

A co-operatively run 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!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

As summer gets into full swing, we are busy with students and volunteers in both Quito and Cuenca, as individuals and in groups. Visitors arrive to study Spanish for fun or credit, to volunteer or intern, or just to travel and enjoy some of the many delights that Ecuador has to offer the international traveler.

May was a relatively quiet month, as is usually the case, with more students and volunteers arriving in June as classes finish and the summer arrives.

Our new arrivals are of all ages – from younger travelers to seniors, with families with children from 3 years old and upwards. Ecuador is less of a backpacker destination than it has been for the past 20 years, and now their parents and uncles and aunts are arriving in increasing numbers to learn Spanish,

True Ecuador Travel . . .

The activities of our new travel agency—True Ecuador Travel—dovetail perfectly with our school, volunteer and foundation activities. We can offer the full range of travel services in Ecuador, from Galapagos land-based tours and cruises, Amazon adventure and lodges, to personalized travel itineraries for individuals and groups of students, volunteers, study abroad and service learning programs.

Ecuador offers so much cultural and biological diversity in such a concentrated area that you can literally go from a snow-capped volcano to the Amazon rainforest or Pacific coast in around 3 hours. With the Andes Mountains running like a spine down the center of Ecuador and sloping steeply to the coast and Amazon on either side, innumerable micro-climates are created where the flora and fauna have adapted over millennia. The human population too has adapted to each niche, displaying a variety of cultural traits and habits that take advantage of their local ecology.

Visit our webpage for more information and ideas: <https://true-ecuador-travel.org>

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volunteer, travel, or to explore the possibilities for retiring here.

The terrible earthquake that devastated some regions of the coast was followed by numerous aftershocks, a couple of them relatively strong but not as destructive as the original shock. Now the long process of rebuilding is underway. The government has raised sales tax by 2% to 14% to increase revenue for the reconstruction effort.

Yanapuma has continued to receive donations from individuals and organizations and now has over \$4,000 to purchase vital items. Once we have received all the promised funds we can dedicate some time to allocating them effectively for delivery.



Attending the NAFSA conference in Denver, CO.

NAFSA 2016 . . .

At the start of June we attended the NAFSA conference in Denver, Colorado, representing the Ecuadorian Association of Spanish Language Schools (AECEE), of which Yanapuma Spanish School is a member.

The aim of the association is to improve the quality of Spanish language tuition in Ecuador and to represent the interests of the best Spanish schools in promoting Ecuador as one of the best locations for learning the Spanish language.

The NAFSA conference is a great venue for making contact with universities and other institutions involved in Study Abroad and Service Learning types of projects.

New Scholarship! . . .

In May we agreed to provide funding to a pupil of the “Yachay Wasi” Bilingual School on the outskirts of Quito. To date we have not considered funding attending elementary school as a priority, but in this case, where the mother supports her family alone through occasional construction work, we believe that the situation merits our support.



Spanish School News . . .

As previously mentioned, May was probably our quietest month of the year so far, as is often the case. Those who started traveling at the beginning of the year have all passed through and there is a lull before the summer gets under way. But June saw the schools filling up, especially in Cuenca where we were struggling to find enough space for the students who had booked with us.

Cuenca is proving to be a much more attractive destination to study Spanish than Quito, although there are still a fair number of students who only study in Quito, or who split their study time between the two destinations. In contrast to the tranquil calm of Cuenca, Quito is generally more bustling, both in the historic center where our school is located and in the new town which is about 30 minutes walk away or 5 minutes by public transport.

The summer also sees quite a few students signing up for our Study and Travel programs. While some like the adventure and challenge of the Ruta de los Volcanes or Baños Adventure programs, others prefer the luxury of an Amazon or cloud forest lodge such as Cotococha Lodge or Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve. The Gaia Amazon Spanish program is also proving popular, being competitively priced and a great program to boot..



We also have a number of students on our “Volunteer Quito” and “Volunteer Cuenca” programs, volunteering in the mornings in a range of projects working with children with learning and motor skills difficulties, day care, elderly-in-need, and summer school programs, and taking Spanish classes in the afternoons.



Volunteers and Interns . . .

We have been working with several interns during May and June. **Arno Rosmanne** from Belgium continued working at the school in Cuenca, visiting and assessing the volunteer projects and helping to set up placements for a group in August.

We also welcomed Javier Cordova, a student of Hotel and Lodging Administration from Florida International University. In addition to helping out in the school in Cuenca with student excursions and activities, he will be visiting hotels in Cuenca to prepare information to add to our travel agency webpages.

At the end of June Jessica Mallory from American University, studying for a Masters degree in International Affairs, joined us to work with the Tsa’chila culture as well as studying their traditional methods of conflict resolution.



Through May and the first half of June two groups from the **Leap (UK)** continued their volunteering projects with the Tsa’chila culture, planting trees as part of our edible forest projects, and working on the Galapagos Islands helping root out invasive species and other conservation-related tasks.

In June a group from **Pacific Discovery** spent time in the Sinchi Warmi Kichwa women’s project in the Amazon before taking off to explore other parts of Ecuador and enjoy adventure activities in Baños.

At the end of May volunteer coordinator **Cristina Lopez** left us. Cristina has worked in the Quito office for 2 years, arranging programs and activities for individual volunteers and groups from various countries of the world.

Study Abroad and Service Learning in Ecuador

With such a diversity of cultures and geographies, Ecuador is the perfect location for study abroad and service programs.

Yanapuma maintains links with over 35 grass-roots projects and communities around Ecuador and we can connect individual students and groups with suitable projects to fulfill academic requirements.

We can also handle all aspects of travel and logistics through our own travel agency.

Project News . . .

Our ongoing project with the Tsa'chila culture in the province of Santo Domingo saw our field teams of Janeth and Cristina working on creating and maintaining vegetable gardens and expanding the “edible forest” project, while Wilson and Rafael continued to work on improving the production of cacao among the Tsa'chila.

Three new families joined those with vegetable gardens, receiving help from Janeth and Cristina in the construction of the garden. These are formed of a bamboo framework with a plastic sheet overhead to protect the plants from the intense tropical rains that sometimes fall and which would otherwise destroy any smaller plants. Also, in the local schools at the start of the new school year they were busy helping the teachers and students renew their plots where they grow vegetables for use in the school lunches.



The vegetable gardens are an ever-evolving project as they figure out new and better ways of coping with the challenges of growing vegetables in the tropical climate. In addition to redesigning the plastic covering to be more resistant to the monsoon-like rains, they have discovered new varieties and recovered old varieties and have found new ways of propagating some of the vegetables.

Many of the families that have been involved for two years or more are now pretty much self-sustaining, saving their own seeds, producing their own compost, and incorporating vegetables into their daily diets without any outside help.

In addition, Janeth and Cristina supervised the planting of more trees in new plots as part of the “edible forest” or analog forestry project. This project has caused great interest among the Tsa'chila as they have remembered trees and forest products that they used to use and have begun to recover these species for planting on a wider scale.

Meanwhile, Wilson and Rafael have begun the first steps in investigating post-production techniques as a step towards increasing the value of the improved cacao that is now being produced in ever-increasing volumes. They had also been expecting to have finalized

setting up a cacao growers association for the Tsa'chila, but unfortunately all the paperwork was lost in the earthquake that flattened the government building where the papers had been delivered. So they have had to start again with the process.



In Estero de Plátano, our scholarship recipients started back at high school. Our volunteer coordinator and qualified anthropologist Maria José visited Estero for the first time to meet the students and their parents and deliver the first checks for their school supplies and bus fares. This is the trickiest period of the year for us with the students as our two new interns from Union College will not arrive until the end of July to begin working with them. So they lack the support we would like to be able to give them for the first three months of the academic year. Sometimes we are lucky to find a volunteer who can spend a month or more there and help them on, but not this year unfortunately.

In the Tsa'chila community of Bua we also have two students who receive scholarships to attend high school. They are also on the same academic year as the rest of

Donation News . . .

During May and June donations have continued to arrive to help those affected by the earthquake that destroyed several towns on the Ecuadorian coast in April. We have gathered more than \$4,000 to date.

These funds will be used to purchase vital items for the recovery efforts. We will then make sure that they arrive where they are needed most.

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



May and June Photo Gallery

