



**THE MAMA NEGRA**

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## The Mama Negra

Festival in Latacunga

10th of November.

The fiesta de la Mama Negra is deeply rooted in Latacunga's history. Initially, it was an eminently religious celebration in honor of the Virgin of Las Mercedes, whose patron celebration is held in the month of September. The Mama Negra Festival is held in November in honor of Latacunga's independence celebrations.

Pomp, color and multiple displays of cultural folk expressions characterize the Mama Negra parade, which takes place as part of the Latacunga independence celebrations.



Very early on, the ceremonies begin in the lower part of the municipal hall: The sacramental change of command between the previous and the new cast of characters of the Mama Negra fiesta takes place.

The celebration starts with the authorization of the patron host. The main characters of this traditional representation in the folklore of Latacunga are the Moorish King, the Angel of the Star, the Sergeant, the Captain of the Guard and the Mama Negra.



Once the official declaration has been read by the public notary of the region, the delivery of Manuelita Baltazara is made: a doll that represents the daughter of Mama Negra. This doll is a symbol of unity and brotherhood among the people of Latacunga so they can be protected by their new guardian.

Later comes the traditional parade and presentations. The members of diverse cultural, social and educational institutions of the city and the neighboring towns represent pachangueros (folk dancers), the patron hosts, queens, cholas (indigenous dancers) and cholitas (young girls), veladores (whip-bearing chaperones), palomeras (dove carriers), champuceros (who give out typical desserts), camisonas (women dressed in white tunics), loeros (limerick-reciting bards) and musical bands, and transform Latacunga into a kingdom of happiness, peace and friendship.

Orchestral groups, musical bands and the support of a variety of companies complement the festive framework of the Mama Negra, whose colorfulness and joy bring out the kind and hospitable character of the inhabitants of this land.