

PARADE History

“Trip To The Equator Via Los Angeles And The Ecuador Parade”

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Before I attended the 21st Taste of Ecuador Parade and Food Fest in downtown Los Angeles, I had been reading Kurt Vonnegut’s Galápagos book and watching Anthony Bourdain’s *No Reservations* trip to Ecuador (Season 6, Episode 6).



It wasn’t intentional Ecuadorian research before attending the event. I often read anthropology and science fiction books for my courses, and can effortlessly spend hours watching food and travel tv. Coincidence, maybe, or the universe prodding me to go the Ecuador

parade.

I arrived at the ribbon cutting with queens and important people on Broadway beside the old Rialto Theater (a.k.a. Urban Outfitter store). At that point, still a bit groggy, I wished I had one of the fictional universal translators in Vonnegut's book. A Gokubi (10 language translator) or the Mandarax (1000 language translator, human disease diagnosis machine, encyclopedia of history, and impressive knowledge of the art of flower arranging) would have been perfect devices for my tired brain that day.

Ecuadorian History



Catching a view of the Galápagos turtle George on a parade float, then walking over to the replica of Quito's equator monument, I was drawn into Ecuadorian historical territory, via downtown Los Angeles' Broadway street. At first, I didn't realize what the tortoise represented. It was symbolic of the last Pinta Island tortoise species in the Galápagos that has since become a conservation icon.

Lonesome George was 100 years old when he died September 26, 2014 of natural causes. The blue footed boobies beside George are some of the distinctive birds of the Galápagos. It was later while talking with a member of the Rivan family of La Puente, CA that I learned more of the real George's history and that this parade entry was the 2nd time hand-made George had appeared on the parade

route. Their float was representative of Comité Cívico Ecuatoriano Los Angeles, though George had been living in the Rivan family front yard when not making parade appearances.



Another parade float reflecting Ecuadorian history was the Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) park landmark replica. It almost looked like the real stone of the original trapezoidal-shaped monument. In actual Ecuador, it is a 30 m high stone monument with a brass globe, located very close to the actual equator line. In LA, way north of the equator, on a mobile parade platform, this vinyl looking stone monument replica is much smaller but still impressive. Letters are displayed on each side of the stone façade structure representing Norte (North), Sur (South), Este (East), Oeste (West) with two beauty queens smiling and waving from one side. Atop the replica monument is a desktop crème colored plastic globe.

Yellow, blue, and red





The national colors of Ecuador were everywhere in the parade, decorating the clothing, flags, banners, and floats in symbolic yellow, blue, and red colors. These colors have their own history as well. The blue is symbolic for independence from Spain (May 24, 1822). The yellow refers to the Federation of Greater Columbia, also known as Gran Columbia, which at that time grouped Columbia, Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador (1819-30). And the red is symbolic of courage.

Queens, province flags, and ceviche





Some of the 24 Ecuador province flags were also on display on the Comisión Permanente de Fiestas Patrias Ecuatorianas (CPFPE) queen float. After seeing all these flags and names of places in Ecuador, it seemed I really needed to learn more about the four regions: Amazonia, Costa, Insular, and Sierra, and their associated provinces. Although I had my recent virtual trip through the tv shows eating concha ceviche on the coast and visiting the iguana park in Guayaquil, this parade was a real connection to the country.

Later, when I made it to the Ecuadorian Food Fest of the cultural event, I felt I had made the journey to the equator, especially when eating the ceviche from Comite Civico Ecuatoriano Los Angeles's booth. Their booth surprisingly had a crown on the table and a queen serving ceviche de camaron. I was tempted to eat the ceviche from Yayita's which was popular as evident by its long lines. They had the ceviche de concha negras (black clams), an Ecuadorian specialty, with corn nuts and plantains. Though I decided to buy from the Quito equator queen's booth since their ceviche with

shrimp looked delicious too and was served by a queen.

Ecuador and more

There is much to be learned and enjoyed at this event. The Ecuador Parade was an opportunity to showcase the country of Ecuador while also including participants representing Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, and various organizations. The parade route followed along the historic Broadway theater district and passed notable LA landmarks such as the Grand Central Market, Bradbury Building (*Blade Runner*/ DC and Marvel Comic fictional headquarters) and ended at the Olvera Street Los Angeles Plaza Park where food booths sold Ecuadorian food. It was an all-day public event where locals and those visiting the city could enjoy the entertainment, history, shopping, and food booths of Ecuador without having to leave Southern California.







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