

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

**July and August** are the busiest months of the year as visitors from North America, Europe and beyond travel to Ecuador to study Spanish, volunteer, take part in other programs and enjoy more touristic pursuits.

**Over the last few years** we have seen the patterns changing. Nowadays we receive a much more mixed student population. In addition to the twenty-somethings traveling around South America, we receive families studying Spanish with their children, as young as 3 or 4 years old, as well as retired and semi-retired students and other professionals in their 30s and 40s.

**The “backpackers”** have largely disappeared, favoring Asia now as the new frontier to explore, leaving the families, professionals and retired travelers to explore Ecuador as a safe and reliable destination. These changes have cast up challenges to

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Yanapuma along with other Spanish schools and organizations that have counted on the “boom” in young travelers over the past 15 years or more. We have seen the student numbers diminish each year for the past few years and have been gradually reacting to the changing situation we find ourselves in.

**Developing our travel agency,** True Ecuador Travel, is part of that change. So we remain in good shape, although our ability to continue funding projects at the level we have done in the past will inevitably suffer. But we continue to consider the options that are open to us to develop our “social enterprise” model in pursuance of the mission of Fundación Yanapuma.

### Donations for earthquake relief

**A huge THANK YOU** to all who contributed to our efforts to raise funds for the “damnificados” who suffered such great loss as a result of the earthquake at the coasts earlier this year. We have just over \$4,000 collected and are at the point of making a decision on how best to use these funds.

**We have been identifying** suitable organizations that are actively working in the worst-affected regions. There is still much to do!

**We had hoped** to have it all wrapped up by the time this newsletter came out, but the pressures of the high season of summer have kept us too busy by far.

**So if you would still** like to contribute it is still not too late! You can follow this link to find out how: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/relief.php>

### Cultural Immersion and Exchange . . .

**In combination with Yanapuma’s mission** to promote sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized communities in Ecuador, our other principal objective is to promote cultural exchange between members of developing and developed communities for the mutual benefit of both parties.

**For those who come from developed countries,** the opportunity to step outside of their habitual patterns and the paraphernalia of modern life and immerse themselves in a more natural and simple environment can be a transformational experience. And for their hosts, receiving visitors from oth-



er countries who demonstrate a real interest and inquisitiveness about their culture and lifestyle can lead to a renewed appreciation of the cultural and environmental wealth that they have and may have taken for granted or undervalued previously.

**For nearly 10 years now** we have witnessed these interchanges between international individual visitors and groups from high-schools, universities and other organizations and the populations of the communities that we are working with. We have seen the effects that such projects have had on both visitors and hosts, and the lasting friendships and commitments made from both sides.

## Spanish School News . . .

Both Spanish schools were busy during these summer months, especially the school in Cuenca where we were struggling to find enough space to hold classes. In the end we even had to use the kitchen as a classroom for part of the day! And that was even with some students taking classes at their lodgings. Students ranged in age from 7 to 70 and from absolute beginners to US Spanish teachers brushing up on their own language skills during the summer vacation.



Cuenca School

The biggest news for the Spanish side of things is the signing of an agreement with a new Spanish school in Cusco, Peru, to represent Yanapuma there. After a visit to Peru in March to visit a number of Spanish schools we found only one that manages a similar methodology and standard of quality of teaching and services. At the end of September we were involved in harmonizing our programs to be able to offer the same services in Cusco as in Quito and Cuenca. We hope that with this increased range we can interest students in studying with us both in Ecuador and Peru.



Quito School

Summer in both schools saw a good number of children studying with us, both with and without their parents. We have developed a range of materials and audio-visual resources to keep classes interesting and engaging for younger students from just 3 or 4 years old and upwards. Often 2 hours of classes is sufficient for the



youngest students, while older children can maintain their concentration for 3 hours of classes.

As an active member of the Ecuadorian Association of Spanish Language Centers (AECEE) we have continued to work with local entities such as ProEcuador and Quito Turismo to promote Ecuador as a destination for “language tourism.” At the same time we have continued to push to get the cost of student visas reduced to a reasonable price. At the start of this year they were suddenly doubled from \$230 to \$460, an outrageous and indefensible increase. While one part of the government is working to promote tourism and language visitors, immigration is doing all it can to make it more difficult for people to study long-term here!



### Studying Spanish Online!

Don't forget that you can study Spanish online with Yanapuma. With over a hundred students taking classes online our teachers are experts in providing professional Spanish language tuition through Skype or Google.

You can give it a try by following this link: <http://timelybooking.com/yanapumaspanish.org>

**Project News . . .**

At the end of July we completed the 8<sup>th</sup> semester report for the **Inter American Foundation** for our co-funded project. At the end of 4 years here are the total amounts invested by our respective organizations:

Source	Budget	Spent
Inter American Foundation	\$ 211.350,00	\$ 181.650,00
Yanapuma	\$ 101.400,00	\$ 105.359,00

The good news is that we still have sufficient funding to be able to continue for a further 12 months – terminating now in July of 2017. Yanapuma has put in an additional \$18,000. Of this amount, \$13,400 (£10,000) came from the **A & N Ferguson Charitable Trust**, and will allow us to develop the project further and to begin thinking about the next phases.



*Our 2 scholarship recipients in Bua*

**The extra year that we can continue** the current project will allow us time to continue training the field team and preparing them to take on more responsibilities in the future.

**Estero de Plátano**

We were also pleased to welcome **Johnny Martín** and **Zi**



**Dhlamani** from Union College, NY, to continue our work in the coastal village of Estero de Plátano (below). We accompanied them to the community to introduce them to their new hosts at the end of July. They will continue to work with the scholarship recipients there as well as involving themselves in other community development projects.



Over the 4 years of the project we have gone from having a team of 3 external experts overseeing the field work to having the field team themselves, three of whom are native Tsa'chila, directly involved in the training and ongoing development of the project. This change has put the tools of development squarely in the hands of the Tsa'chila themselves, creating confidence in some of the younger generation that the Tsa'chila can control and manage their own affairs without having to rely on external experts in the future. Of course, there is still much to do and many challenges ahead. But we are encouraged to continue and Yanapuma will be seeking funding for the team to continue developing their independence so that we can perform more of an auditing and support role rather than being directly in control of the projects.



**We always observe** to the new interns that Estero de Plátano is a great place to pass the time agreeably with friendly locals and a beautiful beach and surrounding forests, but it is a difficult place to put development into practice! That is their challenge for the next 8 months!

## Volunteers and Interns . . .

July and August are always busy months for volunteers, especially with many groups arriving to contribute their willing hands to development projects. We welcomed a group of 12 volunteers from **the Leap** at the start of January. They contributed to projects in the Andean village of Chilcapamba before traveling to the Galapagos to take part in a conservation project there.



A group of 18 students from **Sotogrande International School** came in July with two teachers. After a couple of days in Quito they traveled to the Tsa'chila community of Bua where they helped in local construction and other projects at the Centro Cultural Shinopi Bolón. They also made a short trip to Estero de Plátano where they met the scholarship students that we support

there and learned about the culture and lifestyle of this isolated coastal community.

A group of 7 volunteers arrived with **Pacific Discovery** to work in the Andean community of Agato where they helped with reforestation and also worked on the "chakras" or small-holdings of the people of the community at

harvest time.

At the end of August we thanked the 3 German volunteers who had spent a year here on the **Weltwärts program** funded by the German government, teaching English in Quito and other parts of the country.



Unfortunately, they did not feel that the work in Chilcapamba was very useful. This is a situation we have faced with several communities after a while as they get more used to receiving volunteers for the contribution they make for accommodation and food than for the actual work. So the volunteer project work becomes something of an afterthought which is frustrating for the volunteers themselves. Upon review we began a process of working out an agreement with a new community in the Andes that has a range of possible projects that they would like to do in the coming years. The community is called Agato and is also close to the town of Otavalo.

At the end of their volunteering the Leapers traveled to the Amazon for a few days R&R in the **Gaia Amazon Spanish Center** where they enjoyed hikes and exploration of the Amazon rain forest.

We also welcomed 8 groups from **Outlook Expeditions**. These groups carried out volunteer projects in various indigenous communities and projects including Bua (Tsa'chila), Selvavida (Shuar), and Sinchi Aqua Center (Kichwa). Their relatively short volunteering stint forms part of a longer adventure journey around the country, but their efforts on behalf of these indigenous communities are appreciated.

