



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

We wish all our supporters a Very Happy Holiday Season as that time of the year rapidly approaches!

At the end of October, for the first time in 10 years we did not have a moment spare to create the bi-monthly newsletter. We have been busy on a variety of projects – finishing some off and starting off others – that kept us so occupied that we did not even notice that it was newsletter time!

However, we thought we would just wait until the start of December and send out the newsletter along with our regular **Scholarship Fund drive**, to save sending out two separate emails. Below you will find details of this annual event at Yanapuma for which your support is extremely valuable.

As the year draws to a close we have been busily preparing for

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next year, especially for the start of January when the schools will fill up again, and the travel agency will be more active. December especially is a time for putting new processes in place, compiling new materials and getting our systems operating smoothly.

In Yanapuma Foundation we have been helping our field team in Santo Domingo to prepare a funding proposal for presentation on their own. For us this is the next step on the road to making our work self-sustaining. In the meantime we continue to prepare various volunteer groups for visits to the Tsa'chila and other communities during 2018.



A traditional "chiva" in Quito

Fiestas de Quito!

On 6 December Quito celebrates its founding in 1534. A week of cultural activities, concerts and parades culminates on the 6th every year.

The traditional "chiva" (above) is an open sided transport, much used on the coast, but which serves during the festivities as a mobile fiesta, with a traditional live brass band on the roof—"Banda del Pueblo".

Today however, more and more this traditional mode is being replaced by a flatbed truck decked out as a dance floor, playing modern music and partying around the city.

Annual Scholarship Fund Drive!

At the end of every year we appeal to our readers to support our annual fundraising drive to provide scholarships for deserving and underprivileged youth to study at high school. We support students in the coastal community of Estero de Plátano and the Tsa'chila community of Bua.

In addition we have now begun to also support deserving students of the indigenous school Yachay Wasi in the south of Quito.

One hundred percent of donations go directly to the scholarships.

The high-school scholarships cost \$350 each, and go towards uniforms, books and supplies, and transport from the community to the nearest high school. Our volunteers help keep the "becados" on target with extra tutoring and support when needed.

Please consider donating whatever you can. To do so you can follow this link: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/EdePScholarships.php>



Spanish School News . . .

Towards the end of the year traditionally the schools begin to quieten down, and this year has been no different. The school in Cuenca has stayed busier in general although Quito school also had its moments of being full along with weeks of being very quiet. But we have used the time to plan and review materials and processes for both the classes in Ecuador as well as the online Spanish classes that we offer.

The year 2017 has provided further confirmation of the changing pattern of language study in Ecuador, with many more older students attending both schools, and very few backpackers passing through. There has been a boom for 20 years of



backpackers arriving in Quito to begin their journey around South America, starting off with a couple of weeks of classes to be able to travel with greater confidence. Now we receive some of the same people that came so many years ago, but now as a family with their own children, or their parents who are nearing retirement or already retired.

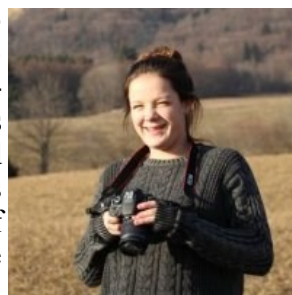


Staff, Volunteers and Interns . . .

At the start of September a group of volunteers from the Leap UK arrived to begin a 10-week program. After 3 weeks in the community of Agato near Otavalo in the northern Andes, they moved on to a very different tropical climate to work with the Tsa'chila in Bua. Finally they went to the Galapagos Islands to carry out a conservation program, rooting out invasive species and working on an organic farm. Of course they also had time to explore the wonders of the Galapagos Islands, visiting some of the other islands, before coming back to the mainland for a few days at the Gaia Amazon Center to round off their 10 weeks.

Currently we also have 12 volunteers on the German Weltwärts program. Arriving in August, they will stay until next July. There are 2 volunteers teaching at the INEPE schools and 2 at the Yachay Wasi indigenous school in the south of Quito, 1 in the coastal community of Santo Domingo, 1 in Agato community in the Andes, 2 in the Selva Vida project near Macas in the Amazon region, 2 at the Caballo Sendero project in Macas itself and 2 at Parque Bambú ecological project.

French intern **Claire Masure** finishes a 5-month internship with us in the middle of December. Claire has worked at the school and travel agency in Quito as well as spending a couple of months in Cuenca where she coordinated the school and carried out other duties. She also created a number of short videos to demonstrate how the online Spanish classes work and videos about Quito and Cuenca and other excursions that she made while she was here. We are very grateful to Claire and she will be missed!



We are pleased to welcome **Ana Maria Carrera** as part of our team in our Quito office. Ana Maria has a Masters in International Communications Management from the Hague and has many years of experience developing social media. This is an area we have neglected severely over the past few years and Ana Maria will help us form a plan to develop appropriate social media channels and publicize our activities to a new audience.



Project News . . .

As mentioned in the introduction, we have been helping the field team that worked for the past 5 years on a project to improve cacao production, carry out reforestation, create vegetable gardens and offer nutrition and diet education, to create a new project proposal that will see them take charge of the entire process. Yanapuma will still be in the background to help and ensure that things are going according to plan and budget. But the idea has always been to make our work self-sustaining and this new proposal represents the end of that process.

In meetings with the field team, we found them full of ideas to develop activities that will improve their economic, social, and environmental well being and we are happy to lend a hand to make these ideas a reality. It marks a point where we are not going in and suggesting what can be done, but are listening to the ideas coming from the community itself, and responding with help in the planning and design of the proposal to fund the work that they would like to carry out.

Another aspect of our work that has grown over the past year or two is our involvement in the Weltwärts program sponsored by the German government. Individual volunteers spend an entire year working in a project, school or community. The extended period allows them to make a significant contribution to their site whether it be in teaching English and other subjects, acting as teaching assistants, or working on other community development projects. This year we are hosting X volunteers on this program and are expecting a similar or greater number for next year.



The contribution of volunteer groups forms an important part of the work that we carry out. In addition to the resources that they bring in the form of their physical work and any project donations, the exchange between cultures offers an opportunity for community members to learn more about the world and their unique place in it through the interest of the volunteers in learning about their culture.



True Ecuador Travel . . .

As the first year of offering our own **Galapagos Land-Based programs** come to an end (we launched them in January 2017) we are happy to say that these have been a great success.



Of the more than 60 programs that we sold in the first year there were only relatively minor hiccups that were fairly easily resolved. Each such hiccup is a learning experience and we know that we always have to be on top of every event for each passenger to ensure that their once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Galapagos Islands becomes a precious and memorable event.

The other top selling program that we have offered during the year has been trips into the Amazon rainforest in the Cuyabeno Reserve (*image below*). Ideal for individual travelers or groups, these programs go deep into the reserve by canoe to explore the flora and fauna of the Amazon region as well as visiting a community that lives there of the Secoya and Cofán cultures.



We have also noted a great deal of interest in visiting the cloud forests of Ecuador which are especially rich in bird species, offering some spectacular opportunities for bird-watchers to observe some of the rarer varieties. Some older Spanish

students have opted to visit the **Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve** for bird-watching while they learn Spanish with their teacher.



In November we attended the ACTFL (*American Confederation of Teachers of Foreign Languages*) conference in Nashville, TN, with a stand to promote Study Abroad programs in Ecuador as well as our online Spanish classes for younger students who need help with their elementary, high school and university Spanish classes.

This is the biggest conference for language teachers, and the majority of attendees were Spanish teachers, along with French, Italian, German and other languages.

The event was a good opportunity to talk with teachers from a wide variety of schools and backgrounds and find out what issues are especially important to them as they work to promote language learning in their respective institutions.

