



USFQ | UNIVERSIDAD
SAN FRANCISCO
DE QUITO

Spanish to GO!

Diversity and Life in Ecuador



Program Overview

This immersive Spanish course combines basic or intermediate/advanced language instruction with hands-on cultural experiences in Ecuador. Through a balance of classroom sessions and experiential activities, students explore Latin American identity, history, politics, and everyday life while strengthening their Spanish proficiency.

Classes focus on integrating grammar with authentic cultural content, while afternoons and weekends are dedicated to cultural visits, field trips, workshops, and community-based experiences. The program emphasizes learning Spanish beyond the classroom, allowing students to engage directly with Ecuadorian culture, landscapes, traditions, and people.

Location:

The Andes

Ecuador

The Ecuadorean Andes are renowned for their breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and diverse ecosystems. This stunning mountain range stretches from the north to the south of Ecuador, featuring dramatic peaks, lush highland valleys, and vibrant indigenous communities. The region offers a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural richness, making it an ideal location for academic exchange and research collaborations.

Time Zone: GMT-5

Weather

Warm Season/ Rainy Season (Dec - May)

Average on land temperature: 60 - 70 °F

Rainfall: Frequent afternoon showers

Cold Season/ Dry Season (Jun - Nov)

Average on land temperature: 50 - 60 °F

Rainfall: Minimal, with clear skies

Chimborazo Volcano

The highest peak in Ecuador. This majestic mountain offers spectacular views and is famous for its proximity to the Earth's equatorial bulge. The area is ideal for trekking and exploring the unique Andean ecosystem.



Program Details

Diversity and Life in Ecuador

Program Duration: 3 weeks

Location: Quito, Ecuador

Program Dates: May 17 to June 5

Application Deadline: April 13th

Payment Deadline: April 20th

Credits: 3

Language: English-Spanish

Campus: Cumbayá (Quito) and Field Sites

Faculty Ratio: 1/10

Price per*
student

\$ 2 150

A minimum of 10 students is required to run this program. If the quota is not met, we will need to cancel the applications.

Program Includes:

- Administrative Fee
- USFQ representative Fee
- Services and activities as listed in the itinerary
- Accommodation in host families as listed in the itinerary with breakfast and dinner included
- Additional meals as listed in the itinerary
- Transportation for all activities, including airport transfers.
- Guides for cultural and community activities.
- Trips and expeditions related with the program
- Farewell dinner
- Conferences and academic component
- Guidance about protocols and assistance in case of emergency

Does NOT include:

- Health insurance (required)
- Personal expenses
- Gratuities
- Additional expenses (not detailed in the program)
- International flight



Program

Diversity and Life in Ecuador

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Develop a deep and experiential understanding of Latin American cultural diversity, with a special focus on Ecuador.
2. Integrate basic or intermediate/advanced Spanish grammatical structures through real, meaningful cultural content.
3. Strengthen linguistic skills in comprehension, production, interaction, and mediation in Spanish.
4. Connect classroom learning with real-world contexts through cultural visits and experiential activities.

COURSE TOPICS

- Cultural diversity in Latin America
- Geography of Latin America: regions, climates, countries, and identity
- Ecuadorian history:
 - Pre-Columbian cultures
 - Colonial period
 - Formation of nation-states
 - Political transformations and migration
- Politics in Latin America: movements and influential figures
- Traditions and customs: festivals, popular beliefs, religion, and alternative medicine
- Gastronomy: traditional Ecuadorian dishes
- Art and renowned Latin American figures
- Music: traditional folklore and modern rhythms

Language & Grammas Focus

Program Details

Basic level

- Saludar y presentarse
- Dar información personal
- Números, días y la hora
- Ser vs. estar
- La familia y describir personas
- La casa y ubicación
- Rutinas diarias
- Gustos y preferencias
- La ciudad y direcciones

Intermediate / Advanced level

- Language & Grammar Focus
- Uses of SER and ESTAR
- Past tenses: preterite, imperfect, and present perfect
- Comparatives (equality, superiority, inferiority)
- POR and PARA
- Future tense
- Direct and indirect object pronouns
- Conditional clauses with SI

Student Requirements

for Participation

Program Relevance:

- Enrollment is open to students from any major with basic to intermediate Spanish skills. The basic level requires proof of A1 proficiency, and the intermediate/advanced level requires A2 proficiency according to the Common European Framework.

Skills and Competencies:

- Ability to work in group settings and collaborate effectively.
- Strong communication and presentation skills.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Willingness to participate in outdoor activities.

Physical Fitness:

- A reasonable level of physical fitness for hiking and fieldwork
- Ability to adapt to varied climates and terrains.

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:

- Demonstrated cultural awareness and an open attitude.
- Ability to differentiate between cultural appropriation and responsible community-based tourism.

Safety and Preparedness:

- Commitment to following safety protocols.
- Willingness to engage in training related to risk management.

Documentation:

- Submission of a valid passport and health insurance documentation for international fieldwork.
- Signing of liability waivers



Program Details

Diversity and Life in Ecuador

EXPERIENTIAL & FIELD-BASED LEARNING: Throughout the program, students will participate in guided cultural and nature-based experiences designed to deepen their understanding of Ecuadorian society, history, and environment:

- Middle of the World – Intiñán Museum: Exploration of geography, cultural symbolism, and scientific perspectives of the equatorial line.
- Historic Center of Quito Tour (UNESCO World Heritage Site) – with lunch. Guided visit focused on colonial history, architecture, political processes, and cultural identity.
- Alabado Museum: Introduction to pre-Columbian cultures through archaeological artifacts and indigenous worldviews.
- Otavalo Experience – with lunch. Visit to the Jambi Huasi Indigenous Clinic, exploration of ancestral medicine practices, and guided visit to the local fruit market.
- Traditional Ecuadorian Cooking Class: Hands-on culinary experience exploring local ingredients, food traditions, and gastronomy.
- Salsa Class: Cultural immersion through music, rhythm, and movement as expressions of Latin American identity.
- Mindo Cloud Forest:
 - Waterfall hike (caminata de cascadas) focusing on biodiversity, conservation, and sustainable tourism.
 - Butterfly Garden (Mariposario) – with lunch
 - Chocolate Tasting – Quetzal: Introduction to Ecuadorian cacao, sustainable production, and cultural significance of chocolate.
- Papallacta Hot Springs & Cayambe-Coca Ecological Reserve Hike – with lunch. Experience of Andean highland ecosystems, geothermal activity, and protected natural areas.
- Cotopaxi National Park – with lunch. Visit to one of Ecuador’s most iconic national parks, exploring volcanology, high-altitude ecosystems, and cultural relationships with the land.



Middle of the World



Historic Center of Quito



Otavalo Fruit Market



Cotopaxi National Park



Papallacta & Cayambe Coca Reserve



Ecuadorian Cooking Class



Mindo Cloud Forest:



Chocolate Tasting

Diversity and Life in Ecuador

Itinerary **subject to change**

N.	DATE	ACTIVITY	TRANSPORTATION	LODGING STUD	MEALS
1	do 17-may	Arrival in Quito Host Families Pick-up		Host Families in Quito (H.F)	n/a
2	lu 18-may	USFQ Cumbaya Orientation & Campus Tour Welcome Lunch La Línea (weekday) Class time 3 h Service learning introduction		H.F	B,L,D
3	ma 19-may	Middle of the World Intiñán Museum Lunch independent Spanish class - time 3h	Included	H.F	B,D
4	mi 20-may	Class time 3 h Service Learning first day accompanied by staff from IAS		H.F	B,D
5	ju 21-may	Historic Center Tour with lunch Alabado museum	Included	H.F	B,L,D
6	vi 22-may	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
7	sá 23-may	Free day		H.F	B,D
8	do 24-may	Free day		H.F	B,D
9	lu 25-may	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
9	lu 25-may	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
10	ma 26-may	Otavalo (Jambi Huasi Clinic) with lunch and visit to the fruit market Return to Quito	Included	H.F	B,L,D
11	mi 27-may	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
12	ju 28-may	Spanish class - time 3h Cooking Class		H.F	B,D
13	vi 29-may	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
14	sá 30-may	Free day		H.F	B,D
15	do 31-may	Free day		H.F	B,D
16	lu 01-jun	Spanish class - time 3h Service Learning		H.F	B,D
17	ma 02-jun	Spanish class - time 3h Salsa Class Service learning wrap-up and closure		H.F	B,D
18	mi 03-jun	Mindo caminata cascadas Chocolate Tasting Quetzal + Lunch Mariposario	Included	H.F	B,L,D
19	ju 04-jun	Papallacta Hot Springs & Cayambe Coca Hike with lunch	Included	H.F	B,L,D
20	vi 05-jun	Cotopaxi National Park with lunch Return to Quito Farewell Dinner Quito Departure from Ecuador (Program Ends)	Included	H.F	B,L,D





For Further Information

Contact:

Mara Riera

International Programs Office

Email: mriera@usfq.edu.ec