SAN CRISTOBAL

BIOLOGICAL STATION AND RESERVE
INTRODUCTION

The Galapagos Islands sit in the Pacific Ocean about 1000 km west of Ecuador. Because the islands were never connected to the mainland, many species of plants and animals are unique to the Galapagos. In 1835, the young naturalist Charles Darwin arrived on the islands. His collections from the Galapagos became central to his theory of how species evolve.

San Cristobal is home to the Capital of the Galapagos, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. This island is one of the 5 inhabited islands of the Galapagos archipelago that for decades has been dedicated to agriculture, mainly producing sugar cane and coffee. About 5,400 people live here, and many work for the government or in fisheries.

The highland forests of the populated Islands in the Galapagos chain have been greatly altered due to the introduction of exotic and invasive species of animals and plants. Highland conservation, development and poverty issues have been almost completely neglected by conservation, development and government agencies. As a result of the lack of fruit and vegetable production on the Galapagos Islands, boats from the Ecuadorian mainland unload fruits and vegetables to hotels, restaurants, and markets on a daily basis. Quarantine regulations are consistently ignored and at least two exotic and/or invasive plant or faunal species enter the islands each day. This is why one of the main problems on the Galapagos Islands is the introduction of non-native species (plants and insects).

Additionally, the local population, lacking most government services and suffering high unemployment levels, is almost completely excluded from working in and
benefiting from the tourism industry: tour operators do nearly all their business from their boats, ignoring business possibilities with local Galapagueños.

The biological station and reserve sites are located in the highlands of the island, on a 200 hectare site, where there is still native vegetation. The native vegetation consists of miconias, ferns and other native herbaceous species. The reserve is mainly an organic agricultural and habitat restoration project.

There are two main climatic seasons on Galapagos. The hot season is from December to May, and sees increased sea temperatures and occasional heavy rainfall, which is heaviest around January and February. Off-peak season from June to November is cooler with more cloud formation and misty patches leading to lighter rains. After June, however, trade winds can cause ocean temperatures to dip as low as 15ºC. The weather on the islands are favorable to visit for most of the year, except January and February, due to their latitudinal advantage.

OBJECTIVES

The Jatun Sacha Foundation has worked to develop reforestation, habitat reconstruction, and agroforestry activities utilizing native species for the last 18 years throughout Ecuador. Consistent with past work, one of the objectives of this station is to develop the technology to reconstruct native habitat in the highlands on San Cristobal, and to serve as a center for similar projects in the highlands on other populated islands in the Galapagos chain. The remaining native highland forests on the populated islands is quite limited due to farming activities in general, and the introduction of useful, but very invasive species from the mainland such as tropical cedar and Cinchona. The foundation has established a Plant Conservation Center for the production of native plant species for this work. Regarding the habitat restoration aspect, the reserve is dedicated to eradicate invasive species of plants, especially a type of invasive raspberry, in order to plant native trees and vegetation. The reserve is currently implementing a biological corridor going from 150 m.a.s.l. (meters above sea level) to 550 m.a.s.l. to demonstrate the different native vegetation at different gradients of the island.

In addition, the foundation works collaboratively with local landowners to develop clean agricultural alternatives for the production of vegetables and fruits to sell to local universities, restaurants, and hotels.
ACCOMMODATION

The Jatun Sacha-San Cristobal Biological Station is open to researchers, guided natural history groups, and to volunteers. The station is composed of two houses made of native bamboo and cement, containing 11 rooms each, and resting areas. Separated from the houses are the dining room and the kitchen. The accommodations are rustic, with room for groups of up to 35 people. Researchers can obtain needed permits with assistance from the foundation. Individuals interested in volunteering can contact Rebecca Willey, the Volunteer Program Coordinator for the foundation, to arrange their stay at the reserve.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers will work on both habitat restoration and agricultural projects while at the reserve. In addition, foundation staff will lead volunteers on various destination hikes to a nearby lagoon, native forests, beaches, and local villages to explain the ecological and human dynamic of Galapagos. Opportunities to work on group research and monitoring projects are available.

Volunteer Activities
Here are some of the activities volunteers may take part in during their stay:

- Habitat restoration: removal of non-native/invasive vegetation
• Reforestation with native species: seed collection and classification, nursery work, maintenance of reforestation lines
• Organic agricultural activities and agroforestry to help maintain and secure food production for the station
• Station maintenance
• Personal project (develop your own project or support different conservation projects that are being developed at the station at the time)
• Trail maintenance
• Sign elaboration for trails
• Basic construction activities
• Help clean fresh water supply
• Help in kitchen
• Observation of petrels: clearing around the nests to facilitate the mother's entrance, observation of birds' behavior
• Phenology studies and flora inventories: observation and classification of native, endemic and invasive species.
• Bird observation at the reserve to determine if they are native, endemic or invasive.
• Germination Project: Research to determine the most effective method for germination in vegetable production.
• Guided hikes throughout reserve and/or nearby related areas (learn about biodiversity, natural history, and ecology).
• Occasionally volunteers are expected to work half days on Saturdays, but for the rest of the weekend volunteers may dedicate their time to rest, read, wash clothes, and/or travel around Galapagos.

**Things to Do Nearby**

In San Cristobal you may be lucky to see the red footed booby (the rarest of the boobies). It's also the home of the Chatham mockingbird Mimus melanotis, only found here on the island. There are many visitor sites, some of which can be reached by foot from Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. It's a charming, peaceful island, and worth the visit. Take your time in the village to get to know the people.

If you want to see where the Frigates nest, go past the “Centro de Interpretación”, northeast into the scrub forest. It's a great 35 minute walk to the cliff areas of Cerro Tijeretas, and you don't need a guide.

There's a good surfing spot at Playa Punta Carola. The waves may be too big and daunting for swimmers, and so we recommend Playa Mann (through Avenida Northia) or Playa
de Oro. The waters are calmer and there are some beach hotels as well.

Take a 20 minute walk south of town to La Loberia. Here you can see sea lions, marine iguanas, birds, and even tortoises. Don't forget to always stay on the path, and try not to disturb the wildlife!

**WHAT WE ASK OF YOU**

These expectations have been written in order to better prepare you as a volunteer, not only for the work that you will be involved in but also for the environment you will be living in:

We understand that each individual situation will vary somewhat, so we cannot guarantee that everything will be the same as described for every individual, although this is a good general outline of what you should expect when volunteering in Ecuador.

It is important to emphasize that you are dealing with another culture when you are volunteering internationally. The way you would approach a particular situation in your own country is not necessarily the appropriate way to handle it in Ecuador.

Your time and commitment to the program is valued, but please remember that you are a guest of the country and will no doubt be viewed as a representative of your homeland.

If you have any queries you would like to discuss about the information provided here, please direct them to your volunteer coordinator.

**RULES**

- Alcohol and drugs are not permitted in the station. If you would like to drink, you must do so outside the reserve, such as at a local bar in town.
- Although there is someone to clean your room, it is your responsibility to keep it in order. This also includes the communal areas.
- Since we depend on the rain for water, please use it carefully. Please do not wash your personal items in the sinks or showers.
- We recommend you use rubber boots when walking the trails. Please step in the mud and don't walk on the sides. This is how we keep the trails narrow and the muddy area small.
• Please respect the schedules. We always try to be on time so we expect the same from you.
• You share cabins and rooms so please respect the others and their space.
• When you are using insect repellent you must avoid touching animals and plants, they are very sensitive to it.
• You should notify the office when you invite anybody to stay or visit the station. Every visitor must pay a fee.
• When bathing at the river you must use an appropriate bathing suit (one-piece for women, swim trunks for men). The customs here are different.
• Please inform us of your whereabouts (and fill out the Responsibility Agreement) when/if you leave the station for a few days.
• Please pack out your plastic garbage and old batteries to avoid polluting the reserve.

FEES & LOGISTICS

Financing:
Volunteers must pay their own expenses, including airfare to Ecuador and living costs while in the country.

• The fees include: Coordination of the volunteers in Quito and at the reserves, 3 meals a day, plus lodging in cabins that are shared with other volunteers and researchers. During the orientation meeting in Quito you will receive the following things: a Jatun Sacha hat, t-shirt, and the volunteer manual for the station you are going to volunteer at.
• NOT included in the fees: Transportation expenses from Quito to the reserve, activities outside of the reserves, other expenses that are not specified in the volunteer program.
• Application fee: There is a USD $47 application fee to apply for the Jatun Sacha Foundation Volunteer Program (continental stations). Volunteers pay the application fee only once (per year).

Duration of Volunteer Work:
The minimum time limit for volunteers/internships is 2 weeks. Volunteers will need a visa if staying in Ecuador more than 90 days.

Health Insurance:
Volunteers must have their own international health insurance and need to sign a waiver to release Jatun Sacha from responsibility from any illness or injury incurred in Ecuador. There exists a small risk of malaria at our biological stations located in the Esmeraldas provinces on the Ecuadorian coast (specifically at Bilsa and Congal Reserves). Therefore we recommend volunteers supply their own malaria prevention medication while volunteering at either of these sites.

Work Schedules:
Volunteers are expected to work 8 hours a day, 22 days per month, therefore having 8 vacation days per month to be used upon approval of the project.
coordinator. Volunteers can choose to either take Saturday and Sunday off each week or take all 8 vacation days together.

**Educational Requirements:**
University study is not a prerequisite to be accepted into the program. Prospective volunteers should have interest in conservation and related human issues.

**Extra costs:**
While at the reserves, volunteers will need approximately $30 USD per week for additional costs (beverages, community visits, postcards, etc). However, the amount you spend depends on you. Please take along small bills to the reserves, as it may not be possible to get change for larger bills (US $5 and $1).

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

The Application Procedure consists in sending us:

1) Application letter: Indicating experience in conservation activities, future interests, reasons for applying, preferred station and participation dates (participation dates are needed to guarantee space availability).

2) Doctor’s note stating you are fit to participate in all activities required of you OR Proof of international travel insurance.

3) 2 passport size photographs

4) If you intend to carry out an original project, please include work plan (2-5 pages)

5) US $47 for the application fee (write check in USD currency to Fundación Jatun Sacha)

**PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP**

**Passport / Visa Requirements**
Please note that you need a full valid passport. Some countries offer an automatic tourist visa for Ecuador; please confirm this with the embassy in your country. Volunteers from certain countries will be issued a 3 month permit upon entry (at no cost). Visit extensions of an additional 90 days can be obtained through the local immigration authorities. Make sure the correct date and length of stay in the country is entered onto your visa when at immigration. Longer-term visitors need to obtain a volunteer visa. We can send you all the documents you require.
**Arrival / Departure Information**

You need to fly to Quito Mariscal Sucre International Airport, and make your way to a hotel. Taxis from the airport to the center of Quito cost approximately US$25-$30. If you would like us to provide a transfer service, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

After arrival you must attend an introduction meeting at the Jatun Sacha Foundation main office in Quito. Introductory meetings are at 11:00am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. If you need to schedule a different time, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator. During these meetings you will receive all the information you need to volunteer in the project. Please bring your passport and two passport photos to this meeting.

The following are the entrance days to each reserve:

- Bilsa: every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday
- Guandera: Sunday or Monday
- Jatun Sacha: Sunday or Monday
- San Cristobal: Sunday, Monday and Wednesday

Please inquire with the Jatun Sacha’s Volunteer Coordinator to organize arrival dates to Ecuador, the date for your orientation, and entrance days to the reserves before booking flights.

**Directions to the Office**

Take a taxi (about US$2 from the popular Amazonas tourist area) to the intersection of Av. Republica and Teresa de Cepeda. Our office is located near the Southwest corner of the intersection. There is a sign on the building (behind a gated wall) that reads “Jatun Sacha.” Go to the gate, ring the bell next to the words “Jatun Sacha,” and someone will ring you up.
**Finance**

The Ecuadorian currency is the US Dollar. In general we recommend that you bring traveler's checks or internationally recognized credit cards. Please be aware that you may have a maximum limit on cash withdrawal for your bank card in a single day, so it is advisable to come with most of the cash you’ll need right away to avoid complications or delays. Alternatively, you may pay the fees via a bank transfer.

Ecuador is a cheap country in which to live. A normal person's daily expenses (excluding room, laundry and board) range between US $10 to US$15. Urban public transport is US$0.25 one-way regardless of distance. There are many interesting points to visit on your own throughout the country, like volcanoes and the jungle. Make sure you bring enough money to explore any other areas you wish to visit.

**Medical Information**

Quito is located at an altitude of 2800 meters above sea level. High altitude can affect some people's health. You should check with your doctor if you have any doubts before you travel. When visiting Quito, you are advised to take it easy and drink lots of water for the first couple of days.

**Health and Safety**

*Field Base safety*

All members will be informed of the risks, health and safety procedures for the field base on arrival. It is imperative that everyone both understands and respects them.

*Volunteer safety*

Look after your passport and take a separate photocopy with you. Do not wear flashy jewelry or walk around with valuable items on display such as cameras. Do not carry large amounts of cash. In the unlikely event that you are targeted for your belongings, hand them over without resistance.
RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT LIST

Clothing & Footwear:
- Well-fitting rubber boots (knee high) are indispensable! Best to buy them here in Ecuador, brand name Venus, without the white lining ($5.00 to $10.00). However you can only find up to size 44 (European; US size 10) in Ecuador.
- Poncho or LIGHT rain jacket.
- Shoes to walk and/or play sports in.
- Sandals/flip flops
- Fast drying clothes are recommended, however any old shirts and trousers/pants will be good to work in. Just make sure you bring some extra clothes.
  - 4 or 5 long sleeve shirts with collars (all of which you should be prepared to throw away as the DEET spray will stain them) in light colors (dark blue or black attract mosquitoes)
  - 10 white t-shirts (mostly long sleeve) to wear under your shirt or for breakfast, lunch and evenings
  - Long and short trousers that can get messy – again, avoid blue or black
  - Fleece or anything else warm for evenings
- Swimwear.
- Face net for mosquitoes (especially through December to April)

Toiletries & Medication:
- BIODEGRADABLE soap & shampoo, tooth brush, tooth paste, etc.
- First aid kit: hydrogen peroxide, band aids, gauze, bandages, iodine, ibuprofen or paracetamol, topical antibiotic cream, anti-hystamine tablets, sports tape in case of twisted ankles, and any medications you already take.
- Sunscreen.
- Sun hat/cap.
- LOTS OF insect repellent with high DEET content.
- Feminine hygiene products (if necessary).

Other necessary items:
- Light sleeping bag.
- Towels.
- BIODEGRADABLE laundry detergent.
- Sun hat or cap.
- Work gloves.
- Torch/flashlight/headlamp with enough spare batteries.
- Small daypack for hikes and work.
- Water bottle.
- Ziplock bags.
- Diary, writing pad, pencils & pens, etc.
- Enough money for traveling expenses, mules, community visits, beer or coke, etc., (about $100 for a month, please bring many small $5 and $ 1 notes!).

Recommended, but not necessary, items:
- Binoculars (preferably waterproof), camera, books, playing cards, pocket knife, chocolate and/or energy bars, biscuits, sweets, snacks, etc.
CONTACT INFORMATION

POSTAL ADDRESS:  Fundación Jatun Sacha  
Teresa de Cepeda N34-260 y República  
Segundo Piso.  
Urbanización Rumipamba  
Quito, Ecuador  
América del Sur

OFFICE TEL:  (593 2) 243 2240 (Quito Office)

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

COORDINATOR:  Rebecca Willey

EMAIL:  volunteer1@jatunsacha.org

TEL:  +593 99 237 1034

WHATSAPP:  +1 719 205 3236