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1. Geographical location

The capital of the province of Azuay finds itself in the sierra of the Andes in the Austro or southern region of Ecuador. Cuenca lies 2,538 meters above sea level and is surrounded by the four rivers of - Tomebamba, Yanuncay, Machangara and Tarqui. The city also surrounds itself with Andes mountain range and enjoys a subtropical highland climate. The average temperature throughout the year ranges from 21°C-14°C.



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2. Neighbouring cities/countries

The City Finds Itself Just 129kms Away From Guayaquil, Followed By Santo Domingo At 293kms, 301kms To Quito, 316kms To Piura And 443Kms To Chiclayo. Ecuador Is Also Neighbours With Peru And Colombia.



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3. Significance

A laidback colonial charm – Ecuador's second most important city, Cuenca is a beautiful colonial town that till date wanders around between its clean streets, laid-back culture and rich history. The city is the main hub of many craft traditions that includes metalwork, ceramics and the ever popular Panama hat, however for the real taste do find yourself at the nearby indigenous village to learn more about these handicrafts. Cuenca has been embarked upon by the Canari people followed by the Inca reign and finally the Spanish rule, of which all of three have left their marks in the cobblestone streets and the beautiful architecture that the city boasts of today. The third largest city in the country, Cuenca is home to several outstanding examples of architecture like La Concepción convent and El Carmen de la Asunción church along with numerous other excellent pieces of architecture that will swoon you away. Cuenca is the city of choice for those people who'd dream of living smack in the middle of Paris, Barcelona, or Sienna within walking distance of historical, beautiful architecture, culture, and food, no wonder in the recent year it has become a hot spot for expatriates and retirees settling down to live.

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4. History

The city's history being long before the arrival of both Incan and Spanish. The city that was originally a Canari settlement called Guapondeleg is believed to have been found around 500 AD. Guapondeleg meaning 'Land as big as heaven'. Less than half a century before the conquistadors landed, the Inca community conquered the Canari and occupied Guapondeleg and the surrounding area. Shortly after the defeat of the Canaro, the Inca commander ordered the construction of this city, renaming Guapondeleg to Pumapungo. However the Inca rule ended by the 15th century, giving birth to the Spanish settlement that was founded in the year 1557 by Gil Ramirez Davalos, an explorer. The city of Cuenca was founded decades after other major Spanish settlements. However the city after the Spanish control only grew and saw new architectural buildings, roads and many important institutions as such. The city achieved its independence on 3rd November 1920 and became the capital of one of the 3 provinces that made the nascent republic. Today the city stands proudly boasting of all the three cultures that lay their hands upon the city – Canari, Incan and the Spanish.

5. Cultural identity

Ecuador's rich history and diverse geography has definitely built up the cultural identities that extends its arm along Pacific coastlands, Andean mountainscapes and extending through the lush vegetation of the Amazon rainforest. A multi-ethnic country dealing with African and European communities, Ecuadorians are bustling and mestizo, a blend of Spanish and indigenous ancestry. The country's many indigenous groups have all contributed to Ecuadorian culture as it stands today. From the rich and distinctive food traditions to customs for celebrating various holidays and religious festivities, Ecuador's culture is a pleasure to explore. Boasting of many diverse indigenous groups, Pre-Columbian influence is seen around in every part of the country, whether it is the architecture, language or customs and traditions. There is no one food that is especially Ecuadorian, as cuisine varies from region to region of the country, however there are certain dishes that are world class. From Patacones, seco de chivo, llapingachos and fancesca to ceviche and encebollado, these are some dishes that you will bump into when travelling the country. With Spanish as a dominating language, the country is widely acknowledged for its music scene that brings out many influences together. Albazo, Pasacalle, Tonada, Capiacha, Bomba, Incaico and Rockola and some of the excellent examples of the music scene along with Sanjuanito ruling the dancer affair. The culture of the city is captivating and fascinating. The city's culture can be seen in its many architectural buildings and local customs that still prevail from centuries. Ambato is known for the festival of fruits and flowers that commemorates the anniversary of the earthquake that ruined the city. The famously traditional Cuencanos continue a proud intellectual tradition that has produced more notable writers, poets, artists, and philosophers than anywhere else in Ecuador. Cuenca culture and history are thoroughly represented in the city's many museums. Those seeking culture in Cuenca by day can choose from a variety of churches and colonial plazas. When you step into the city you can feel the living culture and the spirit on its streets. The soul of Cuenca, is that of a people identified with the artistic and cultural, so their crafts are the reflection and reference for the city has been declared a Cultural Heritage. When you walk the streets of the city today, you will notice that Modernization

has not taken away the distinct local flavours and roots of the country making the culture and traditions of the city alive till date!



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6. Natural resources

The city is home to Cajas National Park that is located in the highlands of Ecuador. The park was declared a national park in the year 1996 and is home to paper tree forests along with other interesting Flora. One can also spot a wide variety of wildlife in this park ranging from foxes, pacas, bears, opossums, pumas, skunks etc. The Ecuador land is rich in petroleum, vegetables, flowers, fruits, timber and hydropower.



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7. Key site seeing places (paid and free)

7.1. Paid

7.1.1. Museo de las Culturas Aborígenes

A cultural space with great archaeological value, Museo de las Culturas Aborígenes features over 5000 archaeological relics, artefacts and objects that represent more than 20 pre-Hispanic indigenous cultures of Ecuador dating back to around 15,000 years ago. Dig deep into the history with the informative guided tour touching each and every topic about the Incas and their equipment's as you explore one of those rare gems in the city. Discover the secret treasure of paintings and crafts of the colonial period and learn more about the different cultures and expressions that marked the history and lifestyle of various aboriginal civilizations settled in the country.

Address : Calle Larga, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.9026539, -79.00230879999998

Contact : +593 72 839 181

Website : <http://museoculturasaborigenes.com/>

Nearest Public Transport : Remigio Crespo y Remigio Tamariz Bus Station

Entry Fee : Adult: \$4, Students: \$2, Children: \$1.

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Friday 09:00hrs-18:00hrs, Saturday 09:00hrs-13:30hrs

Time Required : 2

Expected Wait Time : 10-15 minutes

Buy Ticket : Yes

7.1.2. El Sagrario

A whitewashed architectural bastion snuggled in the park across from new cathedral, El Sagrario or the old cathedral was constructed in 1157, the same year the city of Cuenca was established. Being the oldest building of the city, this cathedral holds much historical significance and was used for La Condamine's expedition in 1739 where it's towers served as a triangular point to measure the shape of the earth. Walk through the golden doors of this European Renaissance structure and be fascinated by 15th and 16th century paintings displayed in the

main atrium of the old chapel that today serves as a religious museum and a recital hall.

Address : Parque Calderón, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010104

Location : -2.8978053, -79.00384159999999

Nearest Public Transport : San Blas Bus Station

Entry Fee : Adult: \$2, Child: \$1

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Friday 9:00hrs-13:00hrs & 14:00hrs-16:00hrs;
Saturday-Sunday 10:00hrs-13:00hrs

Time Required : 1

Expected Wait Time : 10-15 minutes

Buy Ticket : No

7.1.3. Museo del Monasterio de la Conceptas

Get a glimpse into the old customs of the cloistered nuns who settled at the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception almost 100 years back. Museo del Monasterio de las Conceptas, a religious museum founded in 1599 offers you a peek into various topics like the history and daily routine of the Monastery, intriguing facts about the constructions and more through its exhibits. Explore the museum and stumble upon the equipment's and dioramas of their stark cells along with some religious artworks.

Address : Hermano Miguel, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8965677, -79.00165770000001

Contact : +593 7-283-0625

Website : <http://www.museodelasconceptas.org.ec/>

Nearest Public Transport : Republica Bus Station

Entry Fee : Adults: \$3.50; Senior Citizens: \$2.50 Students: \$1.50.

Open & Close Timing : Tuesday-Friday 09:00hrs-18:30hrs, Saturday
10:00hrs-13:00hrs

Time Required : 1.5

Expected Wait Time : 5-10 minutes

Buy Ticket : Yes

7.1.4. Catedral de la Inmaculada Concepción

Also referred to as the new cathedral by the locals, the construction of this beautiful cathedral began in 1882. Featuring magnificent domes made up of sky-blue Czech tiles that is visible from every nook and cranny of the city, the structure of this new cathedral is complemented by several styles including the roman style along with Gothic architecture in the three rosettes and embellished with short bell towers. Find your way here to not only adore the architecture but also to seek some peace in the midst of the chaos.

Address : Padre Aguirre, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.897389, -79.00534429999999

Contact : +593 98 333 5238

Nearest Public Transport : Remigio Crespo y Remigio Tamariz Bus Station

Entry Fee : \$0.50

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Friday 08:00hrs-19:00hrs

Time Required : 1

Expected Wait Time : 15-20 minutes

Buy Ticket : Yes

7.1.5. El Cajas National Park

Located in the highlands of Ecuador, El Cajas National Park is an unparalleled gem of nature right on the doorstep of Cuenca. The rocky landscapes, the rolling hills, elevated cloud forests and magnificent glacier-fed lakes and ponds of the park makes it a paradisaical playground for the adventure enthusiasts. Declared a national park in 1996, this phenomenal park was considered to be a sacred place of Canari people who came here to worship the moon before the Incans conquered the region. Explore the park and gaze at the paper tree forests that provide shade to a wide variety of native wildlife including white-tailed deer, foxes, pacas, Andean gulls, bears, opossums, pumas, skunks, Andean condor, cougar and more. Follow the Incan trails or hike across the park to discover the mysterious side of the jungle and get lost into the beautiful scenery that greets you at this verdant oasis.

Address : Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8487368, -79.253760899999

Contact : +52 1 222 660 7111

Website : <http://www.parque-nacional-cajas.org/index.html>

Nearest Public Transport : Terminal Terrestre Cuenca Bus Station (Not Recommended)

Entry Fee : Day Entry: \$10, Night Entry: \$4.

Time Required : 6

Expected Wait Time : 20 minutes

Buy Ticket : Yes

7.1.6. Prohibido Centro Cultural

Prohibido Museo de Arte Extremo has got everything. This cultural hub and up-and-coming area is home to a museum, a restaurant, a bar and a nightclub. Also accompanied is the strange and unusual Grim Reaper-themed gallery among one of the weird establishments at this destination. But, quite fascinating. The Prohibited Museum (Prohibido Centro Cultural) isn't one for the faint hearted and easily offended. As a museum / cafe decked out in gothic objects, coffins, anti-Christian art and murals depicting death, some could be easily scared away. There's even a crucifix of a Jesus with an erection. The Prohibited Cultural Center was born in February 1996, as a gallery of the artist Eduardo Moscoso. Supporting artists of alternative cultural expression . The infrastructure of the gallery is adapted to perform musical or performance events. It is also used as a museum for the exhibition of works. Currently (2016) in our local work with national and international artists, in its different expressions such as: Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Musical Arts, Audiovisual, etc.

Address : La Condamine, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8989823, -79.008980299999

Contact : +593 07 2 840703

Website : <https://prohibidocc.wordpress.com/>

Nearest Public Transport : Remigio Crespo y Remigio Tamariz Bus Station

Entry Fee : General Admission: \$2.

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Saturday 09:00hrs-21:00hrs, Sunday 09:00hrs-14:00hrs.

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : Yes

7.1.7. Ingapirca Ruinas

The most iconic reminder of the existence of Incans in the country, the Ingapirca ruins is believed to be a spiritual monument to the ancient inhabitants. Situated in the Cañar province, the ruins is the largest archaeological complex in the country that preserves the history surrounding its edifice. Meaning “Incan Wall”, the walls of the complex features remarkable work of masonry that complement the original structure of what was known to be the “Castle of Ingapirca”. Delve deep into the historic chapters as well as the customs of the communities as you stumble upon the coppery brown adobe giving you a glimpse into the Canary culture combined with the bluish-green Andean stones that speak about the Incan life.

Address : Ignapirca, Ecuador

Location : -2.5406133, -78.874009

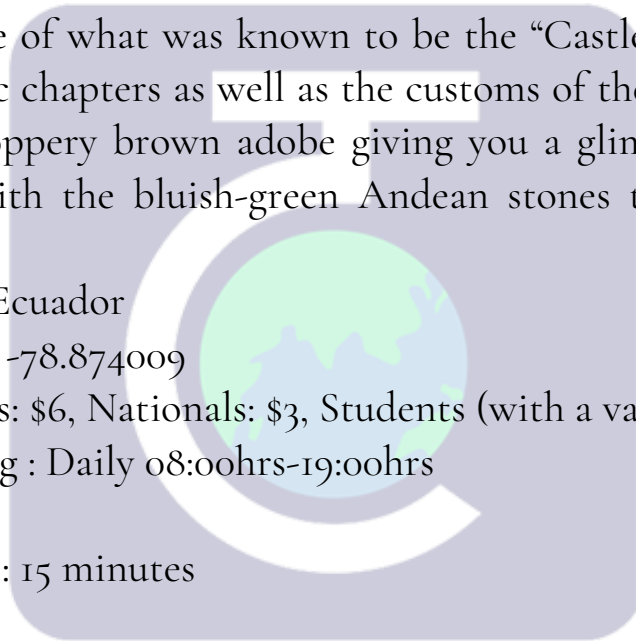
Entry Fee : Foreigners: \$6, Nationals: \$3, Students (with a valid ID): \$1.

Open & Close Timing : Daily 08:00hrs-19:00hrs

Time Required : 6

Expected Wait Time : 15 minutes

Buy Ticket : Yes



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7.2. Free

7.2.1. Museo del Banco Central 'Pumapungo'

One of the most significant museums of the country, this museum has everything from modern art to pieces representing Ecuador's diverse indigenous cultures. Home to 7 temporary exhibition rooms that the museum represents wide diversity of exhibitions: art, history, photography, sculpture are some of them. It also has an archaeology exhibition room - site museum, where the development of society is explained through time, as well as the Inca occupation and findings at the Pumapungo archaeological site. Your visit to the museum also includes a must-pay visit to the Archaeological Park out back, where you can walk through the extensive ruins of buildings believed to be part the old Incan city of Tomebamba. Pumapungo or "Puerta del Puma" is a tangible testimony of the Cañari Inca culture that allows to understand its sociopolitical organization during the advance of the incarnation by the current Ecuadorian territory. The museum houses the largest collection of ethnographic objects that are a testimony to a multiethnic and multicultural country, reflected in everyday and festive attire, scale houses and representative objects that account for life forms, beliefs, rites and Symbols of our peoples. There is also a room of iconography of Baroque art of the eighteenth century, landscape and costumbrismo of the nineteenth and modern painting of the first half of the twentieth century. The complex has an ethnobotanical park and a bird center that hosts species released from captivity. There are colorful animated dioramas that show the traditional costumes of various indigenous Andean cultures, as well as Afro-Ecuadorian groups who live in the northern provinces of the country and the inhabitants of the Pacific Coast known as "Montubios." Ecuadorian Amazon groups are also represented in the exhibition, including some rare examples of tzantzas (shrunk heads) of the Shuar. In addition, there is a room displaying iconography of 18th century Baroque art, landscape and customs of the 19th century, and modern paintings from the first half of the 20th century. The museum complex also has an ethnobotanical park and a center of avifauna that hosts species freed from captivity. The ruins of Pumapungo, is the largest ensemble of archaeological Incas Ingapirca south. It represents a recognition of the values of the Inka Kanari or that have left a lasting imprint of their identity in the city of Cuenca and its

surroundings. The ruins are made up of terraces where crops are grown related to sun worship and spiritual ascension represented the Incas. In the bottom of Pumapungo can see the entrance to a tunnel more than a hundred feet long and served as a mausoleum to symbolize the underworld, home of the wacas and the spirits of the ancestors. Also you can see structures that make up a large irrigation canal and a ritual bath that was used for the purification of the body.

Address : Calle Larga, Cuenca, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010104

Location : -2.9060782, -78.996819899999

Contact : +593 7-283-1521

Website

<http://www.museos.gob.ec/redmuseos/index.php/museos/itempumapungo>

Nearest Public Transport : Banco Central Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Tuesday-Friday 08:30hrs-16:30hrs, Saturday-Sunday 10:00hrs-16:00hrs.

Time Required : 2.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.2. Santo Cenaculo Church

Located two blocks away from Plaza de San Sebastian, Church of San Cenáculo built in the 19th century is worth a quick look if you are around the area and you have nothing to do. Another piece of great architecture complemented by beautiful interiors, this church comes under one of the many churches in the city.

Address : Tarqui, Cuenca, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8960547, -79.007784399999

Nearest Public Transport : Republica Bus Station

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.3. San Sebastian

One of the many churches located in the city, Church of San Sebastián was established in the 19th century and stands on the gorgeous Plaza of San Sebastian on the western edge of the historical center. Standing proudly with marvelous

architecture, the church's interiors are accompanied by religious paintings and serene atmosphere that'll not make you leave for sure.

Address : Coronell Guillermo Talbot, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador,

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8955293, -79.010990699999

Contact : +593 99 039 9271

Nearest Public Transport : San Blas Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Saturday 06:30hrs-17:00hrs, Sunday 06:30hrs-20:00hrs

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.4. Plaza de San Sebastián

You'll always come across Plazas that are bustling with crowd and noisy all the time, but this plaza right here in the town is rather a quiet one. Established in the 17th century this plaza was used for bullfights and other fun expeditions but today it stands as a quiet one surrounded by restaurants, shops, bars and cafe's.

Address : Plaza de San Sebastián, Cuenca, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.895831, -79.010951

Nearest Public Transport : Remigio Crespo y Remigio Tamariz Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Open 24 Hours

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.5. Parque Calderón

The state park is set a location where on one side you will see the whitewashed old cathedral. This park is a good place to wander around and take a break from your sightseeing. Surrounding by greenery come here for some family picnic or to play with your children and grab a bite of a traditional snack from one of the many kiosks.

Address : Mariscal Sucre, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8974039, -79.0044834

Nearest Public Transport : Garcia Moreno Bus Station

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.6. Ruinas de Pumapungo

This archaeological park located in Museo del Banco Central 'Pumapungo' will take you through the extensive ruins of buildings believed to be a part of the old Incan city of Tomebamba. The park is a good place to take a stroll and get to know more about the history of the region!

Address : Calle Larga, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.9072733, -78.997042099999

Nearest Public Transport : Puente el Vergel Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Tuesday-Friday 08:00hrs-17:30hrs, Saturday-Sunday 10:00hrs-16:00hrs

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.7. Orquideario

If you are someone who's intrigued by outrageous and beautiful plant species, then this is your place to be. A free attraction, Orquideario is home to over 400 species of orchids that will just swoon your camera's memory card away. Most plants are in flower from December-May so do book your tickets accordingly! A sight that cannot be missed.

Address : Quinta de Balsaín, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8769216, -78.7637373

Contact : +593 7 284 2893

Website: http://www.ecuagenera.com/epages/whitelabel4.sf/en_US/?ObjectPath=/Shops/ecuagenera/Categories

Nearest Public Transport : Estacion de Transferencia El Arenal Bus Station (Not Recommended)

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.8. Rio Yanuncay

Located just about 1km away from the south of the Old Town's La Escalinita staircase, the serene surroundings along this peacefully wending river is a perfect place for all the getaways for a family picnic. Sit here and enjoy the beauty of the nature while grabbing a bite of your sandwich and a sip from your wine glass. There's also a botanical garden located here if at all interested to see some of the planet species from native and international lands.

Address : Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.9232676, -79.075226999999

Nearest Public Transport : Terminal Terrestre Cuenca Bus Station (Not Recommended)

Open & Close Timing : Open 24 Hours

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.9. Mirador Turi

This one's for all the Instagram posts that you've been longing for. Come here for gorgeous views of the city. Located south of the town along Avenida Solano, the views from this place are ever-popular. Romantic Skylines, Spectacular sunsets in the months of November and December are especially to die for! During Christmas time, Mirador de turi is rather a treat to your eyes.

Address : Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.9455274, -79.0182399

Nearest Public Transport : El Tiempo Bus Station (Not Recommended)

Open & Close Timing : Open 24 Hours

Time Required : 2.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.10. San Blas Church

This is the only church in the city built in the form of a Latin Cross. One of the city's largest, the church finds itself at the eastern end of Parque San Blas. Church

of San Blas boasts of beautiful architecture well accompanied by excellent interiors.

Address : Manuel Vega, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.8986411, -78.9977564

Contact : +593 98 334 5647

Nearest Public Transport : San Blas Bus Station

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.11. CIDAP (Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares)

Located just down the stairs on the river bank, this Inter-American traditional art centers is home to indigenous costumes, artworks and handicrafts from around Latin America. One can not only look at these fascinating pieces but also some replica from the well-priced crafts store. Do take back some souvenirs for your home!

Address : 3 de Noviembre, Cuenca 010101, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010101

Location : -2.9026034, -79.0031075

Contact : +593 7-284-0919

Website : <http://www.cidap.gob.ec/>

Nearest Public Transport : Remigio Crespo y Remigio Tamariz Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Friday 08:00hrs–17:00hrs, Saturday 09:00hrs–16:00hrs

Time Required : 1

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.12. San Francisco

This dazzling look church boasting of colonial architecture yet remains curiously ram shackled till date. Finding itself on Plaza San Francisco, the church was established in the 19th century. Not only the exteriors out-of-the-world but the interiors also features a gold-leaf altar from the colonial period along with many religious artworks.

Address : Padre Aguirre, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.898767, -79.006290499999

Nearest Public Transport : San Blas Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Saturday 06:30hrs-17:00hrs, Sunday 06:30hrs-20:00hrs

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

7.2.13. Puente Roto

Most of the part of the bridge was washed away during a flow, however that didn't steal away the glory of this major attraction. Gaze at the stone arches that makes for a nice venue for art fair that takes place every Sunday and cultural events that are held every saturday. So now you know when to come here.

Address : Puente Roto, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Zipcode : 010150

Location : -2.9041641, -79.0012467

Nearest Public Transport : El Estadio Bus Station

Open & Close Timing : Monday-Saturday 06:30hrs-17:00hrs, Sunday 06:30hrs-20:00hrs

Time Required : 0.5

Buy Ticket : No

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8. Adventure sports, Local sports, stadiums

Football is the most popular sport in Ecuador and the city follows the footsteps. The two major teams from Cuenca are Club Deportivo Cuenca and Liga Deportiva Universitaria de Cuenca.



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9. Spas and relaxation

The city is bustling with Spas but the top Spas that will not only harmonize your mind and soul but also offer a well relaxed experience among the natural surroundings include–

- **Piedra de Agua:**

Address : Paseo de la Guadalupana s/n, Calle 1 de Septiembre, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Location : -2.922075,-79.06352099999998

Contact No : +593 7-289-2496

Website : <http://piedradeagua.com.ec/>

- **Novaqua Spa:**

Address : La Guadalupaba, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Location : -2.9226332,-79.0621286

Contact No : +593 72 892354

Website : <http://www.novaqua.com.ec/en/spa-novaqua-home/>

- **Hosteria Duran:**

Address : Av. Ricardo Durán, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Location : -2.9202323,-79.06192809999999

Contact No : +593 7-289-2485

Website : <http://www.hosteriaduran.com/en/home/>

10. Key local guides and tours

Following are your go-to local guides in the city – Carlos: This is your guide to be. Highly recommended by tourists, Carlos is a charming and delightful tour guide who not only offers tailor-made tours but is also a very knowledgeable guide who knows each and every minute detail about the city and the country. Take guided tours with this multi-lingual guide who is very well versed with Spanish, French and English language. Following are the different tours that can be taken by you in this city – 3-Day Tour of Cuenca: Take this 3 day tour of the city that includes a visit to the Calderon park, the new and old Cathedral, the Modern arts Museum and the Flower market. 3-Day Inca Trail: Take this Inca trail from the city to Ingapirca. Explore the greatest Inca trail and discover the most important and best preserved archaeological Inca complex in Ecuador. Full Day Tour to National Park of Cajas: Take a guided tour from the city to Cajas National Park and enjoy a magnificent hike that will take your breath away by exploring the stunning fauna and flora. Cuenca City Tour: Take this city tour that is known as the 'Athens of Ecuador' on this 4 hour tour and cover all the highlights of the city. Cuenca Markets Full Day Tour: Spend a day discovering the local markets of the city and the various goods it has to offer. Cuenca City Half Day Tour: The city's half day tour takes you through some of the most important landmarks of Cuenca.

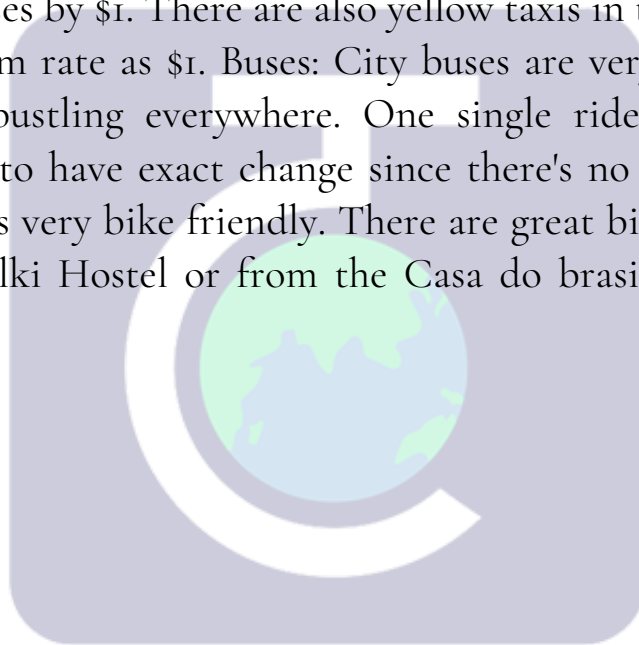
Index**11. Transportation hubs**

Airport: Mariscal Lamar International Airport: The main airport serving is Mariscal Lamar and receives flights from Guayaquil and Quito. The airport is located around 3.5kms away from the main city. Bus Terminal: Terminal Terrestre Cuenca: The main terminal serving the city is Terminal Terrestre Cuenca and receives buses from the surrounding regions. Bus terminal is only located around 3kms away from the city.



12. Transportation cost

The city all in all is easily walkable and is often faster than taking the cab in the narrow traffic-jammed lanes. However if someone really wants use public transport there's taxis, bikes and buses bustling around in every corner. Following are the different costs incurred for different transport – Taxis: Taxis are easily available in the town and just charge about \$2-3 for a single trip, however in the night the cost increases by \$1. There are also yellow taxis in the city that run taxis meters with minimum rate as \$1. Buses: City buses are very easily to figure out and bus stops are bustling everywhere. One single ride costs around \$0.25. However make sure to have exact change since there's no fare collector on the bus. Bikes: The city is very bike friendly. There are great bike paths and one can rent bikes from Mallki Hostel or from the Casa do brasil cafe at just around \$0.50.



Index**13. Baggage allowance**

One can carry heavy amount of luggage into the city when travelling from the nearby cities in buses, also carrying heavy baggage's in taxis is also a fine option, however make sure to just roam around with light backpacks or money belt when exploring the city to avoid any inconvenience. One shouldn't carry heavy baggage in buses and bikes since it can cause massive inconvenience to self and those around you.



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14. Must try food and local savouries

Ecuadorian cuisine is unique in its own way and is known for its diversity. Pork, beef, chicken and roasted guinea pig (cuy) are the most popular in the region. The cuisine also pays attention to seafood and major spices. While the country isn't well known for its international cuisines, this small country has a few traditional delectable dishes that cannot be missed – Cuy: One of the important dish of the country and especially in the highlands. This is a traditional Andean dish that dates back to the Inca period. A traditional Cuy is generally cooked over an open fire or may be fried and taste like a cross between pork and chicken, just a little more greasy. Quimbolitos/Humitas - A sweet-dish with a flavor redolent of a sweet cornbread made from corn, wrapped in corn leaves further topped with raisings is one thing that you will bump into on every other street or corner. Encebollado - Referred to as Ecuadorian hangover foos, this fish soup is brewed with tomato, yuca, onions and topped with chifles and popcorn. A must try, this is considered as a National dish by many Ecuadorians. Bolónes - This Ecuadorian treat, made of plantain is served with cheese or meat fillings. The mixed plantain is fried to perfection and goes well the spicy aji salsa sauce is your perfect deal for some great breakfast. Pan de Yuca - Made with starch, eggs, cheese and sald these comes in chewy rolls making for a perfect afternoon snack. Have it with the fruity yogurt of this unfamiliar yet tasty flavored dish. Fritada - Usually eaten for dinner, the dish features pork which is layered on the top of friend plantains, seasoned with corn, onions, cilantro and llapingacho. Batida de Maracuya (Passionfruit Smoothie) - Passion fruit rules the country, from maracuya cheesecake, yogurt to even maracuya beer, it is everywhere. This odd-looking fruit blends with the smoothie to make the flavor irresistible. A blend of tangy and sweet, Batida de Maracuya is a refreshing drink found almost everywhere. Llapingachos - A Traditional Andean potato Pattie filled with cheese and cooked on a griddle, the dish is further topped with a fried egg and layers of cheese and avocado, ultimately served with beef and salad. Encocado - Typically coastal, Encocado is made with fish, shrimp or the combination of the two and is dipped in sweet creamy sauce made with fresh coconut. Served with a side of patacones and rise, one will find this dish anywhere near the coast for sure.

Choclo con queso - Literal meaning corn with cheese, this dish consists of Andean corn or choclo and Ecuadorian cheese is served with earthy beans making it a nutritious meal. Ceviche - This dish is one of the most iconic one in the city. Coming from seaside, this marinated fish dish are in Lima and it's the healthiest, freshest and zestiest dish you will ever have. Ceviche comes from the indigenous quechua language meaning fresh fish and is definitely not to be missed. Mote-paw: This is the king of Cuencanos dishes. A thick soup of peeled corn broth pork, with pieces of sausage, meat and bacon and seed sambo seasoning. Mote paw is definitely a treat.



15. Restaurant & Nightlife

The city is bustling with restaurants especially in the area of Hermani Miguel and Calle Larga. Cuenca has excellent restaurants, gorgeous bakeries and inviting cafes. There's plenty of street food available all over town that will certainly not disappoint you. The quaint traditional flavours perfectly blend with the International cuisines making your plate just about perfect. For the one's seeking a traditional dining experience there's plenty of places located in the town to bustle your stomach away. Here our top favourites –

Food -

The city is bustling with restaurants especially in the area of Hermani Miguel and Calle Larga. Cuenca has excellent restaurants, gorgeous bakeries and inviting cafes. There's plenty of street food available all over town that will certainly not disappoint you. The quaint traditional flavours perfectly blend with the International cuisines making your plate just about perfect. For the one's seeking a traditional dining experience there's plenty of places located in the town to bustle your stomach away. Here our top favourites –

- **Moliendo Cafe:**

Address : Honorato Vásquez, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.9013756,-79.00287960

Contact No : +593 72828710

Open / Close Time : Monday-Saturday 12:00hrs-21:00hrs

- **Guajibamba:**

Address : Luis Cordero 12-32, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador

Location : -2.8938202,-79.003193500000

Contact No : +593 7-283-1016

Open / Close Time : Monday-Saturday 12:00hrs-15:00hrs & 18:00hrs-22:00hrs

- **Raymipampa:**

Address : Benigno Malo, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador,

Location : -2.8972873,-79.00491920

Contact No : +593 7-283-4159

Open / Close Time : Monday-Friday 08:30hrs-22:30hrs, Saturday & Sunday 09:30hrs-22:30hrs

- **Los Capulies:**

Address : Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.899034,-79.00327679

- **El Jardin Restaurant:**

Address : Cuenca 0101221, Ecuador

Location : -2.9021087,-79.00359309

Contact No : +593 7-282-7401

Website : <http://hotelvictoriaecuador.com/?id=EN>

Open / Close Time : Tuesday-Saturday 12:00hrs-22:00hrs

- **Café de Ñucallacta:**

Address : Hermano Miguel 5-62, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.9009837,-79.00259199

Contact No : +593 98 619 0490

Website : <http://cafenucallacta.com/>

Open / Close Time : Monday-Saturday 09:00hrs-18:00hrs, Sunday 09:00hrs-15:00hrs

- **Windhorse Cafe:**

Address : Calle Larga 6-16, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador
Location : -2.9023686,-79.00298190000001
Contact No : +593 7-284-9334
Website : <https://www.facebook.com/WindhorseCafe>
Open / Close Time : Thursday-Sunday 08:00hrs-15:00hrs

- **Fabiano's:**

Address : Pdte Córdova, Cuenca, 010150 Ecuador
Location : -2.8997146,-79.00103100
Contact No : +593 7-282-4517
Website : <http://fabianoscuena.com/>
Open / Close Time : Monday-Thursday 12:00hrs-20:00hrs, Friday 12:00hrs-22:00hrs, Saturday 16:30hrs-22:00hrs

- **El Maiz:**

Address : Calle Larga 1-279 y Calle de los Molinos, Cuenca 010150, Ecuador
Location : -2.9050996,-78.998844599999
Contact No : +593 7-284-0224

- **Good Affinity:**

Address : Los Capulies, Cuenca 010103, Ecuador

Location : -2.891491399,-79.0229885

Contact No : +593 7 283 2469

Open / Close Time : Monday-Saturday 11:30hrs-15:30hrs

- **Cafe Lojano:**

Address : Mariano Cueva, Cuenca 010110, Ecuador

Location : -2.8975411,-79.00083849

Contact No : +593 99 284 8704

Open / Close Time : Daily 08:00hrs-16:00hrs

- **Restaurant Govinda's Vegetariano:**

Address : Presidente Antonio Borrero, Juan Jaramillo, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.900321,-79.003811999999

Contact No : +593 7-282-2036

Open / Close Time : Tuesday-Friday 12:00hrs-16:00hrs, Saturday 12:00hrs-15:00hrs

- **Wunderbar Cafe:**

Address : Hermano Miguel, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.9025595,-79.00301939

Open / Close Time : Monday-Thursday 11:00hrs-12:00hrs, Friday-Saturday 11:00hrs-02:00hrs

- **La Mesa Salsoteca:**

Address : Gasper Sangurima, Cuenca 010110, Ecuador

Location : -2.8972694,-78.999224200000001

Contact No : +593 98 102 2848

Open / Close Time : Wednesday 20:00hrs-02:00hrs

- **La Compañia:**

Address : cnr Borrero & Vásquez, Cuenca 010104, Ecuador

Location : -2.9014223,-79.003648800000001

Open / Close Time : Monday-Saturday 10:00hrs-02:00hrs, Sunday 10:00hrs-00:00hrs

- **Malamado:**

Address : Calle San Roque, Av 12 de Abril, Cuenca 010106, Ecuador

Location : -2.8986491,-79.011947200000001

Contact No : +593 99 808 0037

Index**16. Average meal cost**

Economical Meal: \$30 Mid – Segment Restaurant: \$30-100 Luxury Dining: \$100 and above Average cost of beer: \$3-\$5



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17. Shopping

The city is a bustling metropolis with everything from high end shopping centers, handcraft stalls to street markets that will just take your breath away. Shop till you drop should be the motto here with the amount of centers located on every other corner of the city. Stock up some cash for the following shopping centers and get ready to take an extra bag home – Homero Ortega P & Hijos: Find yourself here to buy some exclusive hats. Known as Ecuador's best hat seller, one will be surrounded by a huge collection of high quality men's and women's straw hats. Plaza de San Francisco Market: This interesting market offers everything from wooden utensils, ceramics, basketry, gaudy religious paraphernalia, plastic trinkets to guinea pig roasters. Artesa: This big ceramics company is your place to be if you want to be antique Andean ceramic style hand pieces to take back home. Eduardo Vega: Located below Mirador de Turi, this is another store to buy grate ceramic stuff from sculptures, plates and vases to decorate your house. Casa de la Mujer: This market is home to over 100 craft selling handmade music instruments, jewellery, embroidered clothing and baskets. Casa del Sombrero Alberto Pulla: The hats of the city's most famous hatter have graced the travellers so do find yourself if you are someone who loves hats. Plaza Rotary Market: This Thursday market is mainly for locals and focuses on fruits, furniture, polyester and pigs. There are a few craft stalls to check out. Mall Del Río: This shopping mall is your place to be to shop everything from high end brands to local brands that will swoon you away with their collection. Monay Shopping Center: Another shopping center known for its great shops, food court and cinema along with other entertaining options to keep the locals bustling. Coral Centro: Coral is like the "Walmart of Ecuador." You can get almost everything you will ever need here--groceries, home goods, toys, clothing, among many other things. There is also an extensive hardware and construction section.

Index**18. Tourist benefits**

The VAT charged in the country is 12% which is comparatively lower compared to the other countries. One will also find duty free shops around the city of Cuenca and duty free shopping at the airport is a must that offers an extensive variety of shops dealing with anything and everything. One can also buy a tourist card for the city from the airport that provides discounted rates at most of the major attractions located in the city.



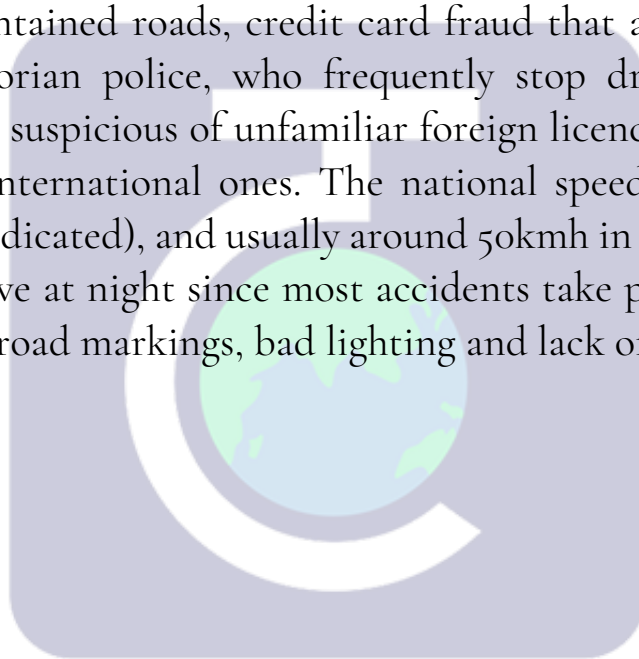
Index**19. Essential local apps**

Following applications can come in handy while visiting the town of Loja – Taxi Seguro Ecuador - Taxi-renting application for the best travelling experience. Enter the destination and the closest driver will be right at your doorsteps in a few minutes. Radio Ecuador: One of top most radio applications of the city, download this app for some live traditional music.



20. Driving

One can drive a car in and around the city. Renting a car requires you to carry your passport, driving license, International driving permit and experienced driving skills. Also make sure that you are 21 years of age to drive in the city. However it is highly recommended to avoid driving in the city due to reckless and aggressive driving of the people along with mountain winding roads, mudslides, poor maintained roads, credit card fraud that add to the misery. Be aware of the Ecuadorian police, who frequently stop drivers to check their documents, are often suspicious of unfamiliar foreign licences and much happier when dealing with international ones. The national speed limit is 100kmh on highways (or less if indicated), and usually around 50kmh in towns or urban areas. Make sure not to drive at night since most accidents take place at that time due to absence of decent road markings, bad lighting and lack of road signs.



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21. Travel essentials

Following are the necessary things to keep in mind while travelling in the country – 1. Adapter/Plug – The standard voltage in the country is 140-160V with a frequency of 60 Hz. Power sockets: type A / B in Ecuador. 2. It is always advised to carry sufficient prescribed medicines as OTCs may not be allowed. 3. One needs to carry a money belt in order to avoid theft or pick pocketing.



Index**22. Essential clothes**

Following are the necessary things to keep in mind while travelling in the country – 1. Adapter/Plug – The standard voltage in the country is 140-160V with a frequency of 60 Hz. Power sockets: type A / B in Ecuador. 2. It is always advised to carry sufficient prescribed medicines as OTCs may not be allowed. 3. One needs to carry a money belt in order to avoid theft or pick pocketing.



23. Local currency

The present currency of Ecuador is United States Dollar

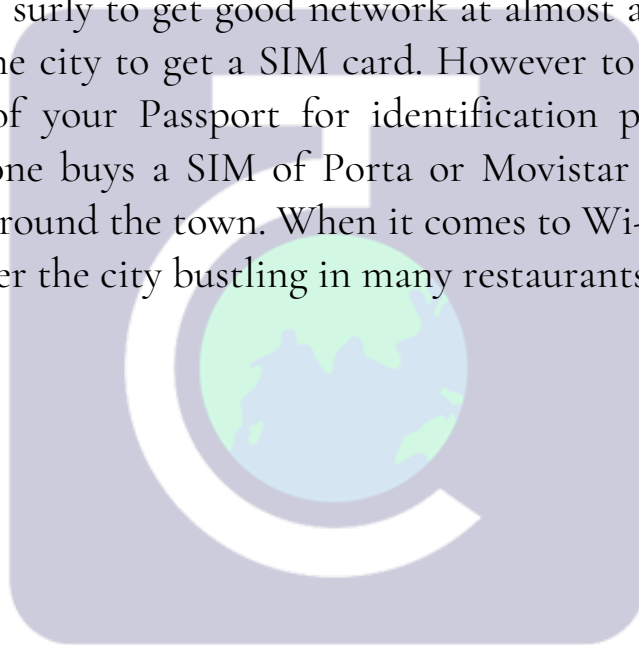


24. Change vendor's commission, ATM charges

The city isn't home to many ATMs. Most of the cards are accepted in the ATMs. Banks are likely to charge you with a foreign transaction fee in an ATM, hence make sure to confirm with your bank about the fee charges prior to your transaction. One can only take out a limited amount, so it is recommended to take out the maximum amount in one go. The biggest advantage is that the country's currency is in US Dollars. However if you are travelling from some other country and need to exchange the native currency you can exchange the currency at the airport or at many shops that are located in the city at a decent rate, however there are people who will deliberately bump into you to exchange currency on the streets, hence be aware of these people as they sell false notes. The exchange commission charged might be 5-6% higher than usual hence make sure to confirm the price prior to buying the currency. The usual currency rate is 2.5-4%. Credit cards are accepted in the city, however a fee is charged hence one should confirm the extra transaction fee from their bank prior to their travel.

25. Staying connected

Major networks that dominate Ecuador are Porta, Claro, Movistar, and Alegro. However make sure to unlock your phone prior to your travel in order to use any SIM card in the country. If your stay is for a longer period of time, it is recommended that you buy a local SIM to stay connected. One can purchase a SIM card at the airport upon arrival. Buying a SIM card in the country is affordable and one is surly to get good network at almost all the areas. One will find shops all over the city to get a SIM card. However to buy a SIM card, you will need a Xerox of your Passport for identification purposes. It is highly recommended that one buys a SIM of Porta or Movistar since it has the best connectivity in and around the town. When it comes to Wi-Fi connectivity there are Wi-Fi hubs all over the city bustling in many restaurants, café's and hotels.



26. Time Zone

Ecuador Standard Time (ECT) is 5 hours behind the Coordinated Universal time (UTC -5).



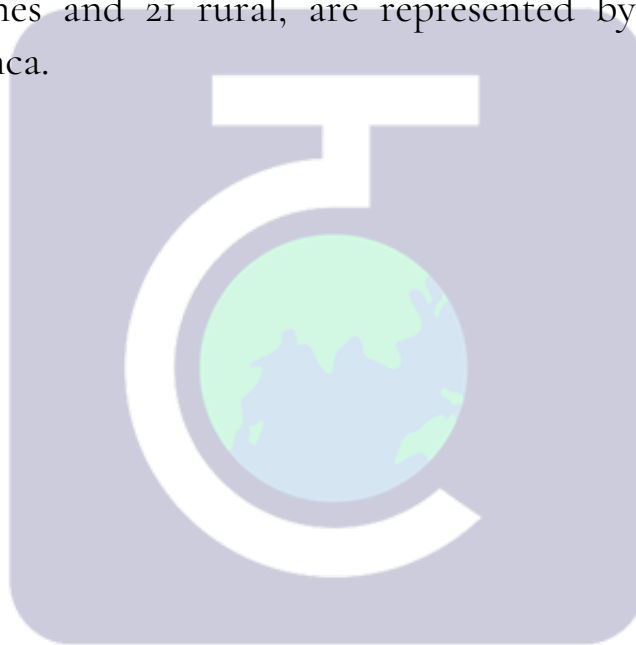
Index**27. Languages**

Linguistically, Ecuador is dominated by the Spanish language, however it is different from the Spanish spoken in Spain since Ecuador slang differs from region to region. Followed by a large number of people (local communities), speaking in the Quichua language, the English language has made its mark as the most spoken foreign language



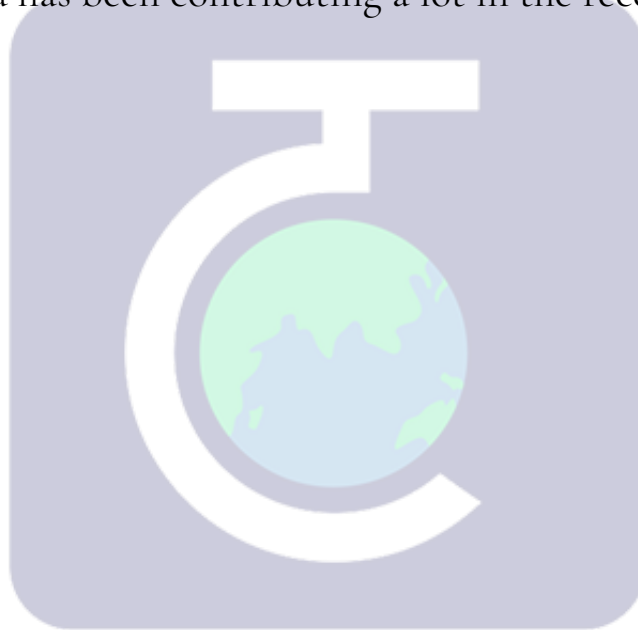
28. Political Scenario

Being a unicameral representative democracy, the president of the country is head of state and the government head on a multi-party system. The central government is elected after every 4 years and leads cabinet with executive power, legislative power and the judiciary. Santa Ana de los cuatro ríos de Cuenca or Cuenca — is the capital of the Azuay Province. The Cuenca canton is divided into 15 urban parishes and 21 rural, are represented by the Vestries to the Municipality of Cuenca.



29. Economic Scenario

The city stands as the commercial centre for most of southern Ecuador, and trades in agricultural products, cattle, hides, and marble, making agriculture the biggest contributor in the economy, followed by some industries that have found a home here. Principal industries include the manufacture of Panama hats, textiles and lace, leather goods, jewellery, and food products. There's also tourism that is on the rise and has been contributing a lot in the recent years.



Index**30. Religious belief**

Roman Catholicism dominates the country with 80% Catholics being devoted to the religion, followed by 11% of the population that identifies themselves as Protestants. The country is ethnically diverse, other religions include Buddhism, Judaism, Bahá'í Faith, Latter-day Saints and Islam.



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31. Visa requirements

Ecuador welcomes its tourist with open arms from each and every country. Citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and most of the European countries do not require a visa unless the stay is expected to cross more than 90 days. One just needs to show a valid passport, return ticket and proof of economic means to support yourself. Countries like India, Cuba, Jordan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Algeria, Iran, Iraq etc do require a valid visa to enter the country. Below is the link for more information – <http://www.ecuador-travel-guide.org/general/VISASs.htm>



Index**32. Essential vaccination**

One needs to be any disease free before travelling in the country and during the visit in the country. Hence it is recommended that one should visit their General Doctor for a routine check-up. Also, when travelling to Ecuador, some basic vaccines are suggested – • Yellow Fever • Typhoid Fever • Malaria • Hepatitis A • Hepatitis B • Cholera • Rabies



Index**33. Theft and Safety**

The city comes under one of the safest ones in the country, however do stay within the city limits, where police patrolling is always on a roll and make sure not stroll around after dark since pick pocketing and mugging still occur especially in shady areas.



Index**34. Embassy/Consulate**

Below is the list of embassies and consulates located in the country
<http://www.embassypages.com/ecuador>



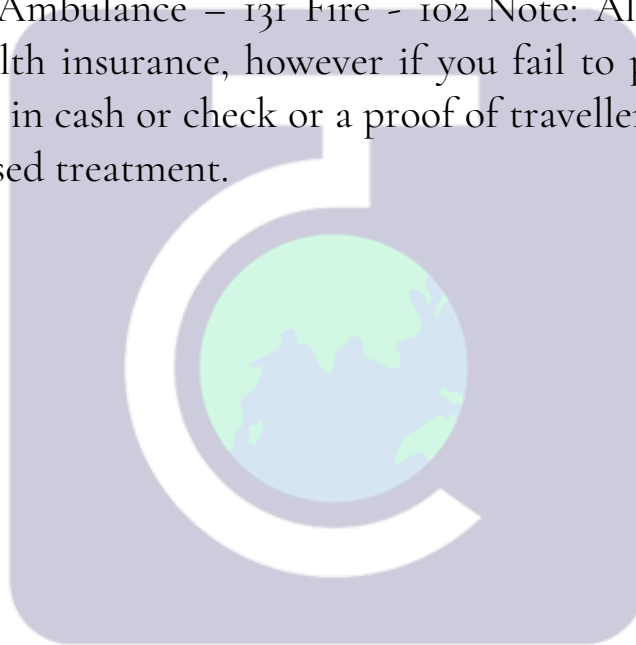
35. Accessibility

Cuenca is not the best place for people with reduced mobility, since only a handful of hotels and hospitals offers wheelchairs or assistance to the disabled. The town is a disappointment as most of it is surrounded by the water which makes it difficult for the disabled to travel around the city.



Index**36. Emergencies**

Following are the few hospitals that one can definitely go to in case of an emergency – Consultorios Monte Sinai. Torre 2 Address: Miguel Cordero, Miguel Cordero Dávila 6-140, Cuenca, Ecuador Phone: +593 7-281-4813 Hospital Universitario del Río Address: y Av., Avenida de Las Americas, Cuenca, Ecuador Phone: +593 7-245-9555 Following are the emergency number that will come in handy. Police – 101 Ambulance – 131 Fire - 102 Note: All the above hospitals accept traveller's health insurance, however if you fail to present a valid credit card, sufficient funds in cash or check or a proof of traveller's insurance coverage then you will be refused treatment.



37. Do's and Don'ts

Do's • Do stay away from the con artists who will impose as bus drives at the bus station. • Do take the yellow registered taxi since it is much safer. • Do learn basic Spanish. • Always carry your bag on your lap while travelling in public transport. • Do explore the many museums to know about the history of Cuenca. Don'ts • Don't wear typical gringo clothes, since you automatically will become a target of the thieves and pick- picketers around. • Don't associate with drugs at all since the country has strict laws against possessions, exporting or using illegal drugs. • Don't drink local tap water.



Index**38.Tipping basics**

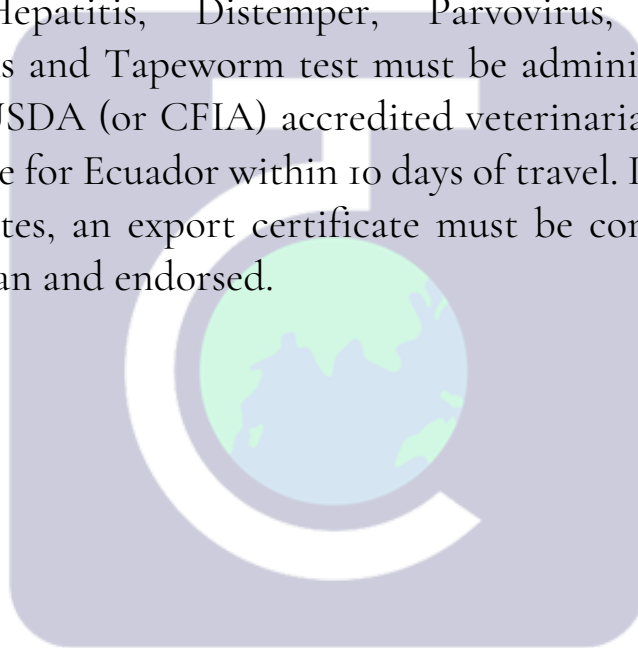
The service charge in Ecuador is around 12%. Taxis drivers need not be given any tip unless you have hired them on a full day basis, then a tip of 5% is expected to be given. In hotels it is accustom to the tip to the maids or the bell boys which is around US \$1 whereas restaurants already charge 12% tax and a 10% service charge in the bill hence a tip of 3-10% is expected.



39.Pet info

Following are some of the guidelines to get your pet into the country –

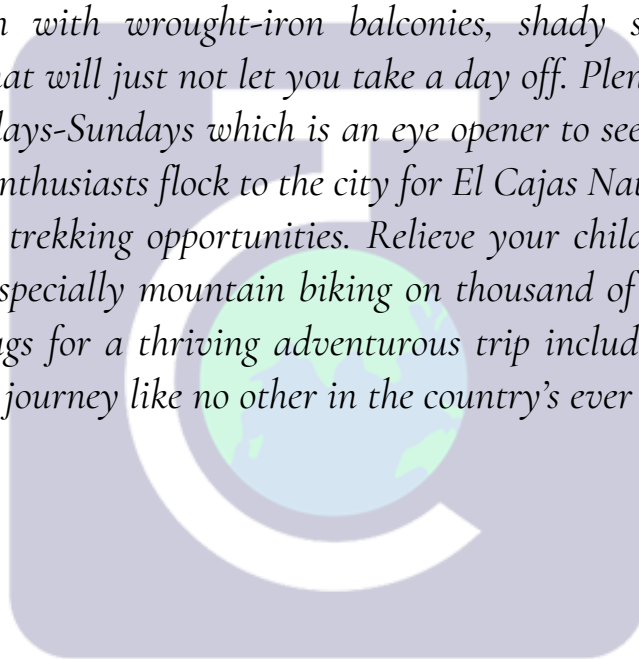
- Your pet dog or cat must have a current rabies vaccination. If it was previously unvaccinated for rabies, it must wait for at least 21 days after the vaccination before entering Ecuador. The vaccination must not have been administered more than 12 months prior to entry into the country.
- Dogs should be vaccinated against Canine Hepatitis, Distemper, Parvovirus, Leptospirosis and Parainfluenza.
- Ticks and Tapeworm test must be administered within 21 days prior to travel.
- A USDA (or CFIA) accredited veterinarian must complete the Veterinary Certificate for Ecuador within 10 days of travel. If your pet is traveling from the United States, an export certificate must be completed by a USDA-accredited veterinarian and endorsed.



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Conclusion – Why to select this destination

Cuenca is arguably the most charming with its cobblestone streets, old-world cathedrals, colonial parks and urban rivers. The third largest city in the country might be a hustly-bustly town by the colonial charm of the past still prevails in its each and every street. The ever-gorgeous and prosperous city of the highlands boasts of a city center that has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, just like its rival Quito. Surround yourself with colonial mansion with wrought-iron balconies, shady squares and numerous restaurants and bars that will just not let you take a day off. Plenty of markets surround the streets from Thursdays-Sundays which is an eye opener to see the traditional culture of the city. Adventure enthusiasts flock to the city for El Cajas National Park which offers spectacular hiking and trekking opportunities. Relieve your childhood days and explore the city on a bicycle, especially mountain biking on thousand of miles of seldom visited trails. So pack your bags for a thriving adventurous trip including a historical tour, a gastronomic ride and a journey like no other in the country's ever charming capital.



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