

QUITO

on a budget

*How to travel longer
while spending less!*



Ecuador's capital is a fantastic city to explore by day or by night, with plenty of attractions and activities to keep you busy for days. Here, we share our top tips to help you stretch your budget and get the most out of your visit.



Yet we regularly meet travelers who are surprised at how quickly they've burned through their cash while visiting this beautiful, high-altitude capital. In the following guide, we'll give you a few practical tips on how to explore Quito on a tight budget.



Tip #1

If you're going to use any online directory to find more information, use TripAdvisor or Facebook. Most of what you can find on the internet about Quito isn't considered budget-friendly; most companies or restaurants that have their own website or appear in Google Maps will be in the mid-high range in terms of cost.



GETTING AROUND QUITO BY BUS AND TAXI



In Ecuador, gasoline is subsidized by the government and is **CHEAP**, making transportation really cheap too!

The cheapest way to get around, by far, is on either the blue public buses that rage through the city, the Ecovia, Trole or Metrobus. The latter three are electric, wheelchair accessible and run from the north to the south of the city. One way in any direction on any of these costs only \$0.25.

Tip #2

Avoid using buses during rush hour traffic as they get extremely crowded. At rush hour, the Ecovia is



Always double check with another person at the bus stop or with the busdriver.

literally packed with people and pickpocketing runs rampant. While it is wise to take advantage of cheap transport, it isn't worth losing your phone or camera!

Tip #3

Google Maps has improved significantly when it comes to navigating Quito, but don't trust all the bus numbers and routes provided. **Always double check with another person at the bus stop or with the busdriver.**

Taxis are also relatively cheap, but rides will quickly add up if you're in traffic or heading to one of the south/north bus terminals.

We strongly suggest you don't just grab any taxi off the street. Ideally, ask your hostel to call a taxi company and whatever taxi you take should

have two stickers: a green one on the side of the taxi with the taxi cooperative name and number and an official orange sticker provided by the city on the windshield. The taxi should also have a license plate.



When you get into the taxi, ask the taxidriver to turn on the "taxímetro", which clocks the price for the duration of the ride. If he/she refuses, simply get out and call another taxi. Without the taxímetro, and if you don't know your way around, you'll probably get ripped off.

Uber and **Cabify** are two applications that work in and around Quito. Not only are they safer than taking a cab off the street, they're also much cheaper! Their rates are higher during rush hours, so plan accordingly.



GETTING AROUND QUITO BY BUS AND TAXI

If you're arriving at Quito's Mariscal Sucre Airport, located about 45 minutes from the city, the cheapest way to get into the city is by bus. There are two bus options: the (bright green) public buses and Aeroservicios.

The public buses charge \$2.00 to take you either to the *Rio Coca bus terminal* in the north of the city or to the *Quitumbe bus terminal* in the south. Unless you want to leave Quito to destinations south immediately, **we suggest you take the bus to Rio Coca since it's much easier to access the center and north of the city from this terminal.** From Rio Coca, you can either take the Ecovía (\$0.25) south to the Mariscal or Old Town

(where most hotels are located), or a taxi/Uber. From the airport, the Rio Coca buses operate from 5:30am - 10:00pm, whereas the Quitumbe buses stop at 7:00pm.

The red Aeroservicios buses are slightly more expensive at \$8.00, however they offer transfers to Quito from Monday - Friday 3:30am to 11:30 pm, as well as Saturdays and Sundays from 4:00am - 10:30pm, giving you more options out of the airport, depending on your arrival time. A bus swings by every 30 minutes, or every hour on weekends, and *tickets can be booked online* here. Aeroservicios buses take you to *Quito's old airport*, now called Parque Bicentenario, in



the north of the city. You can catch buses or the Trole towards La Mariscal and the Old Town nearby — ask staff for details — or hop in a taxi. Aeroservicios buses have WiFi.

If you're arriving at an ungodly time and just can't be bothered to wait for one of these buses, you can jump in a yellow taxi located outside the departures gate. These will charge you \$25 to take you into the city, and sometimes more, depending on where your hotel is located.

You can also try ordering by Uber or Cabify, but internet may be spotty when you first arrive.



QUITO CHEAP EATS

Breakfast and lunch

The cost of food in Quito is astoundingly low. This is due, in large part, to the country's rich and varied agricultural production. Given Ecuador's different climatic zones, almost everything can be grown here.

However, if you aren't careful about where you eat, and cave into your cravings for "international" food, you'll quickly start spending too much money.

If you don't have strict dietary restrictions, you can take advantage of the \$2-4 breakfasts and lunches



on nearly every street corner in the Old Town and Mariscal neighborhoods. Given the cheap prices, most Ecuadorians eat out during lunchtime.

To find a cheap lunch spot, just keep an eye out for small restaurants with numerous tables and chairs. Lunch menus are normally fixed menus that include juice, soup, a main course (with a small salad) and a small desert. Some diners may also have selections from their regular menus, but keep in mind that the price quickly increases if you don't select the fixed menu.

One place to grab a quick and cheap meal in the Old Town is at the **Mercado Central**, located on the street Avenida 24 de Mayo, or the **Mercado San Francisco**, uphill on Calle Rocafuerte. Note that both markets close around 5pm and many places that offer great lunch deals aren't open for dinner.

Below are a few of the other best and cheap lunch spots around Quito:



-  **La Piedra de Cantuña** - On Junin street, in the lovely San Marcos neighborhood (Old Town)
-  **Ari** - Near the Plaza Grande (Old Town), has vegetarian options as well
-  **La Exquisita** - Popular local restaurant (Old Town)
-  **El Costeñito del Buen Sabor** - Specializes in seafood and serves a regular lunch menu (La Floresta)
-  **Las Menstras de la Almagro** - Large, filling, cheap lunch meals (Mariscal)
-  **Las Corvinas de Don Jimmy** - Mercado Central (Old Town)

Finally, on the Plaza Grande, you'll find a number of small restaurants below the cathedral where you can grab a sandwich, *humita* or ice cream.

Vegetarian and vegan food in Quito

If you're vegan or vegetarian, you may have some trouble finding veg-friendly options at the regular diners, but not to worry! There are numerous good restaurants around the Old Town, Mariscal and Floresta areas you can choose from.

Tip #4 **HappyCow.com** is an online directory that lists vegetarian and vegan restaurants worldwide. The selection for Quito is quite good, however not all vegetarian/vegan restaurants have listed there.





Some of our favorite, budget-friendly vegan and vegetarian restaurants in Quito include:

-  **Flora** (Between Old Town and Mariscal area)
-  **Quinoa** (Mariscal area)
-  **Formosa** (Mariscal, La Floresta)
-  **Govinda Gopal** (Old Town)
-  **Donde Gopal** (La Floresta)
-  **La Verdeteca** (La Floresta)
-  **Mile Time** (Mariscal)
-  **Casa Warmi** (La Floresta)
-  **Bai Tam - Viet Sandwich** (La Marsical)

Tip #5

As an alternative to eating out:

Cook! If you're in an area with

few good (or affordable) food options and have access to a kitchen, buy some fruit, vegetables and even grains at almost any corner store and whip up a cheap, home-cooked meal.

In terms of alcoholic beverages, the local brands are Pilsener and Club and a large bottle only costs \$1.30 at most stores. Artesanal and craft beers have become more popular in the last few years, but most of these will cost you \$4-7 a pop.





ACCOMMODATION

Couchsurfing.com

The cheapest accommodation you'll find in Quito is on [Couchsurfing.com](https://www.couchsurfing.com). Quito has a vibrant community of couchsurfer members that regularly get together and quite generously offer couches/spare beds to friendly travelers.



Keep in mind that some parts of the Old Town aren't considered safe so if you've arrived late in the day, wait until the next morning before searching Old Town for a cheap hostel.

Here are a few budget hostels we recommend in Quito, located in the Mariscal and Old Town neighborhoods:

Airbnbs

Affordable Airbnb options are constantly popping up in and around some of Quito's most traveler-friendly neighborhoods. These include San Marcos in the Old Town, La Floresta (residential-hipster neighborhood) and La Mariscal (party central - safety can be a concern here!). The advantage to going with an Airbnb is that you'll likely have access to a kitchen, which will also help you save on food.

Cheap hostels in Quito

Around the Mariscal neighborhood and Old Town you'll find numerous cheap hostels. The ones in the Mariscal usually have their own website and can be found on sites like [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) or [hostelworld.com](https://www.hostelworld.com), whereas many hostels in the Old Town aren't listed online and can only be discovered on foot.



In the Mariscal

| | |
|--|----------------|
|  Hostelito - Pods start at \$12.60 | \$12.60 |
|  Blue House - Dorms starting at | \$6 |
|  Yellow House - Double rooms starting at | \$30 |
|  Color House Petite - Dorms starting at | \$8 |
|  El Patio - Dorms starting at | \$8 |
|  Selina - Dorms starting at | \$14 |



In the Old Town



Community Hostel

- Dorms starting at

\$11



Masaya Hostel

- Dorms starting at

\$14



L'Auberge Inn -

- Single room starting at

\$11



Secret Garden

- Dorms starting at

\$10



La Rosario

- Rooms starting at

\$20



Rebel Hostel

- Dorms starting at

\$10

THINGS TO DO IN QUITO ON A BUDGET

There are plenty of things to do in Quito even if you're on a tight budget, the secret is knowing where to look! Below are a few good starting points to explore the city without spending too much cash.

Take a free walking tour

There are a couple of options for free walking tours of Quito these days. Many concentrate on the Old Town, but Quito Street Tours also do a fun one of La Floresta neighborhood.

To sign up for a free walking tour, taking you from San Blas up to the Basilica and down to the Plaza Grande, check out this link.

Explore the Old Town

A pleasant activity all visitors to Quito should do is explore the windy, cobblestone roads and hole-in-the-wall shops of the Old Town. Grab a freshly squeezed orange juice for only \$1 and make your way to the numerous museums and churches that don't charge admission (or charge a minimal fee).

Visit one of the "Museos de la Ciudad" (City Museums) for a minimal fee

Museums that belong to the Foundation "Museos de la Ciudad" charge a token entry fee (\$1.50

for children / \$3.00 for adults) and offer a 50% discount on the last Saturday of every month (exception: Museo del Carmen Alto). These museums include:



Museo del Carmen Alto - Based in a former convent, this museum depicts religious art and offers tours in English and Spanish



Centro de Arte Contemporaneo (FREE admission) - Cultural center in a former military hospital with frequent cultural events and temporary exhibits.



Museo Yaku Water Museum & Park - An educational museum raising awareness about water as a source of life. Family-friendly.



Museo Interactivo de Ciencia (MIC) - Interactive and educational center frequently offering activities and workshops. Kid-friendly.



Museo de la Ciudad - An interactive museum focusing on national history with most content in Spanish only.

Note: Many of the exhibitions and presentations will be in Spanish only. Most of these museums are closed on Mondays.

Take a Sunday bike ride through Quito

Every Sunday, a few of Quito's major roads are closed so that bike-loving Ecuadorians can ride across the city (north-south) during the weekly Ciclopaseo. This is an excellent way for visitors to explore the Old Town and other parts of Quito, while getting a bit of exercise in.





You'll find a few places to rent a bike on Amazonas, near La Carolina Park and between Roca and Veintimilla streets in La Mariscal.

Rentals cost about \$2.00 per hour and will require that you leave a valid ID with the rental company.

The Ciclopaseo takes place every Sunday between 8:00 am until 2:00 pm and stretches across 30km. A detailed map can be downloaded [here](#).

Climb the Basilica del Voto Nacional

This neo-Gothic cathedral looms over the Old Town and is impossible to miss. The view from its towers is likely the best view you'll come across on your visit to Quito and is well worth the \$2 admission fee.





Visit a park on the weekend

There are a number of lovely parks in and around Quito where you can get some peace and quiet, exercise and watch local Ecuadorian families on their Sunday stroll.

Parque la Carolina is a popular park in the north in the city that comes to life on the weekends. People of all ages come here to run and play sports in the fields and courts available. There's a skatepark, a botanical garden and you can even rent paddle boats in a small lagoon.

Parque Metropolitano is another wonderful destination within the city. Covered by a dense Eucalyptus forest, Parque Metropolitano is ideal for a quiet picnic or jog. Note that the park closes at around 5pm.

Meander through the Botanical Garden

Located inside Parque la Carolina, Quito's botanical garden houses hundreds of tropical and Andean plant species. Admission is only \$3.50 for adults and if you love orchids, make sure you visit their orchid greenhouse.

Visit the National Museum of the Ministry of Culture

This museum houses some of the country's most valuable artifacts and is completely free of charge. Located between the Mariscal and the





Old Town, a visit to this museum is an excellent option for those that want to delve deeper into Ecuador's culture and history.

Ballet Nacional de Ecuador

If you're into arts and culture, you'll thoroughly enjoy the regular, free shows at the Ballet Nacional de Ecuador. Visit the "Noticias" page on their website and keep your eyes peeled for the phrase "Evento Gratuito" (Free Event).

Teatro Capitol

Teatro Capitol is another excellent venue to appreciate Quito's art and culture. Check out this

page to see upcoming events, many of which are free of charge!

Oftentimes, traveling on a tight budget gives you access to a more authentic experience in a foreign country, and this definitely applies in Ecuador.

By using the provided resources and by following our tips, we can guarantee you'll spend a lot less than the average tourist and, hopefully, have more money to spend on things that are really worth your while, like a Wanderbus Ecuador pass!

Wanderbus Ecuador is the safest, most convenient and fun way to travel Ecuador. Find out more about our passes!





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