



**Local Education Authority Document  
Ecuador & Galapagos 2022**

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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to delineate some of the key procedures in place for Operation Wallacea trips to Ecuador. When creating the document, reference has been made to the National Guidance produced by the OEAP (Outdoor Education Advisory Panel – see <http://oeapng.info>) in the United Kingdom in addition to guidelines from the Expedition Provider's Association and BS8848 (the British Standard for organising and managing visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the UK). Additional guidance has been sought from bodies including but not limited to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) DfE (Department for Education), AALA, and numerous Acts of Parliament.

This document may be useful for a number of parties interested in the expeditions, in particular but not limited to: The Educational Visits Coordinator (or equivalent) appointed by the school or college; the senior teacher(s) accompanying the trip (the group leader); parents or guardians of the students on the trip; students or other participants on the trip. Operation Wallacea are members of the Expedition Providers Association (EPA) and hold a Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge (LOtC).

## 2. Objectives and structure of the expedition

### Objectives

The Operation Wallacea expeditions in Ecuador have two key objectives:

- 1) To gather data on the distribution and relative abundance of arthropods, amphibians, reptiles and mammals in the Sani reserve to help grow the tourism income received by the Sani community for protecting their forests
- 2) To train students in the survey techniques used for quantifying the diversity of various taxa in rainforests and to have a good understanding of the ecology and main species on the Galapagos Islands in support of conservation efforts in the Jocotoco Reserve and coastline.

### Structure

High school students will spend two (2) weeks in Ecuador. Their first week will be spent in Sani Camp of the Sani Reserve just north of Yasuni National Park in the forest. During their week in the forest the students will participate in a terrestrial ecology course and the surveys outlined above. They will also visit a local Kichwa Community and learn about their traditions.

After the first week, the group will travel by plane to San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos Islands and then spend 3 nights in the Jocotoco Reserve and 3 nights in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. In the Galapagos the students will complete a Galapagos island Ecology course which will involve one day of diving, coastal species surveys with potential for snorkeling, and rewilding work in the Jocotoco Reserve. The following map illustrates the locations of the sites:



Figure 1: Map of Ecuador illustrating site locations

## Start and finish of the expeditions

Groups need to arrange international flights to arrive in Ecuador on the Monday before their first day of activities begins on the Tuesday. Return flights can be arranged from Guayaquil or Quito any time after 1700hrs on the Monday of the final day of activities on the marine site. Operation Wallacea will be responsible for the safety and welfare of the groups from the point at which they are met outside the airport on the day they arrive, until they are dropped off at the international departure gate at the airport on the day that they leave the country. The only exception to this would be if the group decide to organize their own excursions in Ecuador prior to or after participating in the Operation Wallacea expedition. If this were the case, Operation Wallacea would liaise with the school to agree suitable start and finish times and locations, and would be responsible for the safety and welfare of the group between those designated points.

## Travel arrangements

Operation Wallacea will book international flights for the group from their country of origin through to Ecuador, unless it is specified by the group leader that the group wish to organize their own flights.

Operation Wallacea will then arrange transport to and from the expedition sites at the start and finish of the expedition. Most groups will fly in on a Monday and depart on a Monday and as such their schedule will be as follows:

- **Monday:** land in Ecuador (Mariscal Sucre International Airport), overnight in the hotel in Tababela (Colibrí Airport Hostel or similar) next to the airport
- **Tuesday:** Travel by bus to Napo river (7 hrs approx.) and by long boat to reserve (3 hrs) and by canoe (1 hr) to the camp.
- **Tuesday evening to Monday morning:** participate in forest based courses and surveys.
- **Monday:** travel by longboat back to near El Coca (3 hrs) and coach back to the hotel near the airport in Quito (7 hrs approx.).
- **Tuesday:** Travel by plane to San Cristobal Island (Baquerizo Moreno Airport), then by bus to the Jocotoco Reserve in the highlands of San Cristobal (30 mins)
- **Tuesday - Sunday:** participate in island ecology course and associated practicals
- **Friday:** transfer to the hotel down in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno.
- **Monday morning:** Travel back to Baquerizo Moreno Island airport to fly to Quito or Guayaquil (José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport), to fly back home.

## 3. Booking Process

School and college students have the option to either book as a group, where there is a contract between the school and Operation Wallacea, or as individuals, where the contract is between Operation Wallacea and the participant (and their parent or guardian, if the participant is under the age of 18 at the time of booking the expedition). Once a school group has demonstrated interest in the expeditions, they are given a full presentation about the site where students, parents and teachers have the opportunity to ask any questions they feel are necessary. Following from this the school, or collection of individuals, are given an agreed amount of time to secure their places on the trip with a deposit. Operation Wallacea's terms and conditions are made available prior to booking, and acceptance of those terms and conditions is necessary before the booking can be confirmed.

## 4. Inclusion

In line with the UK Equality Act (2010) Operation Wallacea's policy is to make all reasonable adjustments to enable students of all physical and mental ability levels to participate in the programme. Likewise, participants will not be discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristic (e.g. gender, race or religion). Any specific needs (such as requirements due to religious customs, or those arising from a physical disability) are discussed with the school shortly after the booking has been made. If it is not possible to make suitable adjustments without substantially jeopardising the quality or safety of the programme for the remainder of the participants, then those students unable to participate would be offered a full refund of any monies paid.

## **5. Risk Management**

### **Prior to the expedition**

A thorough assessment of all research sites and activities are completed before the start of each expedition and reviewed throughout via in-house audits. Risk assessment and management instructions are put in place for general activities (such as trekking), for specific activities (such as the marine invertebrate surveys) and specific sites (such as Sani). The risk assessments are published on the Operation Wallacea website and hard copies are available on request, free of charge.

### **During the expedition**

The risk management policies are dynamic and can be amended by the senior Opwall staff on-site should new or unforeseen risks present themselves. All medical incidents and near misses are recorded throughout the season, in addition to the completion of in-house audits. Any major incident (e.g. requiring emergency evacuation or significant deviation from the planned expedition activities) results in an incident report being written by the senior Opwall staff member on-site and statements being taken from parties involved as appropriate. Additionally, the Operation Wallacea Senior Management Team is informed of any major incidents immediately, in case the in-country team should require any further support.

## **6. Training before the Expedition**

Operation Wallacea staff work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils are ready and prepared for the expedition abroad. Various joint meetings take place with the Operation Wallacea schools team and the teachers regarding facilities on site and skills required. A training package is sent to each of the schools including the following:

### **Details of the level of fitness required from the pupils**

The level of fitness required by students is outlined in detail in the training presentation. For those students that have limited outdoors experience professional UK based outdoor adventure companies can be recommended to provide this additional training. Furthermore, bleep tests can be sent to the school to be carried out by teaching staff if this is deemed necessary or helpful

### **Other information**

Operation Wallacea also make available a student handbook (downloaded from the Opwall website) containing full details of the facilities at each site, the learning outcomes for the expedition, and the planned itinerary.

Additionally, participants are given a kit list (which is also available on the Opwall website) and some identification guides for the local fauna and flora. The Operation Wallacea staff are always available to talk to any student, parent, or teacher, who has any questions about any aspects of the expeditions, and the preparation required.

## **7. Roles and competencies of designated leaders**

### **Qualifications, licensing, and technical competency**

Operation Wallacea is not eligible for a license through AALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority) as we do not conduct licensable activities and because we operate outside of the UK. Many of the activities organised by Operation Wallacea are research focused and so no formal qualifications exist. Wherever possible though, the procedures for ensuring technical competency of key staff are in line with AALA recommendations. Where new staff are recruited (i.e. those who have not worked for us before) the selection process includes a review of the CV or resume, a telephone interview, and obtaining at least two positive relevant references from previous employers. The qualifications or experience levels necessary for the various activities are described below, in addition to the roles and responsibilities of the key staff.

### **Role of the teachers**

The teachers accompanying the students are responsible for ensuring the safety of the group during their travel from their country of origin to Ecuador. Flights can be purchased by the teachers or by Operation Wallacea, depending on the school's requirements.

Once the groups are met in Ecuador by Operation Wallacea staff or partners, the teachers will be travelling with the group and are responsible for pastoral care issues, and for helping to organise their group. At the end of the expeditions the teachers and the group are returned to the airport and the teachers are responsible for accompanying the group back to their country of origin. During the expedition the responsibility for the safe provision of activities, and organising the full itinerary, rests with Operation Wallacea rather than the teachers accompanying a group, as the teachers are not expected to have specific technical expertise in activities such as scuba diving. However, the teachers should, prior to the trip, have familiarised themselves with the activities to be carried out. They also should have ensured that the Educational Visits Coordinator (or equivalent in their area) is aware of the trip and has been sent the relevant Operation Wallacea documents (e.g. risk assessments and this document) and that the trip has the approval of the senior management team at the school.

## **Role of the Operation Wallacea staff**

### **Venture Leader**

The Venture Leader is responsible for the overall running of the project. The 2022 venture leader is Sophia Wood. Sophia is based in the Mexico City and has been working on Opwall projects for the past five years, in Fiji and Ecuador. She is completely bi-lingual and has lived abroad across Latin America and Africa for several years.

Sophia will ensure that in each of the locations the correct level of leadership is provided for each of the survey groups and that the various risk amelioration measures are being adhered to, in addition to ensuring that the overall objectives of the project are being met.

Sophia will also ensure that the agreed protocols for the different activities are being adhered to (for example we have a safe trekking procedure) and that volunteers and staff alike are properly briefed with regard to suitable conduct within their role whilst on the expedition.

### **Site manager – Terrestrial sites**

Each site will have its own site manager because the mainland and Galapagos sites are so far apart. The mainland part of the surveys from Quito to the forest sites and back again will be managed by Sophia Wood.

### **Survey leaders – terrestrial surveys**

All surveys will be led by a survey leader at a maximum ratio of 2 staff members to 8 students. The survey leader will have, as a minimum, an undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline and experience in leading young people or students in an outdoor education setting. All survey leaders will receive on-site training in protocols for leading small groups on short treks, such as those likely to be encountered in Ecuador.

### **Site manager – Marine site**

On San Cristobal Island the site manager will be Alexis Harper.

### **In-water activity leaders**

In water scuba activities will be led by a PADI Dive Instructor or PADI Divemaster. Dive training will be conducted in groups no larger than 8 students to 1 Dive Instructor and 1 Dive Master. Qualified divers will be supervised in the water at a ratio no greater than 6 divers to 1 Divemaster. Snorkel activities will also be supervised at a ratio no greater than 8 snorkelers to 1 Divemaster or Rescue Diver.

## **Leadership during vehicle transfers**

### **Bus transfer**

The bus transfers will be organised through Operation Wallacea and will be accompanied by a bi-lingual Opwall staff member to ensure the vehicles are driven in a safe manner. They will ensure that all the vehicles used comply with Ecuadorian regulations and that all their drivers have over 5 years' experience driving in Ecuador.

## **Transfer between forest and marine site**

When moving between the forest site and San Cristobal, the groups will be accompanied by an Operation Wallacea staff member during the bus journey back to Quito, where they will overnight in Colibri Airport Hostel (subject to change) close to the airport. The following morning, the group will be transferred to the airport and pay the Galapagos customs tax (\$20). They will also have a contact number for the Opwall staff member in Quito in case they get into any problems. The groups will board the flight and will be met at the airport in San Cristobal Island by Opwall staff. Once they have disembarked their flight in the Galapagos a bus will transfer the group to the Jocotoco Reserve (30 mins).

## **8. Medical Procedures**

### **Information and records**

All participants will be required to enter their medical details onto the Operation Wallacea data portal. Details of how to log on are sent out upon receiving the booking from the participant. The data is stored securely and is initially only available to certain Operation Wallacea staff members, and, for groups of school students, the teacher leading the group. All medical forms are assessed by Operation Wallacea. The venture leader may seek to contact the participant to gather further information, which they would then enter on to the portal.

All medical problems, illnesses, injuries and near misses are recorded at each of the sites. At the end of the season, these data are collated and a health and safety report is completed and published on the website. This report classifies incidents into 7 categories and allows comparison between the expeditions and other activities. The policy of publication of the accidents and illnesses recorded on the expedition is a unique aspect of the Operation Wallacea expeditions and helps ensure the procedures on site are followed fully.

### **Medical facilities**

A comprehensive medical kit is provided at the Sani site, the content of which is agreed prior to the season in consultation with professional medics. This kit is designed to deal with as many non-emergency medical eventualities as reasonably possible onsite, and also to support emergency incidents and stabilize a casualty for transfer to more extensive medical facilities where needed. The Sani camp will have staff trained in first aid who are competent to use the medical kit provided as well as an experienced expedition medic. All the medics are required to have at least 18 months postgraduate training with some experience in accident and emergency. On San Cristobal the site is so close to a good standard hospital (10 mins) that there is no need for medical staff on site.

## **9. Emergency Procedures**

A document describing the medical and evacuation procedures in full, for Ecuador, is available on the health and safety pages of the Operation Wallacea website.

Carefully planned evacuation protocols are in place for the sites in Ecuador. All staff will have training on the evacuation procedures and protocols.

Because of the high variability of influential factors such as weather conditions and nature of potential injuries, a number of different evacuation scenarios must be prepared for prior to the season. All staff are fully briefed in these scenarios.

Once a major incident or emergency is identified the Site Leader (either the mainland or the Galapagos depending on where the incident happens) will advise Operation Wallacea HQ in the United Kingdom. The Site Leader will take overall control as Incident Coordinator in conjunction with other senior staff if they are in a position to assist. Operation Wallacea's medical and evacuation plans are designed so that, in a serious incident, Operation Wallacea are able to be self-sufficient (and not reliant on a third party such as an insurer or medical assistance company) in terms of getting prompt and effective care to a patient, or moving that patient to care.

## **10. Insurance**

Operation Wallacea will ensure all participants have taken out insurance cover which includes overseas medical and repatriation expenses. Operation Wallacea prepare detailed evacuation plans which can be

quickly passed to insurers so that any Medivac planes and hospitals likely to be used during an evacuation can be contracted in advance and if there is a need for an evacuation then there are no delays.

In addition to this Operation Wallacea have comprehensive combined liability insurance with up to £10,000,000 for public/product liability.

## **11. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

We endeavour to ensure that all school students participating in our activities are safe in accordance with the Protection of Children Act (1989 and 2004). This is done a number of ways as outlined below. It is important to note that it is not possible, practical, and in many cases useful, to obtain government supported vetting checks (such as Disclosure and Barring Service) for all staff that students will come into contact with during their time on the expedition. As such Operation Wallacea adopts the following policies where vetting service checks are included where appropriate amongst other safeguarding methods, but are not the sole precaution taken.

### **Supervision and accompanying adults**

Operation Wallacea offer a free teacher place with every 8 students thus giving an automatic ratio of at least 1 to 8. For each activity provided by Operation Wallacea in the field a ratio of 1 staff member to 8 students applies.

These ratios do not include other supervisory staff such as guides or cooks. Overall there is a level of at least 1 to 4 adult staff to students on site providing a very high level of supervision. Teachers are asked to accompany students on as many activities as possible.

### **Local Guides**

All groups leaving the Sani camp will be accompanied by a science leader and a local guide who knows the trails in the reserve and is aware of which species are dangerous. The Sani Site Manager has the responsibility of employing locals as guides. Each newly appointed guide would have training on how to respond to dangerous situations, basic first aid and how to lead a group. Their training follows a 3-stage induction period: shadowing a more experienced guide; then leading a group while supervised; and finally leading a group on their own.

In the Galapagos there are formal guide qualifications and registered guides specialising in wildlife will lead all the site visits outside the Jocotoco reserve.

### **Sleeping and accommodation arrangements**

Separate male and female sleeping facilities are available both in the forest and at the marine site. Accommodation for staff members and teachers accompanying the groups is also separate. Bathroom facilities are shared, but toilets are always private and lockable from the inside, as are the shower facilities. The details of the accommodation are sent out to participants prior to the expedition so that the school has plenty of time to consider any pastoral issues that may arise as a result of the sleeping arrangements.

### **Minimum number of students**

No activities are planned which will involve a single pupil being accompanied or supervised by a single staff member or adult, without another pupil or adult being present. There may be occasions where a one-on-one situation is unavoidable (e.g. a student is struggling with one of the skills required to pass their SCUBA course, and the instructor spends some extra time with them working on that skill). These occasions though are rare and all staff members are fully briefed on how to conduct themselves when in these situations.

### **Vetting and disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**

Staff who work for Operation Wallacea in the UK, and then lead the various expeditions around the World, are subject to an enhanced DBS check. All locations where students are sleeping have a DBS checked staff member in attendance. DBS and other vetting service checks are included where applicable amongst

other staff team members. The teachers accompanying these school groups will, at the responsibility of their employer, be vetted through the DBS (or national equivalent system if one is available), and whilst on expedition will stay with the students overnight at each location.

## Codes of practice

All Operation Wallacea staff in the field are required to sign a code of conduct before they are employed. The Code of Conduct commits each staff member to not entering into relationships with school volunteers as well as conformity to restrictions on alcohol use and a complete ban on drug abuse. Operation Wallacea will dismiss staff that do not follow the code of conduct.

## Training

All staff are, in addition to their code of conduct, given specific training on suitable conduct with young people. They are made aware of their position of trust and are given examples of how to behave in certain situations. Staff who do not speak English are read the code of conduct in their own language, and any staff employed by third party providers or partners are subject to the same code of conduct.

## Complaints procedure

Any complaint by a school pupil about inappropriate behaviour from any staff member or other student will be treated as a formal complaint and documented. The accompanying teacher will be informed immediately and together with the senior Operation Wallacea staff member on site will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is upheld then any individuals involved will be dismissed from the expedition and a police file created if a criminal offence has occurred.

## 12. Communications

In the Sani forest camp there is a satellite phone available for emergency communication. When groups are surveying, there will always be a second staff member who can, if needed, run quickly back to the base to alert the teams that there is a potential emergency. Radios were tried previously by the Sani Lodge but reception was consistently poor so these were abandoned. The boat used to transport students between the forest and marine site has a VHF radio and also a GPS tracking system so that it, and its location, can be immediately identified by the port authorities if there is a problem. There is good mobile phone coverage on the journey from Quito to Coca and throughout Santa Cruz Island.

## 13. Transport

All transport arrangements conducted by Operation Wallacea in the field are subject to stringent protocols. Road transport used to move pupils from various sites have been assessed by the Venture Leader in Ecuador and are checked for road worthiness including condition of the tyres and visibility through the windshield. As per section 7, the drivers are subject to a code of conduct whilst on the road. The roads in Ecuador are generally of good quality (tarmac rather than rock or dirt) although they can be very steep in places (i.e. through the Andes) and as such the most important aspect of a safe transfer is that the vehicle is driven slowly and carefully, particularly when descending. This is continually monitored by the Operation Wallacea staff.

The longboats used to transport the students into and back from Sani are checked prior to use by the Opwall staff member accompanying the transfer, this is primarily to ensure that they are watertight and that their engine is working. The boats travel in convoy and have a satellite phone with them. In the Galapagos, students will travel on a speed boat to visit diving sides. The boat used for the diving is registered with the port authorities. They are subject to regular checks for seaworthiness, have a strict limit on the number of passengers that they can take (and are regularly audited for this).

## 14. Accommodation and Camp Security

Accommodation is in tents in Sani. All tents are single sex tents. All tents are located in the heart of the camp and in close proximity of both the teachers and medical staff in the event of emergency. As the camp is very remote, it is extremely unlikely that unauthorised individuals will enter the camp.

Accommodation in the Jocotoco reserve is in safari tents in a protected area and with mattresses inside, or in shared rooms in bunk beds inside the main research building. There are shared single sex toilets and showers and meals are provided in a communal building. The teacher and Opwall staff accommodation is on site adjacent to the students. The reserve is well away from any tourists or local people and it has an overnight guard.

## **15. Integrity and Cultural Aspects of the Expedition**

The model of conservation used by Operation Wallacea is strongly rooted in principles of suitable economic growth in areas whose biodiversity is under threat. This means that huge efforts are made to ensure that conservation is tied with development of alternative income sources to, for example, logging and hunting.

All pupils are encouraged to get involved with the community if they wish and several school groups have helped before by fundraising for local schools, tidying the local school area and getting involved in sporting events such as football matches.