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INTERNATIONAL LIFESTYLES EXPLORATIONS

CUENCA, ECUADOR

An Extended Educational Travel Opportunity



AHI Travel is pleased to present a new concept in educational travel: an authentic, extended introduction to living abroad. This first-of-its-kind opportunity features the old world beauty of Cuenca, Ecuador. One of South America's most alluring and captivating colonial cities, Cuenca is a **UNESCO World Heritage site** and has been anointed by *International Living Magazine* as The World's Top Retirement Haven.

Cuenca is an artists' community with all the modern conveniences. It is home to three universities, majestic cathedrals, fascinating museums and living history. Reside in your own apartment in Cuenca's historic center for four weeks with AHI staff always available to support and enhance your experience.

Enjoy individual language instruction combined with an immersion in the lifestyle, customs, history and cuisine of Cuenca, courtesy of your own accomplished and experienced Lifestyle Guide from the eminent *Simon Bolivar Spanish School*. From cooking classes and salsa lessons to shopping strolls through the vibrant *mercado* and the colorful flower market, each day rewards you with deepened insight and the joy of discovery and accomplishment.

Discover Ecuador's other treasures: her unspoiled *Pacific coast*, the magnificent *Cajas National Park*, charming *Gualaceo*, and the wondrous *Galapagos Islands* on optional excursions.

The weather is delightful, the restaurants and cafes wonderful and diverse, the food delicious and fresh year-round. Cuenca offers an unbeatable combination of beauty, livability and a very low cost of living, a fraction of that found in the U.S. and Canada. An added convenience: Ecuador's official currency is the U.S. dollar. Come to Cuenca and live life abroad.



Photo captions

Previous page: The Cathedral and Central Plaza of Cuenca; Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception; local market; Cajas National Park

Above: Making the famous Panama hat; Inca ruins with trapezoidal niches; San Sebastian Church; colorful clothing and textiles in the market on Plaza San Francisco

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy **four weeks' accommodations** in a fully furnished, modernly appointed apartment in the colonial center of Cuenca; includes cable television and broadband Internet access.
- Live and learn with **your personal Lifestyle Guide and instructor** from the Simon Bolivar Language School, providing **private language instruction** and immersion in Cuenca's culture, people, history, art and cuisine four days each week.
- **Stay connected** with friends, family and AHI Travel staff with a **complimentary Ecuadorean cell phone**.
- Rely upon **AHI Travel's experienced and professional on-site staff** to support you throughout this exclusive program, from your initial orientation to Cuenca and your apartment home to whatever assistance or guidance you may require.
- **Experience life abroad**, equip yourself to live independently in Latin America, learn about similar opportunities around the world.

INCLUDED FEATURES

Accommodations

- **Two nights** in Quito at the **Swissôtel Quito**.
- **One night** in Cuenca at **Hotel Victoria**.
- **Four weeks accommodations** in central Cuenca in a **private apartment**.

Transportation

- **Flights** between Quito and Cuenca.
- **All airport transfers** within Ecuador.

Activities and Events

- Festive **Welcome Lunch, Dinner and Musical Performance**.
- **Double-decker motor coach orientation tour** of Cuenca.
- Gala **Farewell Reception, Graduation Ceremony and Dinner**.
- Other meals as outlined in your program itinerary.
- **Professional language and Ecuadorean culture instruction** provided by the **Simon Bolivar Spanish School** four days each week.

MANY INCLUDED EXTRAS

- Consultation services of a **Passenger Service Representative** prior to departure.
- Detailed **travel and destination information** to assist in your planning.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

DAY 1 ~ SATURDAY IN TRANSIT/QUITO

Depart your gateway city for **Quito, Ecuador**, aboard scheduled jet service.* Upon arrival, transfer to the *Swissôtel Quito*.

Tonight, enjoy refreshments at a *Welcome Reception*.

CUENCA

DAY 2 ~ SUNDAY

Fly from Quito to **Cuenca**, and transfer to the *Hotel Victoria*.

At a group welcome and briefing, you will be introduced to an English-speaking doctor and dentist, in case the need for services arises. In addition, you will be given an Ecuadorean cell phone to use throughout your stay.

Then enjoy an Ecuadorean *Welcome Lunch*, followed by a double-decker bus excursion through Cuenca.

Dinner is served at a local restaurant, followed by a *Welcome Reception* with live music.

DAYS 3 - 7 ~ MONDAY - FRIDAY

Transfer to your apartment. Participate in your first language lesson at the *Simon Bolivar Spanish School*.

This evening, enjoy a group dinner with *Lifestyle Guides* at a local restaurant.

Throughout your stay, from Monday through Thursday, you will experience Cuenca through your *language lessons*, excursions through the city with your *Lifestyle Guide* and on your own, and other cultural experiences presented by the *Bolivar School*, including lectures about history, music, art and politics; cooking classes; and salsa and merengue lessons.

In addition, twice each week, participants enjoy lunch with groups of local university students, wonderful opportunities to learn more about the people and culture of Ecuador.

Each Thursday night you are invited to enjoy live music and energetic conversations mixing your new found Spanish with your new found Ecuadorean friends at *La Parola*, a wonderful rooftop café packed with Cuencanoes enjoying an early start to the weekend.

Friday begins each three-day weekend at the traditional *"Gringo Night"* of the very popular *Eucalyptus Restaurant* giving you the opportunity to socialize and compare notes with your fellow travelers and members of the U.S. and Canadian communities who now live in Cuenca.

DAYS 8 & 9 ~ SATURDAY & SUNDAY

The weekend is free for you to explore and enjoy Cuenca. On Sunday, you may choose to join an optional excursion to the villages of Gualaceo, featuring a lively Sunday morning market, and Chordeleg, noted for its ceramics, gold and silver filigree jewelry, Panama hats and pre-Inca ruins.

DAYS 10 - 14 ~ MONDAY - FRIDAY

Monday is highlighted by a visit to Cuenca's Museum of Indigenous Cultures and its fascinating collection of pre-Columbian finds. Immersion into the language and culture of Ecuador continues.

DAYS 15 & 16 ~ SATURDAY & SUNDAY

Two optional excursions are offered this weekend.

On Saturday you may discover the scenic trails, peaceful blue lagoons and other natural wonders of *Cajas National Park*.

On Sunday, explore the *Shabalula Ruins*, extensive ruins of the administrative and military center of the Cañaris, the predominant indigenous, pre-Incan power in southern Ecuador.

DAYS 17 - 20 ~ MONDAY - THURSDAY

Through your on-going lectures, classes and encounters with daily life in Cuenca, continue to broaden your awareness and appreciation of the culture.

DAYS 21 - 24 ~ FRIDAY - MONDAY

Spring Break arrives, and with it a three-night optional excursion to Ecuador's stunning *Pacific coast*. With year-round air and water temperatures in the mid 80s, Ecuador's Pacific beaches, backed by spectacular cliffs, resemble a warm La Jolla, California, in the 1940s. Enjoy surfing, shell collecting, horseback riding, sea-kayaking, mangrove tours, parasailing, and ubiquitous hammocks for those less inclined to move beyond the shade of the palms and palapas.

DAYS 25 - 28 ~ TUESDAY - FRIDAY

Conclude your Simon Bolivar language and culture program. Thursday evening join your fellow participants for dinner at *Restaurant Tiesto*.

DAY 29 ~ SATURDAY

Celebrate your Ecuadorean adventure, and all you have experienced and accomplished, with a *Graduation Ceremony* with lunch at the elegant *La Mansión Alcázar*.

DAY 30 ~ SUNDAY

IN TRANSIT/QUITO

Fly to Quito for an overnight stay at the *Swissôtel Quito*.

DAY 31 ~ MONDAY

IN TRANSIT/GATEWAY CITY

Today, fly home aboard scheduled jet service*, or join us on a five-night optional extension to the wonders of Ecuador's incredible *Galapagos Islands*.

* *Provided for Air Program participants.*

NOTE: Itinerary sequence and/or scheduled events may change. Many excursions in this program involve an element of walking.

From \$2,995 per person
Call for more details: 800-323-7373

Cuenca, Ecuador's Most Beautiful City

Lovers of old world beauty revere central Cuenca's buildings and plazas as a virtual open air museum of the highest achievements of Latin American colonial architecture. Cuenca is served by no fewer than 52 churches, each a pleasing architectural combination of religious motifs, Andean designs and Arabic influences. The Spaniards founded Cuenca in the 16th century on the site of the second-largest city in the Inca empire, Tomebamba. The city was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.

Cuenca produces Ecuador's finest crafts, including ceramics, textiles, silver and gold jewelry, furniture and Panama hats. Situated almost on the equator in a fertile valley crisscrossed by four beautiful rivers, Cuenca's altitude, 8,000 feet, results in weather that is ideal year-round; the crisp mountain air is never too hot or too cold, allowing Cuenca's markets to feature a constant, colorful abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The official currency of Cuenca is the U.S. dollar, and visitors soon discover that each goes a long way. Each day, the city's restaurants offer an ever-changing four-course lunch special for around \$2. Twenty-five long-stemmed roses to enliven one's apartment cost \$4 at the aromatic flower market.

Along side her gardens, parks, indigenous markets, and abundant natural beauty, Cuenca features all of the niceties of modern living, from shopping centers to delicious restaurants, from movies to live theater and music.

ACCOMMODATIONS



SWISSÔTEL QUITO
Quito

The Swissôtel Quito offers deluxe accommodations, a convenient location and gracious service. Unwind in the Amrita spa or a swim in one of the hotel's two pools. Enjoy international cuisine at your choice of six restaurants. Relax in your luxurious guest room, elegantly appointed with modern amenities and conveniences.



HOTEL VICTORIA
Cuenca

Admire views of the Tomebamba River from the first-class Hotel Victoria. This 17th-century home built on a bluff along the river is decorated in the colonial style. Savor delicious meals in El Jardin, the hotel's highly praised restaurant. Retire to a comfortably appointed guest room. Each of the guest rooms have unique decor, but all share panoramic views of Cuenca.



PRIVATE APARTMENTS
Central Cuenca

Propel your overseas living experience to the authentic by living in apartments inspected and leased by AHI Travel for this program. Studios and one-, two- or three-bedroom apartments are available. All are located in the colonial center of Cuenca and are within easy walking distance of the Simon Boliver Spanish School and all of Cuenca's colonial treasures. All apartments are fully furnished and equipped, and they are wired for cable television and broadband Internet access. AHI staff will orient you to your home and will be available around the clock to assist you as needed.



Above: Apartment interiors; all apartments will vary



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