

# ***An Orientation for Working in Ecuador***

**¡BIENVENIDOS! WELCOME!** We are praying that these days will be very special to you and very effective in the cause of proclaiming Jesus Christ to the people of Ecuador. We are very appreciative of not only your interest in Biblical missions, but your desire to be involved in missions - - here - - with us! Thank You very much. We hope and pray for a continued partnership with you here in Ecuador.

**ECUADOR PROFILE.** Ecuador is a beautifully diverse country. It has the Andes Mountains, the Pacific Coast, the Amazon jungle, and the Galapagos Islands. You can see snow-capped mountains, active volcanos, lush jungle, and lovely beaches. The people are nearly as diverse as the land itself with a mixture of tribal Indians, fair-skinned people of European descent, “descent Mestizos” (people of mixed descent), and Black Ecuadorians. Ecuador is about the size of the state of Nevada or the country of Italy, and is named after the imaginary line of the equator which the country straddles. Ecuador is bordered on the north by Colombia and on the east and south by Peru.

**CULTURE SHOCK.** "When you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable." -Clifton Fadiman

You will see, hear, smell, and taste things that are very different than the US. Your reaction to these is often called culture shock. To help you manage this:

- Poverty - The emotional impact of seeing people living in small bamboo, block, or wooden houses, sometimes with dirt floors, may disturb you. While in Ecuador you will possibly experience discomfort with conditions to which missionaries or others may seem oblivious. Please understand that these things are normal in Ecuador. It is helpful for you to ask questions and discuss these things with your missionary hosts.
- You may see women openly nursing their children. Don't Stare as this is very normal here. Keep your eyes on her face if you speak to her. Maintain eye contact. The baby is hungry and she is feeding it in a culturally acceptable manner.
- Men often relieve themselves in public or by the road. Look the other way discretely.
- You may see men and women who have spent the day drinking or on drugs. Pray for them.  
**REMEMBER: THIS IS A COUNTRY WITHOUT CHRIST; THEIR BEHAVIOR WON'T BE CHRIST-LIKE.**

The best way to guard against culture shock is through spiritual preparation. Remember that you are here because you want to share the love of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will protect you and that the Holy Spirit use you in every circumstance. Believe in faith that this prayer will be answered.

**PERSONAL SECURITY.** Personal security often is related to wisdom of actions. Just as you would not walk the downtown streets of major American cities at night, it is wise to follow the same practices while you are in Ecuador.

- Do not go out in groups smaller than 2 and always have a man along. Always let your team leader know when you are going somewhere.
- Please **DO NOT** wear expensive jewelry; it is best left at home. Don't bring anything that cannot be replaced. It is wise to make copies of your passports to carry with you at all times, then leave your passports locked in your suitcase in your hotel room.
- If you carry a backpack and are in large crowds, be sure to carry it in front of you. From behind, they can slit your backpack and take out all that you have very quickly. Men carry you wallet in your front pocket and ladies, your purses in front or tightly under your arm. Always be aware of the people around you. It is wise not to count your money in public.
- **ALWAYS** follow the advice of nationals and missionaries about what you should and should not do and where you should not go. Please trust the judgment of those who are planning your activities and if at any time you have questions or needs, please consult with your missionaries.

- **\*IMPORTANT\*** IF THE MISSIONARY, TRANSLATOR OR A NATIONAL BELIEVER TELLS YOU TO MOVE QUICKLY OR LEAVE A SITUATION, FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS WITH NO QUESTIONS OR HESITATION. YOUR SAFETY IS AT STAKE!
- **\*\*If you see a public disturbance or an activity with police involvement, stay away and try to blend into the background. DO NOT TAKE PHOTOS of the disturbance! Your camera or phone can be confiscated as evidence. If the police confiscate your iPhone, you will never see it again.**

**POLITICS.** Please do not discuss the politics or the government of Ecuador while you are in the country in any way, form or fashion! We missionaries are guests of Ecuador, and if we are connected with negative remarks about the government, it could jeopardize the visas of all Baptist missionaries in Ecuador. What you say could damage the missionaries' right to live in the country. It is a privilege to visit Ecuador, and you do not want to offend anyone.

### **CULTURAL DO'S & DON'TS.**

- Always shake hands with both men and women for greetings AND again for the good-byes. Handshaking has real meaning for Ecuadorians and they are hurt if you do not greet them and give them a good-bye. Women will touch cheeks and kiss the air when they greet men or women.
- Be careful not to be away alone with anyone of the opposite sex other than your spouse. This causes questions of motive. This principle applies to married volunteers as well as singles. It includes nationals of the opposite sex, also.
- Personal space is much narrower in Ecuador than the USA. People talk very close to each other. They will also sit much closer to each other at church, on public transportation and other times when you have a group of people together. Resist the temptation to put space between you and the Ecuadorian for this will be interpreted as being cold. Step out of your personal bubble.
- If you smoke or drink, you **MUST** abstain from these practices while you are in Ecuador. Ecuadorian Christians consider these actions as sins. Your witness will be destroyed by such actions and you will damage the integrity of your missionaries who have invited you to come and work with them.
- Voodoo, shamanism, folk medicine, and other occult practices are very common here. Do not be surprised to hear or see people exhibiting strange behaviors or sharing strange beliefs
- Too many Americans are seen as loud and boisterous; let's keep it to a low roar.... Don't be excessively loud when in public. Don't shout across the road to one another. Don't talk loudly, even among yourselves, when in public. Be very careful about demonstrating anger or frustration—even to one another in public.
- Be very flexible while you are here. Do not let changes in scheduling ruffle your feathers. You will most probably experience changes in schedules, times to meet, and what you might deem as normality.
- Be open, friendly, and outgoing. This will allow you many opportunities to share your faith in Jesus. Women, be careful with being "over-friendly" as it can be interpreted in a wrong way.
- Steer clear of political discussions. If it comes up, let them know that you pray for your president and hope he makes correct decisions.
- Do not compare Ecuador unfavorably to your country. Don't act like your country is better than theirs. Do not refer to yourself as "American" or "from America". They, too, are Americans. You are from the United States, or North America. Don't make remarks that imply that the United States has everything while the people here have very little such as "In the US, we have..." "I know you don't have much here," or "We have so many material blessings in the US" etc.
- Be open and try new foods and new ways of doing things. Expect to eat a variety of Ecuadorian dishes, including some delicious foods that you may never have heard of. Eat what is placed before you, especially if you are in someone's home or eating with a national, including translators. If you cannot eat what is placed before you, ask for a plastic bag, and take it with you. Do not leave it untouched on your plate. Do not make faces or rude comments about the food. You don't want to appear as arrogant, spoiled North Americans.

## **HEALTH CONCERNS**

**\*\*Peanuts and seafood** are used extensively in cooking here. Please let us know if someone on the team has a serious allergy, and we can make alternative arrangements for food for that person.

- Protect yourself from the intense sun here on the equator. You can burn quickly. ALWAYS use sunscreen.
- Never drink the tap water. Drink only purified or bottled water.
- Eat only the fruits that you can peel. If you can peel it, then it is safe to eat.
- Do not eat food prepared by the little street carts. This food usually has never known a refrigerator.
- Do not dispose of toilet paper in the toilet. Use the trash can for paper disposal. This will keep your toilet in working condition, which you will appreciate.
- Keep all valuables locked in your suitcase in your Hotel room. Don't bring irreplaceable valuables to Ecuador.
- If you have any questions during the week, you should always feel free to ask a missionary.
- Remember that the word for "hot" is "Caliente", so the hot water knob in the shower may be the one with the "C". "F": stands for Frio, or cold. Most of the time when you are on the coast, there will be only cold water.

## **PREVENTION OF HEAT-RELATED CONDITIONS**

- Drink lots of water. If you notice your lips are dry, you need more water. Caffeine containing colas do not work for staying hydrated. The soups often served for lunch help keep you from dehydration.
- You may think that you are used to heat, but in the US, you usually spend a large part of the day in air conditioned buildings. While here, you will probably be outside or in hot buildings all day.
- If you feel dizzy or crampy, get in the shade and cool off. Loosen your clothes and pour water over your head and body. Contact the missionary.
- Be aware of the signs listed below and respond quickly if you notice a team member with heat exhaustion or heatstroke.
- Drink lots of bottled water!!!!

For Heat Exhaustion info: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heat-exhaustion/symptoms-causes/syc-20373250>

**USING AN INTERPRETER.** There are some “tricks of the trade” which you can use to make your translation more easily understood. Regardless of the skills a translator possesses, his translation quality is controlled by the person who is the primary speaker. You can make your speaking more effective by following these principles when you speak:

- Speak short phrases or simple sentences to permit a rhythm of translation. Try to complete a thought or phrase and then pause to allow your translator to understand the meaning of that phrase. In many cases, translated ideas require a different word order in another language.
- Stick to simple English and avoid the use of complex, uncommon, or difficult English words.
- Do not use poems or colloquial sayings and avoid American slang, jokes and idioms or most sports illustrations. Most of the time, they do not translate well.
- Speak slowly, crisply and distinctly.
- Review your outline and scripture portions with the interpreter before the service.

One major communication problem is the use of illustrations that are American in context and content. Ecuadorians do not relate well to these stories because they do not travel on the interstate highway, eat Big Macs, etc. They have never been caught in a blizzard or caught up in the NFL season. Because most have lived on or close to a farm, stories about gardening, caring for animals, sewing by hand, or similar tasks communicate effectively. Many translation problems and embarrassments can be avoided by reviewing your stories and illustrations with the interpreter before the service.

## **SHARING THE GOSPEL**

You are going to be blessed to be able to share your faith with some of the people that you meet. Here are some tips to help you know what to avoid, as well as some ways that might be effective in witnessing. Since you already know much of this, it will only serve as a reminder.

- Simplicity is very important and will be your guide as you teach! Ecuadorians take things very literally.
- Most—even many church members here—have very little Bible knowledge. Keep your witnessing to simple concepts of Jesus' stories on repentance and faith.
- If asked about the Virgin Mary, say, "We believe everything the Bible says about Mary." Leave it at that. Do not get drawn into an argument.
- Some will "pray to receive Christ" just to please you; pray for discernment in this area.
- Repetition of the message is a good way of making sure they understand you.
- As you come to the point of trying to win them, ask, "Does this make any sense to you? Would you like Jesus to be your Lord? Is there any reason you cannot repent and make Jesus your Lord right now?"
- You then pray for them, and then ask them to pray out loud to make Christ Lord of their life.
- If they decline, invite them to an event or Bible study where you are ministering.

## **CAUTION! AVOID THE FOLLOWING:**

- Terms like "receiving Christ, born-again, and Christian" can have another meaning here. They "receive Christ" when they participate in the weekly Mass; they are "born-again" when they are baptized as babies into their Church; and they are "Christian" by virtue of belonging to the Catholic Church. And if you say "I always went to church" they will think and understand that you went to the Catholic Church.
- Do not assume they understand what "lost" and "saved" means. Explain them simply and with illustrations.
- Don't ask if they "know Jesus." "Jesús" is a common name. They may tell you he lives around the corner . . . !
- Avoid disparaging remarks about the Catholic Church. It is best to not speak of the Catholic Church at all.

**GIFTS AND PROMISES.** Your heart will go out to these gracious and loving people and in many cases you will want to help by giving gifts or promising to send money or other items to them.

- You cannot and must now try to give a gift to everybody and there will be mobs of people if you start giving out small items that you have brought.
- PLEASE wait until the end of the week to give any gifts you brought and please be discreet in doing so. Monetary gifts to individuals can often do more harm than good.
- PLEASE consult with the missionaries before giving gifts to individuals. Unkept promises made by volunteers create many problems, particularly for your missionaries.
- Ecuadorians remember every promise made or what they interpret to be a promise. PLEASE communicate very clearly when you are asked to provide any particular item by saying, "I just cannot do that", instead of saying, "I'll see what I can do".

Your heart will be touched by the immense need here. Recognition that you cannot meet every need will help you deal with the issue.

- PLEASE consult with the missionaries before making any promises to the people.
- Inviting people to come visit the USA can be taken as a promise, even if it's said jokingly.
- Do not even promise to send pictures. You may send them, but do not promise to do so.
- Do not promise to help them with a visa to the USA.

## **TEAM LEADERS:**

Have every member of your team scan their passport and send it to you by email. Scan yours as well, and send it to yourself. You could also send a copy of the passports to me if you wish. That way, you have a copy of it if they should happen to lose it while here, and it would help to get them back into the US.

While you are in the country, the missionary will be responsible for all scheduling. If any changes are made to the schedule, these should be discussed with the team and the missionary so that we are all on the same page. If there is something scheduled that you do not feel comfortable with, please let the missionary know.

**Carry a COPY of your passport at all times and your list of Important Phone #'s – It is also a good idea to put a copy of your passport in each piece of luggage you bring.**