

Carding wool in Otavalo, Ecuador

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A kneeling woman adjusts her wooden carding paddle. She is wearing a dark shawl over an embroidered white blouse.

Carding wool is the last stage in preparing raw wool for weaving. A craftsperson uses a wooden paddle with steel tines to separate the wool, straightening and cleaning it before it can be added to the loom.

Otavalo is in the highlands of Ecuador, between the rainforest and the coast. Many of the inhabitants of the area continue to practice traditional ways of life, including retaining their Quechua language, wearing traditional garments, and practicing age-old occupations. Otavalo in particular is known for its highly-skilled weavers. In a tradition that pre-dates the arrival of the Incas, Otavalo weavers are famous for their wool ponchos, blankets, and wall coverings. These products and more can be found in Otavalo's large market.



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