

# Biodiversity Group Expeditions

## Ecuador Travel Information and Packing List

### Important Travel Information

You will need to purchase airline tickets for roundtrip flights to Quito (usually via Houston, Miami, or LAX), to arrive in Quito before the starting day of your project, and leaving after the last day. For all participants, a \$44 airport exit fee must be paid, in cash, upon leaving the country, and is not an included expense. Ecuadorian currency is the U.S. dollar. A valid passport will be needed and should be applied for as soon as possible if you don't already have one. **IMPORTANT:** your passport must not expire until at least six months after your date of arrival. Verify that your passport is valid for the exact dates of travel. For participants with non-US passports, you may need to apply for a visa as well; contact the Ecuadorian consulate for the most current requirements.

For many points of departure in the US, flights can generally be purchased for \$1,000 or less, and sometimes as low as \$600. After landing, you will be met at the airport and brought to our hotel in Quito. You will then be escorted throughout the trip by your group leaders, although there will be some opportunities to explore some areas independently or in groups away from the main study areas. However, if you are arriving earlier than the day before your expedition, you must arrange your own transportation to the hotel.

You also need to consult a physician about traveling to Ecuador, and acquire traveler's insurance. You will be required to sign an affidavit to confirm these steps one month prior to departure. Your traveler's insurance must have a medical evacuation clause; we recommend at least \$50,000 medical evacuation coverage. Basic insurance for travelers under age 30 can be found at [www.TripPlus.com](http://www.TripPlus.com), which starts at \$25. More complete coverage can be found at [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com), which is an agent site which will let you choose from many options.

### To Bring

Important: Some of our Ecuadorian expeditions involve camping. Read the camping requirements carefully.

When packing, keep in mind that you may have to walk extended distances with all of your gear. It is best if you can get all of your gear into one bag and a carry-on item. Getting all your gear into one large backpacking backpack is an excellent way to go.

You must have all items in the essential gear category, or acquire them in Ecuador. Most of these items (except rain boots) are cheaper to get in the US. *You may not participate in this expedition without these items.*

#### a) Essential Basic Gear

- Lightweight Rain poncho or jacket. Much of our work will be in the rain, and you must be prepared to get drenched often.
- Lighting equipment: A bright good waterproof or water-resistant headlamp (headlamps are much better than flashlights for night work). If you are buying a new one, try to get the brightest possible LED you can get. Bring a spare flashlight for emergencies, or a bright flashlight for spotlighting things out of range of your headlamp.
- Batteries: Bring enough batteries to change out your light once every day.

- Insect repellent with 30% DEET, enough to apply at least twice a day for the duration. For extra protection, you can treat your clothing with permethrin solution, which is particularly effective against ticks.
- Small backpack, big enough for your water and some field equipment, such as a clipboard, large tape measure, or animal bags.
- Drinking bottle, with least one-liter capacity.
- Extra copies of all documents. Include a color copy of your passport and vaccinations. Keep your copies in a separate place from the originals.
- Any prescription medications. Also write down your exact prescriptions, including dosages, and keep this separate from your medications.
- Rubber rain boots. May be obtained in Quito for about \$8 if your size is 11 or below. If you have larger feet than this, or if you want to be sure of a fit, bring some from home.
- Wristwatch

### b) Camping Gear

Basic camping gear is needed in Amazon expeditions to Rio Bigal only (we are staying at field stations for all other sites in 2011-12). Safe water, as well as cooking and dining gear, are always provided.

- Tent or hammock. Most gear will be kept in communal areas, so your tent or hammock just needs to be big enough for you. We have been provided with camping hammocks by Lawson Hammock (<http://www.lawsonhammock.com>), and if you wish you will be provided one of these. Let us know if you will be bringing a tent instead.
- Sleeping pad. A basic, lightweight foam or inflatable pad (a very minimal sleeping pad is recommended for hammock camping for cold insulation).
- A lightweight sleeping bag or sac.
- Pillow. Or just stuff a bag with clothes.

### c) Recommended Gear

- A large backpacking backpack is by far the best option for toting your gear around. You may need to carry all your gear for extended periods when mules or alternative transportation is not available.

Field Clothing. For tropical forest work you will need clothes that both protect you and keep you cool:

- Lightweight cotton or synthetic long pants. Shorts should generally be avoided to avoid insect bites. Avoid jeans or any heavyweight fabric, as it may not dry out before it mildews. Cargo pants with several pockets work well.
- Lightweight cotton or synthetic shirts. But t-shirts may also be used, as long as insect repellent is judiciously applied.

- A wide brimmed hat and sunglasses. These are helpful, but since most of our work is at night, they will mainly be used in transit and somewhat during occasional diurnal surveys and river trips.
- A comfortable pair of rugged sandals, such as Tevas. Otherwise a pair of tennis shoes that you don't mind getting dirty will work. Hiking boots are usually not needed, as nearly all hiking will be done in rain boots (above). Keep in mind that, as with clothing, material that can dry easily is best.
- Swimsuit. For swimming in the ocean at Punta Prieta and the streams at Pata de Pajaro, Rio Bigal and Pappallacta Hot Springs.
- Plastic Bags for dry clothes and electronics. Have a dry bag or double ziplocks for all electronics.
- A layer of warmer clothing (light jacket or fleece) for Quito, Pata de Pajaro and upper Rio Bigal.
- Bandanas

Bring enough changes of clothes for about a week, and plan on using clothing (but usually not socks) for 2 or more days in a row. There will be an opportunity to do some laundry by hand, and we may be able to have laundry service once during some trips.

- First Aid. We will have some of the basic first aid items available. You should consider bringing additional items as you might need them. For instance, if you are particularly accident prone, you may want extra Band-Aids. Or if you are susceptible to traveler's diarrhea you may want to bring Imodium.
- Personal Cleaning and grooming items. Be minimal, and bring biodegradable soap, such as Dr. Bronner's, which may be used for clothes washing and even tooth brushing.
- Binoculars. Particularly useful for birdwatchers, you can pick up an adequate pair of binoculars for \$40-50. However, if you are buying a high quality pair, you should look for ones that have close focusing (e.g. 2 meters) and wide aperture, for low light environments such as the rainforest. Eagle Optics ([www.eagleoptics.com](http://www.eagleoptics.com)) sells a great line of waterproof binoculars with high-quality optics.
- Sun Protection. Sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat are recommended.
- Earplugs. The living areas we stay in are not soundproof, and you may have a noisy (e.g. snoring!) neighbor.
- Extra Food. Our diets will be mostly vegetarian and seafood. If you are a meat-eater, you may want to bring some supplemental protein bars. We do not purchase beef in Ecuador.
- Deck of playing cards. You will learn "cuarenta", a local favorite game.

Bottom line: Pack as lightly as possible, use small and lightweight items, and plan on washing clothes. You will be carrying all your belongings over long distances at times. (Tip: see [www.sierratradingpost.com](http://www.sierratradingpost.com) for bargains on personal gear.)