

ECUADOR



The South American country of Ecuador is located right on the equator; the name Ecuador is the Spanish word for equator. Ecuador is bordered by Colombia to the north, Peru to the east and south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The Galapagos Islands are part of Ecuador. The islands are located in the Pacific Ocean about 600 miles (965 km) west of the mainland. Ecuador is one of the smaller countries in South America, with a land area of 106,860 sq miles (276,840 sq km) including the Galapagos.

There are about 17.5 million people living in Ecuador, with about 2,735,987 million of these living in the capital city of Quito. Quito is located high in the Andean mountains at an elevation of 9,300 feet (2,850 m). Quito is only about 15 miles (24 km) from the equator. Usually the equator is a very hot place, but because Quito is so high up in the Andes the temperatures there are mild throughout the year. During the day the temperature is about 67 degrees Fahrenheit (20°C) and at night it can be 49°F (9°C). The temperatures don't change much throughout the year. In fact there are only really two seasons in Quito: the summer, or dry season; and the winter, or rainy season! Although Quito is the capital of Ecuador, the city with the most people is the coastal city of Guayaquil.

The national holiday of Independence Day is celebrated on August 10th. This is Quito's Independence Day, and many other cities celebrate different additional days as their own Independence Day.

The geography in Ecuador is divided into three main regions. The coastal area (La Costa) lies next to the Pacific Ocean. Within the area of La Costa are many marshes, mangrove forests, beautiful beaches and port cities, including Guayaquil. The Highland area (La Sierra) features the foothills and peaks of the Andes Mountains. The Andes run through Ecuador from the north to the south. Mount Chimborazo, at 20,700 feet (6,310 m), is the tallest peak in Ecuador. It is an old volcano. Cotopaxi, the second highest peak in Ecuador, is one of the highest active volcanoes in the world. Cotopaxi is 19,347 feet (5,897 m) high. There are very few glaciers found in the equatorial region, but both Chimborazo and Cotopaxi have glaciers on their summits. Next to the La Sierra region is an eastern area (El Oriente), which is part of the Amazon rain forest. The Pastaza and Napo rivers are two of the major rivers originating in the Andes and flowing through the Oriente region before joining the Amazon River.

In addition to these three main regions, there is also the island region (Región Insular), which includes the Galapagos Islands. Located far out in the Pacific Ocean, the islands are home to a great number of endemic species, or species that are found nowhere else in the world. Among these unique species is the giant Galapagos tortoise, the Galapagos land iguana, the marine iguana, seals and many different birds.

Answer the following questions

1. What countries surround Ecuador?
2. What is the capital city of Ecuador?
3. How many seasons are there in Quito?
4. When did people celebrate the Independence Day?
5. Do many other cities celebrate different additional days as their own Independence Day?
5. What are the three main regions of Ecuador?
6. What is the highest peak in Ecuador?
7. How far away from the mainland are the Galapagos Islands?
8. What are some of the unique animals living on the Galapagos Islands?
10. Is Ecuador in North America?