

Animal wildlife rescue in Guayaquil, Ecuador

Project Overview

Mad about animals?

If you are then this is the perfect project for you in the perfect country. Given the huge amount of wildlife in Ecuador it's no wonder that a few of them need a helping hand once in a while. This wildlife centre comes to the aid of around 300 wild animals of about 30 different species so it's the perfect opportunity to see an array of hopping, bouncing, flying, diving and swinging creatures first hand (if you can get them to sit still long enough.) Duties include feeding, cleaning and of course cuddling as well as getting out and about and assisting with plant identification in the tropical forests and mangroves.



Trip Highlights:

- Working with a wide range of animals in the wildlife centre
- Enjoying Guayaquil's famous nightlife
- Exploring the cities numerous parks - including one with tame iguanas!

Project details:

This Wildlife Rescue Centre was founded over 20 years ago and is the first of its kind in Ecuador. The centre rehabilitates and provides care for around 300 wild animals of about 30 different species. In addition, there are 3 captive breeding programmes in operation all involving endangered species: the American crocodile, the spider monkey and the Guayaquil green macaw. All the animals at the centre are either donated by the public or rescued from the illegal pet trade. The centre also farms shrimp, tilapia, banana and cocoa with an emphasis on aquaculture.

Why the project needs volunteers:

A lack of financial resources and commitment from long-term government funded programmes makes it necessary for the centre to look to volunteers to assist them in all that needs to be done at the centre. The expertise, human resource, and economic backing provided by international conservation agencies and by smaller private groups such as i-to-i is essential to the survival of the small non-profit wildlife rescue centre.

What kind of skills you need to go on this type of project:

The most important requirement for this project is a strong love of all animals, enthusiasm, and flexibility, as well as the readiness to be involved with some of the more basic duties that will be required. Be ready to roll up your sleeves, get dirty and work hard! There are horses on site and you may be able to take horse rides out into the surrounding areas.

Your role as a volunteer:

Duties may include feeding the animals twice daily, cleaning and repairing all animal enclosures, building new enclosures, assisting in wildlife health care, maintaining animal behaviour database and bird sighting database, and assisting a botanist with identifying plants in the mangrove and tropical forest. You are encouraged to learn as much Spanish as possible before you go - knowledge of beginner Spanish will be key to communicating with the project staff.

Where the project is based:

This project is located in Balao Chico about 2 hours from the nearest city of Guayaquil, which is Ecuador's largest city and most major sea port. The project is about 5 km away from the nearest village and 16 km away from the town of Naranjal which has basic amenities and cafes. The project is in a rural, tropical location and you should expect insects!

You will be staying on site in a volunteer house, facilities are basic but comfortable, be prepared for quiet evenings.

You will need to arrive into Quito International Airport (UIO) for orientation two days later you will transfer to the project and can take either a bus or fly to the local airport. If you would like to arrange flights to Guayaquil please contact the Latin America Team for more information.

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 2 weeks - Max 12 weeks
- Project Costs: £659.00 for 2 weeks, £165.00 for every week thereafter
- Location of project: *Balao Chico, about 2 hours from the nearest city of Guayaquil*
- Arrival Airport: *Quito (airport code UIO)*
- Activities: *Various types of work with animals, including helping with feeding, facilities maintenance and data recording*
- Working Hours: *Flexible; Monday to Friday 6am to 4pm, all other time is free*
- Getting to the project: *On site*
- Requirements: *Minimum Age 18*
- Other: *Semana Santa (Latin America Holy week) will be from March 26th to April 4th 2010 and April 15th to April 24th 2011, you may have some disruptions to the placement during this time*

What's Included

- Accommodation: *Shared room at the project*
- Food: *All meals Monday to Saturday, no meals on Sunday*
- Airport Pickup: *Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!*
- Training: *In-country orientation*
- Support: *Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support*

What's not included

- *Flights, Insurance, Visas, Return Airport transfer, Local Transport, Food (not included on Sundays)*

Country Guide - Ecuador

A little bit of history...

For thousands of years before the Incas arrived from Peru to expand their empire, advanced indigenous cultures made Ecuador their home. They fought hard to hold on but from the 1400s the Inca's succeeded in developing its civilisation into neighbouring territories. The Incas were not immune from shifts in power and, during the same year the Spanish set foot on Ecuadorian soil (1526), the Inca Empire was divided for the first time when Inca ruler Huayna Capac went against tradition by leaving his empire to two sons rather than one. After years of fighting, Atahualpa defeated Huascar to become ruler of the empire. His position was short lived and the Inca Empire was all but confined to a place in history when in the 1530s the Spanish laid down the foundations to rule the country. Under Spanish rule, Indians and Mestizos (people of mixed indigenous and European descent) suffered forced labour and several uprisings ensued. Liberator Simón Bolívar helped secure independence for Ecuador, which was fully achieved by 1830.

Against a backdrop of violent rivalry between liberal and conservative factions, an unstable political climate dominated the 19th century and was marked by a quick succession of rulers. The 20th century brought mixed fortunes. The country's development was hampered by the collapse of the coco market in the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s but it achieved stable civilian rule and increased banana exports from 1948 to 1960. Recession and social unrest led to an anti-communist military government taking power in the early 1960s and it wasn't until 1979 that democratic constitutional measures were put into play. Indigenous groups now have a voice and influence on politics but the country has a lot of economic ground to cover and high levels of unemployment. On an environmental level, Ecuador is rich in biodiversity but has one of the highest deforestation rates in South America.



Best time to go...

The diversity of Ecuador does not fit neatly into four seasons. As a general note, it has a dry winter from June to September and a wet summer from December to April. For hiking in the highlands, the best time is during the cool winter. For exploring the jungle (the Oriente), there isn't a temperate period as it's often thick with humidity, while the sierra can get chilly and coastal areas are warm year round.

The Galápagos Islands experience hot, rainy weather from January to April and its waters are comfortably warm during this time, making it ideal for snorkelling. During the rest of the year the water is on the chilly side at around 20°C (68°F) or lower. The surfing season is typically December to February.

The biggest celebration days are Christmas, Semana Santa (Easter week), Inti Raymi (June 24), and Independence Day (May 24). Expect an influx of visitors during these periods and from June to August when the vacation season is in full swing.

Getting around...

There's no better way to see the snow-capped Andes than to fly. The flight from Quito to Cuenca alone takes in the sight of volcano after volcano. With great views aside, flying in Ecuador is affordable and also convenient; you can get to where you want to go in usually no more than half an hour's flying time. The country's main airlines like Tame offer daily services to the main towns and cities, usually departing from Quito or Guayaquil. It's also the best way to get to the Oriente, with other modes of transport unable to access the area. Flights to the Galápagos Islands, however, can be pricey and flying time from Ecuador is around 3 hours. Depending on your destination but particularly for flights to the Galápagos Islands and the Oriente, there is a system in place whereby foreigners are required to pay more than double what Ecuadorians pay. It's also worth noting that seats are not reserved and are given on a first come, first served basis. Reconfirming a flight 24 hours before is imperative as it's not unknown for airlines to refute your reservation if it hasn't been confirmed ahead of departure.

Buses are a cheaper option and although most long distance journeys take a day or less, it can feel longer due to the road conditions. Buses usually leave from central terminals and it's best to buy a ticket at least a few hours in advance to reserve a seat. Local buses are often very cheap but also very crowded. Taxis are a good option for short journeys or day trips out of cities if hired for the day and can be cheaper than car rental. Taximeters are in existence but not always switched on so it's best to agree on a price before the journey begins.