



**Día de los Difuntos (Day of the Deceased) Celebrations**

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The 2nd of November each year is a national public holiday, giving everyone the opportunity to participate in the activities related to one of the most important celebrations of Ecuador - Dia de los Difuntos.

This celebration stems from the belief that the souls of dead relatives visit on this day and families need to ensure that there is plenty of food available for these souls so that they can gain strength to continue on their journey to the after life.



In the more rural communities of Ecuador, it is common for families to have a meal at, and even on, the graves of deceased relatives before leaving food for them. In the cities, families generally have their traditional meal at home, but still visit the cemetery to either leave food or flowers at the graves. In many parts of Ecuador this ritual is carried out for three years after a person has died and then stops, presumably by then the deceased person has reached his or her destination.

Traditional foods specific to this celebration are GuaGuas de Pan, which are baby-shaped bread, along with a sweet fruit based drink called Colada Morada.



These slightly sweet bread babies can be up to 12 inches in length with a round shaped head and a body that tapers down to a point. They are decorated with icing and have something sweet, like jam, inside. Some families make their own bread babies, but most bakeries have them for sale for weeks prior to the celebration and they are on offer at cafés and restaurants during this period. The original meaning behind GuaGuas de Pan and Colada Morada is not quite clear, nevertheless they form an integral part of all Día de los Difuntos celebrations throughout the country.

Throughout Ecuador the celebration of Día de los Difuntos is seen as a time for families to reconnect with their ancestors as well as an opportunity to remember their roots.