

# ADVENTURES IN MIDDLE EARTH

March 2020



Covid-19 has altered our activities in Ecuador indefinitely. At 11:59 p.m. Tuesday (March 16), Ecuador's borders were closed. On March 17, Quito was locked down with very limited exceptions for purchasing food and attending to health issues. Unless work is essential (communication, utilities, health services, grocery stores and food markets, pharmacies, and banks), everyone is required to stay at home (violations are subject to a \$6,000 fine).

But we are doing fine. Uncertain times remind us that God does not change and he still loves and cares for us. So enough about the coronavirus; let's think about something lighter. In our March 2015 newsletter we described how life is different here than in the U.S. Now, five years later, here are a few more (pre-Covid-19) differences we've noticed:

- Greetings (both hellos and goodbyes) typically include a kiss on the cheek (woman to woman, woman to man) or a handshake (man to man). It is expected to greet co-workers both in the morning and upon leaving at the end of the day. Outside of work, friends and acquaintances are greeted warmly, often with an added hug. You kiss or shake hands and say "hello" and "goodbye," even if the conversation only lasts half a minute.

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- Everyone having a job is a higher cultural value than being efficient. So most employees do their job and nothing more. No one makes suggestions for improvement because less work could lead to someone losing their job.
- Labor is cheap and materials are expensive (if you can find them).
- By U.S. standards our missionary salary and lifestyle probably wouldn't meet middle-class standards, but here we are wealthy.
- We can go anywhere in the city by bus for 12 cents.
- We can afford to have a housekeeper come in once a week.
- Our cell phone plans (with data) are \$5.00 per month; our high-speed fiber optic internet is \$30 per month; our other utilities are about \$40.00 per month.
- Our apartment doesn't have insulation or weather-stripping; no one has air conditioning or central heating (yes it gets cold at night); we can hear the rain on the roof.
- We can see a 16,000 ft mountain from our dining room table (Scott has climbed it 11 times).
- Even after six plus years of study and living in Spanish-speaking countries, our Spanish still needs improvement (we're glad we didn't know how hard it would be).
- For the most part our Spanish works, but there are still times when we whisper to each other, "What did he say?" or "Why is she crying?" or "What just happened?"
- But we are encouraged when we have an interesting conversation with a new acquaintance and afterwards say to each other, "We couldn't have had that conversation a year ago."

### How to Pray for Us (and Ecuador)

**Thank God** for who He is, that He's in control, and for His many promises of protection and provision.

**Ask God** to work out His plans world-wide through this pandemic, that His church would be light and hope in this dark time, and that our leaders will make wise policy decisions.

### New Blog Posts

• Coronavirus #1 • Coronavirus #2 •

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