

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

The end of July finds us in the middle of the summer period, with the greatest concentration of students and volunteers, as well as clients for our Galapagos and other programs.

The Galapagos Islands have been especially popular this year and openings for cruises and hotels are getting harder and harder to find.

The tension between the rising numbers of visitors each year and protection of the delicate ecology of the islands is an ongoing issue. Our focus with our land-based tours is on experiential education, so that visitors get to experience the uniqueness of the Galapagos Archipelago while learning about the islands themselves along with

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the challenges of allowing them to visit while preserving the pristine environment.

We have also been busy getting our scholarship program organized for this year, vetting suitable candidates and organizing the funding. The \$25 registration fee from the Spanish school goes towards this fund, and we cover ourselves all the costs of administration so that each donation is 100% destined to direct support of the scholarship recipients.

You can learn more on the following pages.



Inga Pirca—Inca ruins

The annual “Inti Raymi” celebration throughout the Andes is the most important festival of the Incas, dedicated to the sun god (“Inti” in the Kichwa language) and giving thanks to the “Pachamama” or earth goddess.

The celebrations take place between on the summer solstice and during the week of 18-24 of June.



It is a week dedicated to ancestral traditions with processions, rituals, dancing and music, and a sharing of the festivities between neighbors that takes place in hundreds of small indigenous communities and towns throughout the Ecuadorian Andes.

Students from the Spanish school in Cuenca were able to travel to the nearby ruins of Inga Pirca to witness the large festival and rituals that takes place there.



Scholarship Program 2018 . . .



Since 2009 we have supported deserving underprivileged youth to study at high school with funds that we raise each year, from our registration fee and Christmas fundraiser. Over the years we have expanded the program to include some deserving children who would not otherwise attend elementary school or who have

special needs, as well as post-high school studies.

At the end of July we audited the fund to see what is available for this coming year. We have funds left over from the previous year still which are added to the totals below:

Already promised for 2018/19: \$4663.40

Funds available for new scholarships: \$10,265.47

We like to keep a reserve each year just in case next year’s donations are not enough to cover our commitment to the scholarship recipients. The worst thing would be to leave them stranded due to lack of funds.

Spanish School News . . .

Volunteers & Interns . . .

The Spanish school in Cuenca has been at capacity during the last two months with students from all over the world, and all ages and skill levels. It has been particularly attractive for families over the summer, with parents bringing their children to take classes and explore the tranquil colonial city of Cuenca before continuing on their travels to the Amazon, Galapagos and beyond.



The school in Quito has been quieter, as more people tend to favor Cuenca as a destination, especially for families with younger children for whom Cuenca is easier to navigate on foot and more compact.

Our Spanish program in the Amazon at the Gaia Lodge has been especially popular this summer with students taking a week of classes there while they also enjoy activities and excursions such as visiting an indigenous family on Anaconda Island, hiking in primary forest, visiting a butterfly farm, tubing on the river, learning how to make chocolate, and more.

The other program that has been popular is the "Study and Travel" program Ruta de los Volcanes. Students travel down through the Andes with a teacher visiting crater lakes, volcanoes, colonial towns, etc. The program includes plenty of adventure for the active visitor who wants to learn Spanish while they explore Ecuador at the same time.

More information here: <https://www.yanapumaspanish.org/travelclass.html>



Our 11 German volunteers on the Weltwärts program sponsored by the German government are coming to the end of their year in Ecuador. We are grateful to them for the contributions that they have each made to the communities, schools and projects that they have been involved with. All have so many experiences to recount as they adapted to the vastly different conditions and lifestyles that they encountered in their projects, and return home with many memories and a new perspective on their own culture.

We are looking forward to the arrival of a new group of 7 volunteers in August to take over this work.

We welcomed a group of volunteers from the Leap UK to our summer program in Peru. The group began in the southern city of Arequipa with some Spanish classes and visits to local sites before going off to the Aymara community of Karina on the shores of Lake Titicaca where they stayed with host families and learned about the local way of life first hand as well as teaching in the local school. After that they traveled to Cusco and on to a community in the Sacred Valley that is developing community tourism. They will finish with a visit in August to the famous Machu Picchu site deep in the Andes mountains. The group is led by our popular Peruvian group leader Arlich.



At the start of June we said goodbye to tourism interns Anke Publie and Jana Vanhaverbeke, both of whom had spent 3 months stationed at the school in Cuenca helping with daily administration tasks and other activities for the school and travel agency. We are grateful for all their efforts on our behalf.

Meanwhile Belgian interns Simon de Leeuw and Menno Vlietman continued to work with us on a variety of projects.

In July we also welcomed a UK high school group from Outlook Expeditions. The group traveled to the Tsa'chila community of El Poste to carry out a construction project using natural materials. Flabio Calazacon, our local director there was recently elected governor of the Tsa'chila culture.

Projects & Volunteers . . .

In July we were delighted to receive our yearly visit from a group of students from **Sotogrande International School** in Spain, accompanied by their teachers on their “**Kindred Spirit**” project. The group of 11 students traveled to the Tsa’chila community of Bua where they spent two weeks working alongside the members of the Shinopi Bolon cultural center on new constructions using local materials. They also taught English and Art to pupils of the local school.

The group arrived with 5 ipads to donate to the school along with a speaker system and projector. The iPads were pre-loaded with plenty of educational tools for the students of the Abraham Calazacon school to use. They also made a donation for our scholarship program, and for the continuation of the edible forest project.

The students stayed with Tsa’chila host families, getting to learn much about their traditional way of life, culture and the challenges that face them today.

We at Yanapuma are always content to observe the changes in the group at the end of their stay, having stepped out of their own culture for two weeks to explore a radically different way of life and living standard. Sotogrande emphasizes in its curriculum that education is a much broader concept than is generally offered in regular schools, and returning to the Tsa’chila every year offers some of its students a window into a different world. They return ready to examine their own values and lifestyle in the context of what they have experienced living briefly with the Tsa’chila.

At the same time, their presence in Bua offers a window into the wider world for the Tsa’chila, and helps to reinforce the value of their own culture, while

opening them to a deeper understanding of the world beyond their territory.

We are now in the process of organizing the scholarship program for this academic year. We have widened the scope of the program as we have seen additional needs beyond helping youth through high school. These needs include helping some elementary school children to stay in special schools that fit their learning requirements, helping with post-high school programs for some of our recent graduates, and supporting one Tsa’chila teacher through a program to be able to teach at high school level. Currently there are no Tsa’chila qualified to this level which means that high school education is wholly carried out by mestizo teachers who are not connected to their culture.

At the start of this year we helped our Tsa’chila field team to write a project for funding to continue and expand on the work that we have carried out with them over the past 5 years.

Since finishing the project beneficiaries continue with their cacao and edible forest plots as well as the vegetable gardens that the team created with them. There is still plenty of interest in continuing to expand the project in the coming years.

Our aim is to get them to the point of being self-sustaining and able to attract their own financing for the future based on a solid record of achievements for their culture.

Since the start of the year they have been working on creating an association, which is a necessary step on the way to being able to have their own bank account for depositing funding. It has been frustrating for us that things have not moved faster. But we need to be patient and let the team take their own steps towards obtaining funding.



True Ecuador Travel . . .

The summer period is a peak time for the travel agency, especially with our land-based Galapagos programs. Many individual travelers, couples and families visit the Galapagos over the summer period.

Although it is the most popular time to visit the Galapagos Islands due to people in the northern hemisphere being on holiday, it is not necessarily the best time to visit the Galapagos. Waters can be choppy, making crossings a bit rougher and snorkeling and swimming a little more difficult as well as reducing visibility underwater.

Feedback from our clients has been overwhelmingly positive as well as giving us an idea or two for changes for next year to make the programs even better.



A Recent Review!

"I had a wonderful week in the Galapagos thanks to TET. I did not have the time to put all the planning together for it, so I truly appreciate that TET did such a good job organizing the many activities that I did each day. They kept me very busy. The local guides were punctual and helpful. What a beautiful place to enjoy! I appreciate that there was such an emphasis on the geological history of the land and animals and on environmental stewardship."



As we prepare to embark on a publicity campaign for next year, our research has confirmed for us again that our programs really are much better than other similar programs that we have come across, as well as being considerably more economical. Thus we have high expectations for expanding our reach in the coming years.

During these two months, Belgian business major Menno Vlietman has been helping us by updating our Galapagos brochure along with other publicity materials that we will be using in the future.

At the same time, tourism major Simon de Leeuw, also from Belgium has been helping us update databases and research online in preparation for our coming publicity push.



Donation News . . .

We received a donation of €500 from Sotogrande International School for the continuation of the "edible forest" project. As with all small donations, 100% of this will go directly towards the project. Sotogrande also provided \$2408.40 towards the scholarship program in Bua. While they were in Bua they also donated to the school 4 iPads worth €1486.31, an amplifier and speaker system worth \$205, and a new projector. In addition they left \$250 to cover program expenses for a family day in Bua.

Our total funding available this year for our scholarship program is \$10,265.47. As August begins we are in the process of apportioning these funds to deserving recipients.

If you would like to contribute to our scholarship fund for deserving and underprivileged youth you can make a donation online here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/scholarships.php>

Or you can make a direct deposit into our UK or Ecuador bank accounts. Contact us for details. We cover our own administration costs for this program so that 100% of all donations go directly to the scholarships.

Your donations from the USA and the UK are tax deductible!