



## **ECO-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Tropical Cordillera Foundation is seeking eight person eco-volunteer teams to help rural Ecuadorian families implement sustainable ranching practices through tree planting. During this 7-day eco-volunteerism trip to the Tropical Andes, volunteers will be based at the Mazar Wildlife Reserve field camp on the border of the Sangay National Park.

#### **What should I expect?**

Eco-volunteers will have a once in a lifetime experience working with local communities to protect and restore the majestic Tropical Andes of southern Ecuador. Please remember that all participants should be in good physical shape and capable of working in tough and muddy conditions. The pastures are located at elevations between 9-10,000 feet.

#### **How can I sign up?**

We are seeking 8 person eco-volunteer teams. So, start recruiting your team. At this time, we cannot place individuals in this program.

#### **What's the cost? How will my money be spent?**

The Tropical Cordillera Foundation solicits a donation of \$5000 from each group of Eco-Volunteers. This money will purchase trees, fencing, and fertilizers that benefit small cattle ranchers. After the Eco-volunteers leave, this donation will also allow the Tropical Cordillera Foundation to hire and train local Ecuadorian Tree Guardians who will monitor and teach ranchers to care for the trees over a 12-month period.

All Eco-Volunteers should budget approximately \$400/week to cover all in-country costs for food, transport, and lodging in addition to his/her airfare to/from Ecuador.



## **ECO-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

### **COMMON QUESTIONS**

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Is there an age limit?**

We ask that all participants be over 18 years of age. Special consideration will be given to younger participants when accompanied by an adult guardian.

##### **What's the elevation where we will work? What's the elevation in Cuenca?**

Eco-volunteers will plant forage trees in pastures between 9 and 10,000 feet. The elevation in Cuenca is 8,300 feet.

##### **What kind of working conditions should I expect?**

Planting trees at high elevation is tough and muddy work. Participants should be in good physical shape. If you have any health concerns associated with physical work at high elevation, participants should discuss these with his/her local physician.

##### **What's the weather like?**

Average temperatures vary from 50 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Eco-volunteers should come prepared for sunshine or rain.

##### **What languages are spoken in this region of Ecuador?**

Most local residents speak Spanish, although some also speak Kichwa. Eco-volunteers will be accompanied by a bilingual (Spanish-English) Tropical Cordillera Foundation employee.

#### **HEALTH INFORMATION**

##### **Is there malaria there?**

The field camp is located above 9,000 feet. Malaria is not present.

##### **Can I drink the water in Cuenca and at the field camp?**

All drinking water must be treated prior to consumption.

##### **Vaccinations and Illness Prevention**

The Centers for Disease Control recommends a number of vaccines and preventative measures. Please discuss these vaccines and other disease prevention measures with

your doctor. CDC information is available online at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

See your doctor at least 6-8 weeks before you leave for Ecuador to allow time for vaccines to become effective.

### **Travel insurance**

Tropical Cordillera Foundation requires all visitors to show proof of purchase for traveler's health insurance that covers any required medical or dental emergencies that occur during your stay in Ecuador.

## **TRAVEL INFORMATION**

### **Passport and Visas**

Be sure to apply for a passport at least 12-weeks before you leave the U.S. Applications can be obtained at US post offices and take a minimum of 8 weeks to process. If you already have a passport, it must be valid for at least the next six months.

U.S. citizens do not need to apply for an Ecuadorian visa. One can obtain a 90-day tourist visa at the Ecuadorian port of entry.

### **Finances**

Ecuador uses the U.S. dollar as its currency. There are numerous ATM machines in Cuenca which accept Visa and MasterCard. Larger stores and restaurants accept a credit card, while smaller stores do not. Traveler's checks can be exchanged at various banks in Cuenca but this can be a time consuming process and it is not recommended.

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### **MAZAR WILDLIFE RESERVE OVERVIEW**

The Mazar Wildlife Reserve is a privately-owned ecological reserve located in the southern Ecuadorian Andes. The Reserve covers 4,500 acres of cloud forest and tropical grasslands, called *páramo*. Eco-volunteers will stay at the La Libertad field camp on the reserve at 9,500 feet.

#### **Facilities**

Living conditions are simple. The camp consists of a common area with a kitchen and dorm-style housing. Eco-volunteers will have access to beds and mattresses. The camp has a hot shower and sit-down toilet. Running water is piped in through a spring for the kitchen and bathrooms – but all water must be boiled before consumption.

#### **Physical location**

The Reserve is located in the eastern ridge of the Andes in Ecuador's Cañar Province. The nearest small town is called Zhoray/Rivera. You can find the reserve's approximate location by looking up "All things Alpaca Ecuador" on Google Maps. It is approximately a 3 hour drive from the city of Cuenca.

#### **Alcohol and Drug Use Policy**

Consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs is not allowed in the field camp. Both will be handled on a 'no-tolerance' policy and involve immediate expulsion from the field camp.

#### **Contact Number**

The region has no telephone service and during your time on the Mazar Wildlife Reserve you will not be able to connect to telephone or internet networks. In case of emergency, Tropical Cordillera Foundation staff will be able to make receive ingoing and outgoing calls.



## ECO-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MAZAR WILDLIFE RESERVE MAP



Source: Google Maps, 2014.



## ECO-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

### SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

The following list contains suggestions of items you will find useful during your stay in Ecuador. The list is extensive so consider which items are applicable to you.

#### Clothing

T-shirts and long-sleeve shirts  
Work pants  
Raincoat and rain pants  
Fleece Jacket or wool sweater

Mittens / gloves  
Winter hat  
Sunhat / baseball cap  
Long underwear tops and bottoms

Remember it may be colder than you expect. Bring plenty of layers.

#### Footwear

Hiking / trekking socks  
Sandals or Croc-like footwear  
City shoes  
Rubber boots

Tropical Cordillera Foundation will purchase rubber boots for all Tree Guardians. Conditions are wet and can be very muddy and leather boots are not recommended. If you have feet larger than a men's size 12 you should purchase rubber boots in the US, as sizes this large are not sold in Ecuador

#### Toiletries

Toothbrush / toothpaste  
Sunscreen / lotion  
Shampoo / conditioner  
Brush / comb  
Soap  
Feminine hygiene  
Medications (anti-diarrhea, allergy,

Pain reliever  
Band-Aids  
Contact lenses and solution

Tropical Cordillera Foundation will have a full first-aid kit, but it is recommended that you bring the usual medicines that you require.

#### Equipment

2 water bottles (capacity 1 liter)  
Headlamp  
Batteries for headlamp/camera

Day pack to carry lunch  
Camp Towel  
Binoculars (if you have them)  
Sleeping bag  
Sunglasses  
Camera / batteries / film

### **Money and Important Documents**

Passport  
Vaccination certificate  
Copies of important documents  
Credit / ATM cards  
Cash  
Money belt / pouch  
Travel and medical insurance contact numbers

### **Most importantly**

A sleeping bag. Tropical Cordillera Foundation will provide a mattress, but you must bring a bag.

Tropical Cordillera Foundation recommends that you leave a copy of your passport with a US contact, and that you bring one photocopy with you.



## ECO-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM TRIP AGENDA

Day	Location	Activity
1	Travel from Guayaquil to Cuenca in private mini-van. Night in Cuenca.	Travel from Guayaquil to Cuenca through Cajas National Park. Visit scenic Cuenca and enjoy typical Ecuador food for dinner.
2	Travel from Cuenca to Mazar Wildlife Reserve. Night on the Reserve.	Travel through the wild and scenic Tropical Andes traveling up and over the eastern Andean range en route to the Mazar Wildlife Reserve. Upon arrival, receive an introduction to camp, and to the local project and project partners.
3	Mazar Wildlife Reserve. Night on the Reserve.	Eco-volunteers will plant trees on selected private properties.
4	Mazar Wildlife Reserve. Night on the Reserve.	Eco-volunteers will plant trees on selected private properties.
5	Mazar Wildlife Reserve. Night on the Reserve.	Eco-volunteers will visit a local school in the morning and in the afternoon have a special hike to a pre-Incan archaeological site with a local expert.
6	Mazar Wildlife Reserve to Cuenca. Night in Cuenca.	½ day - Eco-volunteers will plant trees on selected private properties.  PM – Return to Cuenca
7	Travel from Cuenca to Guayaquil	½ day – Cuenca souvenirs and city sites.  PM – Return to Guayaquil for flight.