



Quito

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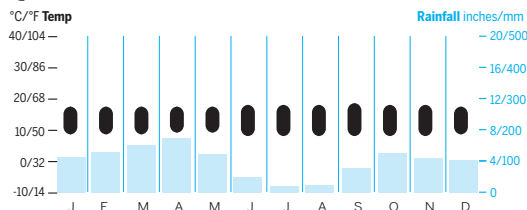
Why Go?

High in the Andes, amid dramatic, mist-covered peaks, Quito is a beautifully located city packed with historical monuments and architectural treasures. It's Ecuador's most dynamic city, with a vibrant civic scene and a fascinating collection of neighborhoods. Dining, drinking and merrymaking are all part of the equatorial experience in the world's second-highest capital.

Quito's jewel is its historic center, or 'old town'. A Unesco World Heritage Site, this handsomely restored neighborhood blooms with 17th-century facades, picturesque plazas and magnificent churches that blend Spanish, Moorish and indigenous elements. It's also home to the presidential palace. The other draw for travelers is the Mariscal Sucre, a compact area of guesthouses, travel agencies, diverse eateries and a pulsing nightlife scene. This is indeed 'gringolandia', though plenty of *quiteños* (Quito residents) frequent the bars and restaurants here.

When to Go

Quito



Year-round Mild days and cool nights, with sunshine typically in the morning and rain by afternoon.

Jun–Sep Best weather for visiting with less rain and warmer, clearer days.

Oct–May Slightly cooler and rainier; fewer crowds.

Food & Drink

Ecuador's culinary capital is a great place to explore the classic dishes from the Andes and beyond. *Seco de chivo* (braised goat stew) is an Ecuadorian classic typically served with yellow rice and *patacones* (plantain fritters). Potatoes, of course, originated in the Andes and are put to imaginative use in dishes like *llapingachos* (fried potato-and-cheese pancakes) often served under grilled steak or fried eggs. A few places also serve *cuy asado* (roasted guinea pig), an indigenous specialty dating back to Inca times.

Seafood specialties include ceviche, uncooked seafood marinated in lemon juice and seasoned with thinly sliced onion and herbs. You can order it as *pescado* (fish), *concha* (shellfish), *camarones* (shrimp), *calamares* (squid) or *mixto* (a combination). Only shrimp is cooked before being marinated.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Aeropuerto Mariscal

Sucre (old airport)
10km north of old town.

Quito Airport New airport 20km east of the city.

Quitumbe Big bus station in the south of Quito.

Carcelén Smaller bus station in the city's north.

FIESTAS DE QUITO

Quito's biggest annual event, on December 6, commemorates the founding of the city by the Spanish. The festivities, however, start much earlier. In late November, Quito chooses a queen, and the evenings are dominated by colorful *chivas* (open-topped buses) maneuvering through the streets, packed with dancing revelers. In the week leading up to the big day, bullfights are held at the Plaza de Toros, located about 2km north of Parque La Carolina on Avenida Amazonas, and flamenco dancing is staged throughout town as *quiteños* connect with their Spanish roots. Momentum builds as the day draws near, with DJs and popular local bands taking to open-air stages set up all over town. Business in Quito comes to a near standstill on December 5, when everyone comes out to party.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 1.8 million
- » Area: 324 sq km
- » Telephone code: 02

Resources

- » **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador/quito) Loads of info on sights, lodging and restaurants, plus the Thorn Tree forum.
- » **Quito Tourism** (www.quito.com.ec) City's official tourism portal.
- » **El Comercio** (www.elcomercio.com.ec) Quito's major daily.

Best Old Town Sights

- » **La Compañía de Jesús** (p55) This fantastically elaborate church blends Spanish, Moorish and indigenous elements.
- » **Museo de la Ciudad** (p51) Explores the city's development and social history through engaging interactive exhibits.
- » **Cathedral** (p49) Curious paintings from the Escuela Quiteña are on display at this iconic church on Plaza Grande.
- » **Basílica del Voto Nacional** (p50) The top of Quito's largest church, reached via rickety ladders, has magnificent views.
- » **Casa del Alabado** (p53) This small atmospheric museum explores the mystical side of pre-Columbian art.
- » **Centro de Arte Contemporáneo** (p55) Cutting-edge gallery showcasing 20th- and 21st-century art.
- » **Casa Museo María Augusta Urrutía** (p51) A beautifully preserved house museum offering a window into the 19th century.

Top Tips

- » **Altitude** Take it easy on arrival: 2850m is nothing to scoff at!
- » **Surprise showers** Always have a rain jacket handy (lovely sunny mornings can quickly cloud over and bring afternoon rain).
- » **Vigilance** Pickpockets are highly skilled: on buses, keep your bag on your lap (it's not safe between your legs or over your head).