

## Climate

Ecuador's climate varies with altitude. Sea level areas of the eastern region are rather hot, although on the coast toward the south, the cooling influence of the Humboldt Current makes it quite mild most of the year. The highlands and valleys of the Sierra region are temperate or cool, but there is no severe cold weather.

There are only two seasons: the rainy season, which generally lasts from December through April (particularly in the coastal region) and the dry season which has some rain.

Quito, the capital city, located at an altitude of over 2 700 m, has an average temperature of 15°C and Guayaquil, the main seaport, enjoys pleasant tropical weather with temperatures averaging 25°C.

## Population

The 1986 estimated population of Ecuador was 9.65 million with an annual growth rate of 2.9 per cent. The majority of the population (80 per cent) are Inca or of mixed blood origin with the remainder being of European and African descent. Approximately 45 per cent of the total population resides in urban areas.

## Language

Spanish is the official language of Ecuador and is spoken throughout the country. Several dialects remain in use, but most visitors will have little contact with these languages. While many business people and government officials possess a working knowledge of either English or French, efforts to speak or at least to conduct business in Spanish are greatly appreciated. Interpretation and translation services are available.

## Religion

There is freedom of religion in Ecuador. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic, but several Protestant denominations have churches in Quito and Guayaquil, and there are several missionary institutions as well as synagogues in Quito and Guayaquil.

## Education

Ecuador has an adult literacy rate of approximately 85.5 per cent. Education is either public or private, and