

[Music playing] [In January 2015, 8 students from MSU headed down south to Quito, Ecuador to begin their once in a lifetime journey through one of South America's smaller but more diverse countries. [Globe highlighting Ecuador] [Photo of students in truck] These students would get the chance to travel to all four of Ecuador's regions. [Photo of mountain range] These four regions include the Andes Mountains, where their new home and the capital city [Photo of street in Quito] of Quito is located 9,350 feet above sea level.[Aerial photo of city of Quito] The other regions are the coast, the Amazon [Photo of iguana in rainforest] Rainforest as well as the famous Galapagos [Photo of birds on rocks in the water] Islands. [Photo of students on a balcony overlooking the city] The Universidad de San Francisco, Quito is the best in Ecuador, and a popular place to study abroad for students from various [Photo of statue in plaza] universities all across the United States. [Photo of view of Quito] The university is used to welcoming foreign students and offers a program that pairs Ecuadorean students with international students so they [Photo of 2 women on horses] get a chance to interact with the Ecuadorean students, instead of falling into the trap of only speaking English with other American friends. The university also offers up a city [Photo of 4 women with mountain range in background] tour for the students, giving them the chance [Aerial view of Quito] to explore the historic center,[Photo of colonial architecture] getting the chance to see some of Quito's beautiful churches [Photo of church in colonial architecture] and understanding why they are voted a UNESCO world heritage site. [Photo of woman sitting in grass looking at city below] International students are able to take a wide variety of classes; some geared only towards international students [Photo of woman with alpaca] as well as regular classes with other Ecuadorean students. Since Ecuador is such a small country, [Photo of white brick wall with Ecuador ama la vida] students find it easy to travel almost anywhere in the country on weekends. [Photo of mountain and city] Long bus rides become a reoccurring normality in the lives of the international students. [Photo of mountain] But Quito also offers a few attractions within an hour from the city itself. Besides many beautiful parks and volcanoes to hike, those [Photo of women hiking in mountain] interested in geography can visit the small [Photo of trail and shelters in forest] city just north of Quito called Mitad del Mundo, [Photo of mountains and buildings] where you can find the equatorial line. Here you can find some museums and science experiments to show the differences between [Photo of people in front of monument] the northern and southern hemispheres. Another popular attraction is the volcano Pichincha, [Photo of mountain] overlooking Quito. A challenging hike, especially [Photo of woman happy about hiking] for those who have not yet been accustomed to the altitude, gives rewarding views overlooking [Aerial view of Quito and mountains] Quito once you reach the summit at 15,406 feet above sea level.[Photo of bird on rock in water] Quito also has many other volcanoes nearby; some are still active [Photo of lake surrounded by mountains] while others are extinct. Students also use their weekends to get a chance to see some [Photo of lake looking through part of the volcano] of Ecuador's most beautiful attractions. One of these is Baños, [[Photo of shelter and trail in the forest] a popular city for tourists looking to participate in adventure sports such as white water rafting, canyoning [Photo of white rapids running between foliage] and bungee jumping. [Photo of woman on rickety wooden bridge with a strap] As well as the "swing at the end of the world" which gives you an adrenaline rush as you soar over a ravine. [Photo of person swinging in air] It is also the home to many large waterfalls [Photo of waterfall] that allow you to get closer than any US national park would ever allow, [Photo of steps leading to the edge of waterfall] create memories that will last a lifetime. [Photo of 2 women in kayak on water] MSU's included trip takes you to Tiputini [Photo of dirt steps and trail] in the heart of Ecuador's Amazon Rainforest. During this trip students get to learn about the rainforest while

climbing above the canopy, [[Photo looking down to rocks and forest with rainbow] swimming in the Tiputini River, [Photo of two women in rocks climbing stairs] seeing many unique flora and fauna [Photo of trail between rocks and plants] and even getting the chance to eat ants! One [Photo of flamingos standing in water] of the most popular places to visit in Ecuador are the beautiful Galapagos Islands. [Photo of sign with words Estacion Cientifica Charles Darwin] Getting to walk in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, learning about his research there and being able to see giant tortoises [Photo of giant tortoise on grass], iguanas, [Photo of iguanas on beach] penguins, [Photo of birds swimming in water] blue footed boobies, [Photo of birds standing on rocks in water] seals, [Photo of seals on sand] on finches and more. [Photo of seal on beach] This opportunity is sure to leave you breathless while educating you more about Darwin's evolutionary theory. [Photo of many giant tortoises in shady area] The beautiful Quilotoa [[Photo of woman jumping in foreground with crater lake in background] Crater Lake inside an extinct volcano provides another strenuous hike [Photo of alpacas grazing along the mountain side] to see this incredible and hidden lake. The pigments in the water [Photo of crater lake] create unique colors that give stunning views. All the incredible places to visit in Ecuador [Photo of mountains] create an extremely diverse and exceptional [Photo of woman swinging in air with mountain in background] study abroad experience. The Ecuadorean culture [Photo of stained glass ceiling in church] is welcoming to foreigners and gives students a chance to take classes, [Photo of woman with a multi-legged insect crawling up her arm] improve their Spanish [Photo of mountains] and travel through one of the world's most beautiful countries. [Written by Lauryn Boag & Narrated by Joy Whitten[Graphic of western hemisphere. ->>For more information visit latinamerica.isp.msu.edu] [Western hemisphere graphic. Edited by Jessica Lundquist]