



Anglia Ruskin University



Amazonian Ancestral Medicine,
Midwifery and Community

Programmes in Ecuador 2025

Introduction

ABOUT KAYA RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

We are a responsible travel organization that specializes in providing meaningful and ethical international experiences for individuals and groups.

Our mission is to promote sustainable social, environmental and economic development, empower communities and cultivate educated, compassionate global citizens through responsible travel. We do this by offering a wide range of academic and community engagement programmes in varying environments across 28 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

WHY KAYA?

We are recognized leaders in ethical travel with expertise in developing countries. We provide hands-on experiences that deliver cultural immersion, positive impact on local communities and activities relevant to your goals – allowing you to travel and grow as responsible, educated, global citizens.

At Kaya, we pride ourselves on delivering only what is best for our participants and host communities. We work closely with everyone involved to ensure mutual benefit and meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

Kaya is committed to creating safe and transformative spaces for all who seek to engage in cross-cultural experiences abroad. We support all participants by providing additional resources when needed in areas of mental health and medical or physical needs, those in the LGBTQ+ community or any marginalized community, and travelers with concerns around their identities abroad.

Our experiential programmes may expose our participants to difficult topics such as societal and racial inequities, cultural differences, environmental concerns, economic disparities, and community trauma. We provide support in order to facilitate productive dialogues between diverse perspectives and cultures. We believe these dialogues are essential for personal and community growth.



"Traveling as a volunteer you can contribute by working on local problems, while as a tourist you are just a spectator."

Matteo Bertoletti

Cost Overview and Inclusions

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COSTS

£1750 per person.

Fee Breakdown as;

£1010 - Program activities, accommodation and meals

£300 - Transportation and logistics

£440 - Program fees, staffing ground costs and administration



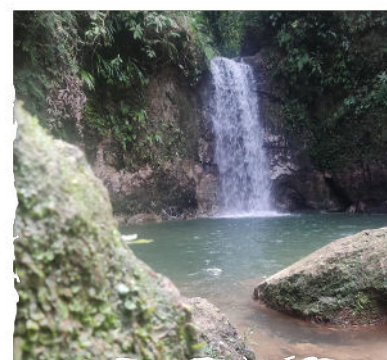
INCLUDED

- 27 nights accommodations in Ecuador
- Includes 3 meals per day
- Local on-site project supervisor.
- Local on-site support available 24/7 in case of emergency.
- Transfers to/from airport and project site
- Welcome Orientation and Health and Safety Overview.
- Excursion and entrance fees for: Quito's historical center



NOT INCLUDED

- International flights and/or domestic flights
- Travel insurance
- Recommended and/or required vaccinations and medicines
- Visas (not required for UK Citizens if staying less than 180 days)
- Police background checks
- Tips and gratuities
- Personal expenses, such as snacks, souvenirs, meals outside of itinerary, laundry, free time activities/fees, transportation outside of itinerary, or baggage fees



Programme Information:

Amazonian Ancestral Medicine, Midwifery and Community

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LOCATION

Archidona, Napo

Archidona is located in the center-north of the Amazon region of Ecuador, at an altitude of 577 meters above sea level, covering an area of 3,028 km², and is home to 24,696 people. It is part of the metropolitan area of Tena, with strong economic, social, and commercial ties to it.

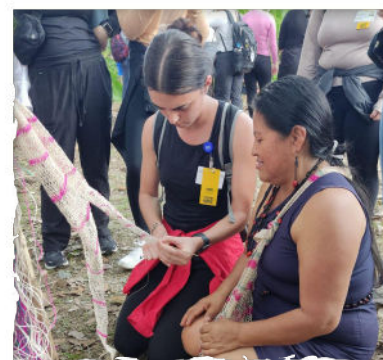
Archidona is known for its rich biodiversity, featuring lush rainforests, diverse wildlife, and stunning landscapes. Within it, there are four protected areas that are part of the national system: the Antisana Ecological Reserve, the Sumaco Napo-Galeras National Park, the Cotopaxi National Park, and the Colonso Chalupas Biological Reserve.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Ancestral medicine in Amazon indigenous' community

This Kichwa women's association is dedicated to reinvigorating their ancestral knowledge, particularly in the fields of midwifery and ancestral medicine. Since the early 2000s, they have been working on projects to strengthen their cultural heritage and practices and to pass them on to younger generations. By doing so, they aim to maintain their identity, preserve their language, and keep their traditions alive within their community.

Volunteers in this project will support the organization in a variety of tasks, including health-related areas such as the live & green pharmacy and midwifery support. Additionally, they will assist in creating handicrafts, working in the chonta flour factory, and helping in the restaurant that aims to preserve and promote traditional foods.



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Areas of Work

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Students will work across these areas as needed. No Spanish language is required unless specified (but if you learn a few words before you go - your efforts are always well received!)

Agriculture traditional techniques (Chakras)

Chakras are an ancestral system of sustainable production, typically managed by Kichwa women who apply traditional and ecological knowledge to conserve the forest, water, soil, and wildlife. These systems produce a variety of species, including food, medicinal plants, fruits, spiritual herbs, and ornamental plants, ensuring food security for families and maintaining biodiversity.

Nutrition

The center features a restaurant that preserves and celebrates traditional Kichwa recipes, utilizing local ingredients often sourced directly from the community's chakras (crops). To create additional employment opportunities for the youth, new initiatives have been developed, such as a small chonta flour and cookies factory that produces a distinctive regional product.

Traditional medicine: alive and green pharmacy

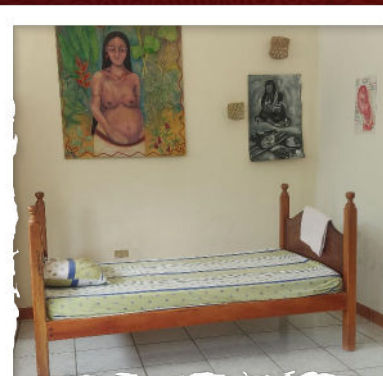
The traditional medicine project is divided into two sections. The first is the "alive pharmacy," where products such as tinctures, droppers, or pills made from natural ingredients are prepared and distributed to patients. The second is the "green pharmacy," where midwives create natural medicines for immediate consumption, including herbal and root-based remedies.

Midwifery

Midwifery is a sacred and indigenous practice that has been used for centuries within the community. Kichwa women have successfully preserved and passed down this knowledge through generations. Participants will have the unique opportunity to witness the rituals and techniques used to reposition the fetus, manage bleeding, and alleviate pain during childbirth. These practices showcase the strength and resilience of the women who have upheld midwifery traditions, preserving them as a vital part of their cultural heritage.

Handicrafts

Participants will also engage in the creation of traditional handicrafts, learning artisanal techniques passed down through generations. Additionally, they will take part in the process of cacao making, gaining hands-on experience in transforming raw cacao into various products, while understanding its cultural significance in the Kichwa community.



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Additional Information

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ACCOMMODATION

The project offers shared cabins with a capacity of 2 to 4 people, each with a private bathroom and shower. Some cabins include a kitchen, although meals are generally served in the dining room/restaurant.

LOCAL FOOD

As part of the experience in the Amazonian indigenous community, meals will be provided using local ingredients and traditional recipes. This offers participants the chance to immerse themselves in the culture, exposing them to new flavors and dishes that may differ from what they are accustomed to. Participants are encouraged to embrace this aspect of the experience and remain open to trying new foods.

A traditional dish participants may encounter is maito, a preparation where various ingredients are wrapped in a bijao or kwan panga leaf and grilled. Meals are typically accompanied by beverages such as coffee or tea for breakfast, and fruit juices or tea for lunch and dinner.

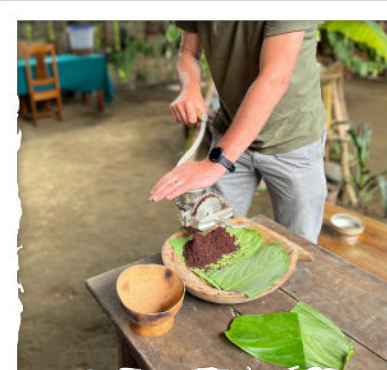
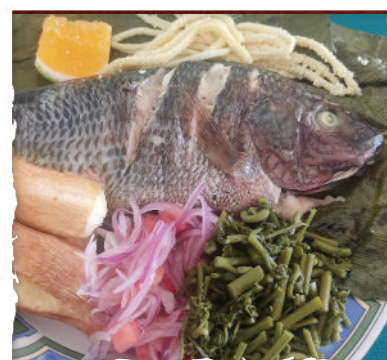
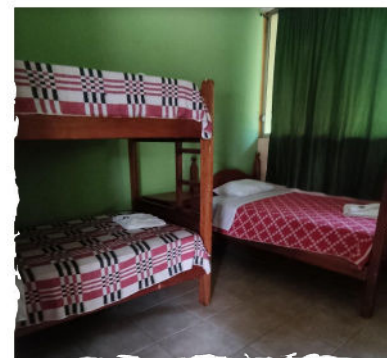
Here is an example of what a typical work-week of meals might look like:

	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI
Breakfast	Green plantain empanadas	Bread and scrambled eggs	Yuca tortillas	Cheese sandwich	Patacones and cheese
Lunch	Fish "maito"	Chicken and yuca soup	Rice, beans and sweet plantain	Fish and Yuca soup	Vegetarian "maito"
Dinner	Fish, rice and lentils	Beef stew and rice	Vegetarian spaghetti	Chicken stew with fried plantains	Chicken Maito

Most dietary requirements can be accommodated, but due to availability Halal and Kosher diets will need to take vegetarian options.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

In many areas of the world, accessibility remains limited. Infrastructure such as ramps or elevators may be limited. With the current itinerary, participants should expect to navigate varied terrain, use stairs, and walk for long stretches. Kaya can provide information, recommendations and the necessary quotes for accommodations wherever possible.



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Itinerary Outline

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Summer 2025 Programme Dates:

- Friday, May 9 – Thursday, June 5, 2025
- Friday, June 6 – Thursday, July 3, 2025
- Friday, July 4 – Thursday, July 31, 2025
- Friday, August 1 – Thursday, August 28, 2025

Day 1, Friday, | Arrival (D)

Overnight: Quito

Upon arrival, participants will be greeted by a driver who will transport them to the hotel/hostel for a well-deserved rest after their long journey. If the flight arrives in the afternoon, dinner will be provided that evening to kick off the adventure with the best energy for the next day. If the flight arrives late, a packed dinner will be provided instead.

Day 2, Saturday | Orientation and city tour (B,L,D)

Overnight: Quito

After a delicious breakfast, participants will attend an onsite orientation to learn about the key aspects of the country, details about the places where they will be staying, emergency contacts, cultural adaptation, safety tips, and health precautions.

Following lunch, participants will explore the streets of the best-preserved historic center in Latin America, visiting majestic squares and churches while learning about the rich history and legends hidden within its walls. As a special treat, they will have the opportunity to taste some of the finest chocolate in the world, made from Ecuador's renowned fine aroma cocoa, and learn about its manufacturing process and numerous health benefits.

Day 3, Sunday | Transfer to project site (B,L,D)

Overnight: Project Accommodation

Today after breakfast and relaxed morning we will transfer to our project site at Amupakin - about 3.5 hours from the city. We will settle into our accommodation and enjoy our first meal in the community.



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Itinerary Outline

ECUADOR

Days 4-26 | Programme activities (B,L,D)

Overnight: Project accommodation

The purpose of the project is to share and revalue the ancestral knowledge of Kichwa women while also providing a free care programme for women from neighboring areas.

During their stay, participants will have the chance to spend time with the midwife "mamitas" and take part in various activities, including health related workshops. They will also join conversation circles and sacred ceremonies to understand the connection between health and the jungle. Visits to neighboring communities will offer opportunities to provide prenatal care.

Participants will join the day-to-day activities of the project and actively engage in the various initiatives. On weekends and during free time, participants will have the chance to explore the jungle, visit protected areas, rivers, waterfalls, and nearby villages.

Day 27, Wednesday | Return to Quito(B,L,D)

Overnight: Quito

After breakfast, participants will travel back to Quito, where they will have time to relax and reflect on their experience. In the evening, there will be a final gathering and farewell meal, offering a chance to share memories, discuss the lessons learned, and say goodbye to the country that has hosted them during this time.

Day 28, Thursday | Return to the UK (B)

Today we head to the airport for your journey back to the UK. Participants will receive full support to ensure a smooth departure, leaving with the experiences, friendships, and memories gained during their time in Ecuador. Safe travels!



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Packing information

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ESSENTIALS

Clothing

- Lightweight, breathable long-sleeved shirts and pants (for protection against insects and the sun)
- Comfortable, quick-dry t-shirts and shorts
- A light rain jacket or poncho
- Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots or shoes
- Sandals or flip-flops for relaxing
- Socks (preferably moisture-wicking)
- Hat and sunglasses (for sun protection)
- Swimwear (for rivers or streams)

Health & Safety

- Insect repellent (with DEET or a natural alternative)
- Sunscreen (high SPF)
- Reusable water bottle (staying hydrated is key in the humid climate)
- Personal first-aid kit (including any prescription medications)
- Hand sanitizer
- Basic toiletries (biodegradable soap/shampoo recommended)

Work-Specific Items

- Notebook and pens (for taking notes on health practices)
- Appropriate clothing for health-related work. Scrubs are not needed.

Miscellaneous:

- Headlamp or flashlight (with extra batteries)
- Portable charger or solar charger
- Small daypack and reusable shopping bag (for excursions)
- Earplugs (for night new noises of the jungle)

NON ESSENTIALS (but useful)

Comfort Items:

- Lightweight travel towel
- Pillowcase or small travel pillow
- Books or e-reader (for downtime)
- Camera (to capture memories, be respectful when taking photos)
- Snacks from home (if you're particular about comfort food)

Cultural Engagement:

- Spanish phrasebook or language learning app (knowing basic Spanish or local phrases can enhance your experience)
- Journal (to document your experiences)

Gifts or Donations (Optional):

- Health or hygiene items (such as soap, toothbrushes, or vitamins)
- Educational materials or tools related to health care or midwifery
- Small tokens from your home country (for cultural exchange)

For the Climate:

- Waterproof dry bags (for keeping electronics and valuables safe in the humid environment)
- Bandanas or buffs (for extra sun protection or to wipe away sweat)



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The Kaya Staff



Heilwig Jones

Founder and Director

Heilwig (known as "H") founded Kaya in 2009, combining her experience as an international student at UC Denver and her work in international development. A leading voice in the field on issues of ethics and best practices in service programming, H is passionate about cultural immersion and equity in community experiential initiatives.



Diana Balarezo

Ecuador's Site Director

Diana joined the team in 2013, bringing a wealth of experience from her master's degree in Social and Environmental Studies and her time as an international student in the US and Spain. At Kaya, she integrates her passion for teaching, research, and sustainable development with her deep love for her country, striving to share its beauty and culture with others.



Javier Remache

Programme Advisor

Javier works with applicants to help identify the best programme fit for their skills and interests.

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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For more information on the programme content, please contact Kaya advisors on info@kayaresponsibletravel.com. For information on available funding support, please contact the ARU Global Opportunities team on go@aru.ac.uk.

www.KayaVolunteer.com