



CUENCA ECUADOR GUIDEBOOK

Dear Taylor University Student,

Congratulations on your decision to go to Ecuador! This decision will have a positive impact on your life -- not only academically, but also personally and professionally. We hope that it will be a very rewarding experience for both you and the family you will be living with in Ecuador.

The next step is to prepare for your journey. We encourage you to begin this process today! The guidebook that follows provides useful information designed to help you prepare for your time in Cuenca. We hope it will help you to make this a successful experience abroad. Please read through it carefully and pay attention to the policies and procedures.

If you have questions along the way, feel free to contact the staff at Off-Campus Programs (located in the Spencer Centre for Global Engagement) or the Director of Ecuador Programs, Dr. Ken Kiers.

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INTRODUCTION TO CUENCA, ECUADOR PROGRAMS

Vision and Mission

The Cuenca, Ecuador Programs are directed and administered by the Spencer Centre for Global Engagement, whose mission and purpose is to “impact the Kingdom of God and minister the redemptive love of Christ to a needy world through the educating and equipping of distinguished students by means of a dynamic integration of faith, life-long learning, and global service.” In the Cuenca, Ecuador programs, our goal is to accomplish this purpose through semester and summer academic programs, residence life programs, and daily routines as students live and study in Cuenca and interact with our partners there.

Partners

The programs in Cuenca, Ecuador operate as a collaboration between Taylor University, Arco Iglesia Cristiana (Arco), and the Universidad del Azuay (UdA).

Taylor University maintains an office in Cuenca, located at the Arco church and under the leadership of executive director María de Lourdes Larrea. She provides on-site leadership for the program, including developing, coordinating, and overseeing all operations in Cuenca, and maintains regular contact with the students in Cuenca to monitor their academic, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. She and her staff coordinate with both the Universidad del Azuay and the Arco church.

Taylor University partners with Arco Iglesia Cristiana, an evangelical Christian church in Cuenca. The church is responsible for the residence life portion of the program and provides strong Christian interaction and involvement for TU students. Check out <https://arcoministries.org> for further information about Arco.

The Universidad del Azuay (UdA) is a university of 5000 undergraduate and graduate students in Cuenca. Faculty from the university’s medical school and undergraduate programs teach courses to TU students in English. TU students receive Taylor credit for these courses.

Contact Information

Regarding academic programs and residence life information, contact Dr. Ken Kiers, Director of Ecuador Semester Programs (knkiers@taylor.edu or 765-998-4689).

Regarding the OCP application and procedural aspects (passport/visa) of the Cuenca program, contact Jennifer Moeschberger, Interim Director of Off-Campus Programs (jnmoeschberger@taylor.edu or 765-998-4961).

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Educate Yourself

- Familiarize yourself with all program-specific expectations – particularly academic objectives and policies, daily routines of the program, and required excursions.
- Research the host country. Learn the local customs and laws. If you break a local law and are subsequently arrested, neither Taylor University nor the US Government has the authority to immediately release you.
- Talk to students from Cuenca, or to other students who have spent time in Cuenca.
- Online newspapers, literature, and film are other great sources of information about your host country.

Withdrawing from the Program

If you need to withdraw from a Taylor University program for any reason, contact the OCP office immediately as each semester is built upon the number of students attending. If you withdraw from the program after your acceptance for any reason that is not medically certified, notify the faculty director or program coordinator and OCP in writing immediately. You will be held responsible for any non-refundable costs, including the program deposit, administrative fees, and other expenses paid on your behalf. Update your local address with Taylor University to ensure that your billing and registration information goes to a parent or responsible friend who will take care of your affairs.

ACCEPTANCE PROCESS

TU Application Deadline

ALL TU-required application materials are due to the Off-Campus Study Programs Office on or before each semester's deadline. If you have questions, please contact Mrs. Jennifer Moeschberger (jnmoeschberger@taylor.edu) or Dr. Ken Kiers (knkiers@taylor.edu).

Where to apply

<https://tayloru-horizons.symplicity.com/student>

Steps:

Click on "Select a Program to Begin." Select Ecuador Semester Programs. Click on "Apply".

On the Application for Study Abroad (Pre-Acceptance):

Click "Save and Continue."

Read each section, then click "Save and Continue."

There is a progress bar on the left-hand side of the page. Repeat the previous step until all the application sections are completed.

You MUST agree to the application terms & conditions and participation terms.

Send in your recommendation requests.

Submit your application.

Schedule an interview: contact Diana Bowman at diana_bowman@taylor.edu.

TRAVEL DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Travel Documents for US Citizens

Passports

Visit the US Department of State website for information on obtaining a passport and other travel documents you may need for your program. If you are a US citizen and do not have a US passport, you need to apply for one immediately. The average wait time for a passport is 8-11 weeks.

You must present a U.S. passport with at least six months' remaining validity. If your passport does expire before 6 months, you must renew your passport right away. Details of this process may be found on the US Department of State website. Visit <http://travel.state.gov/passport> for more details about how to obtain or renew your passport.

Visa

You will need to apply for a student visa before you leave for Ecuador. Please wait to apply for a visa until you are instructed to do so by the Off-Campus Programs office. If you apply too early, it will expire before you are done with the program, meaning that you will have to leave the country before the program ends.

You are responsible for the visa application and the cost of the visa. Visas are issued to individuals, not to universities. A visa is an agreement between you and the Ecuadorian government. While the Off-Campus Programs office will assist you with the visa application process, obtaining the appropriate visa is your responsibility. Please know that visa requirements change frequently and without advance notice. You will most likely need to visit an Ecuadorian consulate for your visa.

Visit <https://www.gob.ec/mremh/tramites/concesion-visa-residencia-temporal-estudiante> for visa requirements from Ecuador.

Please email the Off-Campus Programs office if you have any questions about the visa process.

Travel Documents for Non-US Citizens

The office of Off-Campus Programs will work with you to help you obtain the proper visa; however, because you are a non-resident, Taylor University may not have all the necessary information. It is your responsibility to determine whether you need a visa. A good place to start your research may be the Visas or Consular Affairs/Services section or Consular Division of the official website for the Embassy of Ecuador in the United States.

Find more information at: <https://www.embassypages.com/ecuador-embassy-washingtondc-unitedstates>.

If you have difficulty finding information on visas for non-US citizens, do a search for the website of the Ecuadorian Embassy in your home country.

If you do require a visa, it is your responsibility to follow the appropriate application procedures to obtain the visa before the start of the study abroad program. If you accept nomination to this study abroad program and then fail to obtain the necessary visa, you will be deemed to have withdrawn yourself from the program and may be held responsible for the full program cost. You are also responsible for ensuring that you have the necessary paperwork to re-enter the USA at the end of the program.

Please email the Off-Campus Programs office if you have any questions about the visa process.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Program costs

The cost of the Cuenca, Ecuador Program covers:

- round-trip air travel to and from Cuenca, Ecuador
- tuition
- admission fees for all class-related activities
- program-related travel in Ecuador
- room & board, laundry, phone, & transportation allowance
- CISI (health) and liability insurance

Note: Costs listed below are approximate; you will pay the costs established for your particular semester.

TU Tuition:	\$ 19,070.00
ECU Room & Board:	\$ 5,113.00
OCP Fee:	\$ 1,000.00
ECU Books & Materials Fee:	\$ 150.00
CISI Medical Insurance:	\$ 176.00
TSO Fee:	\$ 50.00
Foreign Liability Insurance:	\$ 40.00
<hr/>	
Total:	\$ 25,599.00

*ECU Room & Board fees include group airfare from US departure city.

Financial Aid

Contact the Office of Financial Aid concerning your semester in Cuenca. Since this program is run by Taylor University, you should be able to apply financial aid to the cost of the program.

Personal Expenses

Personal expenses (passport fees, visa application fees, toiletries, extra food, souvenirs, personal travel, etc.) are the responsibility of the student.

HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Health Insurance

As a Taylor University student traveling abroad, you are required to carry the card for the Taylor University international health plan that covers you while in Ecuador. This card is used in Cuenca at the medical clinic/hospital with which Taylor University has an agreement. All students will be enrolled in the insurance program by the OCP office.

Important Vaccines:

- Hepatitis A & B vaccines are very strongly recommended for students in health-related practicums, and highly recommended for *all* students.

Other recommended vaccines:

- Tetanus-diphtheria booster (if last vaccine was over 5 years ago).
- Measles (MMR) if your records do not show 2 MMR vaccines.
- Typhoid
- COVID-19 (no longer required)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) vaccine recommendations:

Recommended Vaccines

- Hepatitis A & B
- Malaria (atovaquone/proguanil, doxycycline or mefloquine tablets) &
- Rabies.

Note: The CDC recommends the Hepatitis B vaccine if you might be exposed to blood or body fluids (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with local people, or be exposed through medical treatment.

While there is some risk of malaria in Ecuador at low altitudes (<1500 m), you will be based in the central highland area around Cuenca at about 2500 m (8517 feet) where there is no malaria. While Taylor students do travel to the Amazon, there have been no incidences of malaria recorded in recent medical records. Students also travel to the beach and the Galapagos Islands where there is no record of malaria incidents. However, if you choose to take an antimalarial drug, the CDC recommends (listed alphabetically): atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone), doxycycline, mefloquine (Lariam), or primaquine (in special circumstances).

See <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> for more information.

The CDC recommends the rabies vaccine if you might have “extensive unprotected outdoor exposure in rural areas, such as might occur during camping, hiking, or bicycling, or engaging in certain occupational activities.” Cuenca is the third largest city in Ecuador and, while in Cuenca, Taylor University students will not have this kind of rural/outdoor exposure.

See <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/ecuador> for more info.

Please consult your health care provider and past immunization records on any questions regarding required or recommended vaccines.

HOUSING

While studying in Cuenca for the semester, you will live with a Christian host family that has been screened and approved by both the elders of the Arco church and the Taylor University office staff. Upon acceptance into the program, you will be given an application for a host family. On this application is a questionnaire that helps determine the family you will be placed with. The main objective is to pair each student with a family that will provide an enriching experience for both parties, so they can develop strong ties that serve to support the academic semester. The selection process takes into account many important factors that will influence your welfare during your stay in Ecuador.

Students will be placed in host homes with a functional family structure (father, mother and children) with a good Christian witness, the willingness to open their home to a new family member, and the infrastructure to host a student (i.e. single room, shared or private bathroom, access to laundry, meals at home). Families will be responsible for providing housing, meals, laundry (washing machine & soap), and transportation (in some circumstances). You will be notified about your host family approximately three weeks before the departure for Cuenca.

More information about living with host families will be discussed during the orientation meetings.

ORIENTATION MEETINGS

You are required to attend the orientation meetings that will be scheduled by the program director for the semester prior to your departure. These meetings will provide you with important academic and cultural information, as well as helping you develop intercultural competencies (e.g. effective strategies for coping with culture shock) and helping the group develop into a cohesive, supportive team.

Note that you will also be required to attend a Pre-Departure Meeting with Jennifer Moeschberger (TBA), where she will provide important details about your travel arrangements.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

In Ecuador, especially within Cuenca, the importance given to education in the society is easily seen. Ecuador considers Cuenca to be an academic, scholarly, and artistic center. It has the largest cathedral in Ecuador and is known as “The City of the Sciences.” Because of the importance of education in this culture, it will be important for you to know about the educational system and how you will be assessed in terms of academics, appearance, and attitude. Remember, some of the teachers you will have may not be of an evangelical Christian faith, but they know you are coming from that background.

General Course Offerings

Students typically take 15-17 credit hours per semester. Please consult with Dr. Kiers on the specific classes that will be available during the particular semester you’ll be in Cuenca.

The semester program in Ecuador provides the following courses:

Course	TU Code	Credits	Semester Offered
2 Semesters of Spanish	SPA xxx	6-7	Both
Human Anatomy & Physiology I	BIO 310	4	Fall
Human Anatomy & Physiology II	BIO 311	4	Spring
Biology Medical Practicum	BIO 393	2	Both
Ecology	ENS 204	4	Spring
Human Biology	BIO 200	4	Both
Latin American History	HIS 211	3	Both
Latin Dance	DAN 250 or KIN 200FD	1	Both
Exercise Science/Other Practicums	EXS 393/Other	2	Both

For the pre-health student, a typical slate of courses will include:

- 2 Spanish courses
- Human Anatomy & Physiology I (fall) or II (spring)
- Biology Medical Practicum
- Latin American History or Ecology
- Latin Dance

Classroom Culture: Attire & Attitude

It is important for you to remember that you will be studying in a different culture. The style of teaching as well as the style of assessment will be different than you are accustomed to at Taylor. Engaging in a different culture, including a different educational system, is one of the reasons you chose to participate in a study abroad program. The professors in Cuenca expect that Taylor University students care about their education and that they want to do well in their classes.

Homework and readings will be assigned to provide background and further detail to what is being taught. The faculty will expect you to complete all reading assignments and will test you over the reading. Exams and quizzes will be given on assignments, readings, and class activities. You may have a ten-question test of which three questions are from the lecture and the rest from the assigned reading. You will be expected to know everything assigned, not just the material covered during class.

The way you dress for class is a sign of respect to the teacher and will be noticed by the faculty. Wearing jeans with a nice shirt/sweater and shoes — not flip-flops — is quite adequate, but do not come to class looking like you just got out of bed (e.g. wearing pajama pants). Class times may be earlier than you are used to which means you will have to get up earlier in order to prepare yourself adequately and get to class on time.

Trips

You may take field trips in and around Cuenca as part of your language classes. Since these trips are class-related (even if they occur outside of scheduled class times), you should treat them as academic experiences. Be sure to bring a notebook and writing utensil to take notes on the cultural information provided by your professors and tour guides.

The Cuenca, Ecuador program has scheduled several mandatory class trips to other regions of Ecuador as part of the academic and cultural experience. You will have the privilege of going to the Galápagos Islands, the Oriente (Amazon region of Ecuador), and to the capitol city of Quito. A member of the Taylor University Cuenca staff and/or someone from the Arco church will accompany you on these trips. Each trip will require specific attire as you travel. Please check the packing list for those specific items (see page 25).

Absences

If you are ill and need to miss a class, contact the TU Cuenca office staff so they can notify your professors. Missing classes without notification is inconsiderate and culturally impolite. Good communication with your family, the TU Cuenca staff, and your professors is critical.

Notes

Some advice from a previous Ecuador trip participant:

- There may be lots of noise throughout the day and at night- dogs barking, cars honking / alarms, a sports field nearby, the gas truck, etc. I downloaded an app on my phone for white noise and used that every night to help with the sounds – you will eventually get used to it!
- Download the Anatomy textbook before you arrive in Cuenca. The PowerPoint slides used by the professor are directly from the textbook, so it was super helpful to have the textbook to follow along in class and use for studying.
- Switching to an international data plan is worth it. While there are lots of places to connect to Wi-Fi, it is much easier and convenient to not have to worry about it whenever you need to send a message.
- Do not be afraid to ask María de Lourdes (On-site Director of Taylor University Ecuador Programs) or your host family if you ever need anything, are having a problem, or have a question. They are there to support you and make sure you have a positive experience!
- Download the AZU Taxi app and use it! It is very user friendly and a great way to get around once you feel more comfortable with the city and using your Spanish.
- Make the most of everything! Be a “yes” person! Try everything and soak it all up. It goes by fast!

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Introduction

Why should I know something about Ecuador and Cuenca? Ecuadorians have great pride in their country. Knowing something about their country will show them respect and that you care about them. You don't have to have this information memorized; in fact, it may not be accurate in the eyes of the people you meet. Come into the country and learn from them. See if what is said about them is true and let the humility of learning help bring you closer to these people.

Below are some questions you should ask yourself. Then, research what you do not know.

- How many prominent people from your host country can you name? (politicians, musicians, etc.) Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
- Can you recognize the national anthem?
- What is the dominant language? What other minority languages are spoken? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
- What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? What other religions are present?
- What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Plural marriage? Homosexuality?
- What is the attitude toward drinking? What is the legal drinking age?
- What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
- Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? Does this change in different situations?
- If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early? On time? Late? If late, how late?
- What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
- What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
- On what occasions would you be expected to exchange gifts? What kind of gifts?
- What are some of the favorite leisure and recreational activities for adults? For teenagers? What games do children play? What sports are popular?
- What is the normal work schedule?
- How will your financial position and living conditions compare with those of most people living in your home country?
- What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
- How are children disciplined at home? At school?
- Is education free? Compulsory? In schools, are children segregated by race? By caste or class? By sex?
- Is the most popular media generally friendly in their attitude toward the US?
- What are common home remedies for minor ailments? Can medicines be purchased?
- Where are the important universities in the country?
- What will manners and cultural behavior be like at the host home? What is considered polite / rude, or appropriate / inappropriate, with regard to greetings, showing respect, and tidiness?

Weather and Climate

Ecuador has two seasons: wet and dry. The wet season — or invierno (winter) — in the highlands is from October until April (with a short dry period from mid-November to the end of December), and the dry season — verano (summer) — lasts from June until September.

Generally speaking, the temperature is dictated by altitude. Cuenca and the Andes enjoy spring-like weather year-round, with highs of around 20-25°C (68-77°F) and lows of about 8-10°C (45-50°F). Weather in the Galápagos varies between misty and cool, and steamy and sunny. The Amazon region is generally either hot & humid or hot & rainy. However, no matter what season it is said to be, the weather is ultimately unpredictable. Warm sunny mornings can often lead to bone-chilling, rainy afternoons, hence the sierra's adage "four seasons in one day." *Note: it is a little bit colder in Cuenca during the Fall semester, so bring some warmer clothes as there is no indoor heating.

Population

Ecuador's population (as of 2022) is estimated to be around 18,000,000. The population is ethnically mixed (2014 data): 72% Mestizo (mixed indigenous/caucasian), 7% Amerindians, 7% Afro-Ecuadorian, 12% White (of European descent), and 2% other.

Although the population was heavily concentrated in the Andes highlands region a few decades ago, today it is divided about equally between that area and the coast. Migration toward cities in all regions, but particularly Quito and Guayaquil, has increased the urban population to more than 60%. The rainforest region to the east of the mountains remains the most sparsely populated of Ecuador's three continental regions and contains only about 3% of the population.

THE CITY OF CUENCA

Cuenca is the capital of the Azuay province, the third largest city in the nation, and the economic center of the southern Sierra. Cuenca is an ancient city, even older than the Spanish occupation. The city is a colonial jewel; a neat, orderly city set in the picturesque rolling hills of southern Ecuador. Cuenca has a centuries-old colonial center full of stunning architecture, venerable churches, and well-kept parks. Cuencanos are immensely proud of the fact that their colonial downtown was named a UNESCO World Heritage Cultural site in 1999.

The city's cobblestone streets, towering cathedrals, and marble and whitewashed buildings give it a colonial air unequalled in Ecuador. Officially known as "Saint Ann of the Four Rivers of Cuenca," the river Machángara serves as the city's northern limit, the river Tomebamba — which means "River Valley of Knives" — runs through the historic district, and the river Yanuncay and the river Tarquí flow through the southern suburbs. The most visible of the four is Tomebamba, which separates Cuenca's colonial heart from several new residential areas, the stadium, and the city's main university.

Climate

Like the rest of the Ecuadorian Andes, Cuenca enjoys a mild climate year-round. Days are generally warm and nights are cool enough that you should pack a sweater. The average daily temperature is 14.6°C (58°F). The rainy season is the same as Quito's and generally lasts from mid-October until early May. During this time, mornings are typically sunny and afternoons cloudy with light, periodic showers.

Safety

The city of Cuenca is considered to be one of the safest in the country. Although true, petty theft (*passports, money, jewelry, credit cards, smart phones, computers, etc.*) is an issue in any big city. **Don't leave your valuables in plain sight.** Be vigilant and alert when you are out in public.

Since you will be living in a home as part of a family, you should be prepared for and respect the fact that your Ecuadorian parents will tend to be protective of you as to where you go and in which activities you participate in the city.

Transportation

- Bus: National and international buses travel between cities and into other countries and are of good to excellent quality. Local bus routes may not be expansive, and locals frequently opt to walk or take taxis. The distances you would normally travel would be no more than a 30-minute walk; however, main routes are covered by the local bus system.
- Taxis: provide transportation all over the city and to nearby cities. The **Azutaxi** app is a good option. Costs are covered under taxi-metro.
- The Tranvía is another option for getting around the city: <http://tranvia.cuenca.gob.ec/>
- Air: The airport, Mariscal Lamar, provides flights into and out of Cuenca. National airline Avianca and international airline LATAM fly into the country. The two main airports of entry into and out of the country are found in Guayaquil and Quito.

Culture

The overall culture of Ecuador, and especially Cuenca, is one of warmth, acceptance, and caring. The culture is very family-oriented and supportive. Children do not leave the home until they are married or if work takes them to another location. At least once a month the extended family gathers for a day of fellowship together.

Greeting each other (friends and family - and sometimes new acquaintances) occurs with an "air kiss" on the right side of the cheek. Women "air kiss" everyone including children. Men and boys only "air kiss" women and shake hands with other men. You may notice, however, as the relationship between men increases, there may also be a side-hug with the handshake. This greeting is important both upon saying hello as well as good-bye. More will be discussed about this in the orientation meetings.

Holidays are special times and are family oriented. The culture is very patriotic and will respect your US patriotism as long as you exhibit humility. Remember that they do not celebrate US holidays, so if you wish to have a special Thanksgiving or Easter celebration, you may have to teach your family concerning your traditions. The Taylor University Cuenca staff will try to provide the opportunity for you to celebrate important US holidays with the other TU students.

Sensuality is viewed differently in Ecuador. You may be surprised at the level of sensuality in the advertising and the dress. Acknowledge cultural distinctions with respect and be careful of your remarks. On the flip side, public displays of affection that may be acceptable in the US (e.g. stroking one another's hair, laying on someone's lap) are viewed much differently by Ecuadorian culture. Please remember that your behaviors are judged on the basis of Ecuadorian cultural norms, NOT American cultural norms. If someone questions your behavior, please respond with humility and curiosity.

Respect for others is a hallmark of this society. The idea of hierarchy can be helpful/important as you try to interpret Ecuadorian social systems. For example, in an educational context, the teacher is higher in the hierarchy than the students, but lower than the dean/principal, etc. More respect is shown to those who are higher on the hi(gh)erarchy. (How might this apply in a family? Who gets the most respect?)

Demonstration of respect can vary by culture, also. As mentioned earlier, coming to class in pajama pants/sleepwear would be interpreted in Ecuador as a lack of respect for one's professor. In Ecuador, the degree of respect afforded different individuals because of their age, position, status, gender, etc. may differ from what you are used to.

The idea of hierarchy is important when dealing with complaints or conflict, so it is crucial that you address any concerns to the proper person. Because we work very closely within the TU/Arco structure, you must be careful to whom you express your concerns and/or frustrations. Since you are directly under the responsibility of the Taylor University Cuenca staff, it is most appropriate to talk to María de Lourdes Larrea first. She will determine how and with whom any issue needs to be addressed.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Community life in Cuenca, Ecuador involves engagement with your Ecuadorian family, the Taylor University Cuenca personnel, and the Arco church as well as the people with whom you interact at the University, in your practicums, and in everyday life. You will not be living in the "intentional community" of Taylor's campus; rather, you will be living in the culture of another country, and the way you live, learn, and interact will be seen in the context of that culture.

Upon arrival you will have orientation meetings that will help you to become more knowledgeable about the specifics of where you will be living, your host family, the teachers, etc.

Life Together Covenant (LTC)

Taylor University's Life Together Covenant still applies for all students participating in off-campus programs. Remember that the focus of the LTC is to provide a framework for community. As it states in the handbook, "Taylor University is a community of Christians intentionally joined together for academic progress, personal development, and spiritual growth." We seek "to develop servant leaders marked with a passion to minister Christ's redemptive love and truth to a world in need." Together we seek to honor Him by integrating biblical faith and learning while our hearts and lives embrace the process of maturing in Christ.

"The Taylor University community consists of those who, in furtherance of our mission, are living together in intentional, voluntary fellowship, aware that we are called to live our lives before a watching world. Although primarily centered on the Upland campus, this community is not defined by geography, but rather by active engagement in the Taylor educational mission." Although you are not on Taylor's campus while you are in Cuenca, you are still a member of the Taylor community, and are expected to abide by culturally relevant expectations.

The Community of Arco Church

The Arco church was our first partner in Cuenca, and their partnership is key to continuing the Cuenca program. They are especially important because they provide a supportive, spiritually based community for TU students. Because your host family is an Arco member, we request that you attend the Arco worship services on Sunday with your family and participate in the home church ministry as the family directs. (This could mean home church and youth activities.) Finding a way to participate at the Arco church in one of its ministries is important to the church in their outreach to the people of Cuenca. Please work with the Director of the TU Cuenca office and the Arco leadership to see where you may be able to participate. Special note: participation in an Arco ministry requires that you will abide by Arco expectations in that ministry.

The Community of Your Home

You will be staying in Christian homes, with the majority of the families being from the Arco church. As mentioned, you will be in a home selected by a committee of TU Cuenca staff and the elders of Arco church.

The culture of the family in Cuenca is important and, just like your US family, will have its special character. Two things that are very important are the respect for authority and the need for communication. The family will feel highly responsible for your health, well-being, and safety. Lack of communication as to your plans, location, and physical & mental state will be viewed as signs of disrespect. Your Ecuadorian parents are not trying to be controlling; rather, it is a way to make sure that all of the family members work together. Both the preparation of food and getting people around need proper coordination, and the mother of the home takes these tasks seriously. It will be important, then, to understand how your family handles scheduling, daily routines, chores, visits, etc., so that proper respect (and communication) is given to the proper authority. Remember, you are engaging their culture.

You will have regularly scheduled meetings with the Director of TU Cuenca to assess the home stays. Since it can be difficult to express your feelings in a second language, the director will assist you in that communication with the family. You should feel free to express your concerns or needs to the Director of TU Cuenca and work together with her to reach a solution. In the event of ongoing conflict, the director will determine if a change in housing is necessary.

Of special note is the spiritual life of the family. Most of the believers here are first-generation evangelical Christians, and many of the extended family members may not be evangelical Christians. Since you will be highly involved in the life of your extended family, please be aware that everything that you say and do reflects Christianity, not just American culture.

We encourage you to bring gifts to your host family; ideas of gifts to bring will be provided during the orientation meetings. Something that represents you, your family, or your hometown would be appropriate, or a memento such as a Christmas decoration or framed photo of yourself to leave behind.

HEALTH AND SAFETY WHILE IN ECUADOR

Taylor University will work to protect your health and safety while abroad, but you must take responsibility for the results of your decisions, choices, and behavior. Because the flora (bacteria, etc.) in common materials in Ecuador is different from our common flora, the chances of having a case of food dysentery is quite possible. Until you are adjusted to the Ecuadorian flora and fauna, it is strongly suggested that you:

- Be leery of eating foods that have not been prepared specifically for you.
- Don't eat off the street; thoroughly wash all fruit & vegetables before eating them.
- Do not eat foods that cannot be peeled.
- Do not eat undercooked foods.
- Taking a Pepto-Bismol tablet before a meal can help with stomach issues.
- Drink bottled water until you are adjusted; talk to your Ecuadorian parents about whether they drink city water or bottled water.
- Brush your teeth with bottled water, especially when on trips (Quito, Galápagos, Amazon).

Emergency contact information will be provided at the departure meeting. It will contain emergency numbers for you and your US family. Keep this information at hand throughout your stay.

Health Card

As a student at Taylor University, you will also have insurance through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). This card can be used with your own insurance and will help cover expenses incurred in Ecuador. If you are sick while in Ecuador, make sure you call the number on the card and have your insurance card handy. There is a \$10 processing fee that must be paid at the hospital. This will be your responsibility to pay.

Emergency Contact Information

Taylor University Cuenca Office

Address: Av. 10 de Agosto y Av. Loja
Iglesia Arco Segundo Piso
Cuenca Ecuador

Director: Maria de Lourdes Larrea, Cel: 593-9-151-6493

E-mail: mrlarrea@taylor.edu

Physician: Dr. Marlo Palacios (Call Director of TU Cuenca office for contact numbers.)

Hospital Santa Inés (They have agreed to work with the international insurance carrier.)

Address: Av. Daniel Cordova y Federico Proaño

Phone: 593-97-282-7888

DAILY LIVING DETAILS

Currency

Ecuador uses the U.S. dollar as its currency. There is no exchange of currency needed. Debit or credit cards are an easy way to withdraw money from your US account while in Cuenca. Like most ATM machines, a small fee is charged for each use. Make sure that you check with your bank before you leave the country to see what fees and interest rates they may charge for cash withdrawals. If you plan to use a credit or debit card in Ecuador, let your bank know that you will be traveling internationally, so they don't suspect identity theft and put a hold on your account.

In big cities (Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil), large businesses might accept payment by credit card, but most of the small businesses and vendors require cash payments. Carry small bills & coins. Exact change is often required.

Cost-of-living allowance

Every month, you will receive a cost-of-living allowance from the TU Cuenca office. This allowance covers the cost of transportation (bus passes, taxis) and minutes for your TU-issued cell phone. You will be issued a TU cell phone when you arrive in Cuenca. This phone allows the TU Cuenca office staff to be in contact with you at all times. You are required to keep this phone with you at all times. You must make sure the phone has sufficient minutes/calling time and battery power at all times. If you use the TU phone to call the US, you will be responsible for the cost of those calls, and for recharging the calling time on the phone.

Laundry

Laundry facilities will be provided by your host family. If you choose to use a laundry service instead of what is provided in your home, you are responsible for the costs. Remember, you are responsible for your personal needs/supplies, not your host family.

COMMUNICATION

E-mail Communication

While you are overseas, Taylor University and/or the Director of Ecuador Programs will communicate important university information, such as your pre-registration time and RAC code, to your Taylor e-mail account. If you plan to forward your Taylor e-mail to a non-University account, please be aware that many internet-based e-mail providers (e.g., Hotmail, Yahoo) do not handle forwarded e-mail very well. The only way to guarantee that important University-related messages, including grade reports and course schedules, reach you is to leave your Taylor account un-forwarded and regularly check your e-mail.

Communicating with friends and family back home

Internet: Communication overseas can be done a variety of ways with Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Meet, or Facetime, etc. You can also call using your Taylor University Cuenca phone, or an international calling card.

Email is one of the easiest ways to keep in touch. Although internet access is common in many areas of the world, you may not have as much access as you're used to at home. Each home will vary in the amount of internet service. However, both the church and the University have internet access.

Mailing from overseas: It is not advisable to mail packages to and from your host country. The cost is high and in most cases is impractical. Packages that are mailed from overseas can be delayed by customs or by internal

bureaucracy. Package contents may also be subject to damage or theft during transit. Consider these risks before mailing a package or asking your family to do so. If necessary, UPS is one secure method for sending documents, etc. Be sure to allow additional time for your mail to arrive.

Family Visits

If your family wants to visit you in Ecuador, please remember that you are still required to attend all your classes and participate in all trip-related travel, activities, etc. Trips with your host family and program-related excursions take up most of the flexibility that you normally have in a semester.

While we try to provide your semester schedule in advance, it may not be available until one month before you leave and is subject to change.

We recommend that you coordinate all activities through the Director of Ecuador Programs & the Director of TU Cuenca office.



ECUADOR PACKING LIST

NOTE: Airlines limit the amount of liquids you can carry-on and restrict the packaging of those liquids. Please check www.tsa.gov for additional information. Do not pack any items in your carry-on luggage that could be viewed as a weapon. Such items include, but are not limited to: aerosol cans, knives or pocketknives, lighters, nail files, razors, and scissors. A detailed list of airline-prohibited items can be found on the TSA website.

Required Travel Documents

- Passport (plus one photocopy of the signature page & picture page of your passport)
- 1 passport photo (for UdA)
- Visa materials
- TU ID
- Driver's license
- CISI health insurance card
- Credit or debit card(s) for ATM (activate for international use)

Medications/Eyeglasses/Contact Lenses

- Ask your pharmacist for a copy of the original prescriptions for all medications.
- If you take prescription medication, bring the original prescription with you to verify its authenticity.
- Keep all medication in the original, labeled containers with your name, your physician's name, and the generic name of the medication. It may also be helpful to have a list of this information.
- Bring enough medication to last for the duration of your trip.
- Carry all medications in your carry-on luggage.**
- If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses: Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses and/or contact lenses as well as the prescriptions.
- Contact solution — bring enough for the entire semester since it is expensive to purchase in Cuenca. Make sure to put the contact solution in your checked bag. Bring an extra contact case too.

Academic Materials

Required:

- Spanish/English Bible.
- ALL THE BOOKS REQUIRED FOR YOUR CLASSES IN ECUADOR. These will depend on the courses you are taking.**
- Laptop with a 2-prong AC adapter.

Note: Ecuador uses the same electric voltage as the US (110 V), so you don't need travel adapters. However, consider getting a 2-prong plug/converter for your computer power cord in case you need to charge your computer, but the only available outlet is 2-pronged.

Recommended:

- Good Spanish/English Dictionary-Oxford, University of Chicago, Langenscheidt.
- Spanish verb books (e.g. [501 Spanish Verbs](#)) or an app for your phone/laptop.
- Notebooks, journals, index cards, pens, pencils, markers, paper, etc. (or buy in Cuenca).

Clothing

- Raincoat and umbrella (a compact, foldable one is very handy – it will rain!).
- Comfortable, waterproof shoes, sneakers, and/or hiking shoes (You will be walking a lot!).
- At least one dressy outfit (including shoes) for weddings, special occasions, etc.
- Warm jacket, fleece, or sweater(s) for cool nights.
- Hat and gloves (just in case – you might use these while hiking in Cajas).
- Athletic clothing for sports (and dance class).
- Bathing suits, rash-guard, shorts, beachwear.
- Pajamas, slippers & shower flip flops.
- Pants (jeans, khakis and comfy dress pants are good. Most people don't wear shorts unless they are at the beach or playing sports). Skirts and dresses are fine for women, too.
- Tops — a combination of base layers (tanks and tees), middle and outer layers (long sleeve shirts or sweaters). [Bring at least one button-down hiking shirt.]

Toiletries

Most of these items are available in Cuenca, so you don't need to bring large quantities. However, if you need a specific brand, bring enough to last for the semester. Note that many airlines prohibit aerosol sprays in your luggage, so make sure to buy "pump" containers of sunscreen and bug spray.

- Soap (face, body, etc.)
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Razors and shaving accessories
- Sunscreen (expensive in Cuenca)
- Bug spray (expensive in Cuenca)
- Chapstick/lip balm
- Antibacterial hand gel
- Makeup or "looking good" items
- Small mirror
- Laundry bag
- Feminine hygiene products (Pads are easy to find. If you use tampons, bring a supply with you. This might be the time to try a reusable menstrual cup, like the DivaCup or the MeLuna.)

Personal items

- Pictures of your home & family, favorite recipes, etc.
- Gifts for your host family (chocolates, candy, t-shirts, etc. They do not need to be expensive.)
- A favorite book, or movie, or something small that reminds you of home.
- Do not** bring expensive jewelry.

Miscellaneous

- Small bills (dollar coins, \$1 and \$5 bills)
- Backpack (for class) & small duffel bag for day trips or short 2-day trips
- Small or wallet-sized purse; small travel purse
- Travel alarm clock, watch, camera, charging cords, flashlight

Trip-Specific Packing Lists

Galápagos Islands

The temperature can vary greatly in the Galápagos. It is usually hot and humid on the coast, but can be cool and rainy in the hills, and cool and breezy on a boat. Again, lightweight layers are key, and you will appreciate having clothes that dry quickly. Consider bringing at least two swimsuits, and sun-protective clothing. You will be in the water every day and it can be very hot.

- SUNSCREEN – high sunburn risk for everyone
- Bug spray
- Refillable water bottle
- Hat or cap (don't bring your new Panama hat)
- Sunglasses
- 2-3 Swimsuits (coverup, rash-guard)
- Beach towel &/or sarong
- Shorts
- Lightweight pants (for the evenings and the bugs)
- Lightweight shirts (tanks, short and long-sleeved)
- Good walking shoes and/or good walking sandals
- Socks (or tights, or leggings)
- Small backpack/daypack
- Snorkeling masks
- Camera (with charging cables, extra batteries, memory cards, etc.)

The Amazon

- Jeans, hoodies and sweaters, t-shirts (short and long-sleeved)
- Lightweight pants and lightweight, long-sleeved shirts – quick-dry/extra sets
- Tennis shoes or comfortable walking/hiking shoes
- Long socks – several pairs
- Comfortable walking/water sandals – e.g. Chacos
- BUG SPRAY (a big bottle)
- Sunscreen
- Hat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Swimsuit
- Small backpack/daypack
- Camera (with charging cables, extra batteries, memory cards, etc.)
- Umbrella and/or waterproof jacket

El Chorro (waterfalls)

- Shorts
- Chacos (or water sandals)
- Rain jacket
- Change of clothes for afterwards (you will get SOAKED!)

TRAVELING TO CUENCA

At the pre-departure meeting, you will be provided with the name of the city you will be flying through (either Quito or Guayaquil) and the name of the person who will be picking you up at the airport. Since the person who will pick you up could change, please check your TU email regularly. Someone from Taylor University may be at the departure airport to assist you.

When you get your boarding passes and baggage claim tickets, do not lose the baggage claim tickets. You may need them upon arrival in Ecuador in order to claim your luggage (see below). It is good to have your bags marked with something very visible so you can recognize them.

On the flight to Ecuador, you may have to fill out information for immigration (inmigración) and customs (aduana). Make sure that you fill them out completely with your correct passport and visa information. You will use the church address as your home address. It is:

Arco Iglesia Cristiana
Av.10 de Agosto y Av. Loja
Cuenca, Ecuador
Phone Number: 072881330

If you land in Quito, you will be at an altitude of 9000 feet, so you may notice the need for a little oxygen as you walk. It is helpful to drink plenty of water to prevent a headache from the change in altitude.

After you land in Ecuador, you will pass through a series of checkpoints:

Immigration

First, you will pass through Immigration. There should be three lines: one for families with children, one for returning Ecuadorians (and citizens of other Andean nations), and one for other non-nationals. The line you should be in is the one with all the gringos in it. You will need your passport, visa document(s), and the immigration form (inmigración) that you filled out on the plane. When the immigration officials are filling out your paperwork, make sure they write the correct visa type on your passport and double check that they have entered your passport number correctly.

Baggage

After you go through immigration you will pick up your bags. The carousels are very small and the baggage handlers take the bags off the carousel and set them aside, so if you don't see them on the carousel, look to see if they have been set elsewhere. Once you have collected your bags you should head to Customs.

Customs and Baggage scan

Next, you will get in line for Customs and a baggage scan. Usually this is very fast, though if you have a lot of luggage, it can be difficult to get your bags on and off the scanner. You will need to hand the Customs form (aduana) to the Customs official. After going through Customs, you will go through glass doors where you will see many people waiting for their families or picking up people. You have two things to do here: 1) look for the person picking you up and 2) have your baggage claim tickets ready (in case someone checks that your luggage tags match the baggage claim tickets).

RETURNING HOME

Duties and Customs

When re-entering the US, you must declare all items purchased abroad. Typically, the first \$400-\$800 worth of goods is duty-free. If you purchased more than this amount in goods overseas, you will be asked to pay duty on the additional items. When traveling by air, you may be asked to fill out a Declaration Form provided by the airline. Pack items you will need to declare separately and have your sales slips for these items. For more information about US custom regulations and restricted items check <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/know-before-you-go/prohibited-and-restricted-items>.

Note: It is generally forbidden to use cell phones until you have cleared customs.

Reverse Culture Shock

Research has shown that coming home can be more unsettling than going abroad for some students. Returning students often find that they have changed a great deal, and it can be difficult to find people who truly seem to understand your new perspective. There is even a term for the feelings you may have when you get back home: reverse culture shock. It has many of the same symptoms of culture shock.

Remember that these feelings are normal and are part of your ongoing cross-cultural experience. If your friends and/or family have noticed a change in you, it is because you have changed, usually for the better. The tips below will help you prepare for your homecoming, both emotionally and practically.

While You Were Gone

Studying abroad can be so exciting and interesting that it is easy to forget that your friends and family stayed at home. While you are sharing your experiences abroad, ask your friends and family about their lives during your absence. Before you return home, think of the things your family and friends have told you about while you were abroad. How will you connect your experiences with their lives when you return? What will you say to them?

Arriving Home

In your first few days back, your excitement to be home and back in your comfort zone may be colored by jet lag. However, once you have readjusted, keep yourself busy. Most returned students agree that getting a job or volunteering in the community keeps them from daydreaming and missing the host country. Do not make any big decisions in the first few weeks following your return; what makes sense during these weeks can simply be your reactions to re-entry shock. For example, just because you were a pedestrian for a quarter of a year does not mean you should now sell your car.

Reconnecting with Friends and Family

Communicating with family and friends can be the most frustrating experience of re-entry shock. Everyone will be glad that you are home and want to hear about your experiences, but they may be intimidated by the independence you have had. Most will only want a short version of your time abroad, not a detailed description. Give them time and yourself time. In general, others find it difficult to relate to such a personal experience and may find it hard to share your excitement. The following tips may help:

- Talk to friends and family about the process of reverse culture shock, so they know what to expect.
- Organize your photos as soon as possible, so they are easy to share.
- Share your photos with your friends, but only if they ask, and don't talk too long. You may want to choose just one or two photos that show the highlights of your trip.
- When you share the photos with friends or family, set a specific date or time to talk about your trip. This way, you do not impose on their time, and they can focus their attention on your trip for a set time limit.
- Be open to questions and comments.
- Be sensitive to their feelings and try to relate your experiences to situations or events at home. ("This café we went to is a little like the diner down the street. Everyone ends up there in the evening.")
- Let your parents and loved ones know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you to grow by living, studying, and traveling abroad.
- Ask friends what they have been doing while you were gone and ask about local events.

Returning to Campus

Coming back to campus will be another change, and some students say that returning to classes was harder than returning to North American life in general. Talk to your advisor soon after you return about your experience and any possible changes to your career goals and coursework.

Program Evaluation

We are extremely interested in hearing about your experience abroad and learning how we can better prepare future participants. Therefore, the OCP asks each study abroad participant to complete a written program evaluation.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this guidebook has provided you with helpful information as you prepare academically, personally, spiritually, and physically for your semester abroad. While much of the information covered in the guidebook will be reviewed in the orientation meetings, please do not hesitate to let us know if you have questions regarding how to prepare for your trip.

We look forward to seeing you at the orientation meetings, and we are excited to see how you will change and grow through the whole study abroad process.

Updated 10/14/2023

