

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

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

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 67 Dec-Jan 2019

Introduction

Welcome all to 2019! With the end-of-year festivities well over now, we have all gone back to focusing on work, studies, or whatever daily concerns we have. As we look forward to another year we also look back at the past year for clues and hints as to where best to put our energies and what we might expect as a result.

Yanapuma Foundation continues with its mission to promote sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized communities in Ecuador as well as to promote cultural exchange between members of developed and developing cultures for the mutual benefit of both sides.

Our volunteer groups that come throughout the year are part of this focus, along with the individual volunteers and interns that also arrive to experience a different culture and way of life to gain

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insight that will inform their future lifestyle and decisions.

Thank you to all of you who donated to our annual fundraiser to provide scholarships for deserving underprivileged children to continue their studies at high school. Read more about this inside, as well as how to contribute if you still would like to!

Finally, don't forget to take a moment to like and follow us on **Facebook** – after a few months of neglect, we have started to post regularly again to increase our reach and help our social enterprises - Yanapuma Spanish School and True Ecuador Travel to generate sufficient income to support our non-profit work.

New Logo!

We changed our logo for the travel agency (*see above*). We looked for something simple and recognizable which in some way evokes a sense of journey and exploration, and we think (hope!) we found it.



Baile en la Plaza San Francisco de Quito

Fundición de Quito—6 Diciembre

Las “Fiestas de Quito” se celebran el 6 de diciembre, marcando el día en que fue fundado la ciudad de Quito en el año 1534.

Donation News . . .

Following our annual Christmas fundraiser for our scholarship program we can announce that now our total of funds available stands at \$11,390.00

We envisage using half of this amount this year as we like to maintain a backup in case our following year's income is insufficient. That way we can guarantee to continue the funding for those who deserve to be supported.

Currently we have 7 recipients. Of these 2 are receiving funds to keep them in elementary school, 2 to keep them in secondary school, 2 from Bua who are studying post-high school (agriculture and information technology), and one Tsa'chila teacher who is gaining his diploma for teaching at secondary level to be able to offer bilingual and culturally-appropriate education in the local high school. We are looking to expand the number of recipients for this coming year and already have nominated candidates.

Our thanks to those who donated this year end: H Aigner, M Calvert, T Ferrell, A Umaña, P Silverton, R Harper, D Cortez, L Best, M Alonso, B Mallory.

If you have not donated but would still like to contribute, please click on this link to our website to get started: <https://www.yanapuma.org/EdePScholarships.php>



Spanish School News . . .

December, as is to be expected, was a quiet month in the Spanish Schools. January saw a new batch of students arriving, some just to study for a week or two before returning home, while others were embarking on a South American odyssey by taking a week or two of Spanish classes first.

The Quito school was very quiet, while the Cuenca school was very busy. It seems that Cuenca appeals more to a wide spectrum of travelers of all ages and interests with its calmer, more organized and well-maintained colonial streets and architecture. Quito maintains its cosmopolitan buzz, but this is not for all tastes.



Remember!

You don't have to be in Ecuador to take Spanish classes with us. You can take them online from the comfort of your own home at any time that suits your busy schedule. Online Spanish classes are ideal for children too who adapt quickly to the online learning platform.

Check it out here:

<http://yanapumaspanish.org/onlinespanish.html>



One major problem encountered during late January was the temporary suspension of the websites due to a potential malware infection on our server according to our (now former-) web hosts. Their service in solving the problem was so inept and drawn out that we ended up moving all three websites to a new host to get them up and running as quickly as possible, but not after a week without them being viewable online. Apologies to those who navigated to the website only to find a "Forbidden" notice.

As you can see from our photos, our students vary widely in age. Our youngest has been 4-years-old while the oldest . . . well we don't like to ask!



Staff and Interns . . .

During December and January we had no interns working with us, as is normal each year. New interns will arrive in February and be with us until August or September.

Our volunteer coordinator, Gabriela, has been extremely busy since the start of the year. A group leader due to lead a group starting in the New Year dropped out at the very last minute, putting us all into a total panic as the group started to arrive.

We were fortunate to be able to draft in Alejandro Saa, a previous group leader who had worked with groups in Ecuador and Peru, at least for the first 10 days or so to get the group settled in. After that Gabriela took over, staying with the group in Otavalo and then on the Ruta de los Volcanes program and until they set off for the Galapagos Islands.



Volunteer & Project News . . .

Our annual fundraiser in aid of scholarships for deserving disadvantaged children to study at high school and beyond took place in the run up to Christmas. You can read more about it in the Donation News on the front page.



We also began to set up a new project for the summer, wholly funded by Yanapuma/ True Ecuador Travel unless we receive additional funds – to extend the “edible forest” plots that we have created for the

Tsa’chila with a few thousand more trees that will be planted out by volunteers later in the year.

The saplings will be grown by the members of the cultural center Shinopi Bolón in Bua and purchased from them to be planted out on different farms. Recreating a good portion of the original forest is a long-term goal, much appreciated by the Tsa’chila for whom the forest is a large part of their culture. In addition to local species, some of which have been on the verge of extinction, we will include introduced species that have specific use for humans, helping to provide food security and additional forms of income from the forest products.



A volunteer group from Colege Edouard Montpetit in Quebec returned for the 10th year running to work with the cacao growers of the Tsa’chila comuna Bua. The group spent a week helping on the farms of various members of the cacao growers association.

Their repeat annual visits have been a great impetus for the cacao growers to continue their attempts to improve the quality and quantity of their cacao. This year was no different as the group also enjoyed staying with host families to gain insight in to their daily lives in an indigenous culture. The group returned to Quito on Saturday 19 January prior to flying back to a freezing and snowy Quebec on the Sunday.



We also welcomed a group from the Leap – (above) youth from the UK, US and Germany – for a 10-week program in Ecuador. After a couple of days in Quito to acclimatize and receive orientations it was off to the Andean Kichwa community of Agato to live with host families while they worked on various community infrastructure projects. These included maintaining community vegetable plots, clearing felled trees for the installation of electric lighting in the community and helping on the family’s gardens and farms.

Weekends were spent in Otavalo where they could visit the famous market on a Saturday and enjoy excursions to the Peguche Waterfall and the Parque del Condor rescue center for birds of prey.

At the end of January the group set off on the Ruta de los Volcanes adventure week, traveling to Quilotoa crater lake to hike and kayak on the turquoise waters, do white water rafting in Baños, and climb up to the glacier on Chimborazo volcano before cycling downhill around the volcano.

At the very end of January the group headed off to the Galapagos where they will spend nearly three weeks working on a conservation project on San Cristóbal Island.

We were also happy to receive another group from Canadian organization **Operation Groundswell** to work in Bua on the “Edible Forest” project under the guidance of local promotor Cristina Calazacón. During the week they helped in the construction and maintenance of the nursery using local materials.

Our 7 German volunteers on the Weltwärts program funded by the German government continued their labors in the various sites where they are stationed around the country. Donating one whole year of their time to teaching in schools that are underfunded and understaffed provides a welcome resource for the children in these communities.

We are always happy to hear from organizations seeking suitable study abroad, service learning, gap year , volunteer and other programs in Ecuador.

True Ecuador Travel . . .

The new year started busy for the travel agency with a good number of bookings for the Galapagos Island-hopping tours that we offer.

At the end of last year we reviewed our experiences for the year and tweaked the programs a little to make them even better. The prices are very competitive compared with all the competition we have seen, especially for our Spanish students to whom we offer a good discount on the list price.

We have also been very fortunate in finding sponsorship from travel app company Vamoos, who have very generously extended to us the use of their app to help us in our social enterprise efforts.



Their app allows us to create itineraries that clients can access on their smart phones along with all the fine details, documents, weather information and online and offline maps – the complete companion to an Ecuador or Galapagos adventure! <https://www.vamoos.com/>

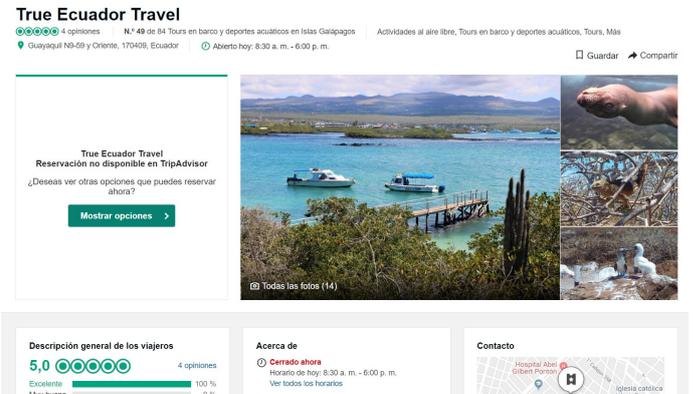


Vamoos replaces our own home-grown app that we developed in-house to provide all the details to our Galapagos clients in a much more basic style!



After months of trying to figure out how to do it we finally also got a page launched on TripAdvisor! Supposedly TripAdvisor does not support pages for travel agencies, but when we search we find many of our competitors with their own pages.

Finally we somehow managed it after several fails over many months. Clients are already leaving positive comments on their experiences with us. If you have a moment to spare please do consider looking us up on TripAdvisor and leaving your thoughts to help us along.



More Donation News . . .

We received a donation of \$200 from the Colège Edouard Montpetit at the end of their project in Bua with the cacao growers. This will be put towards the “edible forest” project.

We also received confirmation of a donation from Sototgrande International School of \$400 which will also be put towards the edible forest project.

We welcome small donations from individuals and organizations, pledging 100% of such donations to direct project costs, providing our own admin and overhead costs.

To learn more about the work of Yanapuma Foundation visit our website: <https://yanapuma.org>