Ecuadorian Slang: Common Words and Phrases (with Examples)

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Quick answer: Ecuadorian slang mixes Spanish with words from Kichwa (Quichua), the Indigenous language of the Andes. The words you'll hear most are **ñaño / ñaña** (brother / sister, or close friend), **¿qué fue?** (what's up?), **achachay** (it's cold!), **bacán** (cool), **chulla vida** (you only live once) and **de ley** (for sure).

Whether you're visiting Quito or Guayaquil, chatting with Ecuadorian friends or learning with a tutor from Ecuador, these Ecuadorian slang words, phrases and expressions will help you sound like a local.

Ecuadorian slang for people

Slang	Meaning	Example
Ñaño / ñaña	Brother / sister; close friend	*Mi ñaña vive en Cuenca.* – My sister lives in Cuenca.
Pana	Friend	*Es mi pana desde el colegio.* – He's been my friend since school.
Guagua	Baby, small child (Andes)	*La guagua está dormida.* – The baby is asleep.
Man	Guy, dude	*Ese man es chévere.* – That guy is cool.
Pelado / pelada	Boyfriend / girlfriend; also a kid	*Salió con su pelada.* – He went out with his girlfriend.
Mijo / mija	Dear, honey (from *mi hijo/a*)	*Ven acá, mija.* – Come here, sweetie.

Everyday Ecuadorian slang words

Slang	Meaning	Example
¿Qué fue?	What's up?	*¿Qué fue, ñaño?* – What's up, bro?
Achachay	Brr, it's cold! (Kichwa)	*¡Achachay, qué frío en Quito!*
Arrarray	Ouch, it's hot! (Kichwa)	*¡Arrarray, la sopa quema!* – Ouch, the soup is burning hot!
Farra	Party	*Nos vamos de farra.* – We're going out partying.

Slang	Meaning	Example
Bielas	Beers	*¿Unas bielas?* – A few beers?
Chumado	Drunk	*Estaba chumado.* – He was drunk.
Chiro	Broke	*Estoy chiro.* – I'm broke.
Camellar	To work hard	*Hay que camellar.* – You've got to work hard.
Caleta	House, home (coast)	*Vamos a mi caleta.* – Let's go to my place.

Ecuadorian expressions and phrases

- **Chulla vida** – "Only one life" (you only live once). From Kichwa *chulla* (single, one of a pair).
- **De ley** – for sure, definitely. *De ley voy.* – I'm definitely going.
- **Fresco** – relax, no worries. *Tranquilo, fresco.*
- **¿Mande?** – Pardon? / Yes? A polite reply when someone calls you, very common in the Sierra.
- **Dame haciendo…** – A uniquely Ecuadorian (Kichwa-influenced) way to ask a favor: *Dame pasando la sal* – Pass me the salt, please.
- **¡Qué bestia!** – Wow! / That's crazy!
- **Bacán / chévere** – cool, great
- **Ve** – A filler word used at the end of sentences: *Sí, ve.* – Yeah, see?

Sierra vs Costa: two styles of Ecuadorian Spanish

- **Sierra (Quito, Cuenca):** slower and very polite, with more Kichwa words (*achachay, guagua*) and a strong "rr" that can sound like a "zh."

- **Costa (Guayaquil):** faster and more relaxed. People often drop the “s” at the end of words (*lo amigo* for *los amigos*) and use words like *caleta* and *pana*.

Learn more in our complete guide to Ecuadorian Spanish words, phrases and greetings.

Ecuadorian food words

Mote (hominy), *encebollado* (fish and onion soup), *locro de papa* (potato soup), *hornado* (roast pork), *llapingachos* (potato patties), *bolón de verde* (green plantain ball), *cuy* (guinea pig), *canelazo* (hot spiced drink). More in food in Spanish.

More Latin American slang

Compare Ecuadorian slang with Peruvian slang, Venezuelan slang and Colombian slang.

Frequently asked questions

What does “chulla vida” mean?

“You only live once.” Chulla comes from Kichwa and means “single” or “only one.”

What does “achachay” mean?

It’s a Kichwa exclamation for “it’s cold!” Its opposite, arrarray , means “it’s hot!” or “ouch!”

What does “ñaño” mean in Ecuador?

Brother (ñaña = sister). It’s also used for very close friends.

What language is spoken in Ecuador?

Spanish is the main language. Kichwa (Quichua) and other Indigenous languages are also spoken and are officially recognized.

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