



**Educational
Tours**

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN ECUADOR'S ANDEAN COMMUNITIES

An EF Service Learning Tour in partnership with Me to We and in support of Free The Children

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

To enter Ecuador, all Canadian and American citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months after the expected return date. Any non-Canadian passport holders may require a transit visa if your group is travelling through the United States. Please check with your local embassy or consulate prior to departure.

CURRENCY

The currency in Ecuador is the US dollar or USD. We recommend withdrawing money from an ATM and not to use traveller's cheques. ATMs are available at the airport in Quito, so please be sure to withdraw enough money to have accessible when you are in the community and for the duration of your tour. Inform your local bank of your travel plans prior to your departure and ensure that your debit card/credit card and PIN number will work in Ecuador. Visit xe.com for more currency information.

The recommended spending money for tours to Ecuador is \$200 USD.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Ecuador is a country uniquely endowed with dramatic topography and a variety of climates, vegetation, birds and wildlife. Free The Children's school-building projects are located in the Chimborazo province, a deeply impoverished rural area with a rich cultural history and breathtaking natural beauty.

Ecuador has two main seasons, rainy and dry, with a lot of variation between its geographical regions. Even during the rainy season, most days stay sunny into the afternoon. Travellers will experience warmer weather while in the capital of Quito and cooler temperatures while working in communities at higher altitudes in the Andes Mountains.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Cell phones may not work and can be quite costly to use, so please do not bring them on tour. Your Field Directors will carry a satellite phone at all times to be used in the event of an emergency and will be in daily communication with EF and Me to We offices locally and in North America.

We understand that communication home is important, so upon arrival, EF/Me to We will send an email confirming arrival in-country to all contact emails listed on the emergency contact list. Within 24 hours of arrival and assuming internet connectivity, all travellers will have a chance to contact parents or guardians back home by email. Once your group transfers to the Free The Children community, there will be no access to phones or internet for the remainder of the tour, however EF/Me to We will send email updates approximately every five days while the group is on tour.

TRANSPORTATION

All vehicles used on the ground in Ecuador are operated by a trusted provider of EF and Me to We. The group travels together in one vehicle and another trail vehicle always follows, to be used in case of an emergency.

ACCOMMODATIONS

In Ecuador, travellers will spend their first and last night in Quito at a safe hotel that is pre-arranged by EF and Me to We. Travellers always share rooms with one or more travellers of the same gender from your entire tour group, while educators have a room that is separate from students.

Washroom facilities are Western-style. Some will have private washrooms with showers and Western-style toilets, while others will have shared washroom facilities. Showers are available on a daily basis. All accommodations will have sinks with running water and are cleaned on a daily basis.

The majority of the trip will be spent at guest houses near the community, which are fully equipped with separate bunk-bed accommodations for male and female travellers, a group meeting room and a dining hall.

FOOD AND WATER

Travellers will enjoy traditional local cuisine, which includes beans, rice, meat, salad, soup and potatoes. This food is prepared with great care by local staff. In Quito, a wide range of both Ecuadorian and North American food is available.

Bottled or filtered drinking water will be readily available throughout the trip—so remember to bring your reusable water bottle. Travellers with food allergies can be accommodated and alternative options are available. It is imperative that this information be clearly communicated to EF prior to departure.

FIELD DIRECTORS

Employed by Me to We/Free The Children, Field Directors are young, passionate about global issues, and have travelled, lived or worked abroad. All Field Directors are trained in basic First Aid and have undergone extensive leadership and risk-management training with Me to We to prepare them to lead student groups on Service Learning Tours. In some cases (Kenya, Ecuador, Ghana, India) they may live in the country that the group is travelling to—but not always. Your Field Director will meet you at the airport upon arrival in-country and remain with the group 24/7 for the duration of the tour. They will guide your group through your leadership modules and guide your tour experience.

ME TO WE POLICIES:

GIFT GIVING

Free The Children and Me to We have worked for many years to create strong partnerships with the communities that our groups work with. The Adopt a Village program—Free The Children’s holistic model of community development—works toward sustainable development, empowering people and communities to support themselves. This means that the work that our groups support is in solidarity with the communities, not an act of charity. Instead of looking for a hand-out, Free The Children community members are happy to receive a hand-up.

We ask our travellers to respect that we have a strict no gift-giving policy, which means that travellers are not to bring gifts from home to give to local children or families. On your trip, as you witness this sustainable development first-hand, you are contributing so much just by being there. A friendly wave, an open smile or a hello in the local language is the most important gift you can give! We are happy to provide guidance on how you can support the country you visited upon your return home.

PHOTO POLICY

On an EF Service Learning Tour, we ask that our travellers respect Me to We’s photo policy of only taking photos of people with whom we have a relationship, after obtaining their permission, in order to ensure that photos are not exploitative or disrespectful of the community.

Your Field Directors will let you know when it is appropriate to have your camera out—so don’t worry, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to take photos and highlight key moments on your trip, but we want to ensure that wherever we go we are treating people like people and not like scenery.

ON-TOUR RULES

There are a number of important rules and commitments that all travellers must agree on prior to participation in an EF Service Learning Tour in partnership with Me to We. These Tour Rules are in place to ensure the safety and happiness of every traveller in your group and are strictly enforced. You will be sent a copy of the Tour Rules with your Me to We Application Package. They can also be viewed online: www.metowe.com/question/camp-group-a-b-rules/.