

**“We never intended to serve in Ecuador alone.”** When God called Ron and Sharon Stiff and gave them the vision over twenty years ago to rescue orphaned and abandoned children, and brought them to Ecuador in 1998, He gave them the assurance that others would come alongside them to serve.



and workers who diligently, both for spiritually. May

ored to welcome you, as you have chosen to invest your time, ts and resources to further God’s work here among the poor and h America. We pray that this trip will be used by God to broaden n the importance of missions in our world today. Many Christians eir more comfortable, familiar lives in order to follow Him and obey e going to have a great time, but you shouldn’t be thinking of the acation. You will be literally “joining” the daily lives of the families live and work on our campus. We are preparing for you your physical needs and comfort, as well as praying for you our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in all that we will do.

### Why come to Ecuador?

- Only if God is calling
- If He has asked you to offer service in a specific way
- To share spiritual gifts and your lives with others with a servant’s heart

### A successful team

Leadership is crucial – person(s) respected by everyone on the team who is organized and committed to Jesus with their lives

Team members - anyone whose heart is primed to serve and share their lives with others

### Preparation

#### Spiritually

We recommend that you spend considerable amounts of time alone with God during your preparation in order to seek His heart and hear His voice. Your coming is not an accident! Take the time NOW in order not to miss His best for your time here.

Prayer partners – enlist two or three dedicated prayer warriors to lift you up during your preparation, during your visit here, and during your “decompression” phase after returning home. Sometimes God chooses to speak to our hearts most clearly after the trip is over and we have re-entered daily life as we know it.

Recommended reading – in addition to daily time in the Word, we recommend that you read:

Through Gates of Splendor (Elisabeth Eliot)

Don’t Waste Your Life (John Piper)

Other missionary books about Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, George Mueller and others will also bless your heart in preparation for coming.

Church and pastoral support – if you have not already done so, please inform your pastor, youth group leader or Bible study teacher that you are involved in this missions experience. They will want to pray for you and talk with you upon your return home for “de-briefing” about what God is doing in your life.

To serve



If you have not already done so, you may want to view each page of our website (<http://itsaboutkids.org/>) in order to learn about our ministry. This site includes information on the various aspects of our work, including our vision and goals. You'll also see photos of the kids!

### Cultural awareness

If you have not traveled outside the United States before, it will be helpful for you to remember that you are leaving the culture that has shaped your entire life until now, even in areas in which you may not consciously realize. While with us in Ecuador, take the time to appreciate life here, even if it makes you uncomfortable. God, in His sovereignty, will enlarge your heart (while protecting it) and will enable you to be courteous and appreciative of others. We pray that you willingly and humbly *"esteem others as better than yourselves"* (Phil. 2:3) as you join us briefly in Latin America.

Ron and Sharon have worked diligently for years to crack open the closed doors of suspicion, mistrust, prejudice and anti-evangelical sentiment in our neighborhood. You will have a profound impact on the overall view of American Christians in our neighborhood, our cities, and among our families



while you are here. Therefore, we ask that you uphold the highest standards of Christian conduct. Children, especially, process what they SEE much more than what they hear. Our behavior, our dress, our reading materials, music and our conversations speak volumes to them about Christ and our commitment to Him. I Corinthians 9:19 says it this way: *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."*



### **Airlines**

Continental, American and Delta are the major North American carriers who fly directly into Quito, changing in either Houston or Miami. TACA(.com) and Lacs(.com) are Latin American carriers who fly through Costa Rica or another city south of the US.

You are advised to be in your departure airport no less than 3 hours before your departure time. Occasionally checking large luggage and/or bins requires extra time getting through security. If your connection time is short, please advise airline personnel that you are traveling as a large group so that they may assist you.



When you arrive in Quito, everyone will need to be in possession of their passport plus the completed immigration form (that you will receive on the airplane and discussed below) in order to go through immigration. After the form is stamped, you will get a copy, which should be kept with your original passport as it will be required when you leave.

NOTE: Although the Quito airport doesn't usually get "fogged in" during the summer months, this can occur at any time. If this happens, you will most likely be re-routed to Guayaquil, a city near the coast, until the fog lifts in Quito. If you are re-routed for any reason, please ask an airline

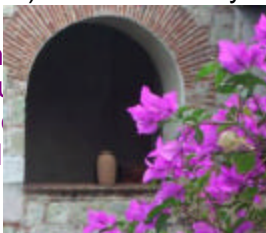
representative for "un telefono" to call Ron Stiff as soon as you are informed of the change in plans. From the US, dial 1-760-553-2728 (rings at Ron's and Sharon's home) or 011-593-95-022036 (Ron's cell). From anywhere in Ecuador on a pay phone dial 022864-764 or 095-022036.

### Luggage/Bins

- Bring no nail files, clippers or any kind of tool in your carry-on luggage. It is advisable to bring clothing and necessities for three days in your carry-on bag. Money (small bills) should be carried securely on your person. Most stores have travel accessories in their luggage department that will help you secure and carry your passport and money. (A passport is worth \$10,000 on the black market here. Guard yours carefully!)

- You have the opportunity to bring items that are much-needed here in Ecuador – things which we simply cannot find here. Your willingness to help us by transporting these items in plastic bins is greatly appreciated and helps us in more ways than we can say. VBS and/or sports clinic items (or any other non-clothing items) are most easily transported in these bins as well.

**Note:** to bring all supplies and materials for VBS, equipment, etc. Bring more than one completed craft so that you have the time required to do each one, to have an example to show and to ensure that you have all the materials you will need.



- Baggage rules have changed in the last year. Currently you are allowed one carry-on bag, one personal bag (purse, brief case, small etc.), and two check-on pieces. The bags that are checked onto the plane must weigh no more than 50 lbs. each. Over that weight – up to 70 lbs. – an additional \$25 will be charged. **Note:** The airline agents are strict about going over the limits, so make sure your scale is accurate. If you are bringing something that we have asked for and the weight exceeds the limit, please pay the extra charge and we will reimburse you when you return.



- One way to get more out of your 50 lbs. is to pack items into lightweight bags. An effective means of doing this is to use plastic bins. Rubbermaid is the strongest and can take the rough treatment during the trip. These are inexpensive and can usually be found at Target, Home Depot and Lowe's. **Important: During the summer months, some airlines put an embargo on the use of boxes and crates. You need to check with your airline on this question if you plan to bring things in something other than conventional luggage.**

- After each bin is packed and weighed, drill about 10-12 holes around the top of the bin through the lid. You'll want to fasten the lid on through each of these holes with plastic "cable" ties (see photo at right). Tape additional ties to the lid of your bin to be used by security to re-secure your bin if they choose to open it during the check-in process.



- On the lid of the bin and on one side of each bin, include the following information with a "Sharpie" or other permanent marker:  
 Ron Stiff and/or (your name)  
 Casilla 17-17-1722 CCI  
 Quito, Ecuador  
 Phone: 011-593-22-864764 + number your bins (#1 of 10, etc.)

Each passenger can bring \$1200 worth of items into the country without paying any kind of "duty." It would be wise to write on the bins or in some other way identify baggage content, i.e. "balls and sports equipment, VBS craft supplies, clothing", etc. You don't need a detailed list. We will provide you with a letter to show the customs officials when you reach that section of the airport.

### Travel tips

As soon as you get through immigration in the Quito airport, you should secure a luggage cart (for \$1 each) to help transport your luggage outside. You may need one cart for each team member, especially if you are bringing bins. You are required to show your luggage claim tickets for each piece of checked luggage. These are collected as you leave the terminal. It would be good to match the claim slip with the corresponding bag. In other words, the one with the cart that has luggage should have the claim slips for those pieces to give to the agent when asked. This should be organized before



you head for the customs area.

### Customs / Immigration

You will be required to fill out an in-flight immigration form (on your flight into Quito) about your visit to Ecuador. The address and phone number of the ministry will be required:

It's About Kids / Ron Stiff  
Casilla 17-17-17 22 CCI  
Quito, Ecuador  
Phone: 011-593-22-864764

You will note on the form that you are here as a "visitor."



### Passports

<http://passportsusa.com> is a must-visit site, or you may make application for a passport at most US Postal Centers. If you do not have a passport, you will want to apply as far in advance of your travel as possible (usually at least 3 months – but don't worry if you have less than that amount of time. There is an express process that costs a little more but will get you the document in a very short amount of time). You will need an official document of your birth certificate (with seal) and a passport photo. If you already have a passport, please check the expiration date, as you must have 6 months remaining on your passport in order to enter the country. Since you are visiting short-term, a visa will not be required.



NOTE: It is a good idea to bring two copies of your passport with you, keeping them separate from your passport. You may occasionally be required to show a copy, and you'll not risk losing your original. Also, a designated team member should keep all original passports on his/her person until such time that they are required to be shown at the airport, recollecting them for safe-keeping. As mentioned earlier, a passport is worth \$10,000 on the black market, so protect yours carefully!

### Miscellaneous money requirements

- Airport exit fee - \$25 per person
- Shopping (many items can be purchased here for less than \$5, except for the things imported from the US, which are much more expensive). For example, a dozen roses cost \$1. A bus ride into Quito costs 30-40 cents. Cute Ecuadorian blouses are under \$10. But shoes at Payless cost quite a bit more than in North America.
- Tips – Ron and/or IAK staff will pay the bus drivers and other personnel a tip for the group. So, unless you are doing an activity independent of the group, don't worry about tipping. If you are involved in an independent activity, there will surely be someone with you who can advise you about what would be appropriate.

### Immunizations

<http://webmd.com/> and other websites (which you'll find by searching for "travel immunizations" or "travel medicine") will assist in your decisions regarding vaccinations. You are not required to have any immunizations to enter Ecuador. The areas where we will be are not considered endemic for diseases such as yellow fever and malaria. However from time to time we do hear of symptoms that sound like malaria and therefore we would have prophylactic medication available for team members who would wish to have it. Team members under the age of 18 would need parental permission before we would make the medication available to them.



### Currency

American currency is used here, so you will find that it is easy to make purchases. Bring smaller bills, \$20 or less, for ease of use. Automatic Teller Machines are available, but it is best to bring your spending money with you.

### What to expect here

- Orphaned & abandoned kids living together as a family and attending school in a “campus” setting
- “Country” living (no-see-ums, roosters, cows and pigs)
- Gorgeous scenery (bring your camera)
- High elevation of over 9000 feet, so be prepared for possible headaches and/or nausea until you get used to it
- The neighborhood surrounding our site is rather poor, but the people are quite friendly. When someone speaks to you, be prepared to say “Buenos dias” (good morning), “Buenas tardes” (good afternoon), or “Buenas noches” (good evening).
- Drink bottled water only
- You should not eat food prepared on the streets
- Delicious meals are prepared by staff members and occasionally by the visiting team while you are at Montebello. In the jungle, meals will be provided by cooks at the lodge.

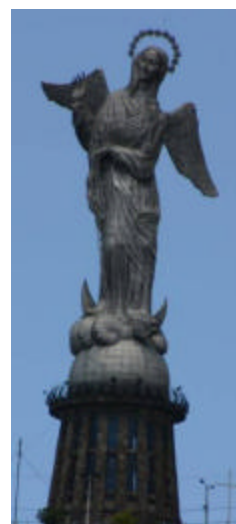


- Accommodations in the guest house, casita and/or “little house” with bunk beds and a shared bath with others of your gender
- Weather can change at a moment’s notice – In Quito, highs are usually in the low 80’s with lows in the 50’s, with variances depending on the time of year (There is no heat or air conditioning here. While the orphanage is on the equator, we are at an altitude of over 8,000 ft. Evenings are cool, so bring a light jacket.)
- Chores (i.e., helping in the kitchen, clean-up, etc.) will be according to how your leaders assign them.
- Construction crews begin arriving around 6:30 am to work on the new school and casita. Others are here during the day as well (arriving at 7 am) to help with various maintenance and housekeeping duties.

### Quito

- <http://ecuadorexplorer.com>
- <http://thebestofecuador.com/>
- <http://lonelyplanet.com>

Each of these websites gives much information about Quito (a bustling city of over 2 million people located high in the Andes mountains), the city which you will fly in and out of. We live about 40 minutes drive from the airport. Please take a moment to check out the medical facilities that are located in Quito to add to your peace of mind about coming here. The airport is fairly modern, but remember to stay together as a group, as you will be collecting your baggage and having them screened before exiting the airport. Large groups may want to get help with a baggage handler (don’t forget to tip them about \$1 per piece of large luggage). They will help you out of the airport and to the car.



Don’t be surprised if you (or the driver or front-seat passenger of your vehicle) is approached by someone selling just-about-anything at intersections, stop signs (or even speed bumps). Ecuadorians will sell goods in the most creative places. If you are not interested, just say, “No, gracias.” Most of the “sellers” are polite and will leave you alone if you say, “no.” Also don’t be surprised to see very young children and/or the very old and physically handicapped begging for money or selling items at any time of the day or night.



### Jungle

If your itinerary includes a trip to the jungle, you will be traveling by bus approximately 5 ½ hours to Misahualli, a small town in the Amazon region on the Napo river. You will be staying at El Jardin Aleman jungle lodge (<http://eljardinal Aleman.com>), deep in the jungle foliage (where they cut the grass with a machete). The food is excellent at this lodge, but you may choose to bring some snacks for in-between meal times. A jungle checklist is attached, which will list the items that will make your trip to the jungle more enjoyable. You are not required to bring every item (rubber boots are usually available at the lodge for smaller groups), so use your discretion about the things you will need.

### Where we live in relationship to the Quito and the jungle

We live on a beautiful mountain surrounded by more beautiful mountains, (hence the name “Montebello”) in a valley east of Quito. The terrain is very gorgeous and green year-round. The jungle area is almost due-east of us, about 2 hours as the crow flies...but quite a bit longer in a car due to the road conditions and the mountainous terrain. Bring your camera, as you will enjoy breathtaking scenery (ravines, rivers and waterfalls) along the route.

### Dress code

- Dress to honor God and others. Shorts are fine, but modesty is always the aim. Short shorts are culturally out of place. In Quito, shorts work during the day but at Montebello you'll want to keep repellent on your legs to keep away the hungry “no-see-ums”. Casual clothing is fine for the church services you will attend with us here. Women do not have to wear dresses.

- Outward appearance is extremely important in Latin America. You will notice that most of the workers on our property take the time to clean up and “dress” before going home in the evenings. Employees in stores and public offices wear uniforms, as do most children in public and private schools. Whether rich or poor, the manner of dress implies a certain respect (or disrespect) for others. Take the time to make sure that your clothing is neat, clean, and contains no logos or slogans which could be misinterpreted by anyone. The people here are very intrigued by North Americans, and we surely stand out in a crowd, so consider the message you are sending by your attire.



- A heart in tune with
- Bible + journal
- Camera
- Flexibility
- Medical insurance
- List of allergies
- Prescription
- Snacks (if you want to
- Umbrella, raincoat or
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (at least
- Clothing for number of days here (plus a couple of extra changes)
- Comfortable shoes (as you will be walking up and down rocky roads) + a pair of sandals for the jungle
- Hat (the sun is very intense at our elevation)
- Earplugs for light sleepers
- Appropriate laxative for those sensitive to travel
- Motion sickness medicine (if needed)



God and His purposes for your time here

information

medications (in your carry-on)  
eat between meals)

poncho

30% Deet recommended)

- Comfortable clothing for the activities in which you'll be involved. If your itinerary includes a stop at Papallacta (the hot springs), please bring a modest 1-piece swimsuit. Shorts and some sort of top is not allowed by the rules there. Men must have traditional bathing suits – cut-offs or other shorts are not allowed. The hot springs are located in the mountains, so bring a coat or warm cover-up to wear before and after your “dip” in the springs.

NOTE: If for some reason (and it has happened) your luggage is delayed, we recommend that you pack three days' clothing plus any other necessities (medications, etc.) in your carry-on. If your luggage is delayed, notify an agent in the baggage terminal. You'll need to file a claim, and usually the item shows up in a day or two.

### Laundry facilities

- We have services at Montebello, however we do ask that you bring what you need for your time here. If there is an emergency need, we will certainly be able to help.

### Musical instruments available

- Keyboard with amplifiers
- Drum set
- Guitar (Note: if you have your own guitar and want to bring it, please do!)

### One-year volunteer opportunities

Volunteer opportunities are available for commitments of one year or longer. If you believe that God may be calling you to serve here, we encourage you to talk with Ron or Sharon while you are here.

### Staff e-mail addresses and phone numbers

Ron Stiff (ministry founder): [kids@ecnet.ec](mailto:kids@ecnet.ec)

Sharon Stiff (ministry co-founder): [kids@uio.satnet.net](mailto:kids@uio.satnet.net)

Chris Nevins (construction, team planning): [chris@nevinsnews.com](mailto:chris@nevinsnews.com)

Janet Nevins (communications): [janet@itsaboutkids.org](mailto:janet@itsaboutkids.org)



**(760) 553-2728** (CA area code that rings here, if calling from the US)

Please give this number to an immediate family member in case there is an emergency while you are here and you need to be contacted. The Ecuador number to the Stiff home is 011-593-22-864764.

For state-side assistance, you are welcome to contact our ministry partner, Teri Nevins. She can be reached at [teri@itsaboutkids.org](mailto:teri@itsaboutkids.org) or by calling 760-641-6017.



### You may be photographed

In order to share our visit together with your families, your churches, and our many state-side supporters and ministry partners, it is highly likely that you and your team will be photographed. You are welcome to submit (or you may be asked to write) a testimonial about your experiences here which will be used in an edition of our It's About Kids newsletter. These testimonies and photos impact our ministry-team-at-large in many ways and we look forward to your participation. You'll also be asked to leave with us your email address and mailing address so that we may stay in touch with you after your departure.

### We are so honored that you have chosen to invest yourselves and your resources in It's About Kids!

With the number of teams requesting time here in the summer, we ask that you pray sincerely about whether you'll be returning and commit to some dates with Ron as soon as possible. Spring break and/or Christmas break may also be a good time for a team to come. Unfortunately, every team which requests a visit cannot be hosted every summer. And not every team is invited back, depending on our shared experiences. We are praying that God will show all of us clearly His will and provide for His purposes to be accomplished through our visiting teams.

Although we have tried to think of the most important things, this document is a work-in-progress and is not intended to cover everything you will need to know regarding your travel. We are praying for the safety and well-being of your group, and ask that you also pray for the covering of the Holy Spirit during your time here. If you have questions about any part of this document, or anything we have not covered, please call or e-mail us. We are here to serve you.

