

# Packing List & Instructions

## ECUADOR: THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS & THE CLOUD FOREST

Ecuador: The Galápagos Islands and the Andes is an active program where you will have the opportunity to visit many different regions of Ecuador. Ecuador is one of the most ecologically and biologically diverse countries in the world. There are no less than 18 distinct ecological systems to be found in Ecuador, a country the size of the state of Colorado. It has four distinct geographical and climatic zones; the coastal plain with a tropical climate and rich agricultural land; the Andean highlands at about 8,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level (Chimborazo, the highest peak soars to over 20,000 feet above sea level); the eastern jungle in the upper reaches of the Amazon where Ecuador's oil reserves are found; and the Galápagos Islands 600 miles off the coast. Rainfall varies from constant rain to severe drought according to the zone you are in – weather is very unpredictable.

Please note that when it is summer in the United States, it is winter in Ecuador. Temperatures are typically hot during the day and very cold at night. In the highlands, including Quito, it is said that one experiences all seasons of the year each day. In higher elevations, such as the Chimborazo Mountain the conditions can be chilly and windy. Layered clothing is best for these types of conditions. Remember, wool or fleece clothing are warmest. The Galápagos Islands normally have a hot and dry climate with cooler weather in July. The cloud forests are comfortably cooler than the rainforests and warmer than the highlands with seasonally heavy rains. At various times, you will be both in higher, colder regions and in lower, warmer zones.

### A Note on Packing for Ecuador

You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage. The most important packing advice is to **pack lightly**— whether you pack in a duffel bag, a rolling suitcase, or a large backpack, you should be able to carry (not roll) your luggage up two flights of stairs. When determining what luggage is appropriate, it is important to consider program itinerary and group activities. Travel between cities is often by private bus. Whatever luggage you bring, you will need to be able to get it on and off yourself, including up and down aisles, and into overhead storage. For more rugged programs with lots of travel and outdoor activities, a larger outdoor camping backpack may be more manageable but certainly not required.

Note that airlines are restricting baggage limits on flights to the Galápagos Islands. Please bring a small daypack/backpack, to carry clothing and items for a 4-day trip, that can be stored under the seat in front of you for your trip to the Galápagos Islands. You will **not** be allowed to bring large luggage on this flight.

In addition to the Galápagos Islands, please bring a small daypack/backpack for day excursions. Your larger luggage will be stored safely whilst you are on excursions.

The list on the following page has been suggested by past participants and leaders. You will have opportunities to do laundry while on program, oftentimes during your homestay. Even though your program may be three or four weeks, pack for about a week. Even though we provide a comprehensive packing list, it is good practice to research the temperature and climate of your program country before you depart. These can vary from year to year, so it is important to check current and expected conditions for your program abroad and pack accordingly.

## A Note on Dress

Remember, while traveling with The Experiment, you are an ambassador for the program and should dress appropriately for the country you will be traveling to. In general, you will want your clothes to be comfortable, compact, versatile, and quick to dry (since access to an electric dryer will likely be limited). You will not need more than one nice outfit, suitable for a religious ceremony or celebratory dinner. Shoes should be comfortable, broken in, and versatile—bring as few pairs as possible – 3 is more than enough. Layering is recommended for changing temperatures rather than bringing bulky sweaters and jackets.

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Sloppy T-shirts and tank tops are discouraged while you are in Quito. Bear in mind that Ecuadorian host families appreciate it when their students dress appropriately for formal family gatherings. It is alright to wear casual clothes during excursions to the Cloudy Forest and the Galápagos – wool sweaters and parkas in the Páramo (above 12,000 feet) and cooler cotton (i.e. quick-drying) in the Cloudy Forest and Galápagos. Shorts and tank tops are fine in the field but are not acceptable in town. The more skin that is covered, the more easily you will avoid unwanted attention from both people and bugs. You will encounter varied climates and most homes do not have central heating or air conditioning, so dressing in layers is a sensible solution.

## Notes from our Team

### PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Make sure to keep any prescription medications or vitamins in their original containers, and bring a sufficient amount for the entire duration of your program, plus extra in case of travel delays. Bring a paper copy of your prescription from your doctor in case you lose your medication. Travel with all essential medications in your carry-on luggage. If you are diabetic and traveling with syringes, bring a certificate or letter from your doctor.

### RESCUE MEDICATIONS

If you use any rescue medications and or devices (i.e. medications intended for the immediate relief of serious symptoms like an EPI pen or albuterol inhaler) you must travel with one or more backup supplies of this medication or device. (e.g. A participant who uses an inhaler would travel with at least two inhalers, while a participant with a severe allergy might travel with several EPI pens.) Comparable therapies can be very difficult to obtain while traveling.

### PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT & OTHER MEDICATIONS

The group leaders will carry a first aid kit for emergencies whilst traveling with the group, but you should bring a travel personal first aid kit with the medication you normally use for minor ailments like body aches, upset stomach, bug bites, common cold, seasonal allergies, Band-Aids and moleskin for blisters, etc. It is the participant's responsibility to replenish their personal first aid kit and pay for any necessary personal prescriptions or medication whilst on program.

With the potential of traveler's diarrhea, it is important to also bring a personal set of oral rehydration salts/electrolytes. These can be found in travel-friendly power packets to add with water.

Finally, participants commonly experience motion and sea sickness during this program, so it is important to pack motion/sea sickness medication. **Dramamine** has been highly recommended by previous Experimenters and group leaders.

A travel first aid kit from your local pharmacy is recommended. All medications should be in original packaging with the package insert if possible, to avoid confiscation at customs. Please review the Health Guidelines for more information.

### TOILETRIES AND SANITARY ITEMS

Please bring the toiletries and sanitary items you are accustomed to using. It is recommended to bring enough feminine hygiene products for the duration of the program. It is often difficult to find the items you are used to using while abroad.

The sun is very strong at the equator line and so sunblock is required. Mineral sunblock is highly recommended by previous Experimenters and group leaders, as it is helpful for sensitive skin and protective of marine life. Note that purchasing supplies or toiletries in high tourist areas, such as the Galápagos Islands, can be very expensive.

### CORRECTIVE LENSES

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, please bring extra pairs and extra contact cases, as these are often difficult to replace if lost. If you use contact solution to clean your lenses, bring plenty of the type you prefer as this can also be difficult to acquire abroad. Consider program itinerary and activities when choosing appropriate eyewear.

Please direct any questions or concerns to [medicalteam@experiment.org](mailto:medicalteam@experiment.org).

### VALUABLES AND ELECTRONICS

The Experiment is not responsible for any items lost, misplaced or stolen. It would be best not to bring large electronics, laptops, iPads, tablets, hairdryers, or other items that you would consider expensive to replace. If you choose to bring small electronics (your digital camera or cell phone) remember to bring your own adaptor, batteries, and voltage converter (which can be obtained from a travel store or pharmacy. More info about electricity, voltage, and adapters can be found here: [www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/)).

### GIFTS

While not required, it is nice to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family in gratitude for their hospitality and to share a part of your culture with them. Gifts do not need to be expensive or elaborate. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy; you do not need a gift for each member. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce (for example, a Vermonter could bring a small bottle of maple syrup). Postcard books and other souvenir items from your hometown are good options. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas.

## CLOTHING RECOMMENDED

- Cold-weather clothing: 1 warm insulated jacket, 1 pair of warm gloves, 1 scarf/gator, 1 warm hat—it can get really cold, especially when you go to the Chimborazo Mountain
- 1 light-weight warm sweater/sweatshirt—fleece/wool is best!
- 1 light-weight rain jacket
- 1–2 long-sleeved shirts
- 3–4 t-shirts
- 1 pair of lightweight pants
- 1 “messy” outfit for community service project such as sturdy pants, old t-shirt, and work gloves
- 2-3 pairs of long pants or skirts – REQUIRED. Note that locals do not typically wear shorts
- 1-2 pairs of water/sport shorts
- 1-2 set of sleeping clothes
- 7 pairs of underwear
- 3–4 pairs of wool/hiking socks
- 2–3 pairs of cotton/normal socks
- 2 conservative bathing suits/swimwear (it is humid and swimwear does not always fully dry overnight)
- 1 pair of comfortable broken-in walking shoes/tennis shoes
- 1 pair of hiking shoes/boots (Low-top Merrells are great with traction, sneakers are not ideal for hiking.
- 1 pair of sandals/water shoes (e.g., Chacos, Tevas, etc.) for wet landing in the Galápagos—REQUIRED
- 1 nice outfit and pair of shoes for special occasions
- Motion sickness medication (Dramamine)—small plane/boat travel can be very bumpy REQUIRED

## GEAR RECOMMENDED

- Reusable and durable water bottle (1 liter) – REQUIRED
- 1 set of toiletries—should be smaller than your head!
- 1 small towel—quick-drying microfiber towels are great!
- Sunglasses and hat with brim - REQUIRED
- Money belt
- Travel watch with alarm—a watch is necessary since you may not be able to use your cell phone as a timekeeping tool
- Small notebook and pens
- Spanish-English translator app
- Small flashlight/headlamp with extra batteries
- Camera, charger, and adapters or extra batteries
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent - REQUIRED

- Sunscreen and lip protection (SPF 30). In the spirit of responsible and eco-friendly travel, please leave your regular sunscreen at home and bring biodegradable and reef-safe sunscreen, if possible - REQUIRED
- Personal first aid kit (as noted above), including motion sickness/sea sickness medicine (Dramamine), oral rehydration salts, Imodium/Pepto Bismol
- At least 3 reusable masks (at least double layered) and gloves for personal protection
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for use when soap and water is not readily available
- Anti-bacterial wipes or solution to wipe down high-touch surfaces, especially while traveling
- Travel size detergent, biodegradable if available – Laundry pods or bar laundry soap are great options
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags—small Ziplocs and a few large garbage-size bags (great for wet/dirty clothes and keeping clean clothes dry while traveling)
- Small daypack/backpack for day trips—can be your school backpack - REQUIRED
- School ID—if you don't have one, it's okay
- A gift for your host family

## IMPORTANT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport, or residency card (if applicable)
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport (also one digital version in your e-mails or photos!)
- Photocopy of visa (if applicable)

## OPTIONAL ITEMS RECOMMENDED

- Journal and pen
- Mailing addresses for friends and family to send postcards
- Printed photos of family or friends
- Small game of cards, Uno, Bananagrams

Where to start: A great place to visit for these types of travel clothes and gear is an outdoors store such as REI and EMS. These places will have waterproof, light weight, quick drying and versatile clothing options specifically made for travel and backpacking. They can also talk you through layering techniques and give you gear recommendations. These stores tend to be a little pricey so don't forget to check for second-hand outdoor gear stores locally as well!