

Country Handbook: Ecuador



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Ecuador. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Ecuador!



Country Information



Ecuador has a fascinating history. Named after the equator which runs through its middle, Ecuador made its mark in 2008 when it became the first country in the world to give nature constitutional rights. It's also home to the world's largest species of tortoise and is the world's largest exporter of bananas.

Main languages:

Spanish

Climate:

Typically warm, but can get cooler in the coastal areas

Main religions:

Roman Catholic (74%),
Evangelical (10.4%)

Currency:

US Dollar



Compassion in Ecuador

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in Ecuador since 1974. 25 per cent of people live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children and youth **AGED 3 TO 11** attend their local Compassion centre for six hours a week.

Students **AGED 12 AND OLDER** attend the centre for four hours a week.



For more information on Ecuador, scan the QR code or visit:
compassion.com.au/where-we-work/ecuador

Compassion assisted children in Ecuador typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

Devotional time - Children learn to pray.

Spiritual lessons - Children sing songs and learn Bible stories.

Break and snack time - Children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships.

Social-emotional lessons - Children learn conflict resolution skills and how to develop healthy self-esteem and a godly character. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

Lunch and social time - Children usually receive lunch each day they visit the Compassion centre at the local church. A typical lunch consists of soup or vegetables and meat, and a main dish containing carbohydrates, proteins and vegetables. Some centres offer snacks to the children before they go home—it is common to provide additional food to children under the age of five.

Health lessons - Children learn practical health and hygiene lessons.

Letter writing and career planning - Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests, setting realistic goals for their future.

In addition to Compassion's curriculum, children have opportunities to participate in activities including football, art, music and dance. Some centres also organise trips and camps. Compassion Ecuador has an additional certified curriculum for teenagers called 'More Than Conquerors' which covers vocational training, including 17 different workshop topics. Parents and caregivers are offered parenting classes once a month.

Cultural Considerations



Body language

- Ecuadorians are warm, kind people and the elderly are deeply respected throughout the country.
- Pointing is considered rude and aggressive, so Ecuadorians will generally gesture using their entire hand, rather than one finger.

Language

- Useful Spanish phrases:

Hello: Hola

Goodbye: Adios

Good morning: Buenos días

Good night: Buenas noches

Thank you: Muchas gracias

Please: Por favor

Excuse me: Perdon

How are you? Como estás?

I don't understand: No entiendo

I'm sorry: Lo lamento

Yes: Si

No: No

Security

- Please ask permission before you photograph any local people. This can include photos taken from a moving vehicle, so be sure to check with your driver or Trips and Visits Specialist first.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 911

Compassion Ecuador office: +593 6010946

Australian Embassy: (+593) 9 5981 1614

Clothing

- **Men:** Jeans and t-shirts are acceptable when visiting child development centres and homes, however, slightly more formal attire is expected at church services.
- **Women:** Jeans and t-shirts are acceptable, but please ensure a modest neckline and avoid tight-fitting clothing. When attending church services, slightly more formal attire is expected, such as a skirt or dress knee-length or longer.
- It is best to wear closed-in shoes when visiting local church partners or children.

Greetings

- Manners go a long way in Ecuador. The most common greeting is a handshake with eye contact and a smile.
- While shaking hands, use the appropriate greeting for the time of day: 'buenos dias' (good morning), 'buenas tardes' (good afternoon) or 'buenas noches' (good evening).
- Titles are important in Ecuador and, in general, only close friends or family use first names. In general, it's polite to use 'señor', 'señora' or 'señorita' followed by the person's surname.
- Among close friends, women may kiss each other on one cheek and men may embrace and slap each other's backs. It's wise to let Ecuadorians determine when to move to this level of formality.

Eating and drinking

- Meals are social occasions and can be quite lengthy. Expect lively conversation during the meal.
- The host will say 'buen provecho' ('enjoy') as an invitation to start eating.
- The host makes the first toast. Please wait for the toast to be made before taking a sip of your drink. The most common toast is 'Salud!'. When you lift your glass, look at the person being toasted.
- Food is always eaten with utensils. Even fruit is eaten with a knife and fork. It is appropriate etiquette for the fork to be held in your left hand and the knife in your right.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

Close to one in three Ecuadorians live below the national poverty line, with indigenous and rural populations most affected. Pray for guidance and strength for our local church partners as they continue caring for those in their communities.

For children, a lack of access to education continues to be a major hurdle, particularly in rural areas where incomes are low. This problem gets worse as children get older, with many high school students dropping out of school to look for work instead. Pray for safety and protection for these children vulnerable to the impacts of crime, drugs and violence.

Hunger and malnutrition still affect many Ecuadorian children, particularly in rural areas, where ongoing drought and soil degradation result in smaller harvests. Farmers are finding it difficult to feed their families. Pray that the work of local church partners will make a difference in this space for children and their families.

Since 2015, Ecuador has received more than 1.2 million refugees from Venezuela, as well as some from neighbouring Colombia. Ecuador is struggling to cope with the demand. Please pray for wisdom for the country's leaders as they make plans to address these issues, and that God would bring peace, unity and stability to the people of Ecuador.



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COMPASSION AUSTRALIA

PO Box 1, Hunter Region MC NSW 2310
Phone: 1300 22 44 53 | +612 49 35 5000
Fundraising Authority: CFN10658
ABN 67 001 692 566

compassion.com.au

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