

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

Another two months has flown past since our last newsletter at the end of August! We have been busy these two months preparing for next year – reviewing, redefining and pricing our programs, developing new offerings, and working to extend our “social enterprise” activities to ensure a reliable income stream for 2017 and beyond.

We continue to develop programs through our travel agency—True Ecuador Travel. We have been putting together our own Galapagos land-based tours to begin offering to the public at the start of next year. These programs will allow students, volunteers and visitors to explore and learn about the wonders of the Galapagos Islands on any of 8 itineraries from 5—10 days in length.

With our new opportunity for Spanish students to study with us in Cusco, Peru, we have moved beyond the borders of Ecuador for the first time. We are already beginning

Weltwärts Volunteers from Germany!

At the very end of October we were pleased to finally welcome a group of 6 volunteers from Germany on the “Weltwärts” program sponsored by the German government. They come to us via the German organization **KulturLife**.

Their arrival was delayed over a month due to the slow bureaucracy in Ecuador as we struggled for months to get the foundation’s papers renewed in order to be able to sponsor their volunteer visas.



The volunteers will teach English and other subjects for the academic year 2016-2017 in different elementary and secondary schools throughout Ecuador. Their extended stay is a great help to small schools as they can guide students over a long period in the development of their English skills.

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to receive inquiries from potential students interested in continuing their studies with us as they journey through the rest of South America.

All of these activities allow us to continue funding the work of our own non-profit NGO—Yanapuma Foundation. The income we receive covers our basic overhead costs and provides some funding for the programs we run—work with the Tsa’chila indigenous culture on cacao production, vegetable gardens, nutrition and diet, reforestation and microenterprise development, and scholarships for underprivileged youth to study at high schools at the Pacific coast, and support for other grass-roots organizations and communities.

We thank you for your continued support!

Yanapuma is 10 Years Old!!

At the end of September we had a low-key celebration of our 10-year anniversary at the school in Quito. It was on 26 September 2006 that we first opened our doors as a non-profit NGO and Spanish school, full of idealistic enthusiasm but short on experience!

It has been a steep learning curve, but we can look back with great satisfaction at having helped to create lasting positive change in the communities and projects that we have been involved with.



Since our inception we have welcomed over 3000 students, 2000 volunteers and dozens of interns, all of whom have contributed to our mission of promoting sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized communities in Ecuador.



A volunteer holds a rescued baby monkey at the “Paseo de los Monos” animal rescue sanctuary.

Spanish School News . . .

While the school in Quito has been fairly quiet these last two months, the school in Cuenca has been much busier and we have seen a number of students taking advantage of our “Study and Travel” programs, visiting different parts of the country with their own teacher.



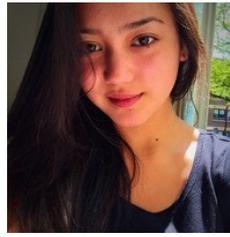
We have seen a general shift in the market with many fewer backpackers arriving in Ecuador over the past couple of years. Along with a decrease in the number of tourists visiting Ecuador this has had a strong



impact on attendance at all the Spanish schools here. We are adapting to the changes in the market, and have been receiving increasing numbers of retired and semi-retired travelers as well as families with children who come to Ecuador to study together as a family.

We have now begun to promote our new school in Cusco, Peru, with similar programs to those we have offered for the previous 10 years in Ecuador. Peru has made great strides in promoting itself as an important tourist destination in recent years, and with a wealth of amazing sites to explore including Cusco itself, the Sacred Valley with Macchu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, Colca Canyon and much more, it is also a good option for students and travelers looking to learn some Spanish.

Volunteers and Interns . . .



We were pleased to welcome Dutch intern **Linda Dobson** to work with us in the travel agency and volunteer department at the start of September. As we are busy consolidating our databases and collating all the prices and programs for next year there is plenty to do!

We also welcomed intern **Hallel Elnir** from Hebrew University of Jerusalem who began to work with the Tsa'chila in the comuna Bua. At first he accompanied Janeth and Cristina on their rounds of the comunas to visit the vegetable gardens and edible forest plots, before beginning to work more with the members of the tree nursery of the cultural center Shinopi Bolón.



We welcomed a group of 16 volunteers from the **Leap** at the start of September. The group started with 3 weeks of volunteering in the Andean Kichwa community of Agato where they stayed with host families, gaining daily insight into the lives of the people who have inhabited this region for centuries. Their volunteer work consisted of . . .

Following this the group spent 3 weeks volunteering in the Tsa'chila comuna of Bua. The group stayed at the Shinopi Bolón cultural center and worked on planting 2,000 saplings that were grown in the nursery there.

Their next volunteering stint was on the Galapagos Islands, working on a conservation project on the island of San Cristóbal. Of course they also had time to visit some of the other islands and enjoy some excursions to explore the wonders of the archipelago.

We also hosted two groups from **Pacific Discovery**, who also spent time volunteering in the Kichwa community of Agato, living with host families and working on . . .

At the end of their volunteering the groups headed off to Quilotoa crater lake and Baños for some adventure before traveling on to the Amazon to work with the “Sinchi Aqua” Kichwa women’s group at the visitor center they have been creating over the past few years as a means of developing an income for their families while preserving and promoting their traditional culture. The groups also got a chance to visit the Cuayabeno Reserve and explore one of the most bio-diverse regions of the entire planet.



Yanapuma Foundation News . . .

During the past two months we have continued with our principal project with the Tsa'chila indigenous culture of the province of Santo Domingo de los Tsa'chila, although progress has been halting due to funding restrictions as we await the final disbursement from the Inter American Foundation. This project will be completed on 11 January of 2017, a date which is fast approaching! At the same time we have additional funding from the **Alan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust** which has allowed us to maintain the activities and will continue beyond the end of the current IAF funding.

On 12 October we accompanied a representative from PKF auditors to Santo Domingo for a site visit and an overview of what we have been doing on the project for these past 4 years as part of a regular audit.



One critical process that we have in the pipeline is to provide training in accounting, especially related to project management, for our field team. We have everything lined up to begin this process as soon as the funding comes through. With this training the team will be ready to move on to the next stage in which Yanapuma will help them to seek funding to continue their work, with Yanapuma acting as guarantors and auditors to ensure that funds are being well spent and that the project is achieving its stated goals.

With this final piece in place we will consider the project to have achieved sustainability, with our current Tsa'chila field staff capable of creating and managing development projects, putting the tools of development firmly in the hands of the Tsa'chila culture. We hope to be able to secure two or three years of funding for the team and to be able to support them during this transition period so that they emerge fully competent and capable of generating confidence in potential funders, both local and international.

New intern **Hallel Elnir** began to work with the tree nursery at the cultural center Shinopi Bolón. To date Yanapuma has been buying the saplings that they grow to plant out with the help of volunteer groups. Our aim is to help them to develop this as a micro enterprise, selling native species of trees for reforestation projects in Santo Domingo and beyond. Hallel has begun to investigate potential channels for sales and distribution of saplings.



In **Estero de Plátano**, our two interns from Union College, **Zi Dhlamini** and **Johnny Martín**, continue to work with the scholarship recipients, tutoring them in various subjects and keeping them on track to complete their high school education. After nearly 3 months in the community they are beginning to get a clear picture of the dynamics of this relatively small community and an idea of the factors that impede their development.

Donation News . . .

After taking some time to decide what to do with the donations we received as a result of our appeal to help the victims of the earthquake that devastated parts of the coast back in April, reviewing the options to ensure that the funds are well utilized, the money has been donated to a local project— **Proyecto Samán** (<http://www.proyectosaman.com/web/home.php>) for relief work in the town of Canoa that was levelled by the earthquake.

We received a total of \$4,407.96 from our former students and volunteers. In addition our staff and teachers donated one day's pay to the same fund.

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

True Ecuador Travel News . . .

Since its inception at the end of 2015, True Ecuador Travel has taken over the role of organizing activities, transport, accommodation and travel programs for our volunteers and students, both individuals and groups. As the number of groups we host continues to rise and the variety of the programs arranged continues to expand, we have everything in place to be able to offer the best options and quality of service to guarantee a meaningful and successful program in Ecuador.



During the last two months we have arranged a variety of programs for groups. The sixteen volunteers with the Leap spent a week traveling through the Andes – kayaking on Quilotoa crater lake, white-water rafting in Baños, trekking above the snowline on Chimborazo volcano, before spending 3 weeks in the Galapagos Islands, and finishing with a few days exploring the Amazon rain forest at the Gaia Amazon Center where they will hike in primary forest, visit Anaconda Island on the Napo River and enjoy tubing on the river among other activities.

Likewise, the two Pacific Discovery groups traveled to Quilotoa and on to Baños for the same activities before continuing on to Tena where they volunteered with the “Sinchi Aqua” Kichwa women’s collective at the visitor center they have

been creating over the past few years to provide income for their families.

Another important step in the month of October for True Ecuador Travel and Yanapuma Foundation was becoming a member of the Forum on Education Abroad. One of the ad-



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vantages of membership of this organization is that we can adopt their “Standards of Good Practice” for education abroad to assure potential and current clients of the very best attention in the creation and realization of their programs.



Volunteers dress in typical Kichwa attire during their stay in the community of Agato (above). Volunteering in a rural indigenous community offers the opportunity to experience and learn directly what it is like to be part of a totally different culture and live in a different environment.

For many of our volunteers it is the first time that they have experienced life outside their own cultural system, and often becomes one of the most memorable aspects of their visit to Ecuador.

