

Dance hall in Coca, Ecuador

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A dance hall called Disco Kamikaze sits closed behind metal shutters. In the foreground are two tables with thatched umbrellas. Above the door to the disco is the word Krakatoa.

Coca is the capital of the province of Orellana in the eastern region of Ecuador. It has benefited greatly from both the discovery of oil in the region and the sharp increase in ecotourism. Coca is on the border of the Amazonian rainforest and is an ideal starting point for trips down the river.

Ecuador relies on its large oil reserves to a significant degree. Indeed, forty percent of Ecuador economic production is in oil. However, the oil is located in remote areas of the Amazonian rainforest. Because the areas are so inaccessible, Indian communities have managed to maintain traditional ways of life and the large biodiversity of the region has thrived. Oil production threatens both the livelihood of the indigenous communities and the existence of the region's flora and fauna. Oil companies have carved up the rainforest for drilling and extraction, leaving behind a legacy of pollution and ecological trauma.

Much of the wealth extracted from oil drilling is used to pay Ecuador's huge foreign debt. In the thirty years since oil was discovered, the standard of living in Ecuador has not noticeably increased.



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