

Frequently Asked Questions

Volunteering Program- Equilibrio Azul

1. How much money is needed for meals, laundry and transportation?
 - a. In Puerto López you will find a great variety of places to eat, with a great variety of prices. The cheapest meal will cost around \$3, and the most expensive around \$15. Laundry costs around \$5 each time. This means that for a day, around \$25 works just fine.
2. Do I need cash?
 - a. There are very few places in Puerto López where you can pay with a credit card, cash is more common. It is best to take cash out of an ATM every time you need it rather than to carry it around. However, be mindful of your banks and the ATM withdrawal fees.
3. How many hours of work per day/per week shall I expect?
 - a. Be prepared to work at least 5 days a week and at least 6 hours a day. Sometimes you will have to work during the night (patrolling beaches during sea turtle nesting season), and sometimes during weekends as well. We work with wildlife and therefore, we work under their clocks rather than ours (you can't tell for sure when an animal will be active).
4. What is a typical day volunteering for Equilibrio Azul like?
 - a. A day volunteering with Equilibrio Azul involves working hard for at least 6 hours a day. When it is sea turtle nesting season, you will usually wake up early and start patrolling beaches. You will also patrol at night (nesting behavior is much more common at night rather than day) but will have enough time for your meals and to relax as well. When all the work is done you can go do all sorts of activities. Puerto López is very beautiful port so you have a lot of nice places to visit and activities to do.
5. How safe is Puerto López?
 - a. Puerto López is a very touristic town of small to medium size (population ~ 18,000). People are very nice and friendly, with virtually little crime. Also, our volunteer house is located close to the beach front and it is very safe.

6. What does an obligatory donation per month mean?
 - a. An obligatory donation per month means that we ask you to pay us a minimum amount of money in exchange for allowing you to help us with the many conservation activities we carry out in and around the Machalilla National Park. As we are a non-profit organization, therefore your money will be invested in the same conservation projects you will be volunteering with and will also be used to cover the costs of your stay in our house in Puerto Lopez.

7. Do I get a certificate for my work as a volunteer with Equilibrio Azul?
 - a. At the end of your volunteer program you will get a certificate, specifying the work you've done and the time spent in it.

8. Is scuba-diving involved?
 - a. Diving is only involved in a few projects. Usually, volunteers do not participate in our diving activities due to safety reasons. There can be exceptions according to the project and according to the experience of the participants.

9. What type of sandals/shoes will I need?
 - a. This is entirely up to you. You will be walking a lot every day, sometimes through mud and sometimes through forests. Some people can handle this with flip flops while others need more heavy duty sandals. Make sure you bring a spare pair of shoes or sandals. Finally, take a look at our "Things to Bring List", which you'll receive as part of your acceptance package.

10. Is a head lamp with red light necessary?
 - a. A head lamp is obligatory. A head lamp with red light is very important as this type of light is used when working with nesting sea turtles. The red light does not disturb the animals, and therefore, makes our work less invasive.

11. Do I need to bring my own diving/snorkeling equipment?
 - a. We have limited equipment which can be borrowed by our volunteers. If you own a mask and snorkel, we encourage you to bring it with you. If needed, you can find diving equipment in Puerto López for rent.

12. Can I buy camping/diving equipment (e.g. sleeping bag, tent, snorkel, diving equipment) in Puerto López?

- a. There are no shops of this kind in Puerto López. If you wish to buy equipment in Ecuador you must do so in the cities of Guayaquil or Quito.

13. Is there an ATM at Puerto López?

- a. Yes, there is an ATM in Puerto López. This ATM is located at Pichincha Bank's (Banco del Pichincha) branch in Puerto Lopez.

14. What is the largest size of bills I need to take?

- a. In Ecuador you can use any US dollar bill. However, we suggest you carry small bills (\$5, \$10 and \$20s). Bigger bills, \$50 and \$100s, might not be accepted in some places in Ecuador, especially in small towns like Puerto López. We suggest, you bring \$20s as the largest bills.

15. Will I have internet access at the Volunteer House?

- a. You can use a WIFI connection at the volunteer house. The computers in the house are used for conservation work only. These computers have very important scientific information; therefore, we prefer that volunteers avoid using them for personal transactions (unless, there is an emergency). Note, that you can also find several Cyber Cafes in Puerto López.

16. Do I need travel insurance?

- a. Yes. In fact, travel insurance is mandatory and we will ask you for proof of insurance. If you do not have insurance yet, make sure you have one before you reach the volunteer house in Puerto Lopez.

17. Will I be sharing the room with other volunteers?

- a. Yes. Our volunteer house has bunk beds and you will share your room with other volunteers (four people per room). Sometimes you will have to share your room with volunteers from the opposite sex. Also, note that you will have to share the bathrooms.