

2. THE COAST

The coastal region of Ecuador is defined by the land between the Pacific Ocean and the western Andean mountain range and comprises the states of Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabí, El Oro and Santa Elena. Approximately 40% of the Ecuadorian population lives in this region. The coastal area main features are:

- * Beautiful and unspoiled white sand beaches - Salinas, Puerto Lopez, Manta, Canoa, Mompiche and a lot more.
- * It has the country's most fertile and productive land – large banana exportation plantation like Dole and Chiquita, cacao and coffee plantations can be found here.
- * Hot and humid weather conditions
- * The highway along the coast is called “La Ruta de Sol” or “La Ruta del Spondylus” and often used as a reference for travellers.
- * Guayaquil is Ecuador's largest city, economic centre and operates one of the principle deep water ports of Ecuador.
- * Major industries include shrimp fishing, petroleum refining, food processing, machinery manufacturing and consumer goods.
- * Sports fishing, sailing, surfing and whale watching are popular sports at the coast.

Guayaquil and therefore the coastal region can be reached by plane. The airport of Guayaquil operates both, domestically and internationally. Manta has a domestic airport as well. Almost all towns on the beach can be reached by bus.

2.1. GUAYAQUIL



Ecuador's largest city **Guayaquil** is the industrial and commercial centre of the country. It is situated on the western banks of the Río Guayas, about 56km (35mi) from its outflow into the Gulf of Guayaquil. The Pacific Ocean enters through the gulf of Guayaquil into the city's harbour which is the trade centre for 90% of all Ecuadorian imports as well as the half of all exports and therefore, the most important port of transshipment of the South American Pacific coast.

Guayaquil - Excursions

City Tour Guayaquil (2h 30min)

During the city-tour of Guayaquil, you will get to know the most interesting parts of the tropical and busy pacific-metropolis. On the western side of the Parque Simon Bolívar you will find the Cathedral (1948), in classic gothic style. The original, 1547 built wooden cathedral was completely destroyed by 1896 city fire. This last large fire destroyed many of the beautiful wooden houses of the city. Only the small quarter Las Peñas, in the north of the centre, was preserved and is now the oldest and last picturesque vestige of the colonial Guayaquil. Some famous people have lived in the today's artist-quarter where daily small open-air exhibition of paintings and sculptures can be seen.



On the way through town you will go along the border of the Río Guayas; appreciate the

pride of the *Guayaquileños*, the beautiful “Malecón”, the cities promenade. It was built in Italian renaissance style (1924-28) and is decorated with typical tropic flowers. The Palacio de Gobernación (the province-government) was built in 1922. Afterwards you will pass by the cemetery, Cementerio General. At the foot of the hill Santa Ana lays the dazzling white cemetery with its avenue of royal palms. This place shows the gap between rich and poor people: In the lower part of the hill you may see a lot of beautiful decorated graves with artistic gravestones and sculptures of white marble, whereas in the upper part only wooden crosses can be seen. You will return to the hotel.

City Tour Guayaquil and Municipal Museum (4h)

In addition to the above described city tour, you will visit the municipal museum. The history of Guayaquil and its surroundings is shown from first settlements to the fires that destructed almost the entire city. Return to the hotel.

City Tour Guayaquil and Botanical Garden (5h)

In addition to the city tour, you visit the Botanical Garden. This garden conserves approximately 324 clearly identified species. Between are trees like Guaiacum, oak, Teak, fruit trees and ornamental plants, as well as exotic tropical plants in their original habitat like palms, water lilies, orchids, heliconias, bromeliads, cactus, etc. It is ideal to watch birds (73 species) and more than 60 butterfly species. It is also possible to observe other animals like squirrels, iguanas, rabbits, etc. The garden is divided into three sections which you can explore through comfortable paths, decorated with drawings by natives from the Ecuadorian coast. Our guides will lead the group, so you will get an excellent guided tour through the wonders of nature. Return to the hotel.

City Tour Guayaquil and Historical Park (5h)

In addition to the city tour, you will visit the Historical Park. Once inside the “Parque Histórico Guayaquil” you will find yourself transported to a world where past becomes present. In one beautiful journey you will see different species that used to populate the ancient province of Guayaquil - from deer to tapirs, monkeys to wild cats. As well you will travel back to the late nineteenth century suburb. The streets and houses bring you a little closer to Ecuador’s recent past. Furthermore, the park also exhibits a reproduction of a hacienda, with its buildings, its traditions and its wealth, and you can discover the way in which the craftsmen used to work. Watch or feel the mood, take part in the duties of the hacienda and discover this unknown side of coastal life. Return to the hotel.

Dinner in Guayaquil (3h)

You are invited to have a special culinary and cultural experience: You will be taken to one of the most delicious and nice atmospheric restaurants Guayaquil offers. This multicultural town is famous for its great offer of delicious varieties of seafood and grandiose steak restaurants. After dinner, the transfer will take you back to your hotel.

Full Day Coastal Hacienda Tour – Banana Plantation incl. Lunch (7h)

Departing from your hotel, you will pass the “Puente de la Unidad Nacional”, a huge bridge that connects Guayaquil with the interior provinces of Ecuador. Drive northeast to the Province of Los Ríos which is about 97 km (60miles) and an approx. 2h drive away. During the bus ride, observe the crops of rice, sugar cane, pineapple, cacao, and corn. You will stop at Jujan to buy and taste fruits of the season, e.g. mango, guaba, bananas, mamey or zapote. Continue to Babahoyo, the capital of the province of Los Ríos and afterwards to the Hacienda Rodeo Grande with its banana plantations and stockbreeding. This is the only place in the country where buffalos are bred. Upon arrival, taste the juice of fresh fruits like “tree tomato” or “naranjilla”, both typical of Ecuador. If you want, taste the typical “patacones”, fried banana tortillas with cheese. Your lunch will be served at the hacienda and includes salad, rice and chicken stew as well as raspberry juice. If you wish, take a nap or

just walk through the paths of the hacienda, before returning back to Guayaquil and to your hotel.

Full Day Coastal Hacienda Tour – Cacao Plantation incl. Lunch (7h)

Hacienda El Castillo is situated in Cerecita 55 km from Guayaquil on the way to the beach. This large property covers over 700 acres. The land is mainly used for growing cacao, mangos, and hardwoods. Upon arrival, cacao juice and plantain snacks with cheese will be served in the house of the farm.

During the visit, you will walk in the plantation and you will be able to appreciate the entire process from the seeds to the sowing, the plantation, the harvest, the fermentation and the drying of the cocoa crops.

At the end, particularly interesting is the visit to the chocolate factory. You will see how using traditional equipment which has been developed by their artisans, excellent quality chocolate is elaborated. After the toasting has been done, the cocoa nibs go to a pre grinder to obtain the paste which then goes through a ball mill to acquire the cocoa liquor that will be mixed later with the rest of the ingredients before entering a conching process. After the tempering process, the chocolate goes directly to the mould depositor. Once it has been cooled down, the chocolate is manually packed in its final presentation. You will have the opportunity to taste this delicious product.

Later you will enjoy a typical costeño lunch which will be served at the hacienda in a peaceful atmosphere before driving back to Guayaquil.

Opening Times for Attractions in Guayaquil				
Site	Weekdays		Weekends	
Cathedral	Mon – Fri	08.00h – 18.00h	Sat Sun	09.00h – 13.00h 16.00h – 17.00h
Malecon 2000	Mon – Fri	06.00h – 24.00h	Sat – Sun	06.00h – 24.00h
Malecon del Salado Fuentes	Mon – Wed Thu - Fri	14.00h – 21.30h 17.00h – 24.00h	Sat – Sun	17.00h – 24.00h
Barco Morgan	Tue - Thu Fri	16.00h – 19.30h 16.00h – 23.30h	Sat Sun	13.00h – 22.30h 13.00h – 19.30h
Ecu Andino	Mon – Fri	08.00h – 17.00h	Sat - Sun	closed
Parque Historico	Mon - Tue Wed – Fri	closed 09.00h – 16.30h	Sat – Sun	09.00h – 16.30h
MAAC	Tue – Fri	08.30h – 16.30h	Sat – Sun	10.00h – 16.00h
Museo Municipal	Tue – Fri Mon	09.00h – 17.30h closed	Sat Sun	09.00h – 17.30h closed
Museo Norton Presley	Tue – Fri Mon	08.30h – 16.30h closed	Sat – Sun	10.00h – 16.00h
Museo Julio Jaramillo	Mon - Tue Wed – Sat	closed 10.00h – 13.00h 14.00h – 17.00h	Sun	10.00h – 15.00h
Jardin Botanico	Mon – Fri	08.00h – 16.00h	Sat – Sun	08.00h – 16.00h
Cerro Blanco	Mon – Fri	08.00h – 16.00h Reservation needed	Sat - Sun	08.00h – 16.00h Without reservation
Manglares Churute	Mon – Fri	07.00h – 17.00h	Sat – Sun	07.00h – 17.00h