

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

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Introduction

April and May always mark a lull between the activity of the first quarter of the year and the onset of the summer period.

Many visitors begin their travels after the Christmas and New Year holidays, taking Spanish classes, volunteering and visiting the Galapagos Islands in the first three months of the year. The next wave of visitors begins around the start of June as the vacation period starts in the US.

The two months of April and May in between give us a moment to plan, organize and prepare for the busy summer months for the Spanish school, the volunteer department and the travel agency.

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We have been pleased to receive two new interns to help us with various tasks as we build up our databases, social media presence, and seek new projects for volunteers and study abroad options for next year. We will introduce them on the following pages.

So as we move into June, we are looking forward to a busy summer period for students, volunteers and other visitors ready to experience the marvels that Ecuador has to offer the inquisitive traveler.



Cotopaxi volcano at sunset

How Many Volcanoes Are There in Ecuador?

The Geophysical Institute of Ecuador has counted 27 volcanoes on the mainland and the Galapagos Islands.

Of these, 7 volcanoes on the mainland and 7 volcanoes on the Galapagos Islands have been active since the Spaniards first arrived in 1532.

One of our most popular "Study and Travel" programs is the Ruta de los Volcanes week, traveling down through the Andes between snow-capped volcanic peaks with a Spanish teacher to learn Spanish while enjoying hiking, white-water rafting, kayaking on a crater lake, and more adventure activities.



And of course our visitors to the Galapagos Islands get the chance to visit the Volcán Sierra Negra on Isabela Island as well as taking boat trips to other islands with a volcanic history and presence.

Weltwärts—The German Volunteer Program . . .

In May, founder Elizabeth Garfalo traveled to Colombia and the small and picturesque town of Villa de Leyva at the invitation of the German government for a week-long set of seminars on the Weltwärts program that they sponsor.

Currently Yanapuma hosts 11 volunteers from Germany who are spending one year volunteering in different communities and projects around Ecuador.

Two are working at the indigenous Yachay Wasi school in Quito, two more are working at the INEPE schools in Quito. One is at the community of Agato in the Andes and two at the Selva Vida project of the Shuar culture in the Amazon region. Two more are at the Parque Bambú conservation



project in the cloud forest north of Quito and two at the Caballo Sendero project in Macas in the Amazon region.

These volunteers make a significant contribution to the projects of their host communities and organizations with a year-long commitment.

Spanish School News . . .

The April-May lull in students in Quito has given us time to focus on updating some of our teaching resources and to begin to develop new ones, especially for the online Spanish classes.

We have been testing out a new professional platform to replace Skype, and are ready to get going with this. But unfortunately Adobe's South American representatives have been painfully slow to send us the necessary information to get up and running! But we are looking forward to installing their professional teaching platform for the benefit of both our online Spanish teachers and the students who will be able to take advantage of a fully integrated system combining audio and video communication with the teacher with additional videos, Power Point presentations, interactive documents, image viewers, whiteboards and more.

Meanwhile in the school in Cuenca we have remained fairly busy with a good mix of students of all ages and skill levels. Cuenca, being such a charming city, is a big draw for potential students and is always popular. Many come to Cuenca with the idea of checking it out as a potential retirement location, taking Spanish classes and networking with other expats who have become "Cuencanos".

Of course, Cuenca too is the perfect location for families with younger children as the city is easily negotiated on foot and with all the regular services that children require.

Interns . . .

During April and May interns **Anke Publie** and **Jana Vanhaverbeke** worked at the school in Cuenca, coordinating students and activities and carrying out research on tourist activities, hotels, and other tourist-related services.

At the end of April we welcomed **Simon de Leeuw** (right) from Erasmus University in Belgium, a student of tourism, and in mid-May **Menno Vlietman** (below) from Tio University of Applied Sciences in Belgium, a student of business administration joined us. Both



are based in the Quito office for the summer, working on various projects with social media, websites and development of the travel agency and school—there is certainly plenty for them to be busy with during their time here!

At the start of May we also welcomed American University student **Hunter Martin** to spend time investigating the role of women in development in the Tsa'chila culture and in the coastal village of Estero de Plátano. We look forward to hearing her reports of her experiences in these two very different cultures.



Volunteers on the shore of Lake Titicaca in Peru

We also welcomed volunteer group leader **Arlich Astete Cienfuegos** as a member of staff, our first in Peru. Arlich has been leading the Peru group since their arrival at the start of April. With both German and Peruvian parents, Arlich is multilingual and has worked in Cusco as a tourism guide for a number of years.

Project News . . .

At the end of May we were happy to welcome Alfonso and José Felipe to our offices in Quito alongside two consultants interested in working with them on the development of the Shinopi Bolón cultural center.

Alfonso is the founder of the center and José Felipe is the current president. It is gratifying for us to note that Yanapuma has become the go-to organization for the Tsa'chila whenever presented with opportunities and options, as they understand that we are totally neutral and without bias and will give them our honest opinion of any situation so that they can come to the most sensible conclusions.



Other organizations have approached us in order to be able to approach the Tsa'chila with whatever project they are promoting. Agricultural engineer Giovanni Toapanta who worked with us for the first few years of his professional career is still very much in touch with the Tsa'chila cacao growers that he worked with during that time (for our paltry salary!). But the experience has opened doors for him as someone able to work with the Tsa'chila in these areas and maintain their trust and collaboration.

During the visit of Alfonso and José Felipe we talked about the projects that they want to develop for Shinopi Bolón, as well as the volunteer groups that will be going there this year, and the scholarship program that we have been running there and want to expand this year with two more candidates. Currently the first two to graduate high school with our scholarships have gone on to study for diplomas in agriculture and information technology – subjects vital for the Tsa'chila to learn in order to determine their own futures.

As May drew to a close we determined to begin the process of assessing the scholarship candidates for this year and getting a clear idea of the funds that we have available to promote basic and further education for deserving youth in Ecuador. Providing sufficient support to each recipient is also of great importance as a little extra tutoring and social support can make all the difference to a young person as they develop.

Volunteers . . .

In April we began hosting two groups from the Leap UK, one in Ecuador and the other in Peru. The program in Ecuador kicked off with a stint in the Andean Kichwa community of Agato where the group provided the muscles to carry out infrastructure projects in the community, as well as doing some teaching in the local school.

After that they went to the Tsa'chila community of Bua to contribute there to construction and maintenance of the cultural center before taking off for an adventure week through the Andes on the “Ruta de los Volcanes” tour. After that they went off to the Galapagos Islands (photo below) to work on a conservation project. They will return at the start of May to spend the last few days at the Gaia Amazon Lodge as a reward for all their hard work.



Meanwhile the group in Peru began in the southern town of Arequipa with some Spanish classes before moving on to explore the impressive Colca Canyon. After that they went on to an Aymara community on the banks of Lake Titicaca to work with the community there on local projects as well as teaching some English to the school children.

After that they traveled to Cusco for a day or two before traveling into the Amazon to a new conservation project that we have begun to support called Tierra Linda. Following that they returned to Cusco before traveling to an Andean community of the Yachaqs in the Sacred Valley where they will help on local projects there before finally taking the Salkantay trek to end up at the inspiring Inca site of Macchu Pichu.



True Ecuador Travel . . .

Over the last two months we have been coordinating with Ana Maria, our social media expert, to raise the profile of True Ecuador Travel. It is a long process to launch a website and takes patience and many work hours to raise the website to the position of beginning to receive organic traffic. Regular updates to our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages helps and slowly the traffic is beginning to increase.

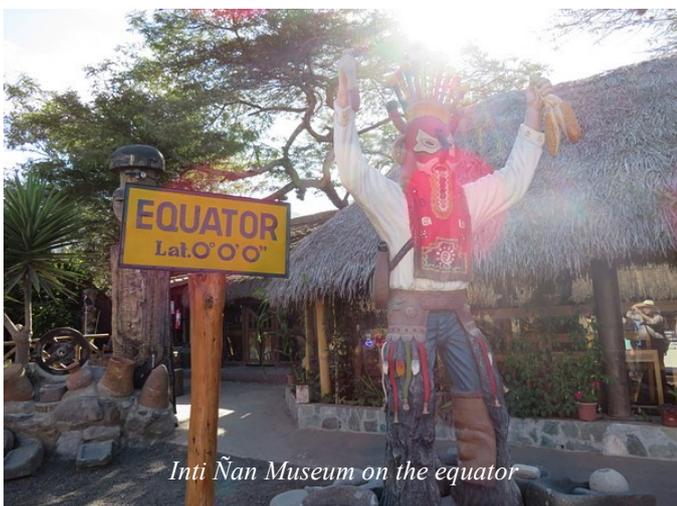
These two months have been a time for confirming the reservations and details for all our clients who will be visiting the Galapagos in the next two months which are a peak time for the islands as they mark the summer months in the northern hemisphere.

The Galapagos has been especially busy over the past months and will be largely sold out over the summer. Clients seeking last-minute bargains for cruises have been met with very few options available, and these on boats that do not come well recommended.

Our intern Simon has been busy adding details to our interactive maps of the Galapagos for our visitors. We aim to keep on adding new details when we hear of great places to eat well or cheap, free activities, and general tips for where to go and what to do on the islands without breaking the bank.

If you would like to see how our app works for our clients then you can follow this link: https://true-ecuador-travel.org/tet/?page_id=491

Log in with “test client” and “123456” as the password.



Inti Ñan Museum on the equator

Study Abroad in Ecuador

Ecuador is the perfect destination for a Study Abroad program, with over 17 different cultures, and a stunning variety of biological and geographical diversity.

And Yanapuma Foundation is the perfect organization to host a Study Abroad program with our links to many indigenous and marginalized communities and grass-roots projects around Ecuador and on the Galapagos Islands.



Street art in Quito

Donation News . . .

We are happy to announce that at the end of April we became affiliated with the **American Fund for Charities**. We fulfilled all the conditions that they require to be counted as a verified international non-profit charity and thus are able to receive funds through them.

This means that any US donations are now tax-deductible for the donor. Donations are made to the AFC specifying Yanapuma as the recipient, and disbursed on a monthly basis to us here in Ecuador.

We were delighted to receive our first donation this way from a retired former student at the Cuenca school of \$5000 towards our scholarship fund for deserving youth to study at high school, elementary school and post high-school.

Currently we are in the process of organizing the scholarships for this academic year which just began at the coast and will begin in the sierra and Amazon regions in September.

You can still donate to our scholarship fund here: http://www.yanapuma.org/en/donate_home.php



Quilotoa Crater Lake