

# Two Months in Ecuador

Report of an IAESTE internship – March and April 2024  
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## Work

My internship was for 2 months as a part of the Grupo de Ingeniería, Ciencias Aplicadas & Simulación at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), working on biomass valorization. During my time, I assisted on various tasks, working on hydrochars production from various biomass sources. Most of the work was done in the lab, but I also assisted in manuscript writing and did literature reviews, it was very interesting to gain knowledge on such topic. During my stay, I also had the opportunity to present the work done in the lab in fairs and conferences, allowing to exchange with professionals and the general public.

One of the main challenges for me was the language barrier, as I didn't speak Spanish very well before coming to Ecuador. Even though a lot of people spoke English at the university, it was challenging to communicate properly with people at first.

Over time, it definitely got better and I even made friends in Spanish, which was a big achievement. The team was incredibly nice and welcoming, and my colleagues quickly became friends. Generally, I found that Ecuadorians are extremely positive and welcoming, and I only had positive experiences getting to meet new people. I also found that they have a very relaxed relationship with their coworkers and supervisors, many students were friends with their professors for example, which was quite different from what I am used to in Switzerland but also refreshing.



*Scientific Fair Presentation at USFQ*



*Sustainability Week Presentation at USFQ*

## Culture

Ecuador is an insanely diverse and beautiful country, with many different landscapes and gorgeous nature. From the volcanoes of La Sierra, the Amazon rainforest to the infamous Galapagos Islands, Ecuador is truly amazing. During my free time, I had the opportunity to explore the country, as public transportation is very well implemented. At university, most students don't have classes on Fridays, which made it super convenient to go on week-ends trips. My favorite food I discovered in Ecuador are Platanos Maduros, a slightly sweet fried banana, usually served with cheese on top. But most generally, fruits were amazing and I had fun trying out many different kinds I never tried before.



*Wildlife of Ecuador (sealions)*



*The beautiful Cotopaxi volcano (5897 m high)*

## IAESTE

I'm grateful for IAESTE, they facilitated the job offer and answered any questions and concerns I had before going. IAESTE also supervised the housing, I stayed with a wonderful host family, super close to the university and they arranged everything beforehand, it was super easy for me. Beyond support, the person in charge at USFQ was very helpful, and organized activities for international students in which I enjoyed taking part, such as hikes, or town visits. Overall, I am so glad I had the opportunity to do this internship. Not only did I learn many things in my field of studies, being able to live in Ecuador for 3 months was truly an enriching experience, the culture I witnessed and the people I have met were life-changing. Now the only question that remains is, when will I be back?





*Hiking around waterfalls with international students*