

IAESTE Internship Ecuador  
18.07-11.09.2022  
Universidad San Francisco de Quito

Arrival:

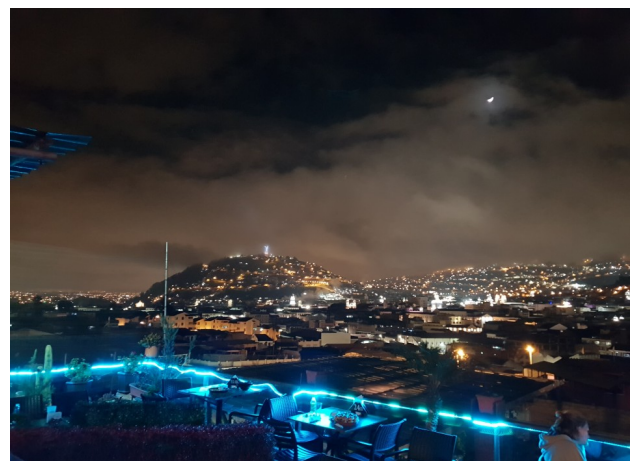
Before arriving, I didn't know much about the country and my life there. I knew the address of my host family, but since I couldn't find it on Google Maps, I had no idea in which kind of neighbourhood and how far from university I will live. Nevertheless, I didn't really worry about anything, because I had contact with the local committee over there. They seemed well organised and tried to help me with all my questions. Shortly before my trip started, I got the information that Ecuador just changed their migration laws and that I need to bring additional documents like an international criminal record, in case they want me to apply for a visa there. So, it was very stressful to organise these documents in that short period of time and I was afraid they won't be there in time. But luckily in the end it all worked out and nobody even wanted to see the documents. At the airport I was picked up by a driver who brought me to my host family.

Accommodation and host family:

The house of my host family was located in a suburb of Quito called Cumbayá and turned out to be only 15 minutes to walk from university. They lived in a quite big house with a garden together with two dogs and a cat. My host parents were an older couple who could only speak Spanish. Even though I speak a bit of Spanish, I had problems understanding them, because they were talking very fast and with a dialect. Nevertheless, it was not that bad, because their daughter, who visited a lot, was organising everything and she spoke very understandable Spanish and English as well. I lived there together with two other IAESTE interns from Austria which was quite cool, because it felt a lot more like home with people around you speaking the same language. We all had our own room with our own bathroom, but we spent a lot of time together and became really good friends. Together it was also easier to figure out what our host parents were trying to tell us and communication got better with the time. Our host parents were nice and happy to have us there. They drove us everywhere we needed to go, sometimes cooked for us and always cared about our well-being, so we felt very welcome. We also spent a lot of time with the family of their daughter. They showed us around Quito and told us where it's safe to go and where not. Many times they invited us over for traditional food or drinks and over one weekend they even took us on a big family trip to their house at the beach.

Life:

Quito in general is not the safest city. Especially in the centre the crime rate is quite high. Our host family always told us, to not go out alone especially at night and to better take Uber instead of a taxi because they are registered and tracked. So, at the beginning I was a bit afraid but with the time you get a feeling for the city and you normally feel quite safe. Of course, you always have to take care of your things and you should not walk in completely empty streets, but if you follow these rules, you can enjoy the historical buildings, beautiful parks and good food and it's definitely worth it!



Some parts of Ecuador are quite rich and good developed, but especially in smaller cities and when you get closer to the coast you see more poverty. Cumbayá is a comparatively wealthy and secure place to live. Standards there are similar to Germany, so it was no problem to walk around alone. Since we lived in the centre of Cumbayá, it only took us five minutes to get to all the bars and restaurants. So, we always had great possibilities to go out. Ecuadorians love to dance especially in so called “Salsotecas”, but the normal clubs are fun as well.

For me one of the best things was, that Quito is the highest capital city in the world. This means wherever you go to, you always have a stunning view of the surrounding valley, which I loved especially at night and miss a lot! The only negative thing about this is, that the city is very hilly and combined with the thin air you get out of breath easily when going up. It gets better with the time, but you never get completely used to it.

Living costs are also similar to Germany. Supermarkets even tend to be a bit more expensive. But in many shops around university, you get at least a student discount. At some touristic places they charge different prices for Ecuadorians and foreigners.

The best way to get around the city is by Uber/ taxi or bus. Buses are very cheap. Even though there are no schedules or line numbers it's very easy to catch one, because they come every minute. Usually, they let you get on and off the bus even when there is no official stop.

### Internship:

I did my internship in one of the food analysis labs of Universidad San Francisco de Quito. The campus was one of the most beautiful ones I have ever seen. In the centre you could find a lake with turtles living in it, surrounded by a big meadow where you could relax in the sun. Colourful buildings, beautiful sculptures and fountains were distributed all over the campus and you had fields for every kind of sport. The whole campus reminded a bit of Hogwarts. Not only because there are different houses in which you are divided as a student, but also because their mascot is a dragon that you can find everywhere. On the building of my lab a dragon was sitting that used to spit real fire. The university campus was connected by a bridge with a shopping mall, including a food court. But also on the campus itself you could find several restaurants and coffee shops.

I was working together with another IAESTE intern from Poland and a student from Ecuador. Our project was about the nutritional quality and functional potential of edible insects from the Amazon and Andean regions of Ecuador. This means, we got samples from different insects and places, which we should analyse

for their contents of substances like fat, cholesterol or polyphenols. I never worked in food science before, but our tasks were easy and it was interesting to get to know new methods.

The equipment of my laboratory was not as good as in Germany. Materials were limited, so we had to wash and reuse many of the things that would be normally thrown away here after a single use. Also, the capacity of the machines was not big enough to analyse all samples at once. So, we spent a lot of time waiting for machines to finish, but since there was the three of us, we always had a good time. The





professor who was supervising the project was super nice and relaxed. From time to time he came over to explain something or check and discuss the results, but most of the time we worked alone.

#### IAESTE activities:

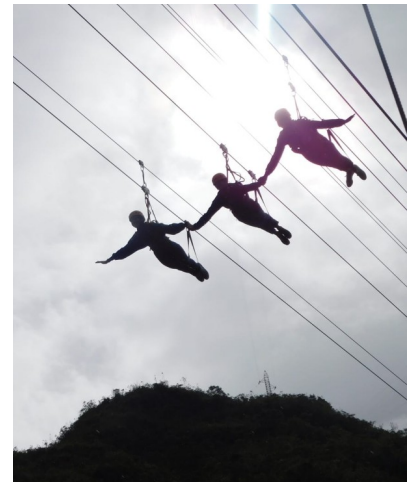
Definitely one of the best things were the organised activities by the local committee. They planned many daily or whole weekend trips or spontaneous get-togethers during the week. This gave us the opportunity to get to know all IAESTE interns that are currently there. It was so much fun to meet people from all over the world, compare your working experiences and make new friends. Some trips would have been a bit complicated to organise by ourselves, so the planned and guided trips were a great and safe option. Besides, it's more fun to travel as a group. There were always around ten people on the trips and we could do activities like hiking, surfing, whale watching,



paragliding, zip lining and kayaking at the most amazing places of Ecuador. I saw many

different cities, beaches, volcanos and the rainforest and I can't decide what was the best. On the weekends where no IAESTE trips were planned, my friends and I organised things on our own.

In general, the people from the local committee were very nice. They not only organised activities, but were always there for us and offered their help with any kind of problem we had to face.



#### Country, people and culture:

Ecuador is probably the most diverse country I have ever been to. It's crossed by the equator and just a few kilometres from Quito you can visit the "middle of the world" to see the equator line. Lengthwise the country can be divided into different zones with completely different landscapes and climates. You have the coastal lowlands in the west with beautiful beaches, the Andean highland with the volcanos in the middle and the Amazon region with the rainforest in the east. No matter what kind of vacation and activities you prefer, Ecuador offers you all at once. I experienced temperatures



around zero degrees on Cotopaxi, one of the highest volcanos of Ecuador, but also around thirty degrees at the coast.

In Quito the weather

changes constantly during the day. You can never rely on the weather forecast. No matter how hot and sunny the day starts, there is often some heavy rain in the afternoon. But normally during the day it's always around 23 °C. Nights are quite cold.





And then there is of course the Galapagos Islands. They are different from everything I have seen before. Nature and animals are incredible. It feels kind of unreal when you walk beside a seal and then almost trip over a group of the endemic iguanas that lie literally everywhere on the way. The islands are super expensive, but absolutely worth it. And when else do you get the chance to go there so easily?

Ecuadorians are super friendly people. Most of them are very open-minded towards tourists and help you to get along in their country. In general you recognise, that they have a slower and more relaxed lifestyle.

They are proud of their traditions and the typical food. There are numerous dishes you need to try like Ceviche, Bolón or Humitas. Most dishes consist of some kind of meat, corn or plantains.

Concerning the language, the Ecuadorian Spanish is not exactly like the Spanish you would speak in Spain. Sometimes, they use different words or grammar, but when you get used to it, you understand them quite good. Everybody tries to teach you some typical words. Some of them are Quechua, an indigenous language and people always smiled when you used those words.

#### Conclusion:

In the end I can say, I really enjoyed my stay and it was one of the best experiences of my life. It's adventurous and enriching and I would recommend it to everyone. I think you get to know a country and its people better when you actually live and work there, than on a short vacation. I wish I could have stayed longer, because I saw a lot, but still not everything. I'm happy I decided for Ecuador and I definitely want to come back!

