



Starfish Foundation Volunteer FAQs
Tutoring Vols, C.E.A. & Friends of Starfish Visitors

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Ultimate Packing List

Clothes

Most Ecuadorians wear tightly fitted jeans and simple t-shirts to Starfish. You are welcome to wear whatever makes you feel comfortable as long as it is modest. You will also be provided an official Starfish Foundation t-shirt. Try to wear this at least once or twice a week.

- T-Shirts to wear at the Foundation (sleeveless is okay)
- Shorts to wear at home
- Jeans, long/flowy pants (leggings are okay)
- Modest beach attire (many people here wear shorts and shirts to the beach, but bathing suits are also fine! Dresses are okay for the beach, but are not as common in Flor and will draw more attention to you.)
 - Hat and sunglasses (the sun is very strong!)
 - Pajamas (shorts and a t-shirt)
 - Shoes- comfortable walking shoes that can get dirty (the roads in Flor are dirt roads and you'll have plenty of opportunities to trip and fall), flip flops for home, shoes for weekend activities (nice sandals or converse). Make sure you have comfortable shoes - you will walk pretty much everywhere!
 - Consider bringing clothing that dries quickly, as you will need to line dry your clothing after washing
 - Light raincoat (Dec-May)

Other

- Towel (two if you have room in your suitcase)
- Small coin purse
- Small umbrella (Dec-May)
- Backpack/bag for travel
- Small flashlight (in case of power outages)
- Passport
- Camera, Phone, etc w/ chargers
- Journal, Books, Games, music, etc for free time
- Cash in small bills
- Water bottle (fill it with clean water at your homestay or at Starfish)
- Extra plastic grocery bags for garbage and laundry, ziplock bags
- Potential gift for host family (not expected or required, but some people like to - examples: A sample of various candy/chocolate from the US, Something special from your hometown/state, Old and new pictures to show your family, especially if you have pictures of snow, Something easy and typical to cook your host family)



Toiletries

Some items/brands are harder to find in Ecuador.

For year-long volunteers, if a year's supply of these items do not fit in your suitcase, we can recommend places to get most of these items other than your prescriptions, but you will likely have to settle for different brands than you are used to.

Short-term vols should bring enough for your whole stay since it will be harder to find time to find these products in the city.

- Your preferred shampoo/conditioner/soap brands
- Razor
- Nail clippers/file
- Hairbrush/hair ties (if applicable)
- Feminine products
- Compact mirror- there will probably only be a small mirror in your family's bathroom
- Chapstick with sunscreen in it
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Hand Sanitizer
- Sunscreen
- Bugspray
- Medications, preferably enough for your entire stay
- Deodorant
- Any other products you use daily or think you might need (makeup, q tips, contact solution, etc)

Entertainment

- It is not safe to be out and about at night in Flor de Bastión, and not safe to return late at night. Use your best judgement, and always get the opinion of staff members. Most days, you will be home at night with your family. This could be a change for volunteers who are used to living very active and busy lives. Be sure to plan ahead and bring plenty of activities to keep yourself occupied.
- Cards- you can teach your host family US card games, and they will teach you Ecuadorian ones!
- Books to read
- Coloring books and markers
- Journal/notebook to write in- this will come in handy to write down plans for your project at the foundation
- Music/podcasts
- Remember that your house probably will not have wifi, so bring enough things to keep you busy during your stay. There is wifi at Starfish.
- Consider bringing your laptop to use and keep locked at the foundation. There are also laptops to use at Starfish.



Apps to Download before Arriving

- Duolingo - especially if you are not confident in your language ability
- Google Translate - make sure you download the offline version within the app
- WhatsApp - for easier communication when wifi is available
- White noise app - especially if you are used to sleeping in a quieter place! Flor can be loud at night
- Mobile Pass - speeds up return trip through US Customs!
- You can also download Netflix shows onto your phone to watch without using wifi/data

Entry Requirements

Volunteers who will be in Ecuador less than 90 days do not need a visa and will only need to present a valid U.S. passport and state that the purpose of the trip is for tourism.

Volunteers who will be in Ecuador more than 90 days must contact The Starfish Foundation at least 4 months in advance in order to begin the process of applying for a Volunteer Visa from your nearest Ecuadorian consulate.

Note: *It is recommended that the volunteer register with the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program before travel to receive updates on security in Ecuador.*

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

Medical Recommendations & Preparations

Medical Preparation

The U.S. government does not require any specific inoculations for travel to Ecuador. However, The Starfish Foundation, Inc. recommends that you have an up-to-date tetanus shot and that you talk with your physician about any medical questions you may have before traveling.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends being vaccinated for the following:

- Up-to-date on all routines vaccines plus:

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis B

Typhoid

Note: *Yellow Fever & Malaria are not recommended or necessary for Guayaquil, but talk with your doctor if you plan on traveling before or after your volunteer experience to mountainous areas of Ecuador or to surrounding countries.*

If you have received these shots for previous travel, read the following information:

Hepatitis A is good for life once you've gotten two shots. If you had just one shot for a previous trip, then you can get a second one and then never have to get it again when you travel. If you



have gotten the typhoid shot previously, it is effective for 2 years, and if you have taken the typhoid pills they are effective for 5 years.

And that you have already received booster doses for:

Tetanus

Diphtheria

Measles

- ❖ If you have not been immunized or received the above booster doses, you should talk with your doctor and plan to be vaccinated 4-6 weeks prior to traveling.
- ❖ For additional information on recommended international health precautions, contact the CDC's International Travel Hotline at 888-232-4636 or visit <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ecuador.htm>
- ❖ You should bring any prescribed medications as well as any over-the-counter drugs you may need
- ❖ The CDC also currently warns about the Zika virus. Please read this warning carefully and consult with your doctor about any questions you may have.
 - According to the CDC, Zika is a mosquito-borne illness that causes fever, rash and joint pain. There is an added risk of birth defects for women who are currently pregnant, but no evidence to suggest that having Zika would affect future pregnancies (as of 4/7/2016). While there have been cases of Zika in Ecuador, it has not been in the area where we work. We encourage all participants to take precaution against all mosquito-borne diseases by using bug spray consistently, particularly in the evening hours. For further information, please see the CDC's travel alert for Ecuador and speak with your physician: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/zika-virus-ecuador>
- ❖ ***Always consult a physician before taking any medication***
- ❖ If you wish you receive updates on any travel or health concerns before the trip, you can register with the State Department: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- ❖ You have unlimited sick days, if you don't feel well let the ICD or the staff know and take care of yourself!

Optional Health Recommendations from Past Volunteers

- Bring plenty of sunscreen as it is expensive in Guayaquil and not always what you are used to in the US. If you do get sunburned and want aloe vera, it is hard to find so consider bringing some of your own with you, although there are often live aloe plants that may serve the purpose!
- The food here will most likely involve less fruits and vegetables than you are used to so it is a good idea to take a multivitamin even if you don't usually at home.
- You don't need malaria medication for Guayaquil, but you could in other parts of the country so if you plan to travel, check with your travel doctor to see if you need malaria meds.
- Consider bringing:
 - Have your doctor prescribe you anti-diarrheal medicine as you may get sick at some point (ex. Ciprofloxacin).



- Only take this medicine if you get sick and stop taking it when you feel better.
- If you do get sick, Ecuadorians will probably give you Pedialyte. It will help rehydrate your body. Drink ½ a cup every five minutes until it is gone.
- Benadryl/antihistamine - for allergies and mosquito bites, and especially if you have allergies to animals (there are cats, dogs, and even chickens in most houses).
- Anti-Itch cream for mosquito bites
- Laxative/stool softener- lactulosa is a good brand
- Fiber supplement for a more natural laxative option
- Iron supplement
- Magnesium/calcium supplement
- Ibuprofen
- Neosporin
- Tums
- Cold medication, throat spray, cough drops
- EmergenC for cold prevention
- Bring LOTS of bug spray- approximately 2 cans per month (depending on how much you use it). Bug repellent is also available in Ecuador, just not usually in spray form.
- Tissues

Health Insurance

We recommend that you purchase international medical/emergency health insurance in case of emergency for the duration of your trip (travel days included). Some volunteers have previously used [MedEx](#) or [HTH](#). International travel medical insurance and emergency assistance protect you on your trip, as most if not all health-related services you might need in Ecuador will be considered "out of network" to you, meaning coverage is more limited and you will have to cover the costs out-of-pocket and later be reimbursed. They are also a source of assistance in knowing hospitals, medical centers, and health professionals that should be used in case of emergency. A good international medical/emergency insurance program is able to assist you in expertise and financial needs if necessary, and the programs are low cost. It is not required and hopefully you won't need it, but quotes should be reasonable. Your doctor(s) may be able to provide a recommendation to you, one place that volunteers to Ecuador have used in the past is Medex Assist (now United Healthcare Global):<https://www.medexassist.com/> One month is usually in the \$50 range, but you should get your own quotes based on your needs.

****2017 update**** Please check with Starfish before arrival as new laws are being implemented that may require health insurance for all visitors and residents**

Medical Options in Ecuador

If you chose to purchase health insurance you will have to review the specific requirement, but generally you have to front the costs and wait to get reimbursed. If you get seriously sick and



need to go to the hospital, go to the nearest hospital, but if possible go to the Clinica Kennedy. Any taxi will know how to get there. It is the best hospital with the quality care expected in developed countries, and has excellent doctors. The Kennedy is in the north. If it is something serious, do your best to let the Volunteer Coordinator and/or ICD know in case there is any way we can help. For smaller problems there are local clinics in Flor de Bastión that also have excellent service and have helped past volunteers.

If you are just looking for medicine there are plenty of pharmacies in all parts of the city. If you can't find something in Flor de Bastión, please let us know and we will do our best to purchase it. There is a larger pharmacy in Mall el Fortin. You can either arrange a taxi to take you there or take a tricemoto from Bloque 15 to the túnel and from there take either bus 114 or 49 for about one stop. Note that you may need a prescription for some medications.

Before you leave it would probably be smart to carve a day out to get checked out at the doctor for parasites. The medical system here is kind of frustrating and time-consuming, but it's worth it to not have parasites back home. There is a medical dispensary on the main road in Flor.

If you need a doctor, there is a clinic in Flor that your host family or someone from the Foundation can take you to. It is right of the main road at Bloque 15. If you are having stomach related issues, you may want to stop at the pharmacy to get containers for urine/stool samples so that you don't have to leave then return to the doctor. Previous volunteers recommend La Clínica del Doctor Orlando Pin in Flor de Bastión Bloque 2 or the medical dispensary on the main road in Flor.

It is common that instead of receiving oral medication, the doctors will give you a shot (most likely in your butt!). Don't let this alarm you, also know that you can ask them to slow down and explain what is happening.

Your host family will most likely have different ideas about what will be best for you when you are sick- ultimately you can advocate for yourself and communicate your needs. For example, they may not want you to drink cold water. If you are hot and sick and want cold water do your best to explain that we have different medical customs and it is ok for you to drink cold water. Host families will also likely have natural remedies to suggest. Feel free to accept or decline depending on how you feel and how comfortable you are with their solution.

- If you are constipated some recommended foods are:
 - anything rich in fiber
 - Beans
 - Broccoli
 - Potatoes
 - Nuts/seeds
 - Fruit: kiwi, pears, plums, berries, papaya
- If you have diarrhea some recommended foods are:
 - Avoid: fatty foods and caffeine
 - Ask for Pedialyte so that you don't get dehydrated
 - Eat bland, simple foods- bananas, rice, toast



NOTE The Starfish Foundation, Inc. is not liable for any health issues or responsible for health insurance. However, we are available to provide guidance as to where to seek appropriate medical advice and highly recommend that you purchase your own health insurance.

Things to Know - Tips from Past Volunteers

- Be prepared for little independence during your time in Flor de Bastión. It isn't typically safe to walk places alone, especially at night.
- Volunteers will be walked to and from the foundation (usually by a member of their host family) every day for the beginning of their stay, and will need a family member to walk them anywhere they need to go at night. While the majority of the residents of Flor know who our volunteers are and welcome their presence, this is just to ensure that all of our volunteers stay safe!
- Volunteers should never use their phones or take out other valuables while walking through the streets of Flor.
- Everyone at the foundation will be very patient with your language abilities, so do not be afraid to start up a conversation with anyone!
- You will be able to do laundry at your house. They may have a washing machine or they may do it by hand. It is most likely that they will do it for you, but offer to help.
 - “Yo necesito lavar mi ropa.” = I need to wash my clothes.
 - “¿Puedo ayudar?” = Can I help?
 - “¿Puede ayudarme?” = Can you help me?
- Have your bus fare ready before getting on a bus – this makes it easier on you, the bus driver, and those behind you. And don't stand in the way of the sensor or the bus driver will get mad because it keeps track of how many people get on and off.
- Buses don't usually stop all the way for guys so if you are traveling with a girl have her get on last so the bus fully stops and you can get on safely.
- On buses it's sometimes more safe to sit on an aisle seat if you need to get out for any reason. This also means that sometimes when you want to get to a seat the person on the aisle will not move to the window, or get up to let you in – rather you climb over them to get to the other seat.
- Dogs in the street tend to be more annoying than we are used to, and are often unvaccinated strays. If you feel threatened, try to avoid eye contact and they will usually leave you alone. If you still feel threatened pretend to pick up a rock and throw it towards the dog and yell “Sale!” (sah-lay) and it will generally go away.
- If you're going to get your haircut, don't try to tell them how many inches (or centimeters) you want cut off, but instead tell them how many finger widths (2 dedos, 3 dedos, etc.)
- With taxis – be smart. Use only “safe” taxis recommended by staff, or taxis that belong to the cooperatives at the malls, airport, etc. Do not take a cab off the street no matter what. Let someone know where you are going and what time to expect you back. Also decide on a price ahead of time. Check with the Volunteer Coordinator, staff, In-Country Director or your host family for fair prices to certain popular locations.
- When at any of the small stores in Flor de Bastión, el Centro, etc. it might seem like no one is working there. Many stores have a backroom or are actually just the front part of someone's house. You can yell “A ver” to get the person's attention and they will come assist you. This also applies at people's homes since many people don't have doorbells.



- Sunscreen is really important. You are living in the tropics and it is easy to get a sunburn.
- It is hot and sticky in Guayaquil so bring mostly light clothing. Bring mostly jeans and short-sleeve shirts. Bermuda shorts or capris for girls are good to have as well. Wearing just jeans and plain shirts helps you fit in and not bring extra unwanted attention. In your house you can wear shorts or whatever you would like.
- Closed-toe shoes help keep you clean from the dusty areas you will be working in but durable sandals are also acceptable.
- Speak as much as you can, even if your Spanish isn't great. Staff, students & families are really nice about it.
- If you are interested in cooking, it is likely that your host family (mom, kids, etc.) will enjoy teaching you so definitely ask!
- Bring a book or some other activity, because you probably won't be going out in too often in the evening. You can always watch TV with the family, but sometimes it's nice to have something else to do when you get tired of TV.
- You will likely be served huge portions of food, including lots of rice and less vegetables than you are used to. You should try the dishes unless it is something you can't eat or allergic too, but you may also politely tell the family after if it is something you really didn't enjoy (or if they serve you way too much) so they don't keep serving it to you!
- You can't put toilet paper in the toilet. There will be a basket next to the toilet to dispose of used toilet paper.
- When you greet someone wait and see what they do as they may modify the tradition when they see you are a foreigner (shake your hand).
 - For the traditional greeting, people touch cheeks and kiss the air.
- To say goodbye, do not say "Adios," this is a very formal word in Ecuador and also used when you will never see the person again. Instead use "Chao". This is more informal and the cultural norm.
- There is less of a focus on names in Ecuador. Do not be offended if your host family doesn't introduce you.
- "Loma" = hill. At some point, you will probably walk up the hill to access the main road. It is steep but it is the safest route to the main road.
- When walking, look out for cars as they will not stop for you.
- Alcohol is often associated with machismo and violence in Ecuador. As adults, you may make your own choices about alcohol consumption in your free time and travels, but while in the neighborhoods where Starfish works please be extra aware of your surroundings and company. If you are invited to a party, it may be appropriate to try a beverage offered to you if you feel comfortable with that, but it would not be appropriate to drink several to the point of intoxication. Social drinking isn't part of the culture in the neighborhoods that we work in, so drinking is often viewed as negative. While it may be hard to turn down food offered to you, you should never feel pressured to try anything alcoholic.

Host Families



Accommodations:

The homes you will be staying in are comfortable but basic. You will have what you need, but it will likely be very different from your home. Host families have a range of different living situations. Some examples include:

- In some houses there are regular showers, while in others you will shower using a bucket.
- In some houses you may have your own room, but in most houses you may just have an area with a curtain closed off for you, and in some cases you may share with a room with some of the younger families members of your same gender.
- Few houses have wifi, most do not. (There is wifi at Starfish though.)
- Few houses have washing machines. Most families wash clothes by hand. While it is not part of their responsibility, many host moms will offer / insist on washing your clothes for you - what a treat!

For housing placements we take into account any dietary restrictions, as well as pet or other allergies that you list on your medical form. Beyond that, if you have any other requests based on the above list, please do let us know (at least 1 month ahead of your arrival). We don't make any promises, but we will do our best to meet those secondary requests as well.

Gifts:

The host families are happy to share their home and life with you. They don't expect any gifts. However, some volunteers like to leave a gift anyway. Deciding to leave a gift, and what you choose to give is up to you. If you are looking for some suggestions, past volunteers suggest: something unique or representative from your hometown/country, a sample of various candy from your home country, old and new pictures to show your families especially if you have pictures of snow, or cooking them a special meal!

Food

- The food here is delicious! Your host family will provide three (huge) meals a day.
- Try the local food and drinks, you usually won't be disappointed.
 - However, don't eat street food or drinks as they may be contaminated.
 - It is not weird for food to be sold on buses, but don't eat it.
- Essentially, your life is centered around meals. Make sure you know when breakfast, lunch, and dinner are in your house and be on time!
- It is respectful and traditional to eat all the food they give you. If you can't it is ok, but make sure they know it is because you are full, not because their food isn't good.
- It is ok to tell them what you don't like. Try to let them know within the first week so that they don't prepare it for you many times.
- Most lunches and dinners are rice, meat (usually chicken), and some type of vegetable or fruit. They also make delicious fresh juice. It is safe to drink at your house as they know you need to drink water that has been boiled. At Starfish, ask before drinking the juice as not all of the moms remember to use boiled water for snack.
- There are little stores everywhere (one is right across the street from the foundation) where you can buy snacks, drinks, and most importantly ice cream! Everything is usually less than a dollar.



- Some phrases you should know:
 - “Estoy lleno/a.” = I’m full.
 - “La comida es rica/deliciosa.” = The food is delicious.
 - “Estoy acostumbrado/a a comer poco.” = I’m used to eating less.
 - “¿El agua está hervida?” = Is the water boiled? (this is a good one for the first day when your family is getting used to your needs and always ask in other people’s homes. It is better to drink unopened bottled water in restaurants “una botella de agua”)
- Take care of yourself! If you are eating in a family’s house, they will want to serve you the best they have, but even so sometimes our stomachs are not used to certain bacteria here. Make sure meat is cooked well, vegetables washed well.
- Only drink purified water. For shorter-term volunteers, it is probably best to also brush your teeth with purified water as your body will not have time to adapt to the new bacteria.
- Stay hydrated!
- If you are going to be buying food in Flor de Bastion, **make sure you wash, peel, cook, etc. EVERYTHING!**

Money / Banks

- Most items in Ecuador are cheaper than the US.
- Plan on not using your credit cards. There are few places that will accept payment with credit cards, and if they do accept them, there will usually be international fees associated with the purchase. There may be sometimes when traveling that a nicer place will accept credit cards.
- There are ATMs if you run out of cash, but try and bring all the cash you will need for short-term volunteers experiences. Year-long volunteers will learn where the closest banks are, and safe ways to get cash and get back home!
- You should carry less than \$5 with you when going to the foundation. More is necessary when traveling.
- Quarters and small bills, (really only \$1s and \$5s) are what you should bring. In Ecuador, coins are most common. The small markets will not always have change for a \$5 bill or more for items that are inexpensive.
- The amount of money you need depends on how much you want to travel. There are few expenses associated with daily living since meals and housing are covered. Budget around \$1/day for incidentals, plus whatever you will need for your weekend trips!

Safety

- In Flor, you are safe walking alone in the day because everyone around either sends their kids to the foundation or will know that you are a volunteer for the foundation. Even so, be aware of your surroundings and do not call attention to yourself by using your phone or other valuables in the street. A staff member or family member will accompany you even during the day for the first month.



- It is most likely that the foundation employees will walk you home anyway so you won't have to be alone.
- Don't walk alone at night in Flor.
- You should not carry phones or other valuables in plain sight as this will draw more attention to yourself. It is ok to use it inside the foundation or your house. The foundation has wifi.
- In regards to crime, we work in a very impoverished area and as in all urban and impoverished areas worldwide, petty theft is a risk. Please always be aware of your surroundings and listen to safety recommendations from staff, your host family, and those given during your orientation.
- Due to the foundation's involvement in the community and the fact that volunteers are well-known and mostly travel as a group, we do not expect any issues. The families in the community open up their homes with open arms to us and it is a wonderful experience to be able to share in their culture.
- We will have a safety orientation to go over safety procedures while in country. This will be part of the in-country orientation with the volunteer coordinator, staff, and at times the ICD.
- As long as you are aware of your surrounding there should not be any problems. Your health and well-being are always top priority for Starfish. If anything does happen, it's recommended to just give the items. A phone is just an item - no use getting hurt!

Work

- The locals call Starfish "La fundación".
- Before arriving, all short-term volunteers are expected to hold a fundraiser with the goal of \$200. Long-term CEA volunteers have a different fundraising goal and should refer to the brochure and other information provided to them upon application.
- Volunteer hours vary but are around 7:30am-10:30am and 1:30pm-6pm.
- Students come to the foundation before or after their classes for homework help and special learning opportunities that are not available at the public schools (ex. Computer lessons, art, dancing, and more).
- The best way to help at first is with English homework.
 - Most students are accustomed to someone like a family member just doing their homework for them so it may take a while to figure out how to work together.
- You will have the opportunity to work on a special project while volunteering. The foundation encourages you to use your passions and talents to plan a project that will be enriching to you and to the students.
 - Some ongoing projects that you can take on or add to your own project:
 - Humans of Starfish: In the style of Humans of New York, interview students and post to the Facebook page. If you choose to do this ask for a list of questions (but you are not limited to them) and a list of students who have already been interviewed.



- Recording books in English: Choose from books at the Starfish library (or bring your own!) and record it in English for the students to listen to so that they can work on pronunciation.
- Blog entries: This is something everyone can do together or separately. Tell a little about your time here, observations, add photos, and whatever else you think is relevant! You can post one or many during your time here.
 - School “summer” vacation is from mid-February to mid-April, as well as one week in September, and one week between Christmas and New Year’s. During school breaks, you are free to travel by yourself, with other volunteers or with your host family - or just rest up! If you will be volunteering during the 2 month summer break, please discuss your plans ahead of time with the Volunteer Coordinator or ICD. There are different activities with students during this time, as well as staff prep for the upcoming school year, as well as staff vacation! We also usually take a staff trip during this time which you are welcome to join!
 - Short-term volunteers should have at least conversational Spanish, and be willing to take risks with speaking Spanish. Week-long visitors will have a translator with them. Year-long volunteers are expected to have intermediate to advanced language skills in order to conduct lessons and form a part of our management team!
 - C.E.A. volunteers - please refer to our website <http://www.thestarfishchange.org/volunteerintern> for updated job descriptions. Some of your responsibilities will be different from those listed above!

Staff

Starfish staff are mostly young, university students. Few of them have formal training in teaching, and almost all of them have been through the same public school system as our students. This means that while they are wonderful, caring individuals who will take excellent care of you and accept you as part of their family, they will also benefit from your experience and any ideas you may have to improve programming! They are patient with your language skills, (as you should be with theirs if they try English with you!). Our staff consists of educators, administrators, psychologists, an operations coordinator, the In-Country Director and work study volunteers. If you would like to get to know our current staff, visit our website at:

<http://www.thestarfishchange.org/employees>.

Tourism

- Officially, we don’t advise on any travel plans. We aren't liable for any adventures (...though you know we personally always want to hear about your fun times!!). It's our responsibility to make sure you have the info you need once you arrive. You can travel any weekend and if you would like extra travel days just let the Volunteer Coordinator or ICD know and we will be sure to arrange your project schedules as such.
- You need a current passport and should only take it with you on trips when flying.
 - Make a copy of your passport and keep that with you on smaller trips.
- Taxis



- Check your handbook for updated numbers of recommended taxis!
- In Guayaquil:
 - The Malecon is the boardwalk with lots of little shops, restaurants, art, artisans, and dancing.
 - Barrios las Peñas, it is near the Malecon. You will climb 400 stairs to a beautiful view. There are also clubs, “discotecas”.
 - El Centro, the downtown, has many shops and restaurants. This is a good place if you want to buy souvenirs and gifts that are made by local vendors.
 - There is a ton to do in Guayaquil depending on your interests. You can definitely keep yourself busy for the duration of your volunteer trip on a budget by staying in the city and just doing day trips.
 - Make sure to ask the foundation volunteers and employees for suggestions and invite them as they may want to join!
- There are many beautiful beach around that you can get to by bus.
 - Salinas is very beautiful and more of a tourists location (2.5 hours by bus, \$5)
 - Villamil is also a great and more popular with the locals (1.5 hours by bus, \$3)
- Puerto Lopez is a beach city with lots of shops and activities, it is also a perfect place to whale watch!
 - Around 4 hours by bus.
 - Machalilla Tours is a good/safe company to use for whale watching. \$50 for the whole day including lunch, a trip to an island, snorkeling, and a guided hike.
- Quito is the capital city of Ecuador.
 - It is an 8 hour bus ride, \$12 each way.
 - It is a 55 minute plane ride, approximately \$100 round trip.
 - There is a lot to do in Quito, just like any capital.
 - This is where you will find the “Mitad del Mundo”, the actual equator line.

Communication

Please advise your family and friends that you will have use of the Starfish Volunteer cell phone. They may call you by calling your volunteer phone at one of these numbers (number assigned upon arrival). (Note: 011 is to dial outside the U.S., if you are dialing from a country other than the U.S., use your country’s international dialing code.)

011-593-93-917-2079
011-593-99-777-4911
011-593-99-777-4060
011-593-96-818-8904

You may also choose to activate an international plan on your regular cell phone. You may also communicate via Skype and similar online services using the wifi at Starfish. Starfish Foundation Directors can be contacted by email at info@thestarfishchange.org or by phone at the following numbers:

Jenn in Ecuador (011-593-99-184-7763) or Beth in U.S. (1-443-326-2418). In addition to this,



we also recommend using the App: Whatsapp, as you can text and call for free when you have wifi and the recipient also has the app.

You will have access to wifi at Starfish during the daytime hours. If you need access at night, please coordinate with the Volunteer Coordinator ahead of time. You may bring your own smart phone and choose to purchase a sim card in Ecuador (around \$7) if your phone is unlocked and you prefer to use that. You can also use your phone in airplane mode while using wifi without a sim card.

Year-long volunteers may want to bring their laptop to use at Starfish, though we do have laptops at Starfish as well. If you bring your laptop, we recommend leaving it locked at the foundation. It is not necessary to bring a laptop for short-term volunteer experiences.

Snail mail is slow and not very reliable. Short-term volunteers will not be able to receive mail as it will not arrive in time. If you are a year-long volunteer and would like to receive small packages, please inquire with the ICD about current mailing requirements, and to receive the address for our P.O. box. Larger packages cannot be shipped.

Flight & Arrival

All volunteers should fly into Jose Joaquin de Olmedo airport in Guayaquil (airport code: GYE). Please check with the volunteer coordinator before purchasing your flight to confirm the date and time of arrival. If you will be arriving past 7pm, you will stay in a hostel the first night, rather than the homestay. Starfish will book the room and get you there, but you will be responsible for the cost of your stay at the hostel.



Friends of Starfish Trip Only

Would I be flying by myself from Miami to Guayaquil or does the whole group take that flight?

Trip participants are going to meet up in Miami and travel down to Ecuador together. The trip coordinator will be in country a few days early and will be picking everyone up at the airport. Traveling home, we will all leave together and fly back to Miami as a group. Depending on where you are traveling from you may have company headed home as well.

What would we be doing each day?

The schedule is tentative. In general, we will be spending our days at our site in Flor de Bastión. While there we will be helping with tutoring and interacting with the students to get to know them. The benefit of the full week in country is that we can really get to know some students and their families and see the day to day working of the foundation. These days will include a group lunch with Starfish families where they cook their favorite meal and we all eat together. It's an awesome experience to hear their stories and Ecuadorian food is wonderful.

In addition, we will have a soccer tournament, possible church services, field day events, day trip, shopping in an artisan market, and a huge talent show with the students to finish off the week. As the date approaches, you will also receive a tentative itinerary, though activities are subject to change. If there is anything specific you are hoping to do while in Ecuador let the trip coordinator know so that s/he can try to work it into the trip.

Can I travel before or after the trip?

Of course you may travel within Ecuador after the trip! We have had other participants come early or leave later than the group, but of course, Starfish is only responsible from the arrival of the flight to Guayaquil through the departure of the group flight on the last day. Travel before or after those dates is on your own. There are certainly many beautiful parts of the country that we hope you are able to explore.



C.E.A. Year-Long Volunteers Only

Financial Commitments:**

***Scholarships may be available.*

- ★ Fundraise \$2500 for Starfish - This money will help cover a portion of the following expenses associated with your volunteer experience (Starfish will cover the remainder):
 - A full year of housing and 3 home-cooked meals per day with a host family
 - Orientation in Ecuador
 - Ecuadorian visa fees
 - Airport pickup and drop-off in Guayaquil
 - 2 Starfish shirts
 - Phone to use during your stay
 - Orientation in the U.S.
 - Small monthly stipend
 - Retreats
- ★ Your round-trip airfare to/from Guayaquil (GYE) - you will need to confirm dates and coordinate flights with the volunteer manager first, but you will book your own flight meaning that you can search around to find a good deal, and/or use any airline miles you may have!
- ★ Transportation to/from U.S. orientation
- ★ International Health Insurance
- ★ Up-to-date vaccines
- ★ Personal items
- ★ Free-time travel expenses

Student Loan Deferment:

While Starfish cannot advise on student loans, you should check with your loan company for deferment options. Often times, volunteers qualify for the economic hardship deferment since you will not be receiving an income during your volunteer year.

Travel Home & Visitors

Volunteers are expected to remain in Ecuador during the complete year of her/his volunteer experience. Exceptions may be made for extreme circumstances, such as the death of a family member. In this case, the volunteers will be responsible for the cost of her/his transportation.

Volunteers may choose to have visitors during their volunteer experience. We welcome your friends and family to our community so they may have a chance to share in your experience. Visits will need to be coordinated with the In-Country director at least 2 months in advance. Your homestay situation may not be able to accommodate visitors so you may need to stay somewhere else with your visitors.



Application Timeline & Program Dates

Mid-November - Application opens

February 15th - Application due

February 28th - References due

February-March - Interviews

Early April - Acceptances offered

Late May - Forms & fundraising due

July - U.S. orientation

August - In-Country Ecuador orientation

****The program is for one year and two weeks. There will be an overlap of 2 weeks with the next year's incoming volunteers during the following August.****

Acceptance Rates

This program is entirely new, so we do not have this information available yet. However, we will be selective as the specific kind of candidate will need to be able to function in a fully immersive cultural experience as well as have the skills to lead our students.