

BIG FIVE[®]

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Ecuador



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Guayaquil, Ecuador Elevation: 30 feet Latitude: 02 09S Longitude: 079 53W
Average High Temperature Years on Record: 16

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	86	88	87	89	89	87	85	84	84	86	85	86	88

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 16

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	72	74	75	76	75	74	72	70	69	70	71	72	73

Cuenca, Ecuador Elevation: 8291 feet Latitude: 02 53S Longitude: 079 00W
Average High Temperature Years on Record: 7

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	69	69	70	69	69	67	66	65	66	69	70	71	71

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 7

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	49	50	51	51	50	49	47	47	46	48	49	46	49

Quito, Ecuador Elevation: 9223 feet Latitude: 00 09S Longitude: 078 29W
Average High Temperature Years on Record: 20

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	67	66	66	66	66	66	67	67	67	68	67	67	66

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 20

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	50	50	50	50	51	51	49	49	49	49	49	49	50

Weather

Warm and subtropical. Weather varies within the country due to the Andes Mountain range and coastal changes. Andean regions are cooler, with cold nights in the mountains. Rainfall is high in coastal and jungle areas. In the Galapagos Island, the weather is dry and mild.

TIME ZONE

Ecuador is GMT – 5; Galapagos Islands is GMT – 6.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

PASSPORTS: For International travel, U.S. and Canadian passports must be **valid for at least six months** from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

VISAS: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas. You will find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: **www.trivisa.com**. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

After obtaining your luggage, exit the airport. If you have booked a complete package with Big Five tours, a representative will be holding a sign identifying you or him/her. **Departure tax:** US\$40.80 per person to be paid locally in cash. Please make sure you have the correct amount for your last day in Ecuador.

CUSTOMS INTO ECUADOR

The following may be imported into Ecuador without incurring customs duty: 300 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 200g of tobacco; 1l of alcohol; a reasonable amount of perfume; gifts and personal effects up to US\$200 (for stay of up to 7 days)

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest

Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH

International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm. All vaccinations that you have should be recorded on an International Health Certificate, available from your physician or health department.

Yellow fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- *You are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.*
- *You plan on visiting more than one South American country.*

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Health recommends getting a vaccination if you are traveling to the province of Sucumbíos, in the Amazon region. There's no risk in the Andes or the Galapagos Islands.

Tourists traveling to the Andean areas of Ecuador need not worry, as there is no danger for them in the Andes Highlands where it is too cold for the mosquito to live or in the Galapagos Islands, which are 1,000 miles away from the continent.

Typhoid poses some risk in rural areas.

Malaria risk: medication is recommended for travel to the coastal areas, particularly the Esmeraldas province, and Sucumbíos. There is no risk in the Andes, subtropics like Mindo or Baños or the Galapagos Islands. A high proportion of falciparum cases in Esmeraldas Province are reportedly resistant to chloroquine. There is no risk in Guayaquil, Quito, Otavalo or Cuenca.

Other risks: Endemic onchocerciasis occurs in rural areas. Hepatitis A and B are hyperendemic and inoculation with gamma globulin is highly recommended. Hepatitis D is endemic in the Amazon Basin. Dengue fever might occur with some risk only in the coastal provinces, including Guayaquil. Altitude sickness is a risk flying directly into Quito (2800m). Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage. If you wear contact lenses or glasses, we suggest you bring an extra pair and cleaning fluid. **Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.**

Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565 and follow the prompts. You can also get information on the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/travel.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Travel light and bring lightweight cottons and linens, and rainwear in subtropical areas. Warmer clothes are needed in upland areas. Clothing should be easily laundered and comfortable. Depending on your itinerary, specialty clothing may be needed for those planning on trekking, climbing, etc.

Andes

In most parts of the Andes, you should be prepared for cold nights and cold rain. Warm, fast drying clothes are recommended (synthetics and wool are good, but avoid cotton, especially directly against the skin). Good hiking boots that either dry quickly or are water-resistant are a must for most activities. For trekking, rubber boots work exceptionally well.

Galapagos (See **Galapagos guide for more information**) Sun hat with a wide brim to protect your neck as well as face and head; sun glasses; sandals (for the boat); sneakers (for dry landings and rocky shores); sandals (for wet landings); swim suit; high factor, waterproof sunscreen, wind-resistant jacket; light sweater or sweatshirt (nights can get rather cool and you don't want to miss stargazing on deck). Bring twice as much film or, in the case of digital equipment, memory cards/chips as you think you will need; extra camera batteries; and motion sickness pills, if necessary.

Oriente (Amazon Rainforest)

Rubber boots (a must since hiking boots don't work well in calf-deep mud) - most lodges can provide boots up to size 13, or you can purchase them in most towns for about US\$5; insect repellent (with DEET with

concentrations not higher than 35%); malaria pills; antihistamine tablets and an epi-pen for people with serious allergies to stings; binoculars (invaluable in the rainforest); plastic bags for keeping your clothes dry; swimming suit; lightweight quick drying clothes; at least one long-sleeved shirt; one pair of loose-fitting pants (no jeans); a light sweater (it gets surprisingly chilly in the rainforest, especially on boat trips); poncho that fits over you and your pack (the cheap plastic knee-length type coats are better than goretex, which will soak right through in a real rainforest deluge); bandana; a pair of clean socks for each day; sandals or sneakers; and zip lock bags for books, maps and anything else you need to keep dry. All clothes (undergarments included) should be loose fitting to help keep you cool and to reduce your chances of being bitten by insects.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary with destination and type of planes used. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final itinerary.

MONEY

Currency: US Dollar (US\$). The US Dollar replaced the Sucre as the official currency of Ecuador in September 2000.

Currency exchange: Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks and at exchange houses (casas de cambio), the latter being generally the best option. ATMs are available in large urban areas.

Credit & debit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Visa and Diners Club are accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Traveler's checks: Travelers checks are generally accepted in the larger cities and can be exchanged into currency at most hotels and banks for a service charge.

PLEASE NOTE: Effective immediately, all passengers traveling to Ecuador are advised not to bring **\$100 bills as they will not be accepted, cashed or changed, even at banks.** Passengers are advised to carry smaller denominations of US bills 1, 5, 10 and 20 dollar bills.

LANGUAGE

Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar are the official languages. English, as well as French and German, is generally spoken in the tourism sector.

ELECTRICITY

110 / 120 volts AC, 60Hz.

FOOD & DRINK

For all travel outside the US, as a general rule, follow the advice of Center for Disease Control (CDC), website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>, regarding food and water guidelines. As a general rule, water used for drinking, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts, or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Bottled water is available. Water is usually safe in the better hotels and restaurants included in your itinerary. Milk is pasteurized and usually safe in the better hotels and restaurants included in your itinerary. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Ecuador has some of the best beer in South America. The most popular brand is Pilsener. International drinks and whiskies are available, but expensive. An Ecuadorian specialty is a unique fruit juice called naranjilla – a taste somewhere between citrus and peach. The best local drink is canelazo, made with alcohol from sugar cane (called puntas), cinnamon, lemon or naranjilla, and sugar. Another local drink is pisco, made from fresh lemon, alcohol from grapes, egg white, sugar and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Best of the jungle fruits include chirimoya, with a delicious custard-like inside; mamey, which has a red, sweet, squash-like meat; and pepinos, a sweet white and purple striped cucumber-like fruit. Specialties include llapingachos (pancakes stuffed with mashed potato and cheese); shrimp or lobster ceviche. This is traditionally accompanied by popcorn and chifles (thinly sliced and fried green bananas); humitas (flavored sweetcorn tamale); and the national delicacy of roasted guinea pig. Bakeries offer delicious sweet pastries and empanadas (hot crispy meat or cheese filled pastries). Another popular snack is patacones (squashed fried green bananas). You will often find that most Ecuadorian homes have a special pounding stone for making this tasty snack. Restaurants have waiter service and there are cafe-style bars.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:
www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

Bargaining is acceptable in small shops and in markets, but prices are usually fixed in tourist stores, boutiques, hotel shops and finer stores. In the Province of Azuay, the cities of Cuenca and Gualaceo offer a wide variety of handicrafts at ferias or special market days. The top attractions are the ferias of Otavalo, Ambato, Latacunga, Saquisilí and Riobamba, most held once a week. They offer the visitor excellent bargains for Indian crafts and silver. Principal silver stores are in Quito. Special purchases include native woodcarvings, varnished and painted ornaments made of bread dough, Indian tiles, woolen and orlon rugs, blankets, baskets, leather goods, shigras (shoulder bags) and hand-loomed textiles, and indigenous art.

A NOTE ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY: You are free to take as many photographs as you wish during the hikes in the rainforest or during canoe rides. **But please take note that there is a restriction** when visiting the indigenous Achuar communities. Just as you would not welcome strangers photographing you in your home without permission, the Achuar do not like to be photographed without warning. *They are very friendly and welcoming, but you must ask them before you take their picture.* Your guide will brief you on the proper protocol with respect to their culture and customs. Wherever you are, it is advised that you try to shoot candid shots (versus asking someone to pose), and please insure that you are not interrupting people during normal activities.

Rainforest treks: Travelers wishing to explore the rainforest of the lower Amazon basin and its abundant plant and animal life should head to the Oriente region (see Resorts & Excursions section). It is probably best to do this as part of an organized tour, which can be booked with a number of local operators providing tailor-made itineraries and experienced guides. The presence of hundreds of waterways, many of which are tributaries of the great River Amazon, means that such tours invariably involve traveling by boat. Usually, these are large motorized canoes traveling up the main rivers (such as the Napo or the Aguarico), although trips on non-motorized boats along the smaller waterways are also available, which is a far better way to observe the wildlife. Several indigenous communities living in the region have preserved their traditional lifestyles and are actively engaged in resisting the ongoing attempts by oil companies to develop and exploit the Ecuadorian rainforest. Ecuador is known as a great place for adventure sports as well as trips into the rainforest

Hiking: There are some good hiking trails in Cotopaxi National Park, one of them following the shores of Lago Limpiopungo, located at an altitude of 3800m (12,465ft).

Climbing: Climbing expeditions to the volcanoes can be arranged. Experienced climbers may head to the Cotopaxi volcano which, at 5985m (19,345ft), is one of the world's highest, best reached from Quito.

Wildlife: Apart from the rainforest, Ecuador's rich wildlife is best represented in the Galapagos Islands, whose most famous inhabitants are the giant Galapagos tortoises (weighing up to 272kg / 600lb). Adventure tours around the islands are available, either in large cruise ships or in smaller ships and yachts (advance booking is essential). The amount of time visitors are allowed to stay on the islands is regulated by the Government.

Water Sports: There are 1,750 miles of coastline along the mainland, with beach resorts offering various types of water sports. Good snorkeling is available via chartered boat trips around the Isla de la Plata (located in the Parque Nacional Machalilla, Ecuador's only coastal national park). Fishing is particularly good off the western coast. Whitewater rafting is also popular around Baños.

Scenic train journeys: Several of Ecuador's railway routes, particularly those in the Andes, pass through spectacular mountain scenery, often at dramatic altitudes. One of the most famous routes, whose climax is the precipitous 'Devil's Nose' passage, is from Riobamba down to the Pacific coast. Train schedules are fairly erratic and visitors should check locally prior to traveling.

OVERVIEW

Ecuador is bordered by Colombia, Peru and the Pacific Ocean. There are four distinct zones: the Sierra or Andean highlands; the Costa or Litoral, a coastal plain between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean with plantations of bananas, cacao, coffee and sugar; the Oriente, the upper Amazon basin to the east, consisting of tropical rainforests threaded by rivers; and the Galapagos Islands, a group of 13 big islands, 6 smaller islands and 42 islets located 1,000 km (620 miles) off the mainland.

The chief ports provide visitors with some of the best resorts for deep-sea fishing on the west coast. The Oriente is a primeval world of virgin forests and exotic flora and fauna, still inhabited by indigenous tribes. Food specialties include llapingachos (pancakes stuffed with mashed potato and cheese) and the national delicacy of roasted guinea pig. There is little nightlife except in Quito and Guayaquil, where there are excellent restaurants and other attractions.

Quito: Quito was established by the Kitu-Cara tribe way before the Inca invasion. It became a major Inca city that was destroyed upon the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Although no indigenous traces remain visible, the city has preserved much of its Spanish colonial character. Ecuador's capital city has a setting of great natural beauty, overshadowed by the volcano Pichincha with its twin peaks of Ruco and Guagua. Quito is located at 2850m (9348 ft) above sea level and some visitors may suffer from altitude sickness during the first hours after arrival. Quito used to be a major Inca city that was destroyed shortly before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Although no Inca traces remain, the city has preserved much of its Spanish colonial character. Also in the plaza is the Municipal Palace, the Archbishop's Palace and the Palacio Presidencial, Ecuador's white House. Many of the city's famous churches and monasteries contain priceless examples of Spanish art and sculpture, particularly the Monasterio de San Francisco (located in the beautiful plaza of the same name) and the Jesuit church of La Compañía. Most of Quito's colonial churches are located in the Old Town, parts of which have been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Perhaps the best preserved colonial street is the historic alley of La Ronda. Other places in Quito worth visiting include the Parque La Alameda (a triangular-shaped park), the astronomical observatory, the School of Fine Arts and the modern Palacio Legislativo. As the cultural and political capital, Quito has a number of museums of colonial and modern art. The Museo del Banco Central, located in the Casa de la Cultura, has a vast archaeological repertory as well as displays of colonial furniture and religious art. Also of interest is the Museo Guayasamín, home to many fine works of Ecuador's renowned modern artist Oswaldo Guayasamín.

The Andean Highlands: The Pan-American Highway traverses the country from north to south, a spectacular route which passes through all the principal cities of the Andean Highlands. Tulcan, center of a rich farming area, is the northernmost of these. Further south is Chota, still inhabited by the descendants of former African slaves who retain some of their tribal customs (the city's population being made up largely of Africans). Chota's Indian market (particularly good for traditional art and weavings) is renowned throughout Ecuador. The peak of Mount Imbabura signals the approach to the valley of Otavalo (95km/60 miles from Quito), the town of the same name being famed for its craftwork and Indian market (which is at its biggest on Saturdays). Approaching Quito, one passes a granite monument which marks the Equator. South of Quito, the region of Latacunga and Ambato has much fine scenery, marked by an avenue of volcanoes. Two active ones are located

within the Parque Nacional Sangay, a national park of outstanding beauty which has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The park is characterized by a variety of landscapes, ranging from rain forests to glaciers, as well as numerous indigenous animal species, such as the mountain tapir and the Andean condor. Located within Sangay park, the Tungurahua volcano (5016m/16,453ft) is popular with tourists, especially at night, since it became active again in 1999. West of Latacunga, the Parque Nacional Cotopaxi is Ecuador's most visited national park. It includes the active Cotopaxi volcano which, at 5895m (19,345ft), is the world's highest active volcano. All have refuges at the snow-line where intrepid walkers can make overnight stays. Visitors are however advised to be cautious when setting out on walking or trekking trips as robberies have been reported in certain areas; experienced mountain guides are available. Further south, the city of Cuenca was founded in 1577 and still contains many examples of Spanish colonial architecture. Contrasting with this, a vast cathedral has recently been built. The nearby ancient Inca settlement at Ingapirca, 50km (32 miles) north of Cuenca, is worth visiting. In the highlands of southern Ecuador, Loja is the last city of importance on the Pan-American Highway, being originally a trading station on the Spanish 'gold road'. Not far from Loja, the Parque Nacional Podocarpus is, along with Ecuador's other national parks, a popular destination for walking and climbing.

Guayaquil: Ecuador's biggest city, Guayaquil is also the chief port and commercial centre. A good starting point for sightseeing is the Rotonda, the city's most historic landmark, which faces the beautiful garden promenade of Paseo de las Colonias. Across the malecón are the Government Palace and city hall, while at the northern end one can find the ancient fortress of La Planchada. Other places of interest include the Church of Santo Domingo, the old residential section of "LAS PEÑAS," and the Municipal Museum.

The Littoral: This is a narrow coastal belt, 560km (350 miles) in length. The chief ports provide visitors with some of the best resorts for deep-sea fishing on the west coast. Particularly attractive are the towns of Playas Posoria and Salinas, while Esmeraldas, one of the country's most important ports, is also known for its beautiful beaches. The region of Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, situated some 90km (55 miles) west of Quito, is the domain of the Colorados Indians who still practice many of their ancient customs.

The Oriente: El Oriente is the term used by Ecuadorians to refer to the Amazon basin in eastern Ecuador. This is a primeval world of virgin forests and

exotic flora and fauna, still mainly inhabited by indigenous peoples. In January 1999, the Ecuadorian President issued a decree blocking future oil exploration, mining and colonization by oil companies of the Cuyabeno-Imuya and Yasuni national parks. These parks are home to thousands of indigenous people, including the Waorani, the Tagaeri, the Taromenane, the Sionas and the Secoyas. The principal towns of the area are El Puyo, Tena, Macas, Lago Agrio, Sucúa and Zamora. Tourist excursions are available along the rivers, which provide the principal method of transport. One of the main rivers in this region is the Napo which, like most of the rivers in the Oriente, is a tributary of the Amazon (which lies further east in Peru). Baños is worth visiting, taking its name from the numerous springs and pools of hot and cold mineral waters. It is also the gateway to the Amazon region, passing through the spectacular gorge of the River Pastaza.

TRAVELING TO THE AMAZON

There never really is a bad time of the year to visit. The year is basically divided up into high water, low water, and transitional. Each period has its unique advantages and disadvantages.

Transitional: The transitional months are a good compromise between low water and high water season. It is not quite as hot as during the low water season and yet one can still view the aquatic life.

Low Water (October-February)

Advantages

- Best for viewing aquatic life
- Land trails drier
- Fewer insects

Disadvantages

- Waterways can become clogged with vegetation limiting access to wildlife areas
- Submerged sandbanks
- Reduced amount of visible wildlife (exception: around isolated lakes)
- Hottest time of year

High Water (March-August)

Advantages

- Best for viewing forest life
- Many waterside plants choose this time to flower
- Cooler temperatures

Disadvantages

- Some forest trails may be inaccessible
- Aquatic life less visible
- Increased amount of insects

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides are produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Barnes and Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com, and Longitude Books, www.longitudebooks.com, have collections of books, searchable by country.

Ecuador

Colleen Madonna Flood Madonna Williams, James D. Henderson (Editor)

Named for the equator, which passes through it, the Republic of Ecuador sits on the western coast of South America. One of the smallest countries of the continent, Ecuador nevertheless features Andean summits, tropical forests and savannas, snow-edged volcanoes, and glacial lakes. About half of Ecuador's 13 million inhabitants live in the country's fertile, coastal lowlands, which produce major exports of cocoa and bananas. The other half reside in the Andean highlands, many around the capital city of Quito.

End of the Spear

Steve Saint

Saint writes about growing up with the Ecuadoran tribe whose members killed his father in 1956. He returns to Ecuador with his wife and teenage children in the 1990s to live among them again. His father was one of five American missionaries speared to death by Auca Indians a half-century ago, when Saint was four years old. He recounts the story and his deep bond with those who killed his father. He explains that Auca, 'naked savage,' is a derogatory name given to the tribe by outsiders. They call themselves Waodani. Saint acknowledges that they were killers before converting to Christianity soon after they murdered father, he tells the story of the 1956 murders from the Waodani perspective. Most of the book is about his family's life today with his Waodani family.

Ecuador

by Yossi Brain

Ecuador is about as perfect a climbing destination as any in the world. Besides having two climbing seasons-June through August and December through February-Ecuador offers an established local climbing community, plenty of equipment shops and available supplies, easy physical access to its peaks, and a relatively low-cost and hassle-free climbing experience. For climbers seeking ideal, high-altitude practice after learning to snow and ice climb in the Rockies and Alps, this is the place. Ecuador: A Climbing Guide is a straightforward, tightly written guide to all twenty of the country's major peaks, half more than 5,000 meters high, all of them taller than 4,000 meters (13,124 feet).

CAÑAR: A Year in the Highlands of Ecuador

Judy Blankenship

Once isolated from the modern world in the heights of the Andean mountains, the indigenous communities of Ecuador now send migrants to New York City as readily as they celebrate festivals whose roots reach back to the pre-Columbian past. Fascinated by this blending of old and new and eager to make a record of traditional customs and rituals before they disappear entirely, photographer-journalist Judy Blankenship spent several years in Cañar, Ecuador, photographing the local people in their daily lives and conducting photography workshops to enable them to preserve their own visions of their culture. Blankenship combines her sensitively observed photographs with an inviting text to tell the story of the most recent year she and her husband Michael lived and worked among the people of Cañar. *Cañar* documents such activities as plantings and harvests, religious processions, a traditional wedding, healing ceremonies, a death and funeral, and a home birth with a native midwife. Along the way, Blankenship describes how she and Michael went from being outsiders only warily accepted in the community to becoming neighbors and even godparents to some of the local children. She also explains how outside forces, from Ecuador's failing economy to globalization, are disrupting the traditional ways of the Cañari as economic migration virtually empties highland communities of young people.

Folktales of the Amazon

by Juan Carlos Galeano

Here are forty-one tales gathered from Amazonian fishermen, hunters, lodgers, small plot farm gardeners, and villagers in Venezuela, Guyana, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador. Organized thematically, these tales for mature readers convey messages of kinship bonds and reciprocity, capturing the socialized relationships between peoples, animals, plants, places and a variety of shape-shifting supernatural entities. Often shocking or hair-raising, some of these tales even range into illicit topics, such as cannibalism and psychotropic plants.