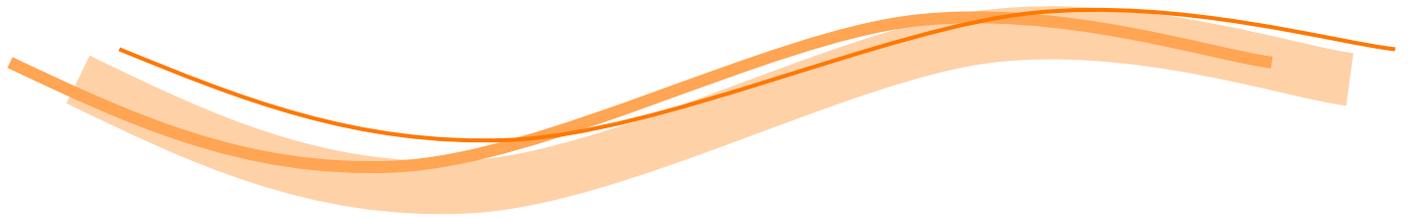




ECUADOR & SENIOR DISCOVERY TOURS





<p>SENIOR DISCOVERY TOURS</p>	<p>If you want to take the worry out of travel – an escorted group tour with Senior Discovery Tours is the way to go. They pick you up from home. Your Tour Manager is there with you at the airport as you leave. You won't have to worry about things like baggage, tips for maids, drivers or guides. You won't have to check in or check out of hotels or keep track of admission tickets or booking meals. You won't have to worry about what time you should arrive or leave or about finding your way in unknown places. You can just relax, enjoy the company of your fellow group travelers, and discover the world.</p> <p>Founded in 1975, Senior Discovery Tours is Canada's largest operator of escorted tours for people aged 55 plus who love to travel. With more than 100 different international tours and cruises across six continents to choose from, they are well known for combining outstanding service and value with discovering the world.</p> <p>For many travellers the chance to share the experience with like-minded companions is one of the highlights of the trip. With Senior Discovery Tours everyone starts the journey together from a single departure point. And friends made on the trip are likely to be fellow Canadians who may not live too far away from you.</p> <p>Since many of their clients are retired, Senior Discovery Tours tend to run tours in the shoulder season. They do not offer tours to Europe during the summer months when everyone is travelling with their families. A big part of their program is cruising – they offer many Cruise itineraries including both Ocean Cruises and River Cruises. Itineraries range from Alaska to Europe to the Southern Caribbean. For Ocean Cruises they work with Princess Cruises and for River Cruises they work with Amadeus Cruises and AMAWaterways – all high end leaders in their field.</p>
<p>TRAVEL WITH ME!</p>	<p>Exciting news in 2017! I'm delighted to announce that I will be personally hosting Senior Discovery Tours' "Ecuador Adventure" journeying around the unforgettable landscapes of Ecuador from 7 to 20 November, 2017. From the dizzying heights of the Andes to the steamy Amazonian jungle and on to the wild Pacific coast, it will be an amazing experience. The trip is 14 days, breakfast and all dinners included plus 4 lunches. Incredibly all-inclusive and great value at \$4797 from Toronto or Montreal. Space is limited so talk to the experts at Senior Discovery Tours now on 1-800-268-3492 or go the website at www.SeniorDiscoveryTours.ca</p>

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	<p>In November 2016 I hosted another incredible Senior Discovery Tours trip called “The Ancient Kingdoms of Southeast Asia”. We explored Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, a colourful area of great contrasts, from rural villages and French Colonial cities to modern skylines. We saw spectacular scenery, magnificent temples and ancient monuments. In all of the countries we visited, open-air markets and villages with their unique culture and traditions thrived along the rivers, surrounded by incredibly lush vegetation.</p> <p>Vietnam stretches from the misty mountains on the Chinese border to the lush tropical Mekong Delta. One of the most beautiful countries in Asia, the land remains relatively unspoiled and the people are extremely friendly, especially to visitors. The scenery, cuisine and history all made this country a fascinating and delightful destination.</p> <p>Laos is a mountainous and landlocked country that has long been isolated from the outside world, and because it remains untouched by the stress of modern demands we experienced a laid-back, simpler way of life. Laos offers pristine landscapes, century-old traditions and a rich cultural heritage. Much of its beauty lies in the peacefulness and warmth of the people who have lived much the same way for hundreds of years.</p> <p>Cambodia is another recently opened country of wondrous beauty. Cambodia offers architectural wonders of its own, the most famous being the many temples in and around the 12th century Angkor Wat. Once a huge city and the capital of Khmer Empire, it is, according to the Lonely Planet team, the greatest single sight anywhere in the world.</p> <p>All the details of this year’s fabulous trip can be found at the Senior Discovery Tours website at www.seniordiscoverytours.ca – it is personally recommended!</p>
<p>Why Senior Discovery Tours?</p>	<p>Senior Discovery Tours include many excursions for which you would have to pay extra when travelling with other tour companies. Flights, hotels, meals, baggage handling, meals, pre-arranged sightseeing and entertainment, all taxes, travel insurance and tipping are all taken care of. The price is guaranteed in Canadian dollars, and there are never any hidden or unexpected surcharges.</p> <p>Most meals are pre-arranged so you never have to worry about finding a restaurant in a strange place. On most tours, daily breakfast, dinner and sometimes even lunches are included in the price. In most Canadian cities, they will even pick you up and drop you off at home.</p>
<p>Range of Tours</p>	<p>Travel the world with Senior Discovery Tours! Take an exotic ocean cruise with Princess Cruises along the South American coast from Chile to Argentina. Visit the exciting European city of Barcelona and combine it with a luxury river cruise along the rivers of France. Spend autumn in Tuscany. Have a two centre holiday in California. It’s all possible, in the company of like-minded travelers, with Senior Discovery Tours.</p>

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	<p>Tours can be from around \$1600 per person for example, for a five day trip to New York – or if you are ticking things off your bucket list, then tours like an 18-day tour Ancient Kingdoms of South East Asia would be more like \$8500 per person.</p>
<p>New for 2017</p>	<p>There are 10 new tours this year for the Fall of 2017!</p> <p>Two new tours - “Across Canada by Rail” and “Grizzlies and Whales on Vancouver Island”- celebrate the nation’s 150th birthday this year.</p> <p>“Grizzlies and Whales on Vancouver Island”. September 6, 2017 - September 15, 2017: 10 Days. It is ranked as one of the world’s best islands to visit by most travel publications, and has been designated Canada’s Number One Destination by Trip Advisor. From Victoria – BC’s historic capital, to the rugged wilderness around Tofino on the west coast, “The Island” as it’s known locally has one of the world’s most diverse ecosystems: rainforests, marshes, meadows, beaches, mountains, oceans, rivers and lakes.</p> <p>There are some new walking and cycling tours as well... “Walking the Scottish Highlands” and “Cycling – England and Scotland” There are a couple of lovely walking tour itineraries in Europe in the Fall...</p> <p>Cycling from Prague to Dresden, August 30, 2017 - September 12, 2017: 14 Days On this exciting new bicycle tour, we’ll cycle between two European centers of cultural importance: Prague and Dresden. The route is rated Easy to Moderate, as it is mostly flat along dedicated bike trails and along river banks. There are a few short uphill ascents on the Prague to Melnik sections. Total cycling length is 240 km, averaging between 25 and 70 km per day over the 6 days of riding. We will be joined by experienced guides, who will provide commentary and detailed travel material enroute.</p> <p>Walking in Provence and the French Riviera, October 7, 2017 - October 20, 2017: 14 Days This walking tour in Southern France showcases the unspoiled parts of Provence and the French Riviera. Discover picturesque perched villages, spectacular scenery, fascinating history and gorgeous architecture while walking on beautiful marked trails. Each day there will be a choice of two gentle walks, ranging from 7 – 16 km with ascents of 200m – 700m, led by experienced hiking guides and complemented by a daily delicious selection of freshly prepared local cuisine and wines.</p>

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	<p>Some of the other new tours are: Himalayas – Bhutan and Northern India Cruise Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands (Cruise) Christmas Markets on the Danube (River Cruise) Wales and Liverpool Romantic Europe (Paris to Rome)</p>
Tour Directors	<p>Travellers always rave about the Tour Managers at Senior Discovery Tours. They attend to every detail, ensuring your trip runs smoothly. Their energetic approach to travel enlivens every tour, and their experience prepares them to gracefully and expertly handle unexpected situations. Their Tour Managers are also expert at creating a positive group dynamic so that everyone enjoys a great sense of camaraderie.</p>
Zoomers	<p>These are just some of the aspects make Senior Discovery Tours a great choice for 55 plus travelers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Tour Managers • Like minded fellow travellers • No worries – everything is taken care of • Huge choice of itineraries and destinations • All of the hotels used on the tours have been personally inspected by their tour planners to ensure quality and value. • Stay put and leisurely paced tours - Most of their multi-stop tours stay in each locale for at least two days, and their “stay-put” holidays allow you to settle into one or two hotels for the entire duration of the tour.
Singles	<p>Most of their tours offer a limited number of single accommodations so a single traveller can book a single room and pay a single supplement. If you prefer not to travel alone they can put you on their “Partner List” - but they do not arbitrarily match travellers up as room-mates. Potential partners are provide with each other’s phone number so they can contact each other and decide if they would like to share accommodations.</p>
Added Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home pick-up and drop-off (from most Canadian cities) - All airfare and all airport taxes - Carefully selected accommodation - All gratuities (for hotels, drivers, guides & cruise staff) - Most meals - Insurance for cancellation and health while outside Canada - Services of one of our cheerful experienced Tour Managers - All prices guaranteed in Canadian funds! - Your holiday literally begins and ends at your front door
Trip Showcase: Ecuador Adventure	<p>Here is the itinerary for the Ecuador Adventure tour that I will be hosting in November 2017:</p>

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Itinerary for the Ecuador Adventure

Day 1: Departure

We depart for Quito via Panama City with COPA Airlines. Upon arrival we transfer to our hotel.

Day 2: Quito

Our journey starts in Quito, the second highest capital city in the world. This exquisite city has the largest concentration of Spanish colonial architecture in South America, long recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will tour its colonial riches, including Compania Church (one of the richest in the Americas), Independence Square, the Government Palace and the Cathedral.

Our exploration of the mountainous heartland of Ecuador will take us to the Equator, from which the country was named. Here we visit the Monument to the Equator and we can stand with one foot in the Northern Hemisphere and one foot in the Southern Hemisphere. We also visit the Equatorial Museum which depicts the culture of the indigenous groups around the world who live on the Equator.

Day 3: Otavalo

Our first stop is the town of Calderón to visit the famous bread-dough handicrafts workshop. As we travel through the Andes we will have the opportunity to see the llamas and alpacas that have been so important to the local people over the centuries. They are strange and cute, in equal measure!

Then we proceed through changing landscapes to Imbabura Province and the city of Otavalo, to stroll through the famous colourful handicraft market. We visit a weaving workshop in Peguche then continue to Cotacachi to shop for fine leather goods.

Day 4: Baños

In a land of volcanoes, Cotopaxi is perhaps the most magnificent. If we are lucky with a clear day, we will see its summit snows which have already decreased by over 40% since the 1970's due to global climate change. The summit is a little under 6,000 metres

We first stop at the Salasca indigenous handicraft market before we continue down the waterfall route into the Amazon Basin. A hike down to the bottom of the Pailon del Diablo, or Devil's Caldron waterfall, and a cable car trip across the Zamora River canyon in an open basket are optional. Later we'll enjoy a panoramic tour in Baños.

Day 5: The Jungle

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We descend from the highlands to the tropical forest and arrive at our jungle lodge, Misahualli Lodge, for a 3-night stay. After settling in we will visit a native community located on the banks of the Napo River and learn about the life of the local people.

Day 6: The Jungle

Amazonia is a whole new world. Our native guide will take us through the jungle on trails to discover the flora and fauna of this beautiful place. We will meet the local people and learn about their lives along the Napo River. Our canoe trips will be a serene experience of this green world. Many of Ecuador's Amazonian plants, animals and insects were only discovered within the last few decades.

Day 7: The Jungle

At leisure to enjoy the facilities of our lodge and spend more time in the jungle with our nature guide, perhaps to watch the local exotic birds and/or visit a butterfly conservatory. At the lodge, we will have the opportunity to see indigenous dances and the preparation of chicha, a fermented maize beverage. We may also have the chance to see a blow gun demonstration and even try this for ourselves!

Day 8: Riobamba

We travel to the city of Riobamba, perched up in the Andes and surrounded by volcanoes. Our route will take us past Chimborazo Volcano. At 6,262 metres (20,548 feet), this is the country's highest mountain - a thousand feet higher than Kilimanjaro in Africa!

We will pass by Urbina where we can learn more about the llamas and the alpacas, and enjoy the view of the Chimborazo Volcano. We will drive along Ecuador's famous "Volcano Row" where snow-capped volcanoes seem to float above the local towns and countryside.

Riobamba is a highlands city where we stay the night and see the oldest church in Ecuador: Iglesia de Balbanera. Its origins date back to 1534 and it's the perfect 'foreground interest' for a photo of Chimborazo in the background!

Day 9: Rail to Cuenca via Ingapirca

The tour is called an adventure and this part of our journey justifies that title alone! We will take a single guage train through mountain scenery that looks impenetrable. It includes the "Devil's Nose" which is a switchback track on the cliffs of an Andean mountainside! Chris rode this in his youth and it's unmissable!

After the train journey we proceed to Cuenca via Ingapirca. Ingapirca are the largest Incan ruins in Ecuador and we will spend time there on this trip. The

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Incan Empire was truly massive, extending up from Chile through Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador as far north as Colombia. Here will see the Temple of the Sun, which is an example of the way the Incas did not use mortar, but fitted massive rocks together amazingly precisely.

Day 10: Cuenca

Our tour of Cuenca begins with a stroll through the cobbled streets of this beautiful World Cultural Heritage city. This colonial jewel has many picturesque squares, balconies, churches, an incredible pink marble cathedral and people wearing traditional colourful costumes - a feast for the photographer! We will enjoy a museum visit, a panoramic view of the city from Turi Hill and a visit to a factory that makes the traditional Ecuadorian hats - a symbol of the country.

Day 11: Cuenca

A day at leisure to explore Cuenca. The cobblestone streets are lined with beautiful colonial houses and scenic squares, so this city is ideal for strolling and exploring. Your Tour Manager will be on hand for suggestions. Cuenca is another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Santa Ana de los Ríos de Cuenca is set in a valley surrounded by the Andean mountains in the south of Ecuador. This inland colonial town, now the country's third city, was founded in 1557 by the Spanish king Charles V. Much of Cuenca's architecture dates from the 18th century and its cobblestone streets are a delight.

Day 12: Cuenca / El Cajas / Puerto Lopez

We drive to El Cajas National Park, world renowned for its 300 lakes. We'll stop at the highest point 4,167 metres (13,671 feet), to view the beautiful landscape before descending to sea level. You will be amazed by the rapid and contrasting change of landscape and weather as we pass from the highlands to the cloud forest and then through tropical banana plantations. We arrive in Puerto Lopez, a delightful oceanside community with a fishing community set amidst banana plantations for a 2-night stay.

Day 13: La Isla de la Plata / Puerto Lopez

This morning we depart for a private boat ride to La Isla de la Plata, known as "Galapagos' Little Sister", as some of the same bird species are found on this island (blue footed boobies, black mask boobies, frigates, Vermilion Flycatcher etc). On our guided walking tour we will spot some of these local birds and enjoy the breathtaking views. There will also be an opportunity to snorkel and enjoy the marine life and coral reefs surrounding the island.

I am most looking forward to seeing the pictured blue footed boobies, as well as the other amazing bird life on the island!

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	<p>Day 14: Home</p> <p><i>After breakfast we transfer to the airport for our flight back to Canada, via Panama City. All Western passengers, and those from Halifax, will overnight in Toronto and fly home the next day.</i></p>
<p>Europe</p>	<p>Senior Discovery Tours offer 57 tours in Europe, from Oktoberfest in Austria to Wales, England and the Isle of Man. They include hotspots like Croatia and Dubrovnik and multi country tours that take in the grand cities of Europe.</p> <p>There are also tours that are themed around events like Christmas or Tulip time in Holland and for those who like their trips on the water, there are luxury river cruises too.</p> <p>New for this year are the new rambling tours.</p> <p>Enjoy gentle walks up to 8 kms with ascents of 200-600 ft., led by an expert hiking guide, through impressive countryside and picturesque villages. Stay several nights in 2 or 3 different locations and take walks and tours from there. Here are some examples: Rambling through South Wales and the Cotswolds Rambling through the Yorkshire Dales and Shropshire</p>
<p>Further Afield</p>	<p>Senior Discovery Tours also features other exotic tours besides Ancient Kingdoms of Southeast Asia...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Other tours in Asia such as "Cruise & Tour in Myanmar". - Tours in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Bermuda. - Costa Rica, Belize, Panama and Mexico in Central America. - Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru in South America. - Other exotic locations from Iceland to New Zealand..... <p>As well as US tours from Florida to California and Canadian tours from the Rockies to Newfoundland and Labrador.</p>
<p>Payment</p>	<p>For any of their tours you pay a deposit of \$300 per person on booking, and the balance 60 days before departure.</p> <p>If you take the cancellation insurance that is part of the tour you can cancel for an insured reason up to 61 days before departure and pay only \$75.</p>
<p>Travel Tips</p>	<p>Senior Discovery Tours have put together some very useful travel tips for those considering a trip...</p> <p>Always try to travel light and pack only what you can carry.</p> <p>If you are having difficulty lifting your suitcase then you have probably packed too much.</p> <p>A good rule of thumb is to take half of what you think you will need.</p> <p>Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them.</p> <p>Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in your hotel safe.</p>

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	<p>When you have to carry them on your person, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch.</p> <p>Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets – they are easy targets for pickpockets.</p> <p>Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are better.</p> <p>One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.</p> <p>To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep any medication in their original labeled containers and bring copies of your prescriptions. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics you should bring a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.</p> <p>Never check any of the following: your toothbrush, prescription medications, your deodorant, your pj's.</p> <p>Pack a set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.</p> <p>Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside each piece of luggage, and wherever possible lock your luggage</p> <p>Consider obtaining a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas destination(s). If you have an unlocked cell phone you may wish to bring it along and purchase a local SIM card.</p> <p>Flights within North America almost never provide meals, so for these trips you may want to pack snacks in your carry-on luggage (in case you're stuck in a long security line and run out of time to buy anything in the departure lounge).</p> <p>The food selection on the aircraft is limited and they may not sell anything you find suitable to eat.</p> <p>It is also a good idea to leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency. And, most importantly, get plenty of rest the day/night before your departure.</p>
<p>Contacts</p>	<p>To find out more, or to book a tour, contact Senior Discovery Tours directly. By not going through a third party travel agent they believe it enables them to offer the best price possible. Friendly, experienced Travel Consultants are available to help you with all aspects of your booking and to help you choose the tour that's right for you.</p> <p>Website: seniordiscoverytours.ca</p> <p>Telephone: 1-800-268-3492</p> <p>Brochure: http://seniordiscoverytours.ca/contact-us/request-a-brochure/</p>

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<p>ECUADOR</p>	<p>Once part of the fascinating Incan Empire – modern Ecuador is a safe, democratic country. In the East, the green jungles of Amazonia extend over almost half the country. Snowy Andes Mountains make up the centre of Ecuador, while the western part comprises coastal lowlands by the Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Take a trip through the highlights of this gem of a South American country. There are so many wonderful sights, starting with the ancient Spanish Colonial city of Quito. High in the Andes, this is one of the most beautiful natural settings of any capital city in the world.</p> <p>By contrast, you can stay in a jungle lodge in Amazonia, with a visit to a native community located on the banks of the Napo River, learning about the life of the local people.</p> <p>For views with thrills, take a ride on the single gauge train that takes you through incredible mountain scenery via the “Devil’s Nose”.</p> <p>Perhaps end your trip in Puerto Lopez, a lovely seaside village on the Pacific Ocean, and take a boat ride to La Isla de la Plata, known as the “Galapagos’ Little Sister” for its amazing birdlife.</p> <p>Ecuador has it all!</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>In South America, Ecuador is bordered by Colombia on the north, Peru on the east and south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Ecuador also includes the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific, about 1,000 kilometres west of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>Ecuador has four main geographic regions:</p> <p>La Costa, or "the coast" The coastal region consists of the provinces to the West of the Andean range. It is the country's most fertile and productive land, and is the seat of the large banana plantations of the companies Dole and Chiquita. This region is also where most of Ecuador's rice crop is grown. The truly coastal provinces have active fisheries. The largest coastal city is Guayaquil.</p> <p>La Sierra, or "the highlands" The sierra consists of the Andean and Interandean highland provinces. This land contains most of Ecuador's volcanoes and all of its snow-capped peaks. Agriculture is focused on the traditional crops of potato, maize, and quinoa and the population is predominantly</p>

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	<p>Amerindian Kichua. The largest Sierran city is Quito.</p> <p>La Amazonía, also known as El Oriente, or "the east" The oriente consists of the Amazon jungle provinces. This region is primarily made up of the huge Amazon national parks and Amerindian untouchable zones, which are vast stretches of land set aside for the Amazon Amerindian tribes to continue living traditionally. The population is primarily mixed Amerindian Shuar, Huaorani and Kichua, although there are numerous tribes in the deep jungle which are little-contacted.</p> <p>La Región Insular is the region comprising the Galápagos Islands, some 1,000 kilometres west of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.</p>
Name	The word "ecuador" is Spanish language for "equator"; Ecuador lies astride the equator.
Population	<p>Ecuador's population is currently estimated at 16 million. Guayaquil has a population of 2.7 million and Quito is slightly smaller at 2.3 million.</p> <p>According to a 2015 genealogical DNA testing, the average Ecuadorian is estimated to be 53% Native American, 42% European, and 5% Sub-Saharan African overall.</p>
Language	Spanish is the official language and is spoken by a majority of the population, though 13 Amerindian languages are also recognized, including Quichua and Shuar.
Currency	The U.S. dollar became legal tender in Ecuador in 2000, which makes everything much simpler here! The current exchange rate as at April 2017 is 1 Canadian dollar equates to 75 cents US.
Tipping	This varies according to the circumstances. Taxi drivers do not expect tips, but you can round up the fare. Better restaurants add 12% tax and 10% service, but more local eateries do not. Guides would merit \$5 per day if they have done a good job.
Government	Ecuador is a democratic presidential republic. The new constitution of 2008 is the first in the world to recognize legally enforceable Rights of Nature, or ecosystem rights.
Documentation	Canadians need Passports, but no visa is required. An arrival card valid for 90 days is issued at the airport on arrival.
Time zone	Eastern Standard Time – there is no time difference for travellers from Toronto and Montreal – a real plus for an exotic trip!
Health	It is advisable to receive a typhoid vaccination, and possibly a yellow fever vaccination, depending on your specific area of travel. Outside the major cities and tourist areas, malaria can be a problem along the coast during the rainy season.
Safety tips	Ecuador is generally a pretty safe country. Petty theft can occur, but rarely. Employ common sense measures such as not wearing

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	expensive jewellery and you should be fine.
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CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>There is great variety in the climate, largely determined by altitude. It is mild year-round in the mountain valleys, with a humid subtropical climate in coastal areas and rainforest in lowlands. The Pacific coastal area has a tropical climate with a severe rainy season. The climate in the Andean highlands is temperate and relatively dry, and the Amazon basin on the eastern side of the mountains shares the climate of other rainforest zones.</p> <p>Because of its location at the equator, Ecuador experiences little variation in daylight hours during the course of a year. Both sunrise and sunset occur each day at the two six o'clock hours.</p>
Today's weather	Today in Quito: 17C sun and showers (8 April 2017)
Best time to visit	With such variable climates in the different regions, it's always a good time to visit Ecuador! Some of the Highland cities have a lovely springtime-all-year-round climate.

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	The Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito and the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport in Guayaquil are the two main entry airports. Guayaquil has a new air terminal, once considered the best in South America and Quito has built an entire new airport in Tababela which was inaugurated in February 2013, with Canadian assistance.
Cities	<p>Quito Quito, the capital of Ecuador stands at an altitude of 2,850 m. The historic center of Quito has one of the largest, least-altered and best-preserved historic centers in the Americas, and is undoubtedly one of the city's main tourist attractions. Quito, along with Kraków, were the first World Cultural Heritage Sites declared by UNESCO in 1978. The central square of Quito is located about 25 km south of the equator; the city itself extends to within about 1 km of zero latitude. A monument and museum marking the general location of the equator is known locally as "Mitad del Mundo" (the middle of the world).</p> <p>Ambato The central city of Ecuador. Special celebrations during Carnival time.</p> <p>Baños The adventure capital of Ecuador at the foot of an active volcano having small eruptions of ash and lava. Volcano Tungurahua. There are also many hot spring mineral baths.</p> <p>Cuenca</p>

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	<p>The third largest city in Ecuador and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.</p> <p>Guayaquil Largest city in the country and largest port city.</p> <p>Loja The oldest colonial city.</p> <p>Manta Fourth largest city in Ecuador. Fastest growing city in Ecuador. Home to the second largest port in Ecuador.</p> <p>Otavalo Small town only two hours north of the capital famous for its Saturday market of indigenous crafts and livestock.</p> <p>Ibarra Town of 100,000 inhabitants halfway between Quito and the northern border.</p> <p>Riobamba Starting point of the famous train ride down the Nariz del Diablo and gateway to Mount Chimborazo, Ecuador's highest peak.</p>
Distances	Ecuador is the smallest of the Andean South American countries (only Uruguay and the Guiana countries are smaller in all of South America), but distances can be deceptive, especially in the highlands. It is better to plan by journey time rather than by distance here! Quito to Guayaquil by bus for instance is approximately seven to eight hours.
Ferries	Most visitors to the Galapagos Islands take a cruise boat to visit multiple islands in the group – most are from three days to a week, but some are longer. Although there are no ferry services between the islands as such, it is possible to arrange boat trips between the main islands.
Trains	There are no international train services into Ecuador. The national railroad from Quito to Guayaquil (Via Lactacunga and Riobamba) is being rebuilt, but in the meantime, several sections are running for tourists. The most popular is the the Alausi to Nariz del Diablo section (this resumed service in 2011 after a 4.6 million dollar renovation).
Car Rental	Although major car rental companies are available in the major cities and airports, I do not recommend driving here. It is a simple matter to hire cars with drivers for reasonable prices everywhere, whether through your hotel or a tourist office. In cities, taxis are always plentiful and very cheap.
Buses	Intercity buses travel to almost everywhere in Ecuador. All the intercity

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	<p>bus routes and schedules are available online at www.LatinBus.com or www.andestransit.com . Many cities have a central bus terminal, known as the terminal terrestre, where it is possible to buy tickets from the various bus lines that serve the city. Long-distance buses typically cost from \$1 to \$2 per hour, depending on the distance and the type of service. Buses are frequent along major routes.</p> <p>Reservations or advance purchases usually aren't needed except during peak periods such as holidays. The bus rides themselves are often quite beautiful, through mountain views in the clouds. These altitude changes cause many of the same ear pressure problems which are associated with an airplane ride. The bus driver will stop along the way to board additional passengers. Many buses arrive at their destination with passengers standing in the aisle. There are a few first class buses, called "Ejecutivo", which cost a little more than the regular buses. They are generally more comfortable and safer.</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>There is a wide range of hotels from the international style in major cities at prices similar to North America, to simple, clean and cheap hostels. Ecuador is also home to an increasing number of Eco Lodges, including many renovated, traditional Haciendas.</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLE GROUPS</p>	
<p>Families</p>	<p>Take the family for a ride on the Teleferico in Quito. This is the world's second-highest cable car. It's located on the eastern flanks of the Pichincha Volcano which overlooks the whole city. It hoists visitors up to an amazing 4,000 meters (12,000 feet). On clear days, you can spot half-a-dozen volcanoes and spy the entire city below. You can also hike up from here to the Guagua Pichincha Volcano, which is active.</p>
<p>Romance</p>	<p>As a honeymoon destination, Ecuador has few equals. You can choose from a hacienda high in the Andes, an adventurous trip to Amazonia, or a beach holiday on the Pacific coast. Or combine all three!</p>
<p>Zoomers</p>	<p>The Galapagos Islands, Ecuador's Pacific island group to the west, regularly features on Zoomer Bucket Lists. A small size cruise ship journey to multiple islands is for many a once in a lifetime experience.</p>

<p>UNIQUES</p>	<p>Ecuador has the first constitution to recognize the rights of nature. The protection of the nation's biodiversity is an explicit national priority as stated in the National Plan of "Buen Vivir", or good living, Objective 4, "Guarantee the rights of nature", Policy 1: "Sustainably conserve and manage the natural heritage, including its land and marine biodiversity, which is considered a strategic sector".</p>
<p>Surprising</p>	<p>Quito, at an elevation of 9,350 feet (2,800 meters above sea level), is the highest official capital city in the world. La Paz in Bolivia and Lhasa in Tibet are higher, but neither is officially the capital of their countries.</p>

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<p>History</p>	<p>The tribes in the northern highlands of Ecuador formed the Kingdom of Quito around 1000. It was absorbed, by conquest and marriage, into the Inca Empire. Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro conquered the land in 1532, and throughout the 17th century a Spanish colony thrived by exploitation of the Indians. The first revolt against Spain occurred in 1809. In 1819, Ecuador joined Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama in a confederacy known as Greater Colombia.</p> <p>When Greater Colombia collapsed in 1830, Ecuador became independent. Revolts and dictatorships followed; it had 48 presidents during the first 131 years of the republic. Conservatives ruled until the revolution of 1895 ushered in nearly a half century of Radical Liberal rule, during which the church was disestablished and freedom of worship, speech, and press was introduced. Although it was under military rule in the 1970s, the country did not experience the violence and repression characteristic of other Latin American military regimes.</p>
<p>Recommended Reading</p>	<p>I recommend Lonely Planet's Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands for planning a trip to this country.</p>
<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Patricia Schultz has a clutch of picks in Ecuador:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuenca – highland colonial charm Galapagos Islands – evolutionary miracles above and under water El Oriente – exuberant world of biodiversity in Ecuador's Amazonia Otavalo – South America's most famous indigenous market Quito – Latin America's best-preserved centre
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>There are five UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Ecuador:</p> <p>Quito Quito, the capital of Ecuador, was founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city and stands at an altitude of 2,850 m. Despite the 1917 earthquake, the city has the best-preserved, least altered historic centre in Latin America. The monasteries of San Francisco and Santo Domingo, and the Church and Jesuit College of La Compañía, with their rich interiors, are pure examples of the 'Baroque school of Quito', which is a fusion of Spanish, Italian, Moorish, Flemish and indigenous art.</p> <p>Cuenca Santa Ana de los Ríos de Cuenca is set in a valley surrounded by the Andean mountains in the south of Ecuador. This inland colonial town (entroterra), now the country's third city, was founded in 1557 on the rigorous planning guidelines issued 30 years earlier by the Spanish king Charles V. Cuenca still observes the formal orthogonal town plan that it has respected for 400 years. One of the region's agricultural and administrative centres, it has been a melting pot for local and immigrant populations. Cuenca's architecture, much of which dates from the 18th century, was 'modernized' in the economic prosperity of the 19th</p>

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century as the city became a major exporter of quinine, straw hats and other products.

Galapagos

Situated in the Pacific Ocean some 1,000 km from the South American continent, these 19 islands and the surrounding marine reserve have been called a unique 'living museum and showcase of evolution'. Located at the confluence of three ocean currents, the Galápagos are a 'melting pot' of marine species. Ongoing seismic and volcanic activity reflects the processes that formed the islands. These processes, together with the extreme isolation of the islands, led to the development of unusual animal life – such as the land iguana, the giant tortoise and the many types of finch – that inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection following his visit in 1835.

Sangay National Park

With its outstanding natural beauty and two active volcanoes, the park illustrates the entire spectrum of ecosystems, ranging from tropical rainforests to glaciers, with striking contrasts between the snowcapped peaks and the forests of the plains. Its isolation has encouraged the survival of indigenous species such as the mountain tapir and the Andean condor.

Qhapaq Nan Andean Road System

This site is an extensive Inca communication, trade and defence network of roads covering 30,000 km. Constructed by the Incas over several centuries and partly based on pre-Inca infrastructure, this extraordinary network through one of the world's most extreme geographical terrains linked the snow-capped peaks of the Andes – at an altitude of more than 6,000 m – to the coast, running through hot rainforests, fertile valleys and absolute deserts. It reached its maximum expansion in the 15th century, when it spread across the length and breadth of the Andes. The Qhapac Ñan, Andean Road System includes 273 component sites spread over more than 6,000 km that were selected to highlight the social, political, architectural and engineering achievements of the network, along with its associated infrastructure for trade, accommodation and storage, as well as sites of religious significance.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	You don't come to Ecuador for the golf! Whilst there are a number of courses close to both Quito and Guayaquil, there is just too much else that is more unique to this country to spend your time on.
Fishing	Salinas, a town on the Pacific Coast of 35,000 people is a good base for

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	<p>sport fishing. Swordfish, sailfish, tuna, dorado and black marlin can be fished for off the coast of this community.</p>
Horse riding	<p>Green Horse Ranch, Quito. The Pululahua Crater is one of the most amazing places to ride, but chances are you will not find anything about it in your guidebook. Astrid, the owner of the ranch who moved to Ecuador from Germany about 15 years ago, will pick you up in Quito and bring you to the ranch (about 45 minute drive). Rides of various lengths are available and she has a wide variety of horses ready for novices and experts. Her and her staff are incredibly friendly and everything is included in the price.</p>
Hiking	<p>The opportunities for all kinds of hikes here – from leisurely wanders to serious multi day treks in stunning wilderness country – well, they are endless! For those with more modest ambitions, consider the trails from the top of the TeleferiQo in Quito which vary from a few minutes to the three hour hike to the summit of Rucu Pichincha at 4,680 metres above sea level. The Camino del Inca is a three day hike over 40 kms to Ingapirca, the greatest of the Incan ruins in Ecuador. It follows an ancient UNESCO-listed Incan road with stunning views of the surrounding sierra. Or for the truly ambitious: Cotopaxi! Only about one in two successfully reach the summit of this impressive volcano, but it remains one of the country's most popular adventure trips.</p>
Cycling	<p>Bicycle Ride the Ciclopaseo takes place every Sunday in Quito. 30 kilometres of roads running north-south through the city are completely closed to traffic. People cycle, run and blade the route. Up to 30,000 people take part. Bikes for rent are available throughout the route.</p> <p>Go Mountain Biking (BIKING Dutchman mountain biking tours), Foch E4-283 (corner of Amazonas, in La Mariscal). There are many outfits offering one- to multi-day mountain biking trips to the surrounding volcanoes, lakes, and valleys. Biking Dutchman is one of the oldest and most well-regarded. It was recently chosen by the National Geographic Traveller among the 101 "Best of Travel from the Region" in South America.</p>
Diving	<p>The Galapagos Islands are one of the world's great dive destinations. Sightings here include rays, dolphins, sharks, turtles, moray eels, seahorses, sealions, whales...and yes, even penguins. Because the Galapagos is the only place in the northern hemisphere where penguins can be found. This is not a place however to learn to dive – conditions are challenging with strong currents and cold waters. There are a number of dive centres on the islands and there is also the (expensive) option of a specific dive cruise.</p>

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	For those not venturing to the Galapagos, there are still diving opportunities to be had on the Pacific Coast. Puerto Lopez for instance has coral reef patches and a rich diversity of marine life, including rays, puffer fish angelfish, moray eels and sharks.
Other Activities	Ecuador has become justly popular in the last few years as a soft and not-so-soft adventure country. Visitors can choose from: Mountaineering White water rafting Surfing Mountain biking Canyoning Bungee jumping Ziplining and canopy walks

CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Quito</p> <p>Centro Cultural Metropolitano. Located right by the Presidential Palace (Palacio de Carondelet), this museum regularly holds exhibits by leading contemporary Ecuadorian and international artists. A must see if you go to the Old City.</p> <p>Centro Cultural Carlos Fuentes. A new cultural centre located in Av. 6 de Diciembre and Wilson, right in front of an Ecovía "La Mariscal" stop. Contains art galleries, cultural spaces and a great bookstore and coffeeshop.</p> <p>Centro de Arte Contemporaneo. The Centro de Arte Contemporaneo (CAC), located in the Old Town in Montevideo y Luis Avila streets., in an old refurbished building which used to be the old military hospital. It is a big museum with multiple shows and cultural events going on at once in its galleries, including concerts and performances. It is one of Quito's main contemporary cultural hotspots. The building also has a beautiful view of the city and surrounding valleys.</p> <p>Arte Actual FLACSO. Contemporary Art space in the north of the city, which is managed by FLACSO (a social sciences university). Features regular curated exhibitions of local and Latin American contemporary art.</p>
Music	The musical heritage of Ecuador is surprisingly rich – surprising to North Americans, because our knowledge often ends at a few tunes on the Andean panpipes. Think Simon & Garfunkel's El Condor Pasa. This style is called Musica Folklorica and has an added haunting authenticity when heard in the context of the high Andean mountain lands. The

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	<p>rondador is the country's national musical instrument and is a single row of reed pipes.</p> <p>But the most popular national music is the Pasillo, which is rooted in the Waltz and dates back to the 19th century. This generally features poignant songs and melancholic melodies.</p> <p>In the northwest of the country, Afro-Ecuadorian music is popular and very distinct from elsewhere in the country. The dominant instrument here is the marimba.</p>
<p>Film</p>	<p>Que Tan Lejos (2006) is a road movie about two women through the Andean Highlands.</p> <p>Ratas, Ratones, Rateros (1999) follows two petty thieves through the more urban background of Guayaquil and Quito.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Quito Museums</p> <p>Museo del Banco Central. Located across from the Casa de la Cultura and adjacent to the Parque El Ejido, you'll find perhaps Ecuador's most renowned museum with different rooms, devoted to pre-Columbian, Colonial and gold works of art, among other topics. Some of the famous pieces include whistle bottles shaped like animals, elaborate gold headdresses and re-created miniature scenes of life along the Amazon. The museum is well-organized, and it takes about 3-4 hours to see everything. Entrance \$2. Guides who speak several different languages including English, are available for a small fee.</p> <p>Casa de la Cultura has galleries featuring local Ecuadorian art, as well as hosting theatre, cinema, and dance performances. The building also is home to a big auditorium where concerts from a variety of local and international artists are performed. Depending on what you do, the entrance can range from free access to several dollars. The price for the concerts depend on the artist.</p> <p>Museo de la Ciudad. The Museo de la Ciudad is in the Old Town, on Garcia Moreno street, directly opposite the Carmen Alto monastery. A lovely museum with two floors encircling two quiet courtyards, the "Museo de la Ciudad" provides more of a social history of Ecuador than other museums in Quito. Re-enacted scenes from daily life of Ecuador's citizens through the years include a hearth scene from a 16th-century home, a battle scene against the Spanish, and illustrations of the building of Iglesia de San Francisco church.</p> <p>Museo de Arte Colonial. This museum features a permanent exhibit of Spanish colonial furniture and a vast collection of sculptures and paintings from the School of Quito from the 16th, 17th and 18th</p>

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	<p>centuries.</p> <p>Casa del Alabado, Calle Cuenca N1-41 (Between the Plazas of San Francisco and Santa Clara). The Museum of Precolombian Art, Casa del Alabado, is a nonprofit cultural institution supported by individuals and private companies. The museum's sole purpose is the preservation Pre-Colombian works of art. It is located in down town Quito. The museum is hosted in a Spanish residence built in 1671.</p>
Festivals	<p>Carnaval Taking place in February each year, this rambunctious and joyful celebration is a great time to be in Ecuador. There are dances, parades and...beware..waterfights!</p> <p>Semana Santa This shows the religious side of the Ecuadorian people. It takes place the place before Easter Sunday and is celebrated with religious processions throughout the country. Perhaps the most visually stunning of such processions takes place in Quito where the penitents wear bright purple robes.</p> <p>Inti Raymi This celebration fuses indigenous rites with Catholic symbolism to create a uniquely Andean festival. It takes place each year in June and the place to experience this at its most vibrant is Otavalo, a little north of Quito.</p> <p>Fiestas de Quito This is the city's biggest explosion of jollity on the streets of the capital. There are bullfights, street dances, parade and music everywhere. It takes place in the first week of December.</p>

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>The Pacific Ocean beaches in Ecuador are amazing, including: Salinas, Bahia de Caraquez, Manta, Crucita, San Jacinto, and San Clemente. They offer very inexpensive hotel accommodations, great food and friendly people.</p> <p>Los Frailes, near Puerto Lopez, is perhaps the most celebrated of Ecuador's beaches. It has sparkling white sands and there is excellent hiking as wel.</p>
Nature	<p>Ecuador is one of seventeen megadiverse countries in the world according to Conservation International, and it has the most biodiversity per square kilometre of any nation.</p> <p>Ecuador has 1,600 bird species (15% of the world's known bird species) in the continental area and 38 more endemic in the Galápagos. In</p>

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	<p>addition to over 16,000 species of plants, the country has 106 endemic reptiles, 138 endemic amphibians, and 6,000 species of butterfly. The Galápagos Islands are well known as a region of distinct fauna, famous as the place of birth of Darwin's Theory of Evolution and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.</p> <p>About 19% of Ecuador's land area is in a protected area. Current protected areas include 11 national parks, 10 wildlife refuges, 9 ecological reserves, and other areas.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Ecuador has thirty plus protected parks and wildernesses, including nine with the designation of National Parks. Fully 18% of the country is protected. Some of the most beautiful are:</p> <p>Parque Nacional Cotopaxi – site of the famous volcano and sightings of the Andean Condor.</p> <p>Podocarpus National Park – high Andes tundra (paramo) and cloud forest, home of the spectacle bear, tapir and bird watching.</p> <p>Sangay National Park – UNESCO World Heritage site: volcanoes, paramo, lowland and cloud forest and sightings of puma and ocelo</p> <p>Cajas National Park – a spectacular expanse of lakes and mountains and high paramo.</p> <p>Galapagos National Park – volcanic island archipelago with a remote and unique wildlife that was the inspiration to Darwin and his Origin of Species.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Parque La Carolina is one of Quito's most frequented parks. On weekends, thousands of locals go to have picnics, play some sports, and overall just enjoy what the park has to offer. It has a lot of sport and recreation areas, as well as a running track, and several bike routes. Food carts with local eats abound. The southern portion of the park features a beautiful artificial lake with several islands, as well as a skate park. The centre of the Park is home to the Botanical Garden, as well as a youth cultural and scientific institution called Mundo Juvenil.</p> <p>Quito Botanical Gardens. The Jardin Botanico is located on the southwest side of Parque La Carolina. All of Ecuador's ecosystems is represented with a wide variety of flora. You can take a guided tour or just wander. The highlights for many people are the two glassed-in orchidariums.</p> <p>Parque Metropolitano del Sur. Quito's biggest park, at 750 hectares, located in the South of the city, right beside Avenida Simon Bolivar. Lots</p>

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	<p>of recreational facilities, bike and ecological trekking routes. It is also home to a part of the ancient "Qapac Ñan" or "Camino del Inca (Inca Trail) route.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>There is so much history here in Ecuador – and it doesn't begin with the colonial period in the 1500's.</p> <p>The ancient site of Intipirca is one of the most impressive Incan sites anywhere in South America – including Peru. Its semi-intact temple and grazing llamas set at 3,230 metres up in the Andes is a photographer's dream. The site was originally occupied by a pre-Incan people and then taken over by the Incas in the 1400's before the arrival of the Spanish. They used it as a military stronghold and an impressive one it must have been in its day.</p> <p>The Spanish Colonial heritage is stronger in this country than anywhere else in South America. Two cities are so remarkable that their colonial assemblage of churches, fortifications and plazas have been recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites: Cuenca and Quito. But Loja and Riobamba are equally as gorgeous in my view.</p> <p>Conjunto Monumental San Francisco, Quito. This church dates back from the 1570s and was devoted to San Francis, since the Franciscan order was the first to settle in the area. Hence Quito's official name: San Francisco de Quito. The church contains masterpieces of syncretic art, including the famous "Virgin of Quito" by Legarda. The sculpture represents a winged virgin stepping on the devil's head (in the form of a serpent) and is displayed in the main altar. The virgin would later be inaccurately replicated on top of Panecillo hill. The museum next door to the church is arranged through the monastic compound and includes access to the choir.</p> <p>Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesus, Quito. In the Old City, this church is regarded by many as the most beautiful in the Americas. Partially destroyed by fire, it was restored with assistance from the Getty Foundation and other benefactors. It is simply stunning.</p>

<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>There are several fair-trade shops in Quito which promise to pay the craftspeople fairly for their products. The ones at the Tianguéz (Plaza San Francisco), El Quinde (Plaza Grande), and Museo Mindalae are all very good.</p> <p>There are lots of artisans working on unique crafts in the capital. These include guitar-makers, candle makers, tanners and leather-workers, silversmiths, ceramicists and woodcarvers. You can find them at their workshops, published in a guide by the Visitors' Bureau.</p> <p>Ecuador's indigenous peoples include many highly skilled weavers.</p>

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	<p>Almost everyone who goes to Ecuador sooner or later purchases a sweater, scarf or tapestry. In Quito vendors are found along the sidewalks of more touristy neighbourhoods. You should also consider travelling directly to some of the artisan markets, such as the famous one in Otavalo. If you haven't got time for Otavalo, you can find virtually the same gear at the market on Jorge Washington and Juan Leon Mera in the Mariscal district. The Mariscal is replete with dozens of souvenir, craft and T-shirt stores which make shopping for a gift very easy.</p>
Markets	<p>You have come to the perfect country for markets! Best advice – bring an empty suitcase, because time spent in Ecuador's markets will be rewarded with all kinds of remarkable crafts: panpipes, weavings alpaca and llama clothes, woven bags and pottery. Here are some suggestions:</p> <p>Otavalo – Ecuador's biggest and best...go on a Saturday when it is at its most vibrant.</p> <p>Saquisili – It's Thursday morning market is famous and the locals throng there so it's great for photos; the variety of goods is amazing</p> <p>Mercado Artesanal La Mariscal – This is Quito's most interesting market with a good selection of crafts from all over Ecuador</p>
Nightlife	<p>Nightlife in Ecuador varies widely from large cities of Quito and Guayaquil to the smaller towns of Banos and Montanita. Generally speaking, the larger cities which feature modern bars and discotecas will cost you more than grabbing a beer in the Amazon, mountains, or beach.</p> <p>Banos has an excellent reputation for partying, but the small surf and hippie hangout of Montanita on the Pacific Coast is the party capital of the country.</p> <p>During the Summer, it's common for Ecuadorians from around the country to vacation in Montanita. There's a whole contingent of young people from nearby Guayaquil who would prefer to escape the city for the beach every weekend. Also, the surf town's casual vibe and relaxed policies on marijuana attract lots of other South Americans from Argentina, Chile, and Colombia, as well as foreigners from around the world.</p> <p>Montanita is especially well-known for being a crazy (and crowded) place to celebrate New Year's Eve.</p>

CUISINE	
Food	Locro de papa is a famous Ecuadorian soup with avocados, potatoes and cheese.

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	<p>Ceviche is a common dish found on the coast. It is a cold seafood cocktail that is usually served with "chifles," thin fried plantains, and popcorn.</p> <p>Encebollado is a hearty fish soup with yuca, also found on the coast: A tomato-fish soup filled with chunks of yucca, marinated vegetables with "chifles" thrown in for added crunch.</p> <p>Empanadas are also a common local food that are usually consumed as snacks in the afternoon. The most common varieties of this filled pastry are cheese and/or chicken.</p> <p>Cuy - The cuy, or guinea pig, is a rodent mammal native of the South American Andes. It is indispensable in popular parties and it's part of Ecuador's traditional cuisine. Guinea pigs were raised in the kitchens of farmers and indigenous people of the Ecuadorian Sierra; today there are specialized farms producing this animal. Its low fat content makes it a very appetizing and healthy dish that is served with potatoes, hominy and chili pepper. If you go to the city of Cuenca it's a must to stop and try this traditional cuisine.</p>
Drink	<p>Bottled water is very common and is safe to drink; it comes con gas (carbonated) and sin gas (non-carbonated). Water from the tap is unsafe to drink.</p> <p>Coffee is widely available in cafes and restaurants, and also sold in bean form. Tea is also common, usually with a good selection including herbal.</p> <p>Fruit juice is plentiful and good, and you will often have many options: piña (pineapple), mora (blackberry), maracuyá (passion fruit), naranja (orange), sandía (watermelon), naranjilla (a jungle fruit), melon, taxo, guanabana, guava, etc. If you'd like it made with milk, sort of like a less-frozen milkshake, ask for a batida.</p> <p>Aguardiente, often made from fermented sugar cane, is the local firewater. If possible, have some ground freshly into your cup from the sugar cane.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Some suggestions for eating well in Quito :</p> <p>Cafetina, Valladolid N 24-353 y Vizcaya (La Floresta neighborhood, part of Ocho y Medio cinema). Nice restaurant, specializes in variety of local dishes like the traditional "locro de queso con aguante" (cheese soup with advocado). Great ambience and staff edit</p> <p>Sakti, Calle Carrion (1/2 a block east of Av. Amazonas). Vegetarian restaurant with \$3 lunch specials.</p> <p>Sangu Green Food, Av. Amazonas N22-19 (a few doors north of Calle Carrion). 1/2 the menu is vegetarian. A great selection of pastas, salads, and wraps. Here you can enjoy a glass of wine or beer with your</p>

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	<p>meal.</p> <p>Pim's. A Ecuadorian Franchise. They have 4 locals, Panecillo, Cumbaya, Itchimbia and Isabel La Catolica (next to the Swissotel).</p> <p>Restaurant Techo del Mundo (Restaurante El Techo del Mundo), Av. González Suárez N27 142 (In the 7th floor of Hotel Quito). Luxurious restaurant with a spectacular view located in the 5 stars hotel "Hotel Quito", international and Ecuadorian cuisine.</p> <p>El Capuleto -Italian. Av. Eloy Alfaro y 6 de Diciembre. You can enjoy a fine Italian meal in a quiet space... but right in the middle of the city. The home made pizza and the capuccino are excellent.</p> <p>Tibidabo - International cuisine. Attentive service in a comfortable, unpretentious atmosphere. General Salazar 934 y 12 de Octubre. Reservations recommended.</p> <p>Restaurante Las Redes - Seafood. Moderate. Popular with the locals; well known for ceviche.</p> <p>Ille de France - French. Expensive and excellent. Formal attire. Reina Victoria 1747.</p> <p>El Nispero, Valladolid N24-438 y Cordero, tel. 222 6398. Fine Ecuadorian cuisine in an elegant atmosphere. Moderate. Business casual. Reservations recommended.</p> <p>Cebiches de la Rumiñahui. Ceviches are its specialty. Reasonable prices for excellent cebiche. Popular with locals. Real Audiencia N59-121 La Mariscal.</p>
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