

RAEI Research Participant Checklist and Instructions

The following steps must be taken *before your application will be considered*:

- _____ Complete online application
- _____ Pay \$200 deposit with \$25 application deposit.
- _____ Send a copy (fax, paper or digital) of liability waiver

The following steps must be completed *at least one month prior to departure*, or upon acceptance to the program if less than one month from departure.

- _____ Consult with doctor or health professional about health and safety concerns with travel to your expedition destination
- _____ Obtain traveler's insurance with medical evacuation coverage.
- _____ Send a color copy (paper or digital) of your passport (see information below to apply)
- _____ Send a copy (fax, paper, or digital) of health coverage affidavit
- _____ Complete final payment online or by mail
- _____ Have obtained a flight reservation and sent your itinerary

Pre-departure checklist

- _____ Passport
- _____ Color copy of passport kept separately from original
- _____ Cash in USD, separated out into two separate packages
- _____ Debit/Credit Cards in two separate places
- _____ Prescription medications
- _____ Copies of prescriptions kept separately from medications
- _____ Review "what to Bring" list

Important Travel Information

You will need to purchase airline tickets for roundtrip flights to Quito (via Houston, Miami, or Panama City), to arrive in Quito before the starting day of your project, and leaving after the last day. For all participants, a \$44 airport exit fee must be paid, in cash, upon leaving the country, and is not an included expense. Ecuadorian currency is the U.S. dollar. A valid passport will be needed and should be applied for as soon as possible if you don't already have one. **IMPORTANT:** your passport must not expire until at least six months after your date of arrival. Verify that your passport is valid for the exact dates of travel. For participants with non-US passports, you may need to apply for a visa as well, contact the Ecuadorian consulate for the most current requirements.

For many points of departure in the US, flights can generally be purchased for \$1,000 or less, and sometimes as low as \$650. After landing, you will be met at the airport and brought to our hotel in Quito. You will then be escorted throughout the trip by your group leaders, although there will be some opportunities to explore the areas independently or in groups away from the main study areas. However, if you are arriving earlier than the day before your expedition, you must arrange your own transportation to the hotel.

You also need to *consult a physician* about traveling to Ecuador, and acquire traveler's insurance. You will be required to sign an affidavit to confirm these steps one month prior to departure. Your traveler's insurance must have a medical

evacuation clause; we recommend at least \$50,000 medical evacuation coverage. Basic insurance for travelers under age 30 can be found at www.TripPlus.com, which starts at \$25. More complete coverage can be found at www.insuremytrip.com, which is an agent site which will let you choose from many options.

Some references that might come in handy for traveling and working in Ecuador are:

US Department of State Passport Application Page: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site for travel to Ecuador:

wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ecuador.aspx. A good place to research on your own, and be prepared when you consult with a physician prior to travel.

The Ecuadorian embassy in Washington, D.C., will have the latest travel document requirements:

http://www.ecuador.org/nuevosite/index_e.php

Wikitravel Ecuador page: <http://wikitravel.org/en/Ecuador>. This site compiles some great travel advice about the country, its people, geography, history and climate. It is especially good for independent travelers.

What to Bring

Important: All of our Ecuadorian expeditions now contain at least some camping. Make sure you have the camping items listed below.

When packing, keep in mind that you may have to walk extended distances with all of your luggage. It is best if you can get all of your gear into one bag and a carry-on item. Getting all your gear into one large backpacking backpack is an excellent way to go.

You must have all items in the essential gear and camping gear categories, or acquire them in Ecuador. Most of these items (except rain boots), are cheaper to get in the US. *You may not participate in this expedition without these items.*

a) Essential Basic Gear

- Lightweight Rain poncho or jacket. Much of our work will be in the rain, and you must be prepared to get drenched often.
- Lighting equipment: A bright good waterproof or water-resistant headlamp (headlamps are much better than flashlights for night work). If you are buying a new one, try to get the brightest possible LED you can get. Bring a spare flashlight for emergencies, or a bright flashlight for spotlighting things out of range of your headlamp.
- Batteries: Bring enough batteries to change out your light once every other day. There will be some chances to recharge batteries during the trip, so you can bring rechargeables, but make sure to bring backups as well, since electricity will be only sporadically available. Note: there is no opportunity for recharging at Rio Bigal.
- Insect repellent with DEET, enough to apply at least twice a day for the duration. For extra protection, you can treat your clothing with permethrin solution, which is particularly effective against ticks.

- Small backpack, big enough for your water and some field equipment, such as a clipboard, large tape measure, or animal bags.
- Drinking bottle, with least one-liter capacity.
- Extra copies of all documents. Include a color copy of your passport and vaccinations. Keep your copies in a separate place from the originals.
- Any prescription medications. Also write down your exact prescriptions, including dosages, and keep this separate from your medications.
- Rubber rain boots. May be obtained in Quito for about \$8 if your size is 11 or below. If you have larger feet than this, or if you want to be sure of a fit, bring some from home.
- Wristwatch

b) Camping Gear

Camping is now included in each expedition, and very basic camping gear is required. Make sure you know about any camping requirements for your trip and be prepared with the following items. Safe water, as well as cooking and dining gear, are always provided.

- Tent or hammock. You will not need a tent large enough for all your gear, just enough for you and a few personal items. A camping hammock with insect screen and rain fly is a good lightweight substitute for a tent, and produces a smaller ecological footprint than a tent. Comfortable camping hammocks can be purchased at <http://www.lawsonhammock.com>. Lawson Hammock is our sponsor, and we may have a hammock available to you for our trip, just ask.
- Sleeping pad. A basic, lightweight foam or inflatable pad (a very minimal sleeping pad is recommended for hammock camping).
- Sleeping sac or bedding. A lightweight sleeping bag, or sheet and blanket.
- Pillow. Or just stuff a bag with clothes.
- Backpack. In general, a large backpack is the best for hauling gear around from site to site. But a pack big enough for the above camping gear and personal items for 3-4 days is needed on backpacking trips; trips to Pata de Pajaro, Jama-Coaque, Congal, and Rio Bigal include backpacking.

c) Recommended Gear

Field Clothing. For tropical forest work you will need clothes that both protect you and keep you cool:

- Lightweight cotton or synthetic long pants. Shorts should generally be avoided to avoid insect bites. Avoid jeans or any heavyweight fabric, as it may not dry out before it mildews. Cargo pants with several pockets work well.

- Lightweight cotton or synthetic shirts. But t-shirts may also be used, as long as insect repellent is judiciously applied.
- A wide brimmed hat and sunglasses. These are helpful, but since most of our work is at night, they will mainly be used in transit and somewhat during occasional diurnal surveys.
- A comfortable pair of rugged sandals, such as Tevas. Otherwise a pair of tennis shoes that you don't mind getting dirty will work. Hiking boots are usually not needed, as nearly all hiking will be done in rain boots (above). Keep in mind that, as with clothing, material that can dry easily is best.
- Swimsuit. For swimming in the ocean at Punta Prieta and the streams at Pata de Pajaro, Rio Bigal and Pappallacta Hot Springs.
- Plastic Bag. To store your clean clothes in, and a mesh bag for your dirty clothes. Dry fabric left open to the humidity can accumulate mildew rapidly, and wet clothes that are contained can even faster.
- A layer of warmer clothing (light jacket or fleece) for Quito, Pata de Pajaro and upper Rio Bigal.
- Bandanas

Bring enough changes of clothes for about a week, and plan on using clothing (but usually not socks) for 2 or more days in a row. There will be an opportunity to do some laundry by hand, and we may be able to have laundry service once during some trips.

- First Aid. We will have some of the basic first aid items available. You should consider bringing additional items as you might need them. For instance, if you are particularly accident prone, you may want extra Band-Aids. Or if you are susceptible to traveler's diarrhea you may want to bring Imodium.
- Personal Cleaning and grooming items. Be minimal, and bring biodegradable soap, such as Dr. Bronner's, which may be used for clothes washing and even tooth brushing.
- Binoculars. Particularly useful for birdwatchers, you can pick up an adequate pair of binoculars for \$40-50. However, if you are buying a high quality pair, you should look for ones that have close focusing (e.g. 2 meters) and wide aperture, for low light environments such as the rainforest. Eagle Optics (www.eagleoptics.com) sells a great line of waterproof binoculars with high-quality optics.
- Sun Protection. Sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat are recommended.
- Earplugs. The living areas we stay in are not soundproof, and you may have a noisy (e.g. snoring!) neighbor.
- Extra Food. Our diets will be mostly vegetarian and seafood. If you are a meat-eater, you may want to bring some supplemental protein bars.
- Deck of playing cards. You will learn "cuarenta", a local favorite game.

Bottom line: Pack as lightly as possible, use small and lightweight items, and plan on washing clothes. You will be carrying all your belongings over long distances at times. (Tip: see www.sierratradingpost.com for bargains on personal gear.)