

# WHAT TO PACK

## CENTERS FOR INTERAMERICAN STUDIES (CEDEI)

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### **ESSENTIALS:**

- **An open mind**—your own attitude can greatly impact your experience, as well as that of others around you. An open mind will help make your experience in Cuenca one of the most memorable in your life.
- **Hidden pocket/money belt**—should be worn under your clothes and contain your money, traveler's checks, passport, credit cards, ATM card, phone card, etc. **Never place these items, or other valuables, in your checked luggage.**
- **Passport and 4 copies of photo page**—1) for embassy registration (CEDEI will need this copy once you're in Ecuador), 2) to carry on you while in Cuenca, 3) to save as an extra, 4) to leave with your parents or contact person in your home country.
- **Address book**—include contact information for your bank, credit card company, etc. For current college students, be sure that your address book also contains your academic advisor's and study abroad office's phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- **International Certificate of Vaccination**—review the *CDC Health & Immunization Information* and consult with your doctor, or a travel health specialist, to determine which vaccinations and precautions to follow.
- **Anti-malarial pills**—necessary only for travel in low-lying tropical areas (ie, Costa and Oriente). Cuenca is located in the highlands; therefore, it is not necessary to take anti-malarial medicine while there. Refer to *CDC Health & Immunization Information* and consult with your doctor or a travel health specialist for further information.
- **International Student Identification Card (ISIC)**—for recognized identification as a student, as well as for insurance and discounts. You can obtain the card through our USA office or from any official ISIC issuing office (see <http://www.cedei.org/idcards/>).
- **Cash**—Ecuador now uses the US dollar as its official currency. Since it is not always easy for merchants to make change, it is advisable to have smaller bills (\$1s, \$5s, \$10s), especially for the first few days of your trip (but risky to carry lots of cash—see *Traveler's Cheques* below). We recommend \$75 in small bills for the first few days.
- **Traveler's Cheques**—safer than cash (can be replaced if stolen) and can be exchanged in banks and exchange houses. **Be sure not to countersign or date the checks in advance, as this makes it difficult—if not impossible—to cash them.**
- **ATM/Debit card**—ATM machines are not always reliable, but they are the fastest, cheapest way to receive money in Ecuador. The daily limits usually are \$300 for ATM withdrawals and \$500 for cash advances obtained at a bank. **Be sure to check with your bank about its international withdrawal fees.**
- **Padlocks, cable ties and ID tags**—place identification tags on the outside and inside of *each piece of luggage* (assume that one is not enough, as tags have a tendency to come off during luggage handling). Always secure your luggage with a padlock or cable tie (note that in the USA, Transportation Security Administration personnel will cut padlocks to facilitate inspections, so it advisable to use a plastic cable tie, available in the electronics/wiring section of your neighborhood store).
- **Sunblock and lip balm**—the atmosphere is thin at high altitudes and you will burn more quickly than you expect. These items can also be purchased at pharmacies and stores throughout Ecuador.
- **Prescription glasses or contacts**—if you wear prescription glasses or contacts, it is advisable to pack an extra pair, as well as a copy of your prescription.
- **Travel alarm clock**

- **Spanish-English dictionary**
- **Insect repellent**—especially useful if you are going to the Costa or Oriente. Repellents with a high DEET content are most effective against pesky mosquitoes.
- **Prescription medicine**—leave prescription drugs in their original containers and carry a copy of your prescription(s). A note from a doctor explaining why you are taking the medication is also useful.
- **Journal**—to create a written record of your experience.
- **Camera**
- **Extra film and batteries**—film cost about the same or slightly more than in the US)
- **Day pack**—a small backpack that can double as your carry-on and book bag.
- **Host family gift**—local foods, candies or picture books about your city, typical souvenirs. Your gift does not have to be lavish or expensive—remember, it's the thought that counts! We also recommend that you buy a bouquet of flowers for your host mother—flowers are inexpensive and readily available at the market in Cuenca.
- **ID photos**—for your CEDEI Student ID Card, please provide a small photo (eg, passport size) to the Office of International Programs when you arrive in Cuenca. You can also obtain photos inexpensively in Cuenca—go to Foto Ortiz (Gran Colombia and Padre Aguirre) and ask for a *foto tamaño carnet*.

## **ESSENTIAL CLOTHING**

- **Light raincoat or poncho**—a compact umbrella may also be useful.
- **Swimsuit**
- **Hiking boots and/or good sneakers**
- **One moderately dressy outfit**
- **Underwear**- bring plenty of it!
- **Socks**
- **Slippers**- can be nice on cold tile floors!
- **Pants**- kakis dry quicker than jeans and are more versatile
- **Sweaters/ sweatshirts**
- **Shirts**- long sleeved and t-shirts
- **One pair of shorts**- for the beach
- **One set of long underwear**- for spending the night in El Cajas National Park

### **NOT ESSENTIAL, BUT RECOMMENDED:**

- **Medical kit** with items such as aspirin, Band-Aids, Benadryl, Chap Stick, Dramamine, etc.
- **Package of moist paper towels**- such as Wet Ones
- **Feminine hygiene products**- tampons may be very expensive
- **Deodorant**
- **Razor/ Shaving cream**
- **Over the counter medication**—anti-diarrhea, cold/flu, etc. (although much of this you can find in Cuenca)
- **Hand disinfectant**—eg, Purel. A local brand, Sani, is available in Cuenca and elsewhere in Ecuador.
- **Small flashlight**
- **Ziplock (plastic) bags**—for keeping your camera, IDs, money, etc, dry.
- **Small towel**—handy for traveling (host families will provide towels for your use in Cuenca).
- **Sewing kit**
- **Photos**—of your family, home, friends, etc, to share with your host family and Ecuadorian friends

### **WHAT NOT TO PACK:**

- **School supplies**—easily attainable at *papelerías* in Cuenca and usually much cheaper than at home.
- **Toiletries**—such as shampoo, soap, etc, are readily available in Cuenca. **Women:** although tampons and cosmetics are available, they are more expensive than at home, so you may wish to pack them.
- **Expensive cameras and jewelry**—if the loss of something would ruin your trip, don't take it.