

*Staying safe as a*

# Solo female traveler in Ecuador



With solo female on the rise worldwide, security is a common concern. While Ecuador is not crime-free, it is a safe destination for solo female travelers. In fact, it's more than just safe. ***It's exhilarating, beautiful, budget-friendly and fun.***

To ensure you're prepared for all situations while traveling through Ecuador, we've prepared the following checklist for staying safe as a solo female traveler in Ecuador.







## Before your trip / Upon arrival

### ■ *Health and travel insurance*

Although not a law, tourists visiting Ecuador are encouraged to have travel with insurance that will cover both health emergencies and travel mishaps. Make sure you carry your health and travel insurance card as well as any other relevant emergency contacts with you at all times. It's also a good idea to travel with a credit card since private clinics in Ecuador will expect you to pay for the services you've received first and then for you to deal with your insurance company.

### ■ *Telephone and SIM card*

Make sure you have a phone that will work outside of your country and in other countries. When you arrive in Ecuador, one of the first things you can do is buy a SIM card and basic plan at a kiosk in the airport. Having a phone may be essential in case of an emergency, or even if you get lost and can't find your hostel! Can will also avoid roaming charges.

### ■ *Know your numbers*

Along with having a working telephone, you should have personal emergency contacts on hand as well as Ecuador's emergency numbers. An emergency contact can be a parent or reliable friend. Have these on paper and keep them with you at all times. Ideally, these individuals would also know of your travel plans.

***In terms of emergency numbers in Ecuador, here's a short list to keep handy:***

**911 - Emergencies**

**101 - Police**

**131 - Red Cross**

**102 - Firefighters**

### ■ *Blood type*

Do you know your blood type? It may already be on a driver's license, but if not, write it down with your emergency information.

### ■ *Always carry ID*

While walking around with your passport can be risky, you should always carry some sort of identification information. You can make a copy of your passport and carry that with you at all times.



## Download some essential apps

### ■ *Uber or Cabify*

Avoid grabbing any taxi off the street in the bigger cities, even if you're with friends. The safest approach to finding a taxi is by using either Cabify or Uber. You'll need to have the app on your phone, a method of payment set up (Credit Card) and an internet connection. Alternatively, have someone call a safe taxi for you.

### ■ *Offline maps*

If you end up arriving to a destination late at night, you want to avoid getting lost or meandering into sketchy neighborhoods. Make sure you have an offline map (Google Maps or Maps.me) on hand to navigate to your Airbnb or hostel as quickly as possible.

### ■ *Whatsapp*

In Ecuador, companies use whatsapp professionally. If your calls keep dropping or the landline no longer exists (quite common here!), contact your hostel or travel service through Whatsapp. Look for the mobile phone number in their contacts, which will always have a 098 or 099 at the beginning.



## Book with a company that specializes in solo travel

If you prefer to travel solo, but want the security of traveling in a group, consider booking part (or all) of your journey with a company like Wanderbus. Many of our clients are solo travelers and benefit greatly from a hassle-free, safe bus ride to destinations that are probably on your bucket list.



## Arriving to Ecuador

**Before departing, make sure you already have a room booked at a hostel and know how to get there from the airport or bus terminal.**

If you're flying into Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport or Guayaquil's José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport, there will be a line of registered airport taxis outside the Arrivals area. In Quito, they'll charge you \$25 to take you to your hostel in the city and in Guayaquil, \$6-10. Alternatively, you can book a transfer online ahead of time.



- **Pack medication and a traveler's first aid kit**

If you rely on some kind of medication, make sure you pack more than enough of it, in case some gets lost or damaged. Also, a small first aid kit can be extremely useful for small accidents.

- **Generally speaking, plan ahead.**

You won't be able to plan every single part of your trip and, in fact, you shouldn't! Spontaneity and flexibility are essential components of adventure. However, for certain legs of your journey, it's wise to plan ahead.





## During your trip



### ■ *Traveling around Ecuador*

Public transportation in Ecuador is cheap. However, departure times and routes are unreliable, and public bus terminals are notoriously dangerous places for tourists. Keep a watchful eye on your belonging at all times. Also, consider overnight travel (depending on the distance) so that you arrive at your destination during daylight hours; You don't want to be wandering around at night.

A much safer, and hassle-free alternative is the Wanderbus. The Wanderbus is ideal for solo female travelers in Ecuador since the pick up/drop off locations are centrally located, you share your bus with a group of like-minded travelers, and a guide is available to provide information on hostels, restaurants and more.

**Check out some of our passes here.** 





### ■ *Listen to the locals*

When you arrive in Quito, or to any new town/city on your trip, your best resource can be your hostel's staff, especially if they are women. They've probably lived in the area for a while and can tell you:

- How to safely get around the area
- What neighborhoods or places to avoid
- What to do if you feel like your safety is at risk e.g. how to respond to harassment by men

Not only is this fascinating information to learn since it can vary so much between cultures, it's also extremely useful. Don't assume your instincts are enough and inquire with people who understand the potential safety issues of the area.

### ■ *Avoid walking around at night*

Unless you're going out to party in an area where there are several bars and nightclubs, don't wander around at night, especially if you're alone. If you're planning to dine out, and even if the restaurant is nearby, take a safe taxi. This is an example of an "extra" precaution you might take while traveling alone in Ecuador.

On the coast, stay near the lights and activity of the town and avoid taking a midnight stroll down the beach.



## ■ *Dealing with men*

When it comes to male / female interactions, Ecuador is still a relatively conservative country. Oftentimes, local men are under the impression that women from other countries are more liberal and may be emboldened to attempt interactions that aren't considered locally acceptable.

As a solo woman traveler in Ecuador, always err on the side of caution, and while romance on the road can be another exhilarating element of solo travel, trust your intuition and read the situation.

### **As a rule of thumb:**

- Don't react to men if they're whistling or cat calling. Just keep walking, ignore them completely, and if you feel unsafe head towards an area with more people or into a shop.
- Never let anyone (man or woman) buy you a drink. Receive the drink directly from the bartender and keep a watchful eye on it throughout the evening. Just like in the United States or Europe, the date rape drug exists in Ecuador.



## ■ *Travel in small groups*

**While this might defy the point of being a solo female traveler, making friends while traveling is not only fun, but smart.**

There are certain situations where traveling in small groups is highly recommended. For instance, if you're planning on hiking the Quilotoa Loop or the Volcano Rucu Pichincha in Quito, try to coordinate with a couple of other travellers. This is considered best practice in case you get lost, but also makes you less of a target to an ill-willed individual.

Or, if you're planning to explore nightlife in Montañita or Quito, go with a group of people that seem reliable and agree to keep an eye out for each other.

One of the best ways to meet people and make friends on your trip is by traveling with the Wanderbus. On the road, you're likely to click with a few of the other passengers and from there it's easy to coordinate. Even if your itineraries are different, you can always hop on the next Wanderbus to meet up with them at a later stage.



## *Be careful with what you eat and drink*

### ■ **Food & water**

The last thing you want to deal with on your vacation is food poisoning or parasites. Unfortunately, this is quite common in Ecuador, especially if you're drinking tap water or eating street food. As delicious as it might look, avoid the street food! Even in fancier restaurants, you might also want to avoid salads (especially leafy greens) that may have been washed with tap water.

Locals may assure you that drinking the tap water is fine, but their bacterial gut is already accustomed to it, whereas yours is not.

### ■ **Alcohol**

In the Andes, there's less oxygen in the air and you get drunk faster (great news for the budget traveler!!!!). That means you should take it easy on the booze when you go out. Make sure you're with reliable people or friends, always keep an eye on your drink and NEVER accept a drink from another person.



## *Don't flash your cash*

As a tourist, you probably already stand out because of what you're wearing, carrying or, in some cases, your appearance. It is therefore important to be discreet with your money and don't carry too much at once, since that might make you a target for theft. \$25 in your pocket is usually more than enough for a day tour of Quito or Guayaquil, and definitely enough for some of the smaller cities.

Our advice would be to withdraw a decent amount of cash when you arrive (e.g. \$200), and only carry around what you need that day, leaving the rest of the money, and your credit card, in a safe place (e.g. your hostel's safe).

## **When in doubt...**

At Wanderbus, we know how scary it can be when dealing with unsafe conditions while abroad. If you're unsure about what to do and would like to speak to someone reliable who can help you with the correct information, please don't hesitate to contact the Wanderbus team:

### **CALL US AT**

+593 9 8691-9193 ext 106 (landline)

+593 9 8691-9193 (mobile / Whatsapp)

or use our LiveChat on our website to get in touch.





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