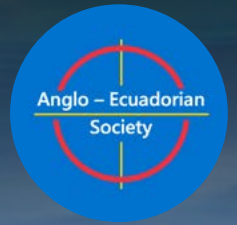


Newsletter

SPRING ISSUE | MAY 2024



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New & Noteworthy

Welcome to the Anglo-Ecuadorian Society's spring newsletter. Please join us in extending a genuine and heartfelt thank you to **Jonathan Lea** for his exceptional leadership during his 5-year tenure as Chair of the Anglo-Ecuadorian Society.

His unwavering dedication, openness, commitment, and perseverance have played a vital role in fostering strong and amicable relations between Ecuador and the UK. We are profoundly grateful for his invaluable contributions to our community. Thank you, Jonathan, for all that you have done! ¡Gracias, Jonathan!

Your input matters to us!

Kindly spare a moment to participate in our survey, focused on gathering insights into the types of events our members would like to attend, as well as to gather general feedback on AES.

[Take the survey](#)


Anglo-Argentine Society Gran Asado 2024


Our friends at the Anglo-Argentine Society have extended an invite to AES members to their Gran Asado 2024 on **Sunday, 9th of June**.

Enjoy a family day with Argentine flavours, live music, games, and a fundraising raffle at London Wasps Football Club (Ealing Common tube). Argentinia will prepare lunch. Picnic equipment or gazebos are welcome.

Tickets include entry, meats, chorizo, morcilla, lamb, molleja, chimichurri, choripan, and entertainment. Please bring your own plates and cutlery.

Anglo-Ecuadorian members are invited to purchase the **"AAS Member Tickets"** at a special discount.

 **Sunday, 9th June 2024**

 **11:00 - 18:00 hrs**

 **London Wasps FC**

[Buy tickets](#)

New contact details

Our new email address is:

info@angloecuadoriansociety.org

Graphic design & creative direction by *Kate Degel*

Outgoing Chairman, Jonathan Lea, reflects on five fruitful years...



Some reflections as I step down as Chair of the Executive Committee after five years.

A group of us got together in 2019 at Canning House to discuss reactivating the Anglo-Ecuadorian Society after it had been a bit quiet for a few years. We all agreed that the aim of promoting friendly relations and understanding between the people of Britain and Ecuador made it worth doing and some of us volunteered to form a committee. I can't remember exactly how it was that I became the Chair, but we all concluded the meeting full of enthusiasm, and repaired to the pub.

We then went to see the Ambassador of Ecuador, Jaime Marchan to invite him to be the honorary President, as was traditional. He kindly agreed and we were very pleased that Baroness Hooper, whose support for the Society over many years has been invaluable, agreed to be our honorary Vice-President.

Our first event was a Christmas reception. Juan Carlos Yepez, then Head of Proecuador in London, provided their office as a venue and one cold night in December



Jonathan with Ecuador's then Ambassador to the UK, Sebastian Corral, in 2022

we filled it with members and old friends, some of whom had not met for years. The Ambassador gave the toast and a convivial evening was assured by a warming winter Canelazo and musicians - the dancing was led by Baroness Hooper.

So we entered 2020 with great plans but with no idea of the pandemic that was about to engulf the world. Patricia and I were in Guayaquil when lockdown happened and, as it happened, so was James McKeigue. Working on WhatsApp, which still seemed novel in those days, we planned for the Society to go digital, starting with a Newsletter edited by James. We later added a new website, with advice from our friends at the Anglo-Bolivian Society. Both the newsletter and website have recently benefited enormously from a major visual makeover by Kate Degel and Juan Teran has taken our social media to a new level.

It was always clear that we needed to reinvent the Society to appeal to a new demographic of potential members. In 2022 we restarted face to face events holding a reception at the Embassy in the new Manuela Saenz room, with the support of Ambassador Sebastian Corral, aiming to reach out especially to Ecuadorians working or studying in the UK. We followed up in 2023 with two book launch events. Both books were related to the Galapagos Islands, reaffirming their importance in the enduring connection between the UK and Ecuador, but were very different. David Horwell's guide to Galapagos Wildlife (Bradt) is the fruit of over 40 years experience, since he first worked as a guide, while David Pollock's Galapagos Sketches (Pallas Athene) is the artistic response of someone visiting for the first time. Both events were very well attended and we established new contacts in the travel and publishing worlds.

The Society keeps close to the Galapagos Conservation Trust and Ambassador Luis Vayas gave an inspiring talk on his work on the proposed UN treaty on Plastic Pollution at their annual Galapagos Day event last



Jonathan with Ecuador's current Ambassador to the UK, Luis Vayas Valdivieso in 2023.

October. The iconic status of the Galapagos is being used to bring alive the massive global challenge of Marine Plastic pollution and to promote a solution. I believe that this is an initiative that the Society can get behind and support in future.

We also aim to support the Arts – last year we supported a visit by Maria Belen Moncayo, Director of the video art archive in Quito who gave talks at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies and at Casa Latina on videoart and experimental film in Ecuador. We finished 2023 with another well attended Christmas Drinks event at the embassy.

We have kept up our support to charities working in Ecuador by sponsoring children through the *Junto Con Los Ninos* programme in Guayaquil. Sponsoring a child costs £240 a year and is a very impactful use of the our annual membership fee.

We have also worked over the years with another UK Charity, the Condor Trust for Education who enable children from poor backgrounds in Quito, to finish high school and go on to university. The Condor Trust will be celebrating their 20th Anniversary this year and we look forward to helping mark this milestone with an event in October to assist them to continue to raise much needed funds.

As we have expanded our network, I am pleased that we have started to bring in new members, although there is a lot more to do. We have also seen new people join the Executive Committee. As I step down as Chair, I would like to thank all the committee members for their support over the last five years. I am very pleased that Juan Terán and Juan Carlos Yépez have taken over as Co-Chairs and look forward to supporting them as they take the Anglo-Ecuadorian Society forward into the future.



The launch of David Horwell's Galapagos Wildlife

“One cold night in December we filled it with members and old friends, some of whom had not met for years. The Ambassador gave the toast and a convivial evening was assured by a warming winter Canelazo and musicians - the dancing was led by Baroness Hooper.”



Meet our new Co-Chairs: leading the way forward

The Anglo-Ecuadorian Society warmly welcomes our new Co-Chairs Juan Terán Jurado and Juan Carlos Yépez. We look forward to continuing our mission of strengthening bonds between Ecuador and the UK and building our community.



Juan Terán Jurado

Juan Terán Jurado, aged 37, holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Espiritu Santo University in Guayaquil, a Master of Marketing from the Fuerzas Armadas University in Quito, and an MBA from Federico Santa María University in Chile. With 15 years of international trade experience, he has served as Ecuador's commercial attaché in Panamá (2012), the UK (2015), Switzerland (2019), and Germany (2020).

Additionally, he has worked as a consultant for Germany's Import Promotion Desk and the United Nations' International Trade Centre. Having resided in the UK for over 7 years, Juan is currently the Head of Corporate Affairs at Canning House, directing corporate strategy and fostering connections between the UK, Latin America and Iberia.



Juan Carlos Yépez

Juan Carlos Yépez has a Bachelor in International Business Management from the Catholic University of Guayaquil and a Master in International Trade from the National University of Cordoba. He has 7 years of experience in the private export sector and 14 years of experience in the Ecuadorian public sector. Since 2017, Juan Carlos has served as Trade Commissioner of Ecuador, 5 and a half years in the United Kingdom and 1 year in the Netherlands.

Juan Carlos was Co-President of the Latin American Trade and Investment Association and a Board Member of the Association of Economic Representatives in London. In addition, Juan Carlos is a guest lecturer in 3 Ecuadorian universities and he is a Mentor in the Empower Latam program to support young Latin Americans in the United Kingdom. Juan Carlos is married to a French/British citizen and he has lived in London, United Kingdom for over 11 years.



'I am delighted that Juan and Juan Carlos are taking over as joint Chairs and look forward to supporting them as they take the society forward'

- Jonathan Lea

Unravelling the Story of Ecuador's Sombreros de Paja Toquilla

In the bustling streets of Ecuador, amidst the vibrant culture and rich history, lies a treasure deeply rooted in tradition—the sombrero de paja toquilla, known worldwide as the “Panama Hat.” While many legends surround its origins, one fact remains crystal clear: this exquisite headwear is unequivocally Ecuadorian, crafted with meticulous care by skilled artisans across the country.

*Hat being made by a woman in Ecuador. [Ca. 1915 - 1945]
Source: The History Trust of South Australian Government*



Ancient Beginnings

The story of the toquilla straw hat dates back millennia, tracing its roots to pre-Hispanic cultures like *Jama Coaque* (355 BC – 1532 AC), *Manteña* (600 AF – 1534 AC) and *Chorrera* (3800 BC). These cultures, renowned for their artistry and craftsmanship, first wove the toquilla straw into hats to shield themselves from the sun's harsh rays. Over time, this practical accessory has evolved into a symbol of cultural identity and artisanal excellence.

Cultural Heritage

The legacy of the *sombrero de paja toquilla* is deeply intertwined with Ecuador's history and culture. Generations of artisans from regions like Montecristi, Jipijapa, and Cuenca have passed down their weaving techniques, preserving this cherished tradition. Despite the legends surrounding its origin, one thing is certain: the craftsmanship behind each hat reflects the ingenuity and skill of Ecuadorian hands.



A Hat By Any Other Name

The origin of the toquilla straw hat weaving can be traced to the province of Manabí. In 1630, an indigenous man named Domingo Choéz combined this raw material with the design of Spanish hats. The weavers of Montecristi and Jipijapa specialised in crafting hats following the European model. By the 19th century, this activity had attracted significant interest from the southern region of Ecuador, with the provinces of Azuay and Cañar becoming key players in what came to be known as the “toquilla boom.”

Historically, the export boom of toquilla straw hats brought about an unprecedented period of economic prosperity. In 1854, the export of toquilla straw hats surpassed that of cocoa; by 1863, 500,000 hats were exported from the Port of Guayaquil. Europe and the United States began to demand this product, which was promoted at the World Exposition in Paris in 1855. The allure of the *paja toquilla* hat was further magnified in 1906 when President Theodore Roosevelt was famously photographed wearing one while viewing the Panama Canal under construction. Little did Roosevelt know that his choice of headwear would ignite a legacy spanning continents. Each photograph capturing his Panama Canal expedition featured the hat perched atop his head, making it synonymous with adventure, sophistication, and, ironically, a misattributed origin.

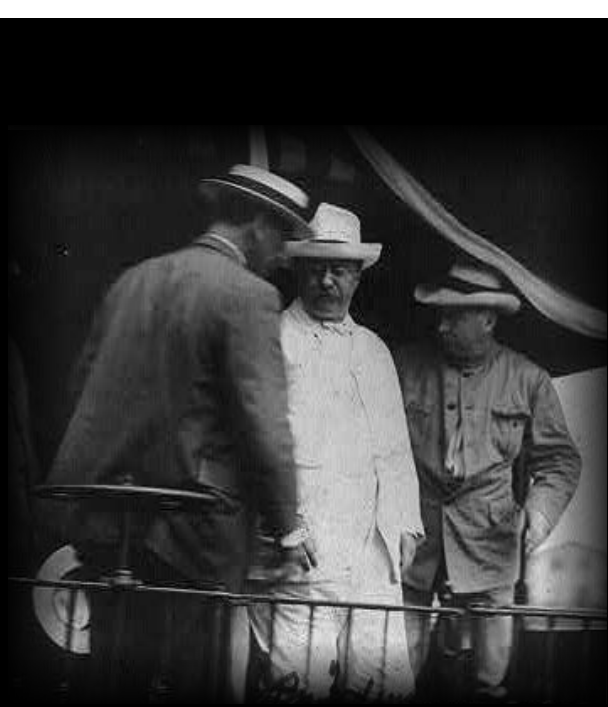
As we peel back the layers of history, the true genesis of this iconic headpiece is revealed. Far from the isthmus of Panama, in the verdant landscapes of Ecuador, skilled artisans toiled with meticulous precision, weaving together strands of tradition, culture, and craftsmanship.



“Panama hats are woven in the cool morning and evening, Tabacunda, Ecuador” [ca. 1879–1930] - Boston Public Library

The *paja toquilla* hat has been popular throughout history and is rumored to have been worn by famous figures such as Winston Churchill and Napoleon Bonaparte. It has made plenty of appearances in popular Hollywood films (from Paul Henreid in *Casablanca* to Anthony Hopkins in *Hannibal* and many more), reminding us just how elegant and good-looking this hat can be. The hat’s popularity highlights the enduring legacy of Ecuadorian artisanship and the timeless appeal of the *paja toquilla* hat.

Despite the hat’s transcontinental journey, its essence remains steadfastly Ecuadorian. Beneath the borrowed title lies a rich tapestry of heritage, a testament to the ingenuity and artistry of its creators. The *sombrero de paja toquilla*, as it’s known in its rightful homeland, embodies the spirit of resilience and creativity that defines Ecuadorian culture.



President Roosevelt passing through the Canal Zone, 1906
Fishbaugh, W. A.



Newspaper advertisement, 1919



Craftsmanship and Process

Paja toquilla hats are far more than simply 'straw hats'; they are the embodiment of tradition and artistry. The *paja toquilla* is a versatile material extracted from the *Carludovica Palmata* plant, native to the coastal regions of Ecuador. The plant's fibers come in various thicknesses and suppleness, allowing for a wide range of hat qualities to suit all tastes and budgets.

The transformation from plant to hat starts with carefully drawing and grading the strands. These fibers are then woven by hand, beginning at the apex of the crown. This meticulous work is best done in a humid atmosphere.

The finest *paja toquilla* hats possess a silky, creamy smooth texture with an almost invisible weave. When held up to the light, a mesmerising spiral of rings radiates from the crown's apex, a mark of true craftsmanship.

The journey from palm frond to finely woven hat is a testament to the artisans' unparalleled skill and creativity. Harvesting the *Carludovica Palmata* plant, processing its delicate fibers, and weaving them into intricate patterns is an arduous process that demands patience and precision. Each *paja toquilla* hat tells a rich story of tradition, resilience, and exceptional craftsmanship, woven into every strand by dedicated hands.

UNESCO Heritage

In 2012, UNESCO recognised the traditional weaving of the toquilla straw hat as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This prestigious designation underscores the hat's significance as more than just a fashion accessory—it is a testament to Ecuador's cultural heritage and artisanal tradition.

Preserving Tradition

As we celebrate the artistry and heritage of the *sombrero de paja toquilla*, let us not forget the artisans who keep this tradition alive. Their dedication to their craft ensures that this iconic symbol of Ecuadorian culture will continue to thrive for generations to come.





Crafting Ecuador's iconic sombreros de paja toquilla: A step-by-step guide

Harvesting the Palms: The journey begins amidst the lush landscapes of Ecuador's coastal regions, where skilled artisans carefully select mature *Carludovica Palmata* plants. These palms, found in humid mountainous areas, provide the raw material for the hats.

Processing the Fiber: Once harvested, the palm leaves undergo a meticulous process to extract the fine fibers. These fibers are then treated to enhance their softness and whiteness, preparing them for weaving.

Dividing the Straw: The fibres are delicately divided to create thin strands, ensuring the highest quality for the final product. The finer the strands, the more exquisite the hat.

Circular Weaving: Using a specialised mold, artisans begin the intricate process of circular weaving. This method forms the foundation of the hat, known as the *plantilla*, and gradually builds up the crown and brim.

Manual Weaving: With deft hands and practiced precision, artisans weave the straw in a circular motion, layering each strand to create a seamless finish. This manual process requires skill, patience, and attention to detail.

Finishing Touches: Once the weaving is complete, the semi-finished hats undergo a series of finishing touches. This includes trimming excess straw, washing, bleaching, pressing, and adding decorative bands or tags.

Quality Assurance: Before the hats are deemed ready for sale or export, they undergo rigorous quality control measures. Each hat is inspected for consistency, craftsmanship, and durability to ensure it meets the highest standards.

Preservation and Export: Once approved, the finished hats are packaged and prepared for distribution. Many are exported to countries around the world, where they are prized for their quality, elegance, and cultural significance.

Cultural Legacy: Beyond their utility, *sombreros de paja toquilla* serve as ambassadors of Ecuador's rich cultural heritage. Each hat carries with it the legacy of generations of artisans, preserving a tradition that spans centuries.

Watch Video ►

HOW ECUADOR FOUND ITS PLACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD

AES Committee Member, David Horwell, tells the fascinating story of the 18th-century French geodesic mission to Ecuador that confirmed the country's pivotal position on the planet...

The French Geodesic Mission to the Equator

On one visit to Ecuador, I crossed the Equator six times in one trip, and that does not count flying over it. This imaginary line that circles the Earth at 0 degrees latitude, divides it into the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

This line is important for navigation and climate, and we take it for granted today. But it began with the fascinating story of the French Geodesic Mission to the Equator back in the 1700s. This was a groundbreaking 18th-century expedition that combined scientific curiosity, international collaboration, and daring exploration.



Portrait of Charles Marie de La Condamine by Carmontelle (1760)

The Quest for Earth's Shape

In the age of enlightenment, the scientific community grappled with a fundamental question: Was the Earth's circumference greater around the Equator or the poles? French astronomer Jacques Cassini championed the view that the polar circumference was larger.

To settle this debate, Louis XV of France and the French Academy of Sciences dispatched two expeditions—one to the Arctic Circle in Lapland and the other to South America, right at the Equator.

The Equatorial Mission

Led by French astronomers Charles Marie de La Condamine, Pierre Bouguer, and Louis Godin, along with Spanish geographers Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, the French Geodesic Mission set sail from France in May 1735.

Their destination: the mountainous landscapes of Ecuador, then known as the Territory of Quito under Spanish rule. La Condamine afterwards travelled down the Amazon together with Ecuadoran geographer and topographer Pedro Maldonado.

The Journey

After landing on the Caribbean coast in Colombia, the team sailed to Panama. From there, they embarked on an overland journey to the Pacific coast.

Splitting into two groups, they trekked through dense rainforests, encountering exotic flora and fauna. Their arrival in Quito in June 1736 marked a pivotal moment in scientific exploration.

Scientific Endeavours

Arc Measurement: The primary objective was to measure an arc of the Earth's surface near the Equator. By determining the length of a degree of latitude, they could infer the Earth's radius.

This mission laid the groundwork for modern geodesy – the science of accurately measuring the earth's shape, orientation in space and gravity field.

Their measurements enabled the first accurate determination of the shape of the Earth, eventually leading to the establishment of the international metric system of measurement. They also proved that the earth is oblate, i.e. flattened at the poles.

Pendulum Length: Pierre Bouguer meticulously established the length of a pendulum beating seconds at various altitudes: at sea level, atop the Pichincha Mountain near Quito, and precisely on the Equator. These measurements helped determine the local gravity.

Marble Plaque: La Condamine commemorated their achievements with a marble plaque. Embedded within it was a bronze exemplar of the pendulum's length. The plaque, presented to the Jesuit College of San Francisco in Quito.

Other observations: Ulloa and Juan visited the architectural Inca complex in San Agustín de Callo and subsequently wrote a descriptive document of what they observed at the ruins. Today a hacienda and

small hotel can be visited here.

The scientists witnessed two eruptions of the Cotopaxi volcano in 1743 and 1744. By talking to local inhabitants, expedition members became the first Europeans to discover and scientifically document rubber tapping and identify the correct type of cinchona tree that produces the active form of quinine (an important anti-malarial drug).

They opened European eyes to the exotic landscapes, flora and fauna of South America and led to the great naturalist expeditions by Alexander von Humboldt and others.

Problems encountered: From the start things went wrong. The locals regarded them with suspicion. They were stoned by an angry mob near Quito, their doctor was murdered after a disagreement over a woman, their botanist had mental health issues, even a senior member Godin, ran off with a young girl.

Others died of fever and other ills. The mountainous geography, instead of giving them clear sights was often shrouded in mist. La Condamine and Bouguer were tenacious and after ten years completed the task. However, they no longer spoke to each other and returned separately to France.



The French Geodesic Mission to the Equator remains a milestone in scientific history. It not only resolved the Earth's shape debate but also exemplified international cooperation.

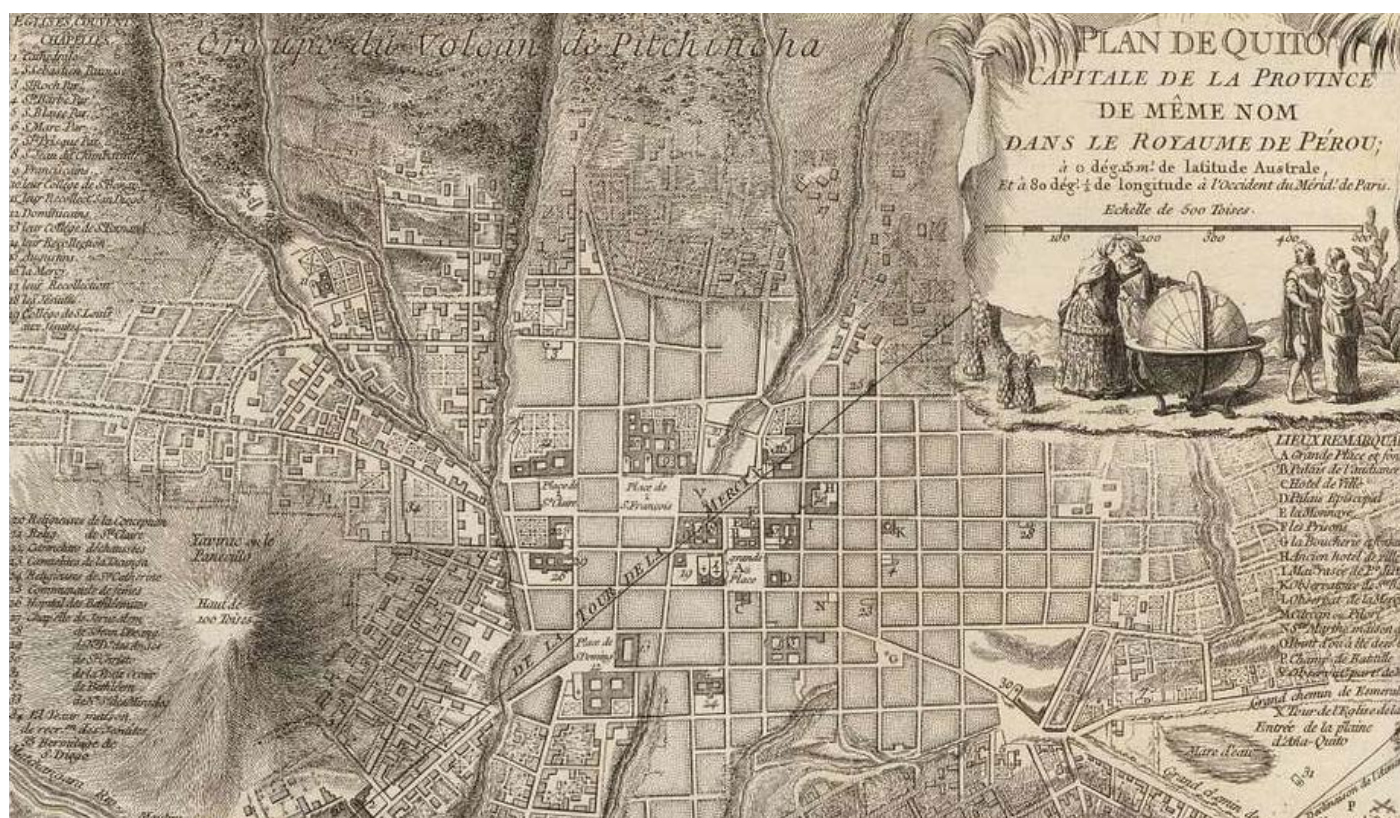


Illustration: Journal of the voyage made by order of the king, to the equator (Paris, 1751), by Charles-Marie de La Condamine. Houghton Library, Harvard University

Legacy and Impact

The French Geodesic Mission to the Equator remains a milestone in scientific history. It not only resolved the Earth's shape debate but also exemplified international cooperation. The courage of these explorers, their meticulous measurements, and their enduring legacy continue to inspire scientists and adventurers alike. The fame brought to the region by the French Geodesic Mission influenced the adoption of the name Republic of Ecuador when the country gained independence in 1830.

In 1936, the French American Committee of Ecuador took the idea of the Ecuadoran geographer Dr. Luis Tufiño and raised a monument commemorating the bicentennial of the arrival of the First Geodesic Mission. They raised a monument at Ciudad Mitad del Mundo in San Antonio de Pichincha, in Pichincha Province. However, there is no record that the Mission ever visited the area.

They opened European eyes to the exotic landscapes, flora and fauna of South America and led to the great naturalist expeditions by Alexander von Humboldt and others.



Fig. 274. — La Condamine.

Charles-Marie de La Condamine based on Louis Figuier's work 'The Wonders of Industry' from 1873 to 1877.



Today many tourists flock to this monument daily, taking photographs astride the Equator line. Recent GPS data shows line is about 200 metres away. Another tourist attraction Inti-Nan has been created by locals, allegedly closer to the real spot.

Here they perform experiments to show the effects of gravity on the equator, such as balancing an egg on a nail. These are entertaining, but hardly scientific.

You can visit both these attractions on any tour to Quito with **Select Latin America**.



Noboa popular with investors and voters but challenges remain

Ecuador's new president, Daniel Noboa, has got off to a quick start; yet significant hurdles lie ahead, writes AES Newsletter Editor, James McKeigue...

Daniel Noboa has proved me wrong. I was in Ecuador during his surprise election victory in October 2023, and I couldn't understand the optimism around his win. Sure, this was a young politician with fresh ideas, I conceded, but Ecuador's significant structural challenges remained. Meanwhile the troubled presidency of predecessor, Guillermo Lasso, had shown the inability of well-meaning but politically-weak, centre-right governments to govern Ecuador.

Firstly, a reminder of those challenges. Noboa inherited a country with: institutions corrupted by organised crime; an unprecedented wave of homicides; a bitter and polarized political culture; a fiscal deficit; high unemployment; poor public education and health systems.

Of course, all of those problems remain today. Yet six months into his shortened presidency – he will only serve 18 months – Noboa has been surprisingly active in taking on those challenges. He has increased taxes, enforced a security crackdown, struck a deal with the IMF and managed to forge consent among most Ecuadorians on these key issues.

It's a dynamic presidency, which is a market contrast to the lacklustre style of the two previous of Lasso and Lenin Moreno administrations. Noboa – and I'm sure many readers – would no doubt hate this comparison, but he's the most active Ecuadorian president since Rafael Correa left office in 2017.



President Daniel Noboa. Source: Presidencia de la Republica del Ecuador, 23 November 2023

Action

A security crisis early on in Noboa's presidency, seemed to prove my scepticism correct. On January 10, gunmen stormed an Ecuadorian television station live on air, as part of a co-ordinated series of attacks. Yet Noboa responded by cracking down on organised crime and rounding up hundreds of suspects. His tough response won support from across the political divide and saw his approval ratings reach almost 80%.

Confident in the support of the people, Noboa launched a referendum to gain the power for new economic and security measures. He won support in all of the security questions, which include the ability to extradite drug lords to the US – something that proved key in combatting Colombia's narco criminals.

He then used that popularity to tackle another serious challenge – Ecuador's fiscal deficit. Years of government largesse under Rafael Correa, made Ecuador the Latin American country with the highest state spending per capita in Latin America. That was fine when the price of oil, Ecuador's main export was high, but when they fell in 2014, the country was left with a brutal fiscal deficit. Lasso's best achievement was solid work of reducing that deficit, yet his government failed to explain to voters why that mattered.

Fast-forward to 2024, and Noboa managed to persuade the Asamblea, where his party does not have a majority, to increase VAT to 15% from 12%. He then built on that to convince the IMF to give Ecuador a \$4billion loan on favourable interest rates. None of this will fix Ecuador's economic problems overnight but it's an impressive start for six months.



President Noboa delivered a strong message of support to the National Police during a ceremony for the delivery of new equipment. 22 January 2024. Source: Isaac Castillo/Presidency of the Republic.

What next

I've been fortunate enough to speak to some of Noboa's government team and they are all aware that this is a long-term project. Many of them feel they will need at least ten years to 'fix' the country. In that sense Noboa is already on campaign, as his current term only lasts until May 2025.

The risk for Noboa is that voters don't have the patience for him to implement his long-term vision. Along the way there is time for plenty of missteps. Most of the international community, were appalled by Ecuador's decision to invade the Mexican Embassy to remove former Ecuadorian VP Jorge Glass. The incident demonstrated the potential dangers of being a man of action – though it played well domestically.

Less popular were the rolling blackouts caused by hydroelectric power shortages. Theories abound of sabotage but the fundamental cause is that Ecuador – a country rich in diverse forms of energy – has failed to build a diversified electricity matrix.

That's not Noboa's fault but voters could blame him if he doesn't fix it.



In Quito, President Daniel Noboa inaugurated the new Military High Command, emphasising that unity is essential to restore peace to the Ecuadorian people. 30 November 2023. Source: Jonathan Miranda/Presidency of the Republic.

The best way for Noboa to fight crime, repair state finances and win voter support would be to create more formal employment. That would mean unlocking Ecuador's vast potential in tourism, agribusiness, energy and mining. There are billions of dollars-worth of investment projects in Ecuador that are stymied by bureaucracy and opposition from vested interests. But the rejection of the two economic measures in the referendum – allowing international arbitration for investors and liberalising the labour market – demonstrate that there are limits to the Noboa consensus.

Previous presidents haven't been able to push through the projects that could unlock Ecuador's vast natural wealth – it remains to be seen if Noboa can.

