

An Ecuadorian non-profit NGO driven by the enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers to promote sustainable development in marginalized communities throughout Ecuador and to promote Cultural Exchange for mutual benefit in our increasingly globalized world

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma and True Ecuador Travel!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

Spring is in the air! Although to be honest, the climate in Quito is actually spring-like all the year around! So we hope you are feeling and enjoying springtime wherever you are!

March and April always tend to see a slowing down of activity in the Spanish schools and the volunteer department after a busy January and February. This generally continues through May before things take off again for the summer. This year is no exception, and although things quieted down in the schools, staff have been extremely busy making bookings and reservations for programs that will run through the summer for individual Spanish students and volunteers, groups of students and volunteers, and visitors for more touristic programs.

Our land-based Galapagos programs are proving very popular as they offer a chance to explore the diversity of the Galapagos at the most economical prices one can find. It seems this is going to be a busy year in the Galapagos as we are already finding it tricky at times to book excursions, especially for groups through the summer months.

The twin missions of Yanapuma Foundation are to promote sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized communities of Ecuador, and to promote cultural exchange between members of developed and developing nations for the mutual benefit of both.

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Our volunteer department has been very busy too, making arrangements for groups that will be arriving from May onwards and through the summer, as well as for individual volunteers. The biggest news has been the launching of a volunteer program in Peru, about which you can read more on the following pages.

The foundation has continued with its work on all fronts over the past two months. Our current project with the Tsa'chila culture will come to an end this July and we are looking beyond then to see what we can launch as a follow up. And at the Pacific coast region the new school year got under way so our "becados" program to offer scholarships to deserving youth to study at high school kicked off again at the end of April. We are grateful to all our Spanish students who pay a \$25 registration fee towards this program as well as those who donated to the program via our annual Christmas fundraiser.



Good Friday in Quito—Semana Santa

Students had the chance to witness the traditional Good Friday procession in Quito, a major event for the Catholic population of the capital city.

The event lasts for several hours as it winds its way through the historic center of the city, not too far from where our school is situated.

It is also a time to sample the traditional "Fanesca," a rich and hearty soup made with a variety of grains and dried fish. On the day before Good Friday it was the dish to prepare for our regular cooking class at the school.



Spanish School News . . .

Overall during March and April things quietened down in the Spanish schools as is normal for this time of year. On the admin side we have been busy though, accepting booking for the summer starting in June and running all the way through to September. We will be receiving individual students of all ages, families with children of varying ages, and groups from universities and other organizations.



One of our plans has been to expand our online Spanish classes as these are less prone to seasonal variations, offering a steady income stream over the

course of the year in contrast to the regular Spanish classes in Quito or Cuenca that can vary enormously from month to month.

We are also beginning to get bookings from students for our school in Cusco, Peru. This school is run in partnership with a local teacher there who has launched her own school, and follows the same methodological line as Yanapuma. We are happy to be able to offer students the option to be able to study in both Ecuador and Peru in a system that provides consistent teaching methods and style.



Volunteers and Interns . . .

At the start of April we welcomed a group of 18 volunteers from **The Leap**. They started by volunteering in the Andean community of **Agato** where they lived with host families and worked on. Following this they spent a week traveling down through the Andes enjoying adventure activities at Quilotoa crater lake, the adventure town of Baños, and Chimborazo volcano. Then it was on to the Tsa'chila community of **Bua** where they will volunteer for nearly three weeks before going off to the Galapagos Islands to work on a conservation project.



At the same time we kicked off our first program in Peru with a group of 6 volunteers led by a former Ecuadorian group leader, **Alejandro Sáa**. The group landed in the southern town of Arequipa where they spent a week taking Spanish classes and exploring before going off to the community of **Coporaque** in Colca Canyon to volunteer on community projects there. At the end they hiked down into the Colcan Canyon to relax at the oasis called Sangalle for a couple of days. At the end of the month they were headed off to Lake Titicaca for the next leg of their adventure.

Project News . . .

March and April has seen a continuation of our project with the Tsa'chila culture in the province of Santo Domingo de los Tsa'chila. The project will be finishing in July of this year and is starting to run down as the funding dries up.



Our four field staff (above) have been working part time through this period, but next month will be working full time as they receive training in basic accounting with a focus on project management. This is a vital step for them to be able to manage their own projects in the future.

Thus Yanapuma can take a step backwards and provide less direct input to the management of any project that they undertake, acting more in a capacity of oversight to assure any potential funders that the project is being well-managed and kept on track.

After the annual holidays, schools in the coastal region got back in session and our scholarship recipients began a new year of studies. Our two interns from **Union College** were responsible for getting them set up for the new year and introducing one new scholarship recipient for the year.

This coming year will mark a significant change for us as we will no longer be receiving interns from Union College in the future due to funding constraints, but we have organized for a volunteer through the German “Weltwärts” program through our partner organization **KulturLife** in Germany. This volunteer will be one of 11 that will be living in indigenous and marginalized communities for a year in different parts of Ecuador, helping in local schools, teaching English and other skills to the children.

True Ecuador Travel News . . .

In March we attended the Forum on Education Abroad conference in Seattle. We had recently affiliated ourselves with the FEA as its goals align closely with our own mission as an educational travel organization. Aside from the opportunity to network with other organizations, universities, teachers and administrators looking to set up programs in Ecuador, it was a great learning experience as well.



The task of setting up a travel agency is a monumental one, with so much information to be gathered to be able to respond to inquiries from a wide range of potential clients seeking to create an exciting travel program in Ecuador.

We continue to advance in this while focusing initially on the most common requests – Galapagos land-based programs and cruises, and Amazon tours and lodges. The travel agency dovetails very neatly with the activities of the Spanish school and the volunteer department, with a good number of students and volunteers also pursuing more touristic activities while they are here

Visitors can travel to less common destinations such as the marginalized communities that we work with.



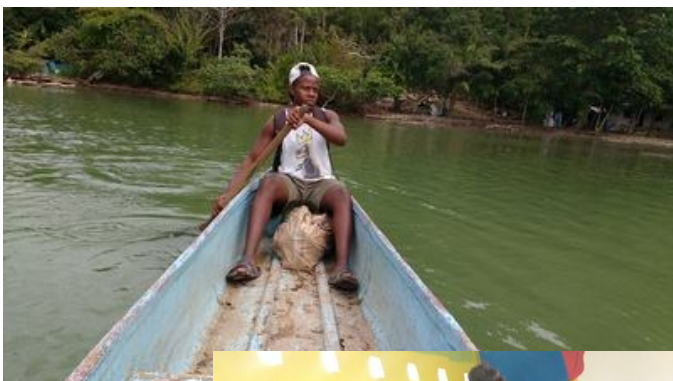
Estero de Plátano

Staff and Intern News . . .

We were pleased to welcome two interns from Belgium in March – **Thijs Mommens** and **Joren Willems**, (right) students of tourism from the **Erasmus University** of Brussels. The two have worked on various information gathering projects in Quito before receiving training and orientation to work as leaders for a volunteer group. This is a great opportunity for them to get hands-on experiencing in leading groups and dealing with the day-to-day problems that arise from looking after a group of foreigners on a program in Ecuador.

We were also delighted to welcome back former group leader **Alejandro Saa** to lead our first group in Peru. His dedication and sensible approach to life are just what we need to make this first program a success.

Towards the end of April, **Johnathan Martin** and **Zibusiso Dhlamini** (below) finished up their 9-month stint in the coastal village of **Estero de Plátano**. We are grateful to them for all their hard work with the scholarship recipients and the other community groups such as the women's group.



We were delighted to meet up again in April with former intern from France, **Emilièn Amblat**. Emiliano, as he was known here, later went on to work with the French development agency, setting up an office in Bolivia where he has worked until recently. It is always great to catch up with some of the interns that have passed through Yanapuma over the last 10 years!

Donation News . . .

At the end of April, returning student **James Latimer** gave us a donation of \$100 to our general donation fund.

Missed off the previous list of small donations to our earthquake relief fund were donations from German partner **TravelWorks** and **Richard Bissett** – too many small pieces of paper on my desk! Thank you all!

If you have not donated to our earthquake relief fund, but would still like to contribute, please click on this link to our website to get started: www.yanapuma.org/en/relief.php