

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

May normally marks the start of the summer in the Andes after the especially wet month of April. However this year the rains continued all through May and even into the first weeks of June. For several years now it has been increasingly obvious that the climate patterns are shifting.

Talking to older locals, they have lived through decades of regular annual weather, and these new changes have begun to affect farming along the length of the Andean highlands.

We have also witnessed considerable changes in the pattern of tourists coming to Ecuador, especially as this has affected the Spanish schools. The 20-year boom of backpackers traveling around Central and South America is over, and far fewer young people are arriving in Ecuador to begin their odyssey by taking Spanish classes.

To a certain extent these have been replaced by families with children of all ages, and retired and semi-retired persons setting out to explore Ecuador and to consider retiring or relocating here.

The Charm and Grace of the city of Cuenca!

Students and visitors looking for an inspiring and rewarding place to study Spanish can do no better than consider spending time in the tranquil colonial city of Cuenca—Santa Ana de los Cuatro Rios de Cuenca—to give it its full name.

With its well-preserved colonial architecture and strong indigenous presence, the city provides endless opportunities for exploration on foot, taking in its plazas and churches and enjoying ice-cream or coffee in any of the many dedicated stores along the way.

In the image to the right you can see the outside of our Spanish school in Cuenca.



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June is the time of year when groups begin to arrive, both to carry out volunteer and service learning projects, as well as to travel around the country as part of their program, including on our new land-based Galapagos packages. These have proven to be particularly popular, offering the most economical way of visiting this spectacular archipelago and getting to see the range of environments and biological diversity that is represented.

Finally, Fundación Yanapuma has continued its work to promote sustainable development among indigenous and marginalized communities as well as to offer the opportunity for cultural exchange between members of developed countries and some of those communities and projects that we are working with. You can read more about these activities on the following pages.



While Ecuador is not especially famous for its culinary excellence, there are a good number of local dishes that can be created as part of the regular cooking classes at the schools.



A cooking class at the school in Quito

Yanapuma Foundation and Spanish School and True Ecuador Travel

Yanapuma Foundation is an Ecuadorian NGO dedicated to promoting sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized communities around Ecuador.

Our for-profit activities in the Spanish schools, the volunteer activities and the travel agency provide vital core funding for our operations.

We seek additional funding for our projects from international organizations and charities that support the kind of work that we carry out.

Our current projects include sustainable cacao production and agriculture, teaching how to create and maintain vegetable gardens, nutrition and diet education, conservation and reforestation, cultural preservation, and providing scholarships for deserving students to study at high school and elementary school in small communities.

Spanish School News . . .

May is normally one of the quietest months of the year, along with December, and this year was no exception. While we will be fully booked for the summer in both schools, both May and June were very quiet. The other schools that form part of the AECEE (Ecuadorian Association of Spanish Education Centers) have likewise noted that each year has seen a decrease in student numbers and the situation does not look like it will improve any time soon.



Our response has been to begin a process of expansion in the online Spanish classes that we offer. We began offering classes online to our Spanish students in 2008, and the numbers had grown steadily to provide an additional line of income for the Spanish school. During that time we had begun to offer Spanish teachers to other online Spanish websites, notably one based in Germany and another in Korea.



During the past few months we have been in discussion to take over two online Spanish websites – Fluento.com and 121Spanish.com. Both are well established, although in need of updating and improving. With these new additions to our Spanish school we will receive a more steady contribution to our income than is now possible from the live classes that we will continue to offer. There is much work to do to get them functioning at full strength.

As we continue to develop the organization, the Spanish schools will continue to figure in the plans, as under the umbrella of True Ecuador Travel we continue to develop educational travel programs that will inevitably include Spanish classes.



True Ecuador Travel . . .

These have been two busy months for the travel agency as we get everything prepared for the individuals, families and groups that will be visiting Ecuador in the summer months.

With so much to see in Ecuador one of our primary tasks is to help visitors narrow down their options to fit into the time they have available.

As June draws to a close we are looking for a person to begin working full time to help in the further development of the travel agency. While there is still a lot to do to complete our database of options and opportunities here in Ecuador, we also need to work on publicity and marketing, especially in promotion of the website which is beginning to generate some inquiries and sales.

Meantime we are happy that Claire Masure has joined our team to help with the development of the agency. One of our priorities is to begin working on developing social media to raise our profile, in combination with the Spanish schools, the foundation, and the volunteer activities that we offer.



An iconic view of Bartolomé Island in the Galapagos archipelago

Project News . . .

Our project co-funded by the Inter American Foundation was due to finish in July of 2016, but as we had not used up all the funds, the project was extended for an additional year. But by the end of May of this year the funding finally ran out.

One of our last activities is a series of workshops for the field team in accounting for project management. This is being carried out by the **Fundación Funder**, based in Quito. They provide training and preparation in a variety of fields for NGOs and other groups. With this training under their belts, the field team will be well prepared to manage a project on their own in the future. This represents the next phase for Yanapuma in our work with the Tsa'chila. Three of our four-member field team are themselves Tsa'chila.



We have always focused on working towards putting the tools of development directly in their own



hands, and so the next phase for us is to take a back seat and provide ongoing support and other contributions while they manage the project directly themselves. To this end we will help them to secure funding for their own project



in the future. As part of the process of ending the current project we have collaborated with local videographer **Humberto Morales** to create a video of the learning that has taken place over the last 5 years. Humberto has worked with the field team to record their impressions along with those of the beneficiaries to edit into a short video that will be made available when it is finished.



In the coastal village of **Estero de Plátano** the new school year is underway. This year we have 8 students with scholarships to study at high school in the nearest small town, Tonchigwe. Starting in August we will have a German volunteer on the **Weltwärts** program living there for a year and supporting the scholarship recipients through their studies.

Our two interns from **Union College** left in April, which leaves us a bit of a gap between now and August, but we are relying on the help of one of the previous graduates from Estero de Plátano, **Jordan Chila** to help the scholarship recipients meantime.

Now is the time of the year—from late June to September—when the humpback whales migrate along the Pacific coast as they make their way to Hawaii for the winter. As there is a deep channel running close to the coast off the shore of Estero de Plátano, the whales can be seen breaching quite clearly from the malecon in the village at this time of year.

Donation News . . .

We received a general donation from **Marlon Richardson** of £370.00. Marlon was one of a group that came to Ecuador back in October last year for two weeks of adventure and exploration.

We also received a donation in May from **Janet Marcus** of \$50 towards our general fund.

These funds will go towards our work with the Tsa'chila over the next months as we help them prepare a new funding proposal.

If you would like to make a donation you can do so by clicking on this link:

(100% of small donations received goes directly towards project work)

Volunteers and Interns . . .

Through May and June we have continued to work with Belgian interns from **Erasmus University**, **Joren Willems** and **Thijs Mommens**. They have been assigned to working with the travel agency on a variety of programs in and out of the office. As part of their work they acted as group leaders for the Leap group in April and May. But they have also helped with research for the agency and marketing projects.



In June we also welcomed public health student from **George Warren Brown School of Social Work**, **Adriana Amburu**. Along with Ecuadorian, **Andrea Gallego**, an Ecuadorian student studying psychology and sociology in the US, she went to spend time in the Tsa'chila community of Bua, living with our nutrition and diet expert **Cristina Calazacón**. The pair worked on a health and diet program to present to students at the local school on a regular basis.



At the end of June we were pleased to welcome French student of Business Administration at Grenoble University, **Claire Masure** to work with us until the end of the year in the travel agency and Spanish school. We are sure there will be plenty for her to do!

We welcomed a group of 18 students from **Vanderbilt University** in May. The students volunteered with various projects in Quito for 6 weeks and stayed with local host families as part of their cultural exchange experience.

June saw the arrival of 4 students from **New York University School of Medicine**. They are spending 5 weeks volunteering at the **Centro Docente Asistencial Cipriano Dueñas**, part of the Facultad de Medicina of the Universidad Central del Ecuador. They take Spanish classes when they are not volunteering,

and are developing both their research and medical knowledge while learning medical Spanish.

In May and June we were still hosting two



groups from **The Leap Overseas**—one here in Ecuador while other continued their program in Peru.

In Ecuador the group spent three weeks working with the Tsa'chila and staying at the cultural center Shinopi Bolòn in the comuna Bua. After that they went off to the Galapagos to volunteer on a conservation project where they also got the chance to explore the archipelago for a long weekend. Finally they spent a few days in the Amazon rain forest at the **Gaia Amazon Lodge** to relax after all their hard work.



In Peru the group spent 3 weeks volunteering in a community of the Amaru culture on the shores of Lake Titicaca, before traveling to Cusco in the Sacred Valley. They volunteered in another indigenous community there for 3 weeks before going to the renowned Inca site of Machu Picchu.

