

Ecuador Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- People shake hands when meeting for the first time.
- Men may embrace each other if they are good friends.
- Ecuadorians kiss once when they meet friends.

Body Language

- There is a good deal of touching among friends and family.
- Yawning in public is rude.
- Fidgeting with hands and feet is distracting and considered impolite.
- Holding out a hand, as though to shake hands, and twisting it back and forth means “no.”
- It is impolite to point at someone. Ecuadorians may point by puckering or pursing their lips.

Corporate Culture

- Ecuadorians are generally not punctual. Arriving 15 to 20 minutes late is considered “on time.” However, all foreigners should be punctual for business meetings.
- Many executives don't arrive at the office until after 10:00 a.m. Many businesspeople start the day by playing tennis or golf at their club, then taking a Turkish bath and having breakfast before going into their office. A great deal of business gets done this way.
- The “old boy” network is very important.
- Meetings start with small talk before business discussions begin.
- Ecuadorians negotiate with people, not companies. Never change your negotiating team. Be prepared to make several trips to conduct a business transaction.
- Negotiations can be lengthy. Be patient and expect delays.
- Private business people may speak English, but few government officials will. You will need to hire an interpreter.
- Hire a local contact--a business consultant or lawyer--when doing business in Ecuador.

Dining and Entertainment

- Guests are not expected to arrive on time for a social event. Arrive half an hour to an hour late for a party.
- Drinks and appetizers may start at 8:00 p.m. Dinner may not be served until 11:00 p.m. or midnight. Be prepared to make a night of it. A party may not end until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. Sometimes breakfast is served before the last guests leave.
- There is no such thing as a party without dancing. Ecuadorians learn to dance at the same time they learn to walk.
- Being invited to someone's home for a visit is a sign of friendship and should be viewed as a great honor.
- Ecuadorians enjoy meal times, and conversation is lively. Dinners are considered social events, and business should not be discussed. Stay for conversation after the meal is finished. It is considered impolite to leave right away.
- When guests are invited to a restaurant, the host pays for the meal.

Dress

- Styles are European and conservative.
- Men should wear suits and ties for formal meetings. Light shirts may be worn to casual business or business/social meetings.
- Women should wear suits for a first meeting. After that, comfortable dresses.

Gifts

- Name brands are appreciated.
- Be very demonstrative in your gratitude when you are given a gift.
- After dinner, hosts may give the guests a small gift.
- If invited to a home for a meal, send or bring flowers. Do not give lilies or marigolds, which are considered funeral flowers. Give: pastries, chocolates, wine, liquors or items for the home.
- A gift for the children is appreciated. American candy bars are popular, i.e. Milky Ways, Snickers, etc.
- Business gifts are exchanged after negotiations are over. Give: desk accessories or pictures and books, especially those related to your region or country.

Especially for Women

- Foreign women should have no problems doing business in Ecuador.
- Men will expect to pay the bill at a restaurant. It is polite for a woman to offer, but she will be refused. Arrange to pay ahead of time if it is important for you to pay.
- Ecuadorians are not accustomed to seeing women drink whiskey or hard liquor. Women drink wine.

Resource: http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_ec.htm