

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

At the start of September we begin to look forward to the following year, taking out our crystal ball to try to predict the conditions for next year and set our prices accordingly. The agencies that we work with need this information in good time to begin their marketing efforts, while many of the local suppliers that we use tend not to think about next year until it is upon them – which is frustrating for us!

So there is a certain amount of extra guesswork involved too. But happy to say that we have gone through the process and are nearly almost absolutely kind of definitely probably set for 2016!

The good news for our students is that we will not be raising the prices for Spanish courses and homestays for next year. With inflation fairly low in Ecuador and the Spanish market a little flaccid here, we need to remain competitive, so no price increase.

Among the Spanish schools of the AE-CEE, of which we are a member school, there has been a noticeable reduction in student numbers this year. In part it may be that the euro is very low against the dollar making it relatively expensive for students from Europe. In addition countries like Colombia and Peru have been promoting themselves heavily internationally to attract students, which may also account for the change.

Another factor we have seen is the rising popularity of Asia as a travel desti-

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nation for young people, making South America a little less popular among backpackers.

While both Spanish schools have been fairly quiet over the past two months, we have been busy as ever with volunteers and volunteer groups. In addition to receiving a group of 13 volunteers from the Leap (UK) for a 10-week program, we received a group from Thinking Beyond Borders of 16 volunteers for their annual 1-month program.

Both groups have been a huge help in our ongoing projects with the Ts'a'chila culture – reforestation with native and productive species. You can read more about this on the following pages.

We have also continued to build up our travel agency – True Ecuador Travel – promoting study abroad and service learning programs as well as more conventional Amazon and Galapagos tours for our own students and volunteers.

Another regular end-of-year activity is to think about our promotional activities for next year and begin to plan how to spend our budget. We may attend one or two trade conferences, but maybe more with a slant towards educational travel and study abroad rather than the language conferences that we have previously attended.

Galapagos—Land-Based Tours!

We have been offering land-based tours of the Galapagos Islands for several years now, and have found these to be one of the best ways of getting to explore the diversity and splendour of the Galapagos Archipelago. We offer 7 different options, mostly for 8-days/7-nights, with options with and without diving. All programs take visitors to several of the important islands to visit, on whole-day and half-day excursions.

For many, the chance to wander around the port towns in the evening, choose where to eat, use the internet or enjoy a coffee or beer, and to be able to sleep in a bed that is not swaying, is the deciding factor in choosing a land-based Galapagos tour.

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Dia de los Difuntos!

November 1st is the Día de los Difuntos (Day of the Dead) in Ecuador as in all of Latin America. Traditionally it is a day when families visit the graves of their departed relatives with food and drink to “hang out” with them for a while.

More and more the day is being conflated with Halloween, US style.



Families visiting their departed loved-ones.

Yanapuma's Birthday!

In September Yanapuma celebrated its 9th birthday. To mark the occasion we enjoyed a cake, shared with staff, teachers, volunteers and students.

It is hard to believe that we have been going for 9 years now, growing steadily all the time, and developing new ways of generating funding to support the development work of our foundation.

Some years are easier than others, and each year throws up its unique challenges. 2015 has been particularly hard for the Spanish schools, but overall we can report that we are still growing.



Some of our staff in Quito celebrate our birthday!



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Spanish School News . . .

Both schools, in Quito and in Cuenca, have been quieter during these two months than in the same period in previous years. However, a larger than normal percentage of these students chose one or more of our Study and Travel Programs.

So while the schools appeared quiet, there were still students on the road with their teachers visiting Amazon lodges, exploring the Pacific coast, enjoying adventure sports in the town of Baños or enjoying the spectacular scenery of the Andes on the Ruta de los Volcanes program.

We have been able to renew and revise some of the Spanish materials that we use, as well as carry out teacher training in both schools. These ongoing efforts allow us to stay abreast of developments in Spanish teaching methodology and methods and ensure that our teachers are up-to-date in their teaching format.

We have also finished the process of updating our prices for all our programs, including the Study and Travel programs. These are the hardest for us to update as many hotels and other services don't begin to think about the prices for next year until it is practically upon them!



On Friday 30th of October we invited the students to try "Colada Morada," a hot drink made with a variety of fruits, including the mortiño, a berry from the Andean moorlands very similar to a blueberry or bilberry. This drink is traditionally eaten with "Guagas de Pan," sweet bread rolls in the shape of a baby and decorated with icing. "Guagua" is the Kichwan word for a baby.



Yanapuma students vary in age from 7 to 70 years old. Our teachers are confident in working with children and we have materials to keep classes fresh and engaging for students of all ages, whether they are studying live in Quito or Cuenca or via online Spanish classes.

To learn more please visit our Spanish school website: <http://yanapumaspanish.org>



Volunteer News . . .

At the start of September we welcomed a group of volunteers from the Leap (UK). The thirteen volunteers started out by working in Chilcapamba community in the Andean sierra. They continued work on the installation of a potable water system for the community as well as helping build a house in the community. In addition they took Spanish lessons in the afternoons.

This was followed by three weeks in the Tsa'chila comuna of Los Naranjos where the group helped us with our "edible forest" project, planting out trees that had been grown in a nursery in the comuna Bua. These were primarily species that have high human value, mostly endemic local trees, but with some particularly productive introduced species as well.

After a week touring down the spine of the Andes and enjoying adventures along the way the group went off to the Galapagos Islands to spend 3 weeks working on conservation, eradicating invasive species and working on an organic farm.

Towards the end of September a group of 16 students from Thinking Beyond Borders arrived with 3 teachers. After a week of orientation in Mindo, the group went off to the comuna Bua of the Tsa'chila culture where they also contributed by helping us plant out saplings for our "edible forest" project. On the 27th of October the Shinopi Bolón cultural center organized a farewell celebration at which all the students dressed as Tsa'chila and took part in a variety of events.



We also welcomed a group from Pacific Discovery. After volunteering in the Andean community of Agato the group went off to Baños to enjoy some adventure there before continuing on to the Sinchi Aqua Kichwa Womens' project near the village of Misahualli in the Amazon region.

In addition to these groups we welcomed 4 volunteers from the German organization KulturLife on a program called "Weltwärts," funded by the German government. The volunteers arrived at the end of August and after orientations they were accompanied to their individual projects – 3 in the Amazon region (Selvavida, Chunkiap, and Macas) and one in Quito at INEPE to teach English and assist the teachers.

Finally, we welcomed a handful of individual international volunteers who were escorted to various projects around the country. All the organizations that we collaborate with are reliable and well-run grass-roots organizations and small communities that need willing volunteers to be able to carry out their work. Yanapuma is in regular contact with these organizations to ensure that they maintain their high standards and offer a valuable experience to the volunteer.

Project News . . .

Tsa'chila

Our principal activities during these two months have revolved around initiating our "edible forest" project with the Tsa'chila culture. Groups of volunteers from Thinking Beyond Borders and the Leap have been instrumental in helping us plant out the saplings that were grown in the nursery of the Shinopi Bolón cultural center. Yanapuma purchases the plants from the cultural group as a way of encouraging the development of this activity as a micro-enterprise, with a donation from TBB.

In total we transplanted 6,000 saplings of local species predominantly, mixed with a few introduced species that are of special value to humans.

This project dovetails nicely with the project that we have been developing over the past 3 years of working with families to develop small vegetable gardens as a means of improving the families' nutrition. In the tropical, hot, wet, sunny, fertile province of Santo Domingo we have had considerable success in growing a variety of vegetable – tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, spinach, chard, coriander, and even cabbages and beets have done well.

We are hoping that in a few years time each family will be able to harvest avocados, papayas, oranges, tangerines, nuts and other fruits from their "edible forest" which will also be encouraging the return of native species of birds, insects and animals with the mixed forest environment.

One worry during the planting out of these saplings was the weather, as the summer has been particularly dry and the soil quite desiccated in many places. Fortunately a week after planting out many of the trees it began to rain, resulting in a lot of very happy saplings!

Estero de Plátano

In Estero de Plátano Gerardo and Lacey continued their important work helping our scholarship recipients with their studies, visiting their colleges to get reports on their progress and helping them stay on track. In addition they have worked



with other sectors of the community in their efforts to promote sustainable social entrepreneurship in this precious part of the Ecuadorian coast, as well as starting a project to clean up the village and keep it free from plastic and other trash.

At the end of October they came to Quito to present letters to the communication companies to request that they consider installing antennas for cellphone reception and possible internet services in Estero de Plátano. We will wait to see if hopefully they receive a positive reply from one of the providers. The lack of communication with the rest of the country is a major hurdle in the development of businesses in Estero de Plátano.



Wilson and Rafael, our two cacaoteros, have also been busy these last two months, visiting the comunas Peripa, Los Naranjos, El Poste and Bua to promote the growing of national varieties of cacao which have the best aroma.

Creating a greater production of better quality and sustainably produced cacao is just the first step though, and now Rafael and Wilson are investigating the best methods for beginning post-production activities to be able to sell the cacao for a better price. Initially they are looking at the fermenting and drying process to produce a cocoa bean that is ready for toasting, the next stage in the production of chocolate.



The biggest challenge for us in the long term is creating a mentality of association among the Tsa'chila who are culturally and historically very individualistic in their way of life. Collective activities are always fraught with difficulties as they do not possess the organizational skills to manage association within their own comuna, let alone between several comunas.

On the 4th of September we accompanied Susana Pico as representative of the Inter American Foundation for a regular bi-annual inspection and evaluation of the project. We visited the communities of Los Naranjos and Bua to view some of the cacao plots as well as the vegetable gardens, ending the day in the cultural center Shinopi Bolón to see the saplings that were grown for the "edible forest" project.

Staff and Intern News . . .

We have been happy to continue working with intern **Alexander Heimrich** who has been working on our social media identity – a sorry state of affairs in reality as we have never had anyone capable of maintaining our social media presence in a sustained fashion. Interns have come and gone and opened up accounts in many different media, but once they are gone little or nothing more gets done! So Alex has been working to create a strategy which he will be putting into effect soon.

We also were happy to have **Alonso Alvaréz** working in our offices after spending 7 weeks with the Leap group as their leader. Alfonso is from Mexico and has lived in the US for many years. He will also be leading one of the groups in January.

We were sad to say goodbye to **Juliet Barrett** who has been our student and volunteer coordinator in Cuenca for the past 5 months. Originally drafted in to temporarily replace former coordinator **Alicia McDermott**, the post extended. However it is now time for Juliet to return to the US to pursue her artistic aspirations and with a little bit of luck, be accepted to study in Barcelona in Spain! We wish Juliet all the best and much success in the future!

September and October Photo Gallery

