

## Colonial building in Independence Plaza, Quito

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A colonial building with a massive arched entryway sits behind a ring of stone stone steps. The building is adorned with sculptures at the corners and several small domes sit atop the peaks. Independence Plaza is home to most of Quito's main administrative buildings, including Ecuador's Presidential Palace. It is a pedestrian-only area of the city, and tourists will find many fountains, statues, and monuments. Quito is the capital of Ecuador, though with a population of 1,865,541 (2005) it is the second-largest city in Ecuador behind Guayaquil. The urban center of Quito encompasses 112 square miles and is 9,300 feet above sea level. The pre-Colombian city of Quito was destroyed by the last Inca ruler. Therefore, the historic center of the city dates from its founding by Francisco Pizarro in 1534. The historic center of Quito was declared the first world heritage site by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization).



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