

TRAVEL INFORMATION TO RETURN HOME

Leaving Cuenca

When it comes time for you to leave, you'll be taken to the airport, and you should be at the airport 60-90 minutes before departure, longer with big groups, to get checked in. You must go through security at least 35 minutes before departure—sooner is better. When you arrive in Quito, follow the signs and the rest of the people to the baggage claim area and get your luggage. Upon exiting the baggage claim area you'll be met by our representative who will have an OSSO sign and will direct you to the transportation to take you to our Quito house where you'll stay that night before flying home or to the jungle the next morning. (Some might be flying on different schedules and so this information might not be completely applicable, but in general, it will be.)

Leaving Quito

International flights must all be confirmed at least 72 hours before departure by calling the airline or checking online.

You'll be taken to the airport, and you should be at the airport two (2) hours before departure. First, you stand in a luggage security line that's in front of the airline ticket counter. They'll ask security questions about your bags. Then you stand in the ticket counter check in-line. They'll check your bags and give you a boarding pass.

Next you'll need to go to the departure tax window to pay the departure tax in order to leave the country. Upon paying the \$40.80 departure tax, they'll put a stamp on the back of your boarding pass—make sure you don't lose this! For long-term volunteers, OSSO pays this for you by giving you the money for it. For those who are not long-term volunteers, you must have this money in cash. Debit/credit cards are not accepted (though there might be an ATM you could get cash from, but not without a big hassle since it's outside the controlled area you're in at that point and the ATMs at the airport often don't work, so don't count on this).

After you pay the departure tax, you'll go upstairs on the escalator to the military control checkpoint (the path to the control checkpoint winds around through various airport stores selling tourist items). At the military checkpoint they'll verify that your boarding pass has the departure tax stamp and then send you to a line to go through Immigration where they'll check your stamp in your passport. If you still have the copy of the form you filled out when flying into Quito you'll need it here—if not, they'll have you fill out another one. After you go through Immigration you'll go through a security checkpoint where you'll put your carry-ons through a conveyor x-ray machine. Then you'll go through yet another checkpoint when entering the gate area waiting room. Here they'll do a hand search of your carry-ons and possibly hand wand your person. You cannot leave this area without giving them your boarding pass to hold onto, and when you come back from taking a bathroom break (or there's also a place to get something to eat), they'll give it back to you and then have you go through the hand search of your carry-ons again to enter the waiting room.

NOTE: Night flights out of Quito are occasionally cancelled because of fog. If this is the case, it may take 2-3 days to get a flight out (though that's rare), but usually you can get out the next

day. Often the airline will pay for your hotel and food, but sometimes they don't. If this happens to you, call the OSSO house in Quito to make them aware of your situation.

Specifications on luggage

Cuenca to Quito: to fly from Cuenca to Quito, you're allowed 44 pounds of total luggage (yes, you read that right, 44 pounds total). If you have more than that, they can, but don't always, charge you for excess, which can be up to a dollar for three pounds. This is your responsibility to pay for. You're allowed one small carry-on but they sometimes allow you more—it depends on the mood they're in. Sometimes they allow you to carry on a guitar and sometimes they don't. In short, sometimes you can get away with a lot, but if you have more than 44 pounds, be prepared to pay. Also, carry-ons with wheels are sometimes considered too big for the overhead bins on these domestic flights and get lumped in with the regular checked baggage.

Quito to the U.S.: unless there are unusual circumstances, you should be flying home on the same airline you flew down on and the luggage requirements should be the same (refer to your Travel Instructions if you don't remember them). Make certain your checked bags are secure and locked (optional) and contain a copy of your passport. If you have more than this they may charge you \$100-\$300 per extra/overweight/oversized bags if they allow it at all (sometimes there are embargos; during an embargo time, they don't allow overweight or excess luggage at all). Sometimes you can get away with having two carry-ons and sometimes you can't. Sometimes you can get away with having a suitcase overweight and sometimes you can't. It's a gamble—you decide whether you're going to take it. Guitars are sometimes considered too big to be a carry-on but you can sometimes get away with it.

Arrival into the U.S.

Once you're in the U.S, follow the signs to Immigration (basically follow the crowd of people who were on your plane) and get in the line for U.S. Citizens (or where applicable for Canadians). They'll check your passport and ask you what the purpose of your trip was and then direct you on to Customs.

For Customs, follow the signs for baggage claim. You'll need to get a small luggage cart that is free and go and get all of your luggage on the carousel for your flight from Quito. You'll then need to take your luggage to Customs (follow the signs). At Customs they'll ask you if you have any food, plant or animal products. Wooden items, cloth, etc., don't count. Other things may not be allowed—you are responsible for checking into this before trying to bring it home. After the Customs agent clears you, there will be a place to re-check your bags. After you get your bags re-checked you'll go through a security checkpoint, and then you need to find the gate for your next flight. If you don't have a long layover, you need to hurry as fast as you can to get through immigration, baggage claim and customs. If you have a long layover your flight may not be listed on the airport monitors yet, so ask someone and then go to your gate. They may change your gate assignment, so watch to make sure your departure gate isn't changed before your flight.