

## Ecuador Travelogue

**1-22-16:** Most of the day was spent on three different planes only able to sleep a little. After we arrived at the Quito airport we were driven in two separate vehicles by the same driver Omar to the Community Hostel where we were staying.

We soon headed off in search of food having gotten a suggestion for llopingachos. We soon found a place with both llopingachos and jugos. Llopingachos turned out to be a plate of pure deliciousness, with mashed potato patties, sausage that was seasoned deliciously, beets, fermented onions, tomatoes, avocado, and a fried egg on top. Jugo literally means juice in Spanish, but a fresh jugo in Ecuador is as thick and flavorful as a smoothie but water based.

However this was only on one side of the market that we had found the food in (mercado central (central market)). The other side was full of many, many, different types of fruit. The smell was unbelievable. When we got back to the hostel I crashed.

**1-23-16:** I was woken up at 9:30 having slept 15/16 hours and feeling very refreshed. I had breakfast from the hostel which was good but not the least bit Ecuadorian.

At approximately 11 o'clock we took a taxi to a gondola (cable car) station where we took a gondola to 13,400 feet up the mountain of Pichincha from the ten thousand feet we started at. We then hiked to about 13,900 feet where there was a terrific view of the landscape and Quito. However we did not go any farther because it was getting late and my brother, Toby was getting a headache from the altitude.

Once we got back to the gondola station we took a gondola down the mountain. It is interesting going down the mountain, seeing the landscape outside change, and the city getting ever closer. And as I looked at Quito below us I did not want to go back to it, with all its exhaust and traffic, and I have never liked city's. But eventually we got to the bottom and took a taxi to a Lebanese restaurant where we ate, and drank jugos. We then headed back to the hostel to play card games and read the hobbit.

**1-24-16:** At ten o'clock we loaded ourselves (the four of us and the thirty college students) into taxis and headed to a park where there was a botanical garden and a vivarium, which was why we were there. A few of the taxis including ours dropped us at the wrong side of the park which was mildly irritating. We headed to the botanical garden first and I learned lots about pollination and coloration of plants. We then headed to the vivarium which was very interesting. There were tons of boas, and a few venomous snakes, plus some frogs, iguanas, and a caiman.

After about an hour at each of them we headed to a mall to get supplies. I had hoped that it would be an interesting mall because it was in Ecuador, but it turned out to be exactly the same as an American mall. We then walked to another park which had food vendors and got four kababs for only \$1.50 apiece. In the park there was a mosaic Japanese style gazebo with kids climbing all over the roof of it. Toby and I climbed on to it avoiding the tiles that had been kicked up and were sliding down at us on the slippery surface of the still in place tiles. Soon after we got up a girl came up to us and said something that I did not understand. Toby told her that we did not speak Spanish, and I introduced us as best I could (all in Spanish). My dad told us that he thought she wanted a picture with us so we stood in a line attempting not to suddenly slide off the slippery sculpture, while we had pictures taken of us.

We then went back to the hostel to have dinner and play card games.



<http://jackmaryetc.com/Travel/Americas/Ecuador/Images/Galapagos/QuitoBotanicalGardens.jpg>

**1-25-16:** At eight thirty this morning a bus arrived to take us to Maquipacuna. We had eaten an early breakfast and we were packed and ready to go. When we spotted the bus I, my brother, my mom, and a few students were standing on the balcony of the hostel talking about the cloud forest. When we spotted the bus Toby and I quickly ran downstairs and put our daypacks on the front seats of the bus.

Once we were on our way we started talking about... many things, really and somehow the question arose of how many hours, minutes, and seconds there are in an 85 year lifetime. I took out my notebook, this notebook that you are holding in your hands right now, and calculated it. In the end it took about two and a half hours to get to Maquipacuna.

Even just being in camp made me remember all the noises of the cloud forest. Being out in the forest was orders of magnitude more noisy.

Later in the day I, my mom, and my dad hiked along a river trail (which was not entirely on the river). I now remembered what it was like in this forest, the rain, the noise, the humidity, and the mud. As we were coming back we found what looked like a damselfly with antenna as long as its body. We stayed there for a good twenty minutes trying to get the perfect photo.

We finished off the day with a delicious meal.



*Taken By Me: Maquipucuna*

**1-26-16:** I was woken up by my mom telling me to get ready for the bird walk at 6:30. I stumbled out of bed and put on my field clothes. I put all my camera stuff, and a water bottle in my backpack and put on my rubber boots. I now felt fully awake.

It was surprisingly warm outside when we headed out. My group headed up the dirt road stopping whenever we saw something interesting, (usually a bird, or a bat tent). When we reached a line of red ants marching across the path we stopped to look at them And I took some pictures, doing this I found out how good an idea macro extension tubes are.



Taken by me with macro extension tubes: Red ants

After breakfast I decided go on a guided hike with my family. However after only a short period of time I had to go back to camp with my dad because my stupid waterproof shirt kept in to much heat and it was making it hard to breathe.

For the rest of the day I talked to students, played card games, and looked at photos that students had caught on trail cameras.

**1-27-16:** Today I was woken up again to go on a bird walk. This time we did not go far from camp at all or see very many birds. Instead we were all working on figuring out the same problem, what could cause the perfectly straight lines of holes in large leaves?!!



Taken by me: lines of holes in leaves

After breakfast me, my dad, and Christian went on a short walk to a birdwatching platform which was about 12 feet off the ground. For about 1 ½ hours we watched a booted racket-tail hummingbird visit every flower on a particular tree in a certain sequence before disappearing for ten minutes while the nectar was replenished and then return to do exactly the same thing over and over again for the hole time that we were there.



Taken by me: Booted Racket-Tail Hummingbird

After lunch I went on a moderately long hike with my family. Some parts of the trail were created by the Yumba and were very deep because people had walked on them for so

many years. After dinner we watched a presentation on insects by someone who was doing research at Maqui. As I was going to bed I saw lightning bugs by our cabin.

**1-28-16:** Today I did not go on a bird walk. Instead I went to see the Booted Racket Tail Hummingbird with my dad. However it was not as active this early in the day as it had been the previous day and the lighting was not as good, but I managed to get a pretty darn okay picture of it.

After breakfast we hiked to the waterfall which was about ten minutes hiking away. Toby went in it for a little bit but came out shortly.



*Taken by me: watterfall*

After lunch me, my mom, and my dad went to see the hummingbird but it only came out once for fifteen seconds in the two hours that we were there.

After dinner my dad gave a presentation on bats and bat tents. There was also an interesting presentation on insect chemical defenses.

**1-29-16:** Today I got up and finished packing. We were going to leave at nine thirty so I needed to be ready. We finished breakfast at about eight thirty so we stood around talking for a hour.

Once we were on the buss Griffin played our guitar and we talked about lots of stuff but it was not very interesting in general. When we got to the community hostel we dropped off our laundry to be cleaned and had lunch at the mercado central. We went on lots of errands to get stuff and then we rested at the hostel. For dinner we had a delicious pollo, aroze, y frejoles dish which was very filling.

**1-30-16:** I woke up at six o'clock and prepared to get on the bus. We got on the bus at six thirty and headed on our way. We stopped a few times to use the bathroom but mostly we just sat, slept, and looked at the very interesting trees for eight hours.

When we arrived we were oriented to el nomad and the students started dispersing with there homestay family's. The remaining group continued to dwindle until there were only 3 students left and we decided to leave for our rented house. It was locked, know one came to the door, and the phone number we had been given did not work. Because it was so late El Nomad decided to give us one of there apartments for free for the night and we could figure out the house problem the next day.

We quickly found a restaurant and to eat at, ate and went to bed.

**1-31-16:** I woke up and got my daypack ready for Incan ruins. Everybody had arrived at El Nomad by 8:30 and we got on a bus to take us to Inca Pirca. It took about 1:45 to get there where a guide met us and started telling us about the Inca (I have notes in my field notebook). I found the stone and clay architecture very interesting and I would have gladly stayed there longer but we only stayed for 45 minutes.



*Taken by me: Ingapirca*

We then took a short hike and drank chicha. Chicha as it turns out is corn that has been mashed up and then let sit to ferment.

Once we got back to Cuenca we got into our house that we had rented and had dinner at an okay restaurant.



*Taken by me: A small glimpse at our house in Cuenca*

**2-1-16:** I woke up at 8 o'clock and had some leftover arose con pollo for breakfast. We then took a taxi to near the school that we were taking Spanish lessons at and walked around until a

few students informed us that we were standing right in front of it. We were then split up into two groups; beginner and advanced Spanish speakers and I was of course a beginner.

In my group the teacher just wrote stuff on the board so I did not learn very much, but apparently the other group got to do skits and play games which sounded a lot better. Afterwards a group of school kids came up to me and my brother and started talking to us. They spoke about as much English as I spoke Spanish and they were very interested in how to say specific things in English. In those seven minutes I learned probably more Spanish than I had in the 2 hours of formal Spanish class.

After Toby finished a game of high altitude soccer we went and found ourselves some lunch. We then sat in a park watching pigeons for a good long time. Eventually we wandered around until we found ourselves in the middle of a delicious smelling fruit market, before heading home to drop off the fruit.

We headed back out for a short period of time just to get ice-cream and groceries. We then wrestled and read the Hobbit before going to sleep.

**2-2-16:** Today I woke up at 6:45 and had some fruit. At 8:30 we left for Spanish lessons. Today in Spanish lessons we played some games which made it a lot better but still not great. Unfortunately we did not talk to any Ecuadorian kids afterwards which made it less fun.

We then go a bunch of fruit and a little other stuff before heading back to the house at 14:00. At 16:00 students started arriving. We had just barley finished cutting up the fruit but they started eating it as soon as they arrived. The meeting / party lasted 4 ½ hours for most people, and 5 ½ hours for a few people and Toby and I were wrestling students for almost the hole time. I was very tired at the end of it, and I fell asleep immediately (I am actually writing this right before I fall asleep.)

**2-3-16:** Today we had Spanish lessons as usual. However at 14:00 we walked to the place to rent bikes and the students that had chosen to come on the bike ride started arriving. Soon we were riding the (not very good) rented bikes down the river. It was apparently an sixteen kilometer ride although it seemed much shorter.

In the evening we walked to the restaurant that we had been told to go to for the welcome dinner to El-Nomad. We had just stepped through the door when Arturo (the owner of El-Nomad) told us to come with him and walked us around the back of the restaurant. It smelled delicious in the back where they were cooking the Ginny pig that we were going to have for dinner. It was very hot in the open walled but roofed space that they were cooking in. There were about four grills which were long metal skewers held up by metal polls about 2 feet above the ground (the fire) and there were 2 or 3 Ginny pigs on each skewer. There were two people tending the cuie and one teenager leaning against a grill that was not in use, and he was on his phone. Eventually we left to have dinner in the eating section of the restaurant.

The dinner was delicious and very filling. It went so late that I was to tired to write about this day fully and instead I just wrote a few notes so that I could write it from memory.



*Taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein: Cuy Roasting*

**2-4-16:** Spanish lessons fell apart into a practice round of carnaval within the school yard. Everyone ran around with either a water gun or a bottle of spray-able foam. I was able to escape not very wet and what I now know as not very slimy from foam.

We then had a good but very gringo lunch and sat in the park for a while watching pigeons. We wandered around a bit looking for a few things but finding not a one and eventually we ended up at our house.

Toby and me headed to a nearby park alone and zip-lined for quite a while.

Later we all headed out with the intension of dinner and got some good street food. We then found ourselves in the middle of hundreds of people who were foaming each other. All of us thought that it would be fun to have some foam and we went about getting it different ways. My parents bought two cans of foam for them, my brother picked up a not quit empty can from the ground, and I snatched a large can out of someone's weak grasp. We soon found ourselves watching an amazing firework show, and within minutes of that we were watching a band of municipal police playing brass instruments with everyone around them foaming them. Eventually we got large fresh cans of foam for all of us and went into the thick of it.

It was gross and slimy, but it was also fun to use so I could not blame the people that sprayed me and it was very fun to get people back after they had sprayed me so over all it was terrific.

We then got back to our house and took showers which felt very good and proved just how hard it is to get the foam off of you.



*Taken by me: Can of foam    Taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein:A brass band of police getting sprayed with foam*

**2-5-16:** We arrived at El-Nomad a few minutes later than 8:00 and got on a bus within minutes. Two hours later we arrived, we were at a site which had evidence of human habitation 8,000 years ago. We looked at and were told about artifacts which had been found there most of which were very interesting. We then took a very short hike to a cave which had been inhabited.



*Taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein: Chobshi cave*

After having lunch we drove to the town of sig-sig. Sig-sig is a very small town with one very big building... the world's main producer of panama hats! We were shown the process of making them, and then were given the chance to get some. Most people including me, my dad, and my brother got panama hats (sombremos de panama).



*Both taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein: Both of Panama hat factory*

We then got on the bus again and headed to silver town. We stayed there for 45 minutes and it was somewhat interesting but we did not see people making the silver objects so it was not the best place we went that day.

We then went back to Cuenca.

**2-6-16:** In the morning we went to the carnival parade which was interesting. Most people were foaming the people in the parade but no one outside of the parade got foamed. There were also quadcopter drones flying around to get pictures of the parade from above and this was apparently the first year that there were drones. Once one of the drones crashed into a wall, fell into the middle of the parade, and had to be quickly fixed on the spot by its owner on the spot while he was missing a big chunk of the parade.

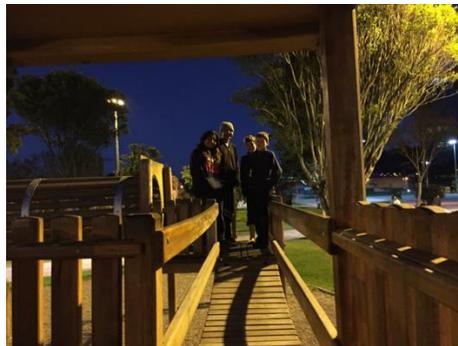
Also at this parade there was the best plates of pork ever. The pork had been cooked whole and as they made the plate of food they would just pole off a chunk of meat and a piece of

skin and put it on the plate. Along with pork there was motte which is like puffed up corn that is still wet and it is completely delicious; there was also a cabbage salad and two llapingachos.



Taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein: Carnaval Parade

A little later in the day Toby and I went down to the nearby park alone again. This time since carnival had started there were people with water balloons, and water guns. We found a large bottle of water lying around on the ground and we took it as a short range weapon. Also we found some broken water balloons in a drinking fountain, and although we knew that they were broken we tried to fill them up; a couple of teenagers saw us doing this, came over, and gave us two non broken and already filled water balloons. We thanked them and then went to go use them. Seeing that we were armed two little girls came after us with water guns, we both threw our water balloons hoping to scare them off, one of our water balloons hit the younger of the girls but the other one of the balloons missed. The younger girl ran off but her sister came to get revenge, as she ran up I doused her with the water bottle and she ran off. We had victory!



Taken by my dad: Bret Weinstein: A different time that Toby and me went down to the park alone (we were talking to Ecuadorian kids)

Later my dad, Toby, and I walked to a nearby Cuban restaurant. We had a very good Cuban dinner, and then went back to our house to sleep.

**2-7-16:** This morning my mom and Toby went out while my dad and I stayed at the house. I did homework while they were gone.

Tonight we had another class official meeting/ party. The students arrived at 16:00 and we had a photo critique hour at 19:00.

**2-8-16:** Today I woke up at 9:00. We went to a restaurant where my mom was already eating. We had a good breakfast and then went back to our house and stayed for a few hours.

At about 13:00 we went to a Incan / Canari ruins site, botanical garden, and small aviary. We stayed there for about 3 hours until it closed and we had to leave. Inside there was lots of opportunity for photography



*Taken by me: Incan / Canari Ruins*

We then went to the restaurant that we had thought was Cuban but was apparently not.