

Quito's Old City with a view of the Cathedral

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Numerous cars, buses, and pedestrians fill the foreground while the Quito's main cathedral, the Basílica del Voto Nacional, can be seen in the background. The Basílica is a good example of Quito's new-gothic architecture. It is often compared with Saint Patrick's Cathedral of New York. What makes Quito's Basílica del Voto Nacional distinct is its use of reptiles and native amphibians of Ecuador in the place of classic gargoyles. 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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