an Ecuadorian family
- Traveling within Ecuador
- ACLAS services
- Medical issues

You will also receive a map of Ecuador, updated emergency contact information and other handouts.
Program Overview

You will receive specific program information from the faculty member from your university who is in charge of your program. Often a program itinerary will be provided. Sometimes changes to the prepared program itinerary are made once the group is in Ecuador. You will be informed of any changes.

The following are common elements of programs, but may not all apply to your program.

At ACLAS

The Andean Center for Latin American Studies (ACLAS) is an educational facility established in 1991 to serve the needs of U.S. college students studying in Ecuador. ACLAS is located in a large converted house on a residential street in modern Quito, close to shopping, public transportation and other amenities. At ACLAS you will find:

- Classrooms of various sizes
- A garden where you can relax during breaks
- An indoor gathering area with filtered water, a microwave and small tables and chairs
- A computer lab with a printer
- Wifi access
- A library and a few tables for studying

Academics

If your program includes Spanish lessons, then the following information applies to you. In most cases upon arrival you will take a placement exam which will situate you in a class with other students of comparable linguistic ability and achievement. In general, your classes will be small to allow for more individual attention and participation, so be prepared to an active member of your group! It is important that you arrive on time every day for your classes. Classes will include discussion, practice, readings, lecture, games, movies, music, individual presentations and the like. There is a midterm and a final exam, which along with your attendance, participation and daily homework, will determine your final grades.

Homestay

As part of the program, you will be assigned an Ecuadorian family with whom you will live for the program. You will be matched up with a family based on the letter of introduction you wrote and the other information on your registration form. In almost all cases one student will be assigned per family. Due to administrative limitations, you will not know who your host family is until you arrive in Quito. Families are instructed to speak only Spanish with you (except in emergency situations), and some do not know English. In your homestay, you will have a private bedroom, access to a bathroom, 3 meals a day and laundry service. Depending on the family, you may be included in other activities, such as visits to other relatives, various parts of the city, etc.

Service Learning

Service Learning is part of most of the programs with ACLAS. This feature will allow you to become acquainted with a different aspect of life in Ecuador, to contribute in a meaningful way and learn! The amount and type of service learning varies significantly from program to program. You can see a general overview of some of our regular service learning sites on our website at http://www.aclas.org/spanishandculture/, and then go to “Service Learning.”

Excursions

Excursions vary by program but are most often held on weekends. Bus transportation will be provided by ACLAS for these excursions. Buses are generally comfortable, but the roads can be bumpy and the drivers may drive more aggressively than you are accustomed. On trips involving overnight stays, you will be provided meals and accommodations in tourist class hotels, generally 2-3 students per room.
Packing

Please note: this is not a comprehensive packing list but rather suggestions on what to bring in addition to basics like clothing and other everyday needs. The list has been compiled from student experiences.

Luggage requirement considerations

Luggage requirements and limitations will vary according to the airline. Check with your airline regarding baggage fees for international flights. It is a good idea to leave a lot of room in your suitcases to take home gifts and souvenirs, since excess baggage is generally not allowed on the return due to high volume travel. If your luggage is heavier or you have more pieces of luggage than the standard allotment you may be charged an additional fee. Any fees related to luggage are your own responsibility. Also, it is recommended that you pack everything that you will need for the first 2-3 days in a carry-on, in case your luggage doesn’t arrive with you. Luggage tags: Put ACLAS (Ecuador) address on the outbound flight; Put your own address on the return flight to the US. Also a good idea, fill out the last form of this packet with information on your luggage and keep it with you in your carry-on in case your suitcases are lost.

Travel documents (To be carried on your person in a money pouch or bag; not a backpack!)

- Passport
- Airline Tickets
- Credit/ATM card (Be sure to notify your bank in advance that you’ll be traveling abroad so they don’t freeze your account to protect you from fraud)
- Cash

Clothes

- Light jacket or sweater
- Rain poncho or windbreaker
- At least 1 set of dress clothes & shoes
- Pajamas, bathrobe and slippers: Most Ecuadorian families are not accustomed to barefooted feet in their home.
- Comfortable shoes suitable for hiking
- Swimsuit for beach or jungle excursions

Pharmaceuticals & Toiletries (Use plastic bags to prevent a mess in luggage.)

- Any prescription drugs you need (to cover the entire time you are away) – take in ORIGINAL CONTAINER and carry paper prescription information if you have it
- Sunscreen (min SPF 15): the sun is very strong on the equator; students wear sunscreen everyday
- Imodium or other stomach-upset medicine
- Pain reliever & minor first aid items (ibuprofen, band-aids, Neosporin, disinfectant, etc)
- Insect repellant (important for the coast and rainforest)
- Toothbrush/toothpaste/floss
- Razor/shaving cream
- Tampons/pads
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Nail clippers/files
- Extra pair of glasses or contacts in case yours are damaged

Miscellaneous

- Sun visor or hat
- Sunglasses (obligatory for mountain climbing)
● Camera
● Spanish phrasebook and dictionary
● Light daypack
● Pens, notebook/journal
● Small flashlight
● Earplugs
● Photos of your U.S. family, community and home

Things to leave home
● Valuable jewelry and expensive electronics, etc.
● Ecuadorians do not tend to wear shorts or short skirts in their day-to-day lives. Shorts are okay for sports, the beach and as loungewear.
● Anything you could not replace

Gift ideas for your homestay
Bringing a special gift for your host family is a wonderful way to express your appreciation for their hospitality. Choose gifts with thoughtfulness: perhaps a family gift and small, inexpensive gifts for individual members of the family. Things that represent your state or region and the United States are especially nice. You may also want to bring along gifts for new friends. Gifts do not have to be lavish or expensive.

Toys and games for children
Candles
Calendar with photos of a local place
Picture book of your state
Food items from your area
T-shirts
Baseball caps
Mugs with local sites and teams
Key chains
American chocolates and snacks
A CD of your favorite music
Playing cards
Other novelty items

Also, it would be a good idea to bring a supply of pencils, crayons and other school supplies to donate to the social agencies that serve children that you will be visiting.
Settling in

Climate

Quito is located approximately 10 miles south of the equator and its climate does not vary much during the year. There is a saying that Quito has 4 seasons all in one day: spring in the morning, summer in the afternoon, fall in the evening and winter at night. It is advisable to bring clothing suitable for a variety of climates. A sweater or light jacket will probably be necessary every day in the city. However, on trips to the coast and the rainforest where the weather is very hot and humid, lighter clothing is advisable. The most notable difference in Quito’s climate is the altitude: the city is situated in a valley of the Andean mountains, at an elevation of 9,248 feet, nearly twice as high as Denver, CO. Many people are affected physically by the altitude. Possible altitude symptoms include:

- difficulty breathing
- dizziness
- headache
- slowed digestion
- general fatigue

These symptoms are usually mild and vary from individual to individual. If you are feeling any of these symptoms let the ACLAS staff and your host family know. People who live in Quito are very accustomed to helping visitors adapt to the altitude and have many ideas and safe remedies to suggest. After about a week most people adjust to the change in altitude.

To stay healthy and adjust to the altitude follow these suggestions, especially during the first few days when you do not yet know whether the altitude will be a factor:

- do not engage in prolonged physical activity (climbing hills, running)
- rest (siesta anyone?)
- eat well (your host family will help with this)
- drink lots of water
- significantly limit alcohol intake. We suggest avoiding alcohol altogether until at least a week into your program.

What to Wear

In general, Quitaños dress more conservatively and more formal than you may be used to in the United States. Of course, you will find people wearing a wide variety of types of clothing. When deciding what to pack, keep the following in mind: appearance is important in Ecuadorian culture, and most people dress neatly when walking on the street. Men tend to wear slacks, shoes, a belt and a button-down shirt, and women tend to wear a dress or skirt and blouse, or slacks and nice shoes. Among young people, neat jeans, sneakers and t-shirts are becoming more common. Shorts, tank tops and low-cut shirts are less common than in the U.S. and may attract attention from locals. Sporty clothes like shorts, baseball hats, sweatpants and sweatshirts are generally only worn when participating in sports. Bring clothing that is comfortable for you for the excursions, as well as some dressier clothing for certain occasions, such as family dinners, parties, or a night out dancing (a very common form of social interaction). See the section on Packing for more information.

Money

The currency used in Ecuador is the U.S. dollar, U.S. bills and coins are used regularly. Additionally, Ecuador has minted its own coins the same size and denomination as U.S. coins. These are used interchangeably with coins from the U.S. Keep in mind that when you return to the U.S., the Ecuadorian coins have no value and probably cannot be changed back into U.S. money.

You can bring money to Quito in a variety of ways:
- Cash – do not travel with too much cash, but it is a good idea to have some on hand when you arrive. Do not bring $50 or $100 bills as these are not readily accepted in most places, you would need to go to a bank to change them for smaller bills.
- Debit Cards - There are many ATM machines throughout Ecuador and many students find this is the best way to access their money, however, you should check to make sure your card has a major logo (i.e. Cirrus, Plus, MasterCard, Visa, etc.).
- Credit Cards - Credit cards are accepted at major hotels, large stores and travel agencies, but often add a charge of an additional percentage to cover fees. Your credit card will also likely charge you an international transaction fee. That said, a credit card is a good backup. And, many credit cards allow you to make international phone calls and may even provide some types of insurance. Look into these details before you depart as they could involve fees.
- Traveler’s checks are not used in Ecuador. Although these can be a good backup in case of emergency, there are only very few places, if any, where you can exchange the checks for cash.

**IMPORTANT! Before you depart be sure to inform your bank and your credit cards of the time period you will be in Ecuador so that they do not put a hold on your account.**

**Budgeting**

The amount of money students spend while in Ecuador ranges significantly. To best prepare a budget for your program take the following steps:

1. Understand what is included in your program (meals, laundry, excursion transportation, etc.)
2. Understand what is NOT included in your program (local transportation, meals outside of the homestay, gifts, cell phone, etc.)
3. Estimate your weekly expenses outside of the program
4. Review the “My Advice from Ecuador” forms that will be sent to you by ACLAS staff to see what other students have spent.
5. Make a budget and then update that budget as you go through your program. The best way to make sure you don’t spend too much is to track your spending and adjust your budget.

**Getting Around**

Your homestay family will help you get to and from ACLAS on your first days in Quito. They will help you until you let them know that you can make it on your own.

Quito is laid out in a long, narrow valley stretching from north to south. To the west is the ever-present Mount Pichincha and to the east is a series of hills beyond which lie several other populated valleys. Most city buses travel in the north-south route along the major avenues: Avenida 10 de agosto, Avenida 6 de diciembre and Avenida Amazonas.

**Trolleys and Busses**

Two trolleys follow these routes and are usually the quickest way to get downtown, since they are faster than buses and have limited stops. These ones have fixed stops, and you pay for entering the stop. When boarding a city bus, be careful to hold on at all times, as they make frequent stops and you may need to jump on and off while the bus is still moving. On many buses, you pay an attendant right before you get off; on others, you pay before or as you get on, or the attendant will come around and ask for your fare. The cost for every ride is 25 cents unless you go outside of the immediate Quito area. During orientation the ACLAS staff will give you more information on how to be safe on buses.

**Taxis**

Taxis are also an inexpensive way to get around town, and are plentiful. When boarding a taxi, always make sure that it has a registered number and a meter. The ACLAS staff will tell you more about how to identify safe taxis during
orientation. If the taxi driver does not have the meter turned out, you may have to bargain for your fare before starting your journey.

**Walking**
When walking, it is important to always pay attention to what is going on around you. Pay particular attention when crossing the street: in Ecuador the laws are the same as in the States, but contrary to the United States, the fact is that cars have the right of way, and there are not always traffic lights and crosswalks to regulate pedestrian traffic. Also, cars will park on curbs and in driveways that may block sidewalks.

**Safety**
For the most part, Quito is a safe city. However, there is also a lot of poverty, and there is pick-pocketing and petty crime. When going out, especially in crowded areas of the city please follow these recommendations:

- Travel in certified taxis
- Speak Spanish
- Use ATMs during the day
- Carry emergency contact information with you so you can call for help, if needed
- Do not wear valuable jewelry
- Do not carry your passport (keep a copy with you instead)
- Do not walk around with headphones
- Do not carry unnecessary items like your ID from the U.S., credit cards you won’t use, etc.
- Only take the money you will spend and keep all valuables in a money belt worn underneath your clothing
- Do not go out alone at night or in more dangerous parts of the city (these locations will be explained during orientation)
- Do not accept flyers being handed out on the street (some of these may be laced with narcotics)
- Do not approach stray dogs, even puppies

While police are less common than in the U.S., many families and businesses hire private guards who are stationed along the streets, and have expensive locks and alarm systems. You will also see many people begging on the streets, including children.

Most female students report that they receive frequent comments, hissing or whistling from males while walking on the street: some comments are flattering and some are degrading. The best way to deal with any of these comments is to ignore them and continue walking. To respond in any way would be to invite further attention.

**Health Issues**
As with any travel abroad experience, a change in climate, diet, stress levels and sanitary conditions make illness more likely, so certain precautions are in order. Although no immunizations are currently required, some are recommended. You, your loved ones and doctors should decide together which immunizations to get, if any. Visit the Center for Disease Control’s website at www.cdc.gov/travel to learn more about recommended vaccines. In many cases you will already have these immunizations because they were required for you to enroll in your school.

Also, which immunizations you decide are necessary depend on where you will travel during your program. For example, if you plan to go deep into the jungle, Malaria medication (usually in the form of pills taken days before entering the jungle) may be more relevant.

Beyond immunizations there are many simple things that you can do to stay as healthy as possible while you are abroad:

- Never stop taking medications that you take routinely. Make sure you have enough of your medication to bring with you during your stay. Keep these medications in their original packaging and put them in your carry-on luggage.
● See the Packing section and the Center for Disease Control’s website (www.cdc.gov/travel) for recommendations on what to bring in your first aid kit.

● Avoid drinking tap water. Bottled or filtered water is readily available throughout the country and will be provided by your host family.

● When dining out, choose restaurants that are clean and reputable. Do not buy food from street vendors unless they are recommended by your host family. Also, be careful with the food at the local mall - don’t be deceived by the “American” look.

● Use insect repellent when on the coast or in the jungle.

**What to do when you get sick**

Even with the best intentions and precautions, some students (even the sturdiest ones) get sick. When you do not feel well be sure to let your host family and ACLAS know. If you feel you need to see a doctor someone from ACLAS or your host family will accompany you to a doctor or hospital (depending on the severity of your illness.) ACLAS is well connected with doctors and hospitals and you will be able to speak with a doctor who speaks English.

**Health Insurance**

Check with your health insurance provider to see what overseas coverage is included. Students are required to provide a scan of the front and back of their insurance card as part of their application packet and should bring their insurance card with them in case they find themselves at a facility which accepts that insurance. Less overseas medical providers accept US insurance so often students must pay upfront, keep receipts and apply for reimbursement from their provider.

Below are links for information about ISIC Basic, ISIC Premium, ISIC Explorer, STA Travel and NSSI insurance options. You will each be provided with International Student ID Cards which includes the Basic insurance listed below. This information is for those who do not have overseas insurance and for those interested in supplemental health, travel and property insurance overseas. For a comparison of the different insurance options please visit: [https://udallas.edu/rome/_documents/insurance_comparison.pdf](https://udallas.edu/rome/_documents/insurance_comparison.pdf).

● If you are covered by University of Dallas student Aetna health insurance you $25,000 lifetime overseas major medical and numerous other travel benefits.

● All program students have prepaid (in their Program fee) for an ISIC card which provides $25,000 of health reimbursement along with other benefits including medical evacuation ($300,000), baggage delay ($100) and document replacement ($500). [ISIC Basic brochure](https://udallas.edu/rome/_documents/insurance_comparison.pdf).

● For an additional $75 students can purchase an upgrade from ISIC Basic to ISIC Premium, which raises health insurance coverage to $100,000; medical evacuation to $500,000; property insurance to $2000; and baggage delay to $200. ISIC Premium must be purchased through the Rome Office. Checks should be made payable to the University of Dallas. [ISIC Premium brochure](https://udallas.edu/rome/_documents/insurance_comparison.pdf).

● ISIC Explorer is another student travel health insurance option that also provides trip cancellation insurance. For further information please see the [ISIC Explorer brochure](https://udallas.edu/rome/_documents/insurance_comparison.pdf).

● For a larger but still reasonable amount students can purchase full travel insurance, which includes cancellation insurance at [www.statravel.com/new-travel-insurance-student.htm](http://www.statravel.com/new-travel-insurance-student.htm) For pre-existing conditions to be covered insurance should be purchased “prior to 24 hours of final payment.” Please contact an STA representative for details.

● You may also purchase **property insurance** that is valid in Irving, at home, and while traveling. This is a reasonable way to protect laptops, cameras, and cell phones. Please visit the NSSI website for more information [https://www.worthavegroup.com/email-marketing/CPSstudents-EmailHost/LIVE/index.html](https://www.worthavegroup.com/email-marketing/CPSstudents-EmailHost/LIVE/index.html). To pay online for upgrades to ISIC premium or Explorer please copy and paste this URL into your
**ADAAA ACCOMMODATIONS.** Any condition that may require assistance or special medical attention must be reported at the time of your registration. Disabilities must be disclosed no later than May 1. If you think you may need ADAAA accommodations please visit our ADAAA page, and submit a request for accommodations as soon as possible. Here is the link to our ADA webpage:

**Communication**

There are many ways for you to stay in communication with your family and friends at home, the other students on the program, your homestay family and ACLAS. Below you will find some options as well as some notes about those options. But first, consider how much time you want to spend communicating with family and friends at home. It is good for you and your loved-ones to set expectations before you go so they do not worry about you if you do not communicate as much as they thought you would. Also, as you’ll see below sometimes communication systems are not as reliable as we’d like, be sure your friends and family understand that as well.

First, a note on internet in Ecuador:

**Accessing internet**

ACLAS has wireless internet throughout the building as well as a few “wired” computers in the computer lab. You will have access to ACLAS twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Your family will likely have internet access, often wireless. But, it is always a good idea to talk to them about the internet access and any limitations on use. For example, does it cost them more to use it for long periods of time? Internet is prevalent in Ecuador. That said, it is a little less reliable than it is in the U.S. Most of the time you will have no problem using the internet but sometimes it can be slower and go down for a bit. Most of the time a little patience is all that is needed. However, this can cause a bit of stress if you have planned to communicate with a family member or friend via Skype, FaceTime or other internet-based calling system. So, be sure to inform your friends and family that it is possible for there to be unreliable internet in Ecuador and not to worry if you do not contact them at the designated time. A good backup to this is an international calling card – read more about international calling cards below.
Ways to communicate

- Email
- Skype, FaceTime or other calling application via computer or other wireless device.
- Internet phone at ACLAS – ACLAS has one phone that is connected directly to the U.S. All you have to do is dial a U.S. phone number and you will be connected.
- Cell phone – cell phones can be useful for communication within Ecuador (others in group, your host family, ACLAS), but are often very expensive to use to communicate with the U.S. It is highly recommended that you purchase a cell phone in Ecuador as opposed to trying to buy an international plan or changing the SIM card in your phone. Purchasing a cheap phone in Ecuador will cost $35-$60 and you can pre-load the phone with minutes. Usually students spend about $1-3 a week on their pre-loaded minutes. Generally you are only charged for outgoing calls.
- International Phone Card – Even if you plan on communicating via the internet and purchasing a cell phone in Ecuador, a phone card is a very good backup. You can use the card to call Ecuador if your flight is delayed and use it to call home once in Ecuador. Most cards can be purchased inexpensively and then you can add minutes if needed. When purchasing an international calling card be sure you can use it to call to and from Ecuador. (Some calling cards are designated for specific countries (i.e. U.S. to Mexico) or specific regions.) You should always talk to your host family before using their telephone when calling internationally (even when using a phone card) or for long periods of time. Telephone lines are much more expensive in Ecuador than the U.S. and rates can vary depending on what type of phone you are calling (land line vs. mobile phone).
- Cabinas/Internet Cafes: In many parts of the city you will find calling booths or cabinas which have very low rates (approx. $.06 to $.10 a minute) for calling the U.S. You will find these booths mostly in internet cafés.
- Mail: If you plan on sending a lot of postcards, keep in mind that postage costs about twice what it costs in the U.S. Do not expect to have anything sent to you from the U.S., it is very expensive to send anything to Ecuador and it is likely it will not reach you before your program has finished.

Group Dynamics

In any group of people, there will be some that you get along with better than others. In a study abroad program, it is important for the cohesion of the group that all members treat each other with patience and respect for others’ feelings. If there is someone in the group that pushes your buttons, remember that that person is as entitled as you to have a positive experience and a certain amount of understanding and restraint will go a long way in promoting group unity.
More on homestays and cultural adaptation

Living with a host family will probably be one of the most significant factors in helping you learn about and understand the Ecuadorian way of life. The homestay offers perhaps the most sympathetic environment for learning and testing new skills in intercultural interaction. A family is usually anxious to learn about its new guest and it extends a warm welcome and hospitality in order to put you at ease. Of course, you will find many opportunities to make cultural “mistakes” in the homestay situation, but the consequences are usually less threatening than in other settings, and you are more likely to learn from whatever mistakes you make.

Family types
Most families have had students living with them before. Host families tend to be of the upper or middle class and can generally provide accommodations similar in many ways to U.S. households. However, there will invariably be many differences and it is likely that you will be faced with some inconveniences and discomforts to which you are not accustomed. Patience, sensitivity to verbal and nonverbal cues, flexibility and an open mind are keys to a successful experience. Remember that you have a unique opportunity to experience a different culture!

As in any country, there are many different types of families, from traditional to modern, small to large, informal to formal, and so there is no one description or behavior pattern that can be applied to any particular family however, there are some general tendencies which we will provide here, so that you will be prepared for a variety of situations.

Food and meals
The three meals are breakfast (desayuno), lunch (almuerzo) and dinner (cena or merienda). Breakfast is usually instant coffee, blended juice and a roll, possibly fresh fruit and oatmeal (served in a mug, in liquid form). Some families, however, may serve you a large breakfast including eggs every day, hoping to approximate an American breakfast. Lunch is the main meal of the day, generally served between 1:00-2:00, sometimes with a siesta following. It almost always is started with soup, followed by a hot plate including rice, chicken or meat and some times vegetables and a salad. You may have less variety than you are used to at home, and greater quantity. You may be badgered constantly to eat more and receive frowns when you say no. It would be a good idea to learn some tactful ways to decline (for example, “Muchas gracias, la comida está riquísima, pero ya estoy lleno y no puedo comer más”). Fruit is often served for dessert and coffee or tea comes last. Dinner, served around 7:30 p.m. or later, is generally much lighter than lunch, and may be simply a cup of coffee and a roll, or leftovers from lunch, and may sometimes even be skipped entirely. Traditionally, lunch is the time for the entire family to be together and talk about the day’s activities. However, with many family members working, it is becoming more common for parents to stay at work and eat a quick lunch out, so you may occasionally eat alone or with one family member. Many families have maids (empleadas) who help prepare meals and clean the house. In other households, the mother prefers to do the cooking.

What to wear at home
In clothing, it is best to always dress respectfully in your home. In most families, it is not acceptable to walk around the house barefoot (or with socks) and in pajamas: use a robe and slippers, and wear shoes at all times. Carpeting is not as common as it is in the United States. Instead, tile or wax floors are used, with small area rugs: be careful not to slip!

There are a wide variety of types of showers, most of which are foreign to the average American. You may not always have hot water as instantly as you are used to, depending on the time of day or the system in use. Some systems require that you turn them on an hour or so before showering, or your family may have a schedule for each person in order to conserve energy. Your water may not be as hot or as forceful as you are used to, or may be difficult to maintain a constant temperature. In any event, it is best to talk with your family if you have any problems with the shower.
The concept of privacy

Privacy is a very North American concept and it is a commodity hard to come by in Ecuador. Your room and belongings will be seen as less private and more public that you are probably accustomed, so here are some ways to minimize stressful situations:

● Always keep your room clean, even if you have a maid.
● If you share a bathroom with a host family member, keep all your toiletries in your room and bring them to the bathroom when you need them. This will avoid a cluttered bathroom and prevent others from testing your shampoo, etc.
● Always dress appropriately, even if you are lounging around, because people have a habit of walking into rooms without knocking.
● Realize that your family wants to know everything about you. This means that your personal belongings may be a target for inspection. Don’t write things about your host family in your journal that would offend them if they read it.
● Keep information documents and cash in a secure (locked) place within your room.
● Try to keep your door open except when you are changing, sleeping, or studying. A closed door is considered rude. The siesta is a good time for privacy each day. After lunch you can go into your room and “rest”, but always tell the family why you close your door.

● If you’re not studying, or if you can study around family noise, consider spending as much time as possible in public areas in your host family’s home. They will try to respect your privacy, and being with them (and not in your room) is a sign that you are open to getting to know them. Even if you are shy, make an effort to be with your family.

Our families have been instructed that privacy is important to most U.S. students just as you have been told that privacy is not as culturally important in Ecuador. Recognize that although you all have information, it is sometimes difficult for both parties to immediately adjust their actions. Just as your family will be patient with you, you should try to be patient with them as well.

Guests, greetings and behavior expectations

Most families adhere to conservative standards of decorum when it comes to guests: get prior permission, usually a day or more, before inviting a girlfriend or boyfriend to visit you in your home. In most Ecuadorian families it is unacceptable to take a friend of either sex to your room: visitations should take place in the common area such as the living room or family room.

Whenever you enter or leave the home, it is important to greet all family members who are present, usually with a handshake or kiss on the cheek. It would be considered rude to come into your house and go directly to your room without saying hello to everyone first.

Some families may ask you to be home by a certain time. In any event if you are going to be late or will miss a meal, it is very important that you call to let them know. Families feel very responsible for you and may treat you as if you were their real child (Did you eat enough? Did you do your homework? Are you feeling OK?). In others, you may be treated as a family guest and allowed more personal freedom.

In general, the noise level in Latin America is higher than in the U.S. Car alarms, home alarms, machine shops, trucks, construction and barking dogs are common sounds and walls are generally thinner. It is a good idea to bring earplugs if you are bothered by a lot of noise.

The most common religion of Ecuador is Roman Catholic, and there are also several other Christian denominations. Some families are very religious; others are not. If you are interested in attending religious services with your host family, it would be a good idea to state this in your introductory letter.
Many people in Ecuador smoke, and this may be the case in your home. If cigarette smoke bothers you, it would be a good idea to request a non-smoking household in your letter of introduction.

**Maids or empleadas**

Many families in Ecuador have maids. It can sometimes be uncomfortable for North Americans to be waited on by someone else. You should not invite the maid to eat with you: your invitation would put her in an awkward situation. If you are very bothered by this situation it may be helpful to look at it from a cultural perspective and try to understand both your discomfort as well as the motivations that encourage this relationship in Ecuador. For example, what is it about your culture that makes you uncomfortable or comfortable with a maid? What values are part of Ecuadorian culture that support the commonality of domestic workers?

You may feel inclined to help out in the kitchen. Some families may prohibit you from entering the kitchen; others may welcome your assistance (more likely from females than from males). It is always best to ask.

As is true in any country, family dynamics will vary from family to family. Some families are very close-knit, others are more distant and some may even have conflicts going on among the members. It is best to not get involved in any family disputes.

Many family members travel frequently for business or pleasure, often to the United States. It is possible that some of the family members will not be home during your stay.

**Overall Behavior**

Please remember that you will be viewed as a representative of the United States during your stay and your behavior will reflect on your country whether you are aware of it or not. Thus, *respect and moderation in all things are the best way to go.* For example, you may find that prices for things are a lot cheaper in Ecuador than in the U.S.: it is best not to always be comparing prices so as not to appear “superior.” You may hear a lot of Ecuadorians complain about their government and their economy. It is important to listen and validate their concerns, but not to add to their arguments or agree with them. You will be asked frequently what you think of Ecuador. It is best to choose something positive to comment on, such as the beauty of the landscape, architecture or native handicrafts, and keep any negative comments you may have to yourself. You will see a lot of poor and handicapped people; it would be in poor taste to draw attention to them or take pictures of them. In general, loud or boisterous behavior, putting your feet on chairs and tables, and heavy drinking are frowned upon, especially in public. Although there will be opportunities to party and have fun, if this is your primary reason for going to Ecuador, you will not have a positive educational experience, plus it will make for an uncomfortable or embarrassing stay for your colleagues.

Always greet people you know with a handshake, even if you’ve already seen them during the day. It is also common among women and between women and men to touch cheeks and kiss the air when saying hello or good-bye. At a party, expect to be introduced to everyone individually by your host. And when you leave the party, you should say good-bye to everyone individually.

**Ecuatorianismos – learning the local language**

Each country has its own way of saying things. Here are a few words and expressions typical to Ecuador:

- **Sigue no más**: a very common expression that means more or less “Go right ahead.”
- **Chévere** is frequently used among young people, meaning “cool.”
- **Chompa** is a jacket, and **saco** is a sweater.
- **Esferográfico** or **esfero** is a ballpoint pen
- **Canguil** is popcorn (often eaten with a meal)
- A car is **carro**, and **curvar** means “to turn.”
- **Novio/a** means “fiance”; to talk about your boyfriend or girlfriend, use **enamorado/a**.
Farra is a party, and chuchaqui (from the indigenous Quichua language) is a hangover. Other commonly used Quichua expressions are ¡Achachai! (Cold!), ¡Araray! (Hot!) and ¡Ayayay! (Pain!).

Homesickness

It is natural that at some point you may feel homesick and will miss your family, friends and your U.S. home: being in any foreign environment is likely to be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. If you share your homesick feelings by email or phone to your family back in the U.S., be sure to share positive things about what is happening as well so you do not inadvertently cause them unnecessary distress. Knowing that homesickness is common, you can prepare for it mentally so that you will not be surprised when it happens. In most cases it passes in a day or so. Never hesitate to talk to the ACLAS staff about any homesickness you may be feeling. Be sure to alert the ACLAS staff if you feel prolonged sadness or notice significant changes over a long period of time like changes in appetite, significant weight gain/loss, crying fits, or insomnia.

Questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact ACLAS or your faculty director if you have questions about anything you’ve found in this handbook. We are happy to elaborate or clarify. It is good to remember that you cannot know everything before arriving in Ecuador, but we want to be sure that you have the useful information you need.
Resources

Useful websites
- Although much information can be found online, our students still find travel books handy. They are packed full of useful information for prior to departure as well as after arrival. And, they only make you look like a tourist if you read them in public. 📚
- El Comercio: A newspaper in Quito: http://www.elcomercio.com/
- Ecuador Ministry of Travel’s tourism website. In English: http://ecuador.travel/en

Social Media
Find ACLAS on social media and discover study abroad tips, information about current events in Ecuador, travel information and more.

Maps
When you arrive in Quito you will receive a larger map of Quito, and, you can obviously investigate the layout of Quito and Ecuador via whichever online map source you prefer. These maps will give you a basic sense of the geography.
Returning to the United States

U.S. customs has certain restrictions on what types of items you can bring back into the country. For example, most plant and animal products are prohibited as well as certain kinds of foods. Generally, U.S. citizens are allowed to bring in up to $800.00 worth of purchases without having to pay duty, however you should understand the limitations prior to spending that much money on things you will bring back with you.
Luggage Description Form
University of Dallas Ecuador Summer Program
Keep this form in case your luggage is lost in transit.

Name_________________________________

Flight Dates_________________________________
Airline and Flight Number 1_____________________
Airline and Flight Number 2_____________________
Airline and Flight Number 3_____________________
Airline and Flight Number 4_____________________

Checked Luggage Piece #1
Brand Name_________________________________
Description_________________________________
Material_____________________________________
Height_____________________________________
Length_____________________________________
Width_____________________________________
Other distinguishing characteristics ____________

Checked Luggage Piece #2
Brand Name_________________________________
Description_________________________________
Material_____________________________________
Height_____________________________________
Length_____________________________________
Width_____________________________________
Other distinguishing characteristics ____________