

Quito Quick City Guide

At a Glance

Quito is the world's highest capital city, sitting at 2,850 m in the Andes. Its UNESCO-listed Centro Histórico, modern northern districts, and dramatic volcano views make it a budget-friendly long-stay base for nomads who can handle a few days of altitude adjustment.

- **Language:** Spanish (clear Andean accent; English in tourist areas)
- **Currency:** US Dollar (dollarized since 2000)
- **Climate:** Spring-like year-round, 10–21°C; wet season October–May, dry June–September
- **Timezone:** GMT-5 (ECT)
- **Calling code:** +593
- **Power:** 110–120 V, two-flat-pin plugs (US-style)

First 48 Hours

- **Hour 0–2:** Land at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO). Take the airport bus (\$2.40) or a registered taxi (\$25–35) to your neighborhood. Buy a SIM from Claro or Tuenti at the airport if you need data immediately.
- **Hour 2–6:** Drop bags, walk to a local café in La Mariscal or La Floresta, and drink plenty of water to adjust to the altitude. Avoid alcohol on day one.
- **Day 1 evening:** Eat a light dinner near Plaza Foch or La Floresta; try loco de papa or a simple almuerzo.
- **Day 2 morning:** Ride the Quito Metro to the Centro Histórico, walk Plaza Grande, San Francisco, and La Compañía. Take it slowly.

Where to Stay

Neighborhood	Best For	Nightly USD	The Catch
La Mariscal	Nightlife, hostels, nomad social life	\$15–50	Touristy; watch belongings at night
La Floresta	Artsy cafés, quieter than Mariscal	\$25–70	Hillier; fewer late-night options
Centro Histórico	Culture, colonial charm	\$20–80	Quiet after dark; altitude hills
Iñaquito / La Carolina	Modern apartments, business amenities	\$35–100	Less character, more traffic

Picks: Hostal La Casona de Mario (budget), Casa Joaquín Boutique Hotel (mid-range), JW Marriott Quito (premium).

Getting Around

- **Metro:** \$0.45 per ride; 30 min north–south through key districts.
- **BRT (El Trole / Ecovía / Metrobus):** \$0.25–0.35; crowded but cheap.
- **Taxi:** Yellow cabs; insist on the meter or negotiate at night. Uber and Easy Taxi app also work.
- **Airport:** Public bus \$2.40, taxi \$25–35.
- **Bike:** Ciclopaseo on Sundays; limited lanes otherwise.

Eat This

- **Local Staples**
- **Where to Eat**
- **Coffee Culture**
- **Dining Etiquette**

Strategy: Almuerzos (set lunches) run \$3–6. For cheap daily eating, hit Mercado Central or Mercado de Santa Clara. Mid-range meals in La Floresta run \$8–18.

Top 10 Sights

Attraction	Time & Cost	Pro Tip
Centro Histórico	Half day, free to wander	Start at Plaza Grande; wear walking shoes
TelefériQo	2–3 hr, ~\$9	Go early morning for clear volcano views
Basílica del Voto Nacional	1–2 hr, \$2–4	Climb the towers for city views
Mitad del Mundo	Half day, \$5 park + \$4 Intiñan	Take Metrobus to La Ofelia, then transfer
El Panecillo	1 hr, taxi \$3–5	Never walk up; visit late afternoon
La Capilla del Hombre / Guayasamín	2 hr, \$8	Combine with Bellavista lunch
Museo Nacional (MuNa)	2–3 hr, \$2	Casa de la Cultura complex
Parque La Carolina / Botanical Gardens	2 hr, \$10 gardens	Best on a sunny weekday
Calle de la Ronda	1 hr, free	Late afternoon for open shops

Attraction	Time & Cost	Pro Tip
Itchimbia Park	1–2 hr, free	Sunset spot after the cultural center closes

Day Trips

- **Cotopaxi National Park** — volcano trekking, 1.5–2 hr drive; budget tours ~\$60–90.
- **Otavalo Market** — Saturday indigenous market, 2 hr north; bus from Terminal Carcelén.
- **Papallacta Hot Springs** — Andean thermal baths, ~1.5 hr east; public bus or tour.
- **Quilotoa Lagoon** — crater lake, long day trip or overnight; tours ~\$70–100.

Safety & Etiquette

- **Altitude:** Take it slow the first 2–3 days; drink coca tea, avoid heavy meals and alcohol initially.
- **Taxis:** Only official yellow cabs; ask your hotel to call one at night. Use Uber for tracking.
- **Pickpockets:** Busy buses and markets are the main risk. Keep phones out of sight on BRT.
- **Dress:** Ecuadorians dress conservatively; shorts are uncommon in Quito. Layers are essential.
- **Scams:** Fake “broken” taxi meters, overpriced airport rides, and equator-line pseudoscience — enjoy Mitad del Mundo as kitsch, not science.

Budget Snapshot

All figures are in USD for a total 90-day stay.

Item	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Room	\$900	\$1,800	\$3,500
Food	\$600	\$1,100	\$2,000
Transport	\$150	\$300	\$600
Coworking	\$200	\$450	\$800
Insurance	\$150	\$250	\$400
Visa	\$0	\$0	\$0
Entertainment	\$200	\$400	\$800
Buffer	\$200	\$200	\$400
TOTAL	\$2,400	\$4,500	\$8,000

Budget Breakdown and Practical Implementation

The figures above represent a 90-day window, which is the standard tourist entry period for many nationalities in Ecuador. Because the economy is dollarized, you will not have to deal with currency exchange fluctuations, making your budgeting significantly more predictable than in neighboring Andean cities.

Accommodation: From Hostels to Luxury The “Lean Nomad” budget assumes a mix of shared dorms or very basic private rooms in budget-friendly hubs. In the La Mariscal neighborhood, which is a central point for nomads and expats, you can find affordable stays at Hostal La Casona de Mario or Hotel Sierra Madre. Other highly rated budget options include El Patio Hostel Quito, Community Hostel, and Hostal Quito Terrace. For those who prefer a social atmosphere with a dedicated nomad vibe, Viajero Quito, The Secret Garden Quito, and Play House Quito are excellent starting points.

The “Comfortable Nomad” budget allows for boutique experiences or private apartments. Casa Joaquín Boutique Hotel in the artistic La Floresta neighborhood offers a more curated, mid-range experience. Other reliable mid-tier options include Heritage Inn Hotel, Posada del Maple, and La Casa de Tulia. These locations typically offer better security, faster Wi-Fi, and more privacy.

The “Premium Nomad” budget is designed for those who require high-end amenities and business-class service. The JW Marriott Quito on Av. Orellana is the gold standard for luxury, providing expansive rooms and professional concierge services. Other high-end options like Vibes Aurik or Bunker Hause cater to those who want a modern, upscale aesthetic in the city’s safer northern districts.

Food and Dining A lean budget relies heavily on “almuerzos” (set lunch menus) found in small eateries throughout the Old City and La Mariscal, where a hearty meal can cost between \$3 and \$5. The comfortable budget incorporates more frequent dining at established cafes and a mix of grocery shopping at local markets. The premium budget allows for fine dining in the northern districts and frequent visits to high-end bistros.

For those who work from cafes, Quito has a thriving coffee culture. You can find productive environments at Il Barista, Coffee Factory, Coffee Romance, and Café Anaconda. For a more atmospheric experience, ATÁVICO CAFÉ – UN LUGAR CON ALMA provides a soulful setting for light work.

Transport and Connectivity Transport costs vary based on your reliance on ride-sharing apps versus walking. The lean budget assumes primarily walking and the use of public buses. The comfortable budget includes frequent use of apps like Uber or Cabify to navigate between the Old City and the northern districts. The premium budget accounts for private drivers or frequent high-end taxi services to ensure maximum safety and speed.

Coworking and Productivity Quito offers a variety of professional spaces depending on your needs. Lean nomads may rely on “laptop-friendly” cafes or the occasional day pass. For a more structured environment, COWORK Centro in La Floresta is a favorite for those seeking a creative community. Workings Ecuador on Av. Eloy Alfaro provides a more corporate environment with private offices and hot desks. Kokopelli Coworking in La Mariscal is well-known for its nomad-centric community, while Impulsa Coworking offers professional infrastructure for those scaling a business.

Health and Wellness While the budget table includes a general insurance estimate, it is important to know where to go in case of an emergency. For those with private insurance, Hospital Metropolitano on Av. Mariana de Jesús is a modern, private facility. The Clínica de la Universidad Católica del Ecuador on Av. 12 de Octubre is also highly regarded and often has English-speaking staff. For public specialty care, Hospital de Especialidades Eugenio Espejo and Hospital de Especialidades Carlos Andrade Marín are the primary complexes, though wait times can be longer.

Dental care is a common “add-on” for long-stay nomads. For general cleaning or restorative work, Clínica Dental Metropolitana on Av. 6 de Diciembre is a reliable choice. Those seeking cosmetic work or implants may look into Dental Ecuador in La Carolina or Smile Center Quito on República del Salvador.

Entertainment and Exploration The lean budget focuses on the free and low-cost attractions of the Old City, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Walking through the 17 plazas, including the Independence Plaza (Plaza Grande), and visiting the various colonial churches and monasteries is largely free or very inexpensive.

The comfortable and premium budgets allow for guided tours of the Andes, visits to the Middle of the World (Mitad del Mundo), and weekend trips to nearby highlands. The premium budget also accounts for higher-end nightlife and dining experiences in the city’s most exclusive sectors.

Final Notes on Altitude and Adaptation Regardless of your budget, remember that Quito sits at 2,850 meters (9,350 feet). Most nomads will experience some degree of altitude sickness during the first few days. It is recommended to budget for hydration and perhaps some local coca tea to help with acclimatization. Verify all current pricing and visa requirements locally upon arrival, as municipal taxes or entry regulations can change.

Daily averages: **Lean ~\$27, Comfortable ~\$50, Premium ~\$89 (USD).**

Quick Links

- Quito Metro
- Mariscal Sucre Airport

- Ecuador Tourism
- Quito Visitors' Bureau
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs — visa info