

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT TRIP

RIOBAMBA ITINERARY





Dear MEDLIFERs,

Thank you for joining the MEDLIFE Movement via a Service Learning Trip with us! Here at MEDLIFE, our mission is to build a worldwide Movement empowering low-income individuals in their fight for equal access to healthcare, education, and a safe home. As an SLT participant in Riobamba, Ecuador, you are joining that worldwide Movement! The following is a sample travel plan for you to review. Please go over it before your trip and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Thank you for joining the Movement, and we can't wait to see you in Riobamba!

Overview:

This Community Empowerment Trip takes place in Riobamba, a small city in the Andes mountains of Ecuador, where it all started. This is the original MEDLIFE home, where Dr. Ellis first was inspired to start the Movement. Though the area is rich in natural beauty, it is one of the poorest provinces in Ecuador and it lacks many basic services. The city of Riobamba is surrounded by many smaller Indigenous villages where realities of everyday life can include malnutrition, lack of healthcare, and no sanitation infrastructure. These challenges can be attributed to a variety of factors, but as the agricultural goods upon which the economy relies continue to decline in value, residents fall deeper into poverty. The arrival of COVID-19 further exacerbated their difficult financial situation, leaving many families with no way to keep food on the table. To make matters worse, recent [volcanic eruptions](#) resulted in severe damage to the crops that communities depended on. During your trip, you will explore Riobamba alongside MEDLIFE staff, visit our partner communities, and learn about our Patient Follow-Up Program. We will also have a chance to explore different areas of the province of Chimborazo and see first-hand the inequalities throughout the province. This experience will help you gain a global perspective and learn how you can make a positive impact both at home and abroad.

Highlights of the Week:

- City tour of the capital of Ecuador, Quito
- Reality Tour in MEDLIFE's partner communities
- 1 day volunteering on a Development Project
- 2 days volunteering on a Mobile Clinic
- Talks and educational discussions with MEDLIFE HQ team
- Visit to Baños

Key Pillars

- **Service:** By volunteering on a Mobile Clinic and Development Project, you'll directly help bring accessible medical care, health education, and a safer home to the marginalized communities you visit.
- **Environment:** Service Learning Trips are created with sustainability in mind. In Riobamba, you may have the opportunity to volunteer on an environmentally friendly project such as a [public park](#) or [eco-bathroom](#).
- **Education:** Learn about the historical, political, and economic factors that have shaped Ecuador. Deepen your knowledge of global health by shadowing healthcare professionals.
- **Life-changing experiences:** Through eye-opening experiences and building human connections, a MEDLIFE Community Empowerment Trip will deepen your passion for building a world free from the constraints of poverty.

Detailed Itinerary

DAY

Saturday

1

Arrival at Airport

Arrive at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) in the evening. A MEDLIFE representative will be waiting for you in the International Arrivals area with a MEDLIFE sign. They will help you check-in and answer any questions you may have about your upcoming week.



Overnight
Quito MEDLIFE Hostel



DAY

Sunday

2

Equatorial Line & City tour

Today we will start with a Welcome Meeting to see the week at a glance and reminders to be most prepared for the activities and days ahead!

The day begins with a visit to the Basílica del Voto Nacional, one of Quito's most iconic landmarks. This neo-Gothic church, the largest of its kind in the Americas, is famous for its gargoyles carved in the shapes of native Ecuadorian animals — including tortoises, iguanas, and condors — in place of the traditional European gargoyle designs.

From there, we will enjoy a chocolate experience, which starts with a guided tour of a chocolate workshop explaining the history of cocoa in Ecuador, followed by a chocolate tasting.

Next, we will head to the city's impressive colonial center for a walking tour, the reason Quito was the first city to be named a world heritage site by the United Nations. First on the agenda is a walk through the main plaza, the "Plaza de la Independencia", where you will see the Government Palace, the Cathedral, and some of the most important churches built around the XVI and XVII centuries, including the San Francisco Monastery, a building



begun only 5 days after the founding of the city.

After the walking tour, we will head out to the "Mitad del Mundo"; a site located 45 minutes north of Quito, where a monument marks the equator at its closest point to the city. Archaeological evidence shows that both pre-Inca and Inca civilizations recognized and celebrated the equinox, the day the sun is directly over the equator.

Upon arrival, we will visit the "Ciudad Mitad del Mundo", a group of buildings designed to explain the significance of the site, as well as the Ethnographic or Intiñan Museum, located right on the Equator. Here you will have the chance to plant your feet in two hemispheres at the same time. Lunch is included.

We will then make our way back to Quito, arriving at the hotel with time to rest and get ready for the week.

Dinner is not included today, however your Trip Leaders and chaperones will decide together on a restaurant experience nearby!



Overnight
Quito MEDLIFE Hostel

DAY

3

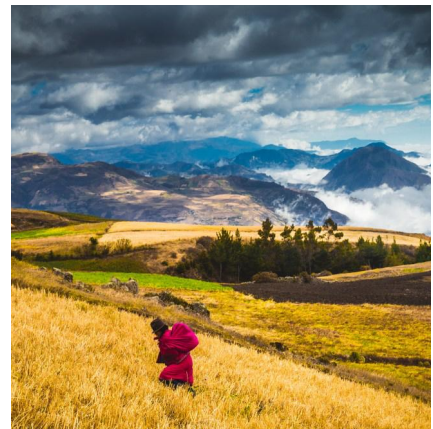
Monday

Quilotoa - crater experience & Transfer to Riobamba

Get up close with a volcano!

After breakfast in the hostel, we'll board the bus for Riobamba. You can relax and enjoy the views of impressive mountain landscapes and quaint rural villages along the 4-hour journey.

Today you will visit a remote mountain region in the Western half of the Ecuadorian highlands, where indigenous communities raise crops at altitudes of



over 13,120 feet (3,999 meters) and the famous Tigua paintings were born.

Witness the incredible turquoise waters of Quilotoa Crater Lake inside an extinct volcano. You can take a short 1.7km hike around the crater's rim or simply relax and admire the beautiful highland landscape from the rim viewpoint. Lunch is included.

Afterwards, stop to visit the art galleries in the community of Tigua. Take your time viewing the vibrant paintings that tell of life in the high Andes: the volcanoes, the condors, and the indigenous communities with their legends.

After arriving, we'll have lunch and some time for an orientation walk to explore Riobamba's main square, prior to returning to the hotel for dinner (included).



Overnight
Riobamba MEDLIFE Hostel

DAY

4

Tuesday

Reality Tour + Educational Round Table Discussion

Today we gain a better understanding of the geographical, political, and social realities of the region. Your first stop is at the Iglesia de Balbanera, the oldest church in Ecuador, where you will continue to learn about Spanish colonization and the influence of Catholicism in Andean Ecuador. Here you can purchase local artisan goods from local vendors. We will visit a Medical Center in Llinllin de Columbe to talk about the conditions of public health in the area. After this visit we'll head to the San Martin community to share some rural activities with the local comuneros and get acquainted with the indigenous culture as well as understanding historical events like the Reforma Agraria from the people who have experienced it firsthand.



While in the communities, we will hold our first Engaged Education Roundtable Discussion to talk about the harsh realities of living in these settlements, returning to the hotel for dinner (included). Stay tuned for a fun activity on this night, planned by our Ecuador team!



Overnight
Riobamba MEDLIFE Hostel

DAY

5

Wednesday

Mobile Clinic Volunteering

Wake up bright and early for your first day of volunteering at a Mobile Clinic! Staffed by local practitioners, our clinics offer basic medical treatment and preventative screenings to low-income patients. A packed lunch is included today.

After returning to the hotel in the afternoon, we will hold our second Engaged Education Roundtable Discussion, focusing on the relationship between poverty and healthcare. Following dinner at the hotel (included) and two busy days in the field, you will have the chance to relax and enjoy a documentary movie night later today.



Overnight
Riobamba MEDLIFE Hostel

DAY

6

Thursday

Mobile Clinic Volunteering

Help MEDLIFE bring free healthcare to low-income communities with another day of volunteering on a Mobile Clinic. Upon arrival, we will work together to set up each station. Volunteers will spend the morning shadowing medical professionals as they provide treatment and identify patients in need of follow-up care. A packed lunch is included today.

Upon arrival at the hotel, dinner is included, followed by your orientation for this Saturday's epic trip to Baños!



Overnight
Riobamba MEDLIFE Hostel



DAY

7

Friday

Project Day

Lack of infrastructure and basic resources is a reality for the communities MEDLIFE partners with. Many live without electricity, water, bathrooms, nearby schools, and more. Today, you will help improve the quality of life for many children by working hand-in-hand with locals to build a sanitary bathroom facility or safe home project.

Before saying goodbye to the community, we will all come together to inaugurate a very special MEDLIFE project. A packed lunch is included today.

Upon arrival at the hotel, we'll take time to reflect on the week behind us and how to be advocates for change returning to our own communities. Dinner is included. Take time to pack up as we will leave bright and early for Baños tomorrow, and will not return to the same hotel prior to heading back for our final night in Ecuador in *Quito*.



Overnight
Quito MEDLIFE Hostel



DAY

8

Saturday

Baños & the waterfall route

Early this morning, we will head from Riobamba for a three-hour bus ride to Baños; a small vibrant city at the foot of the Tungurahua Volcano south of Quito. Nestled into the mountains where the Andes meet the Amazon, the area is a remote paradise home to sweeping views, extreme sports, and plenty of local tradition.

Officially named Baños de Agua Santa, meaning baths of sacred water, the area is renowned by locals for its natural hot springs which are said to have healing properties thanks to various minerals, and visits from the Catholic Virgin Mary. This morning, you will board a Chiva, which is a colorful, open-air tourist bus that will take you on the Route of the Waterfalls, La Ruta de las Cascadas. The road connects Baños to the Ecuadorian jungle city of Puyo, and has spectacular views of prominent volcanoes, low valleys, and rushing waterfalls.

Adrenaline-pumping adventures

You'll then continue for a ride on the Swing at the End of the World, Casa del Arbol. Located atop a mountain, the swing offers a wonderful view between peaks and valleys. Adventurers of all ages can feel the wind rush against their face as they soar over the cliff's edge. After that you will have lunch (included) at a nice restaurant.

Upon arrival back at the hotel in Quito, the hotel will have dinner ready for the group (included).



Overnight
Quito MEDLIFE Hostel

DAY

9

Sunday

Back home

After the final breakfast together, the group will have time to pack up before checkout at 11 AM. Luggage will be stored for the group to do one last restaurant lunch together (pre-reserved, though not included). After collecting luggage, it's time to head to the airport and say goodbye!

INCLUDED

- ✓ 8 nights dorm room accommodation
- ✓ Breakfast, lunch, and dinner from Monday to Friday
- ✓ Transportation to and from the airport (within the established schedule), and to SLT activities
- ✓ English-speaking Trip Leader
- ✓ Safety equipment (including face masks)
- ✓ Medical insurance

NOT INCLUDED

- ✓ Flights
- ✓ Volunteer Visa
- ✓ Tips
- ✓ Pre or post-trip accommodation
- ✓ Optional excursions
- ✓ Non specified meals
- ✓ Cancellation insurance

Travel Advisory

All volunteers require a valid passport of at least 6 months from the SLT start date. You can register for the MEDLIFE SLT without a passport, but you must submit the info at least 2 weeks before the trip. You must ensure your passport validity before departure.

Visit your doctor: MEDLIFE does not require any vaccinations. However, you should follow all CDC requirements and any advice from your medical professional.

If you're not a U.S. or Canadian citizen, you may need a visa to enter certain countries. It is your responsibility to determine if you need a visa and make appropriate arrangements.