



Birding in Northwest Ecuador and East Slope of Andes

Day 1: Arrival to Quito

Participants will fly to Quito (most flights arrive in the late evening). No matter your flight plans, we will have a representative meet you outside of customs gate and take you to the local hotel.

Day 2: Mindo

Morning: An early start for the Mindo area will be good to get to the birding. Our guide will know a number of good bird watching stops along the way, and we might see Southern Yellow-Grosbeak, Rufous-naped Brush-Finch, Rufous-chested Tanager and much more. These stops will make the short trip go by even faster, as at each stop will add a number of life birds for each trip participant.

Once in Mindo, we will have all morning and most of the day to see beautiful tanagers and other Ecuadorian birds. Blue-necked Tanager, Golden Tanager, Beryl-Spangled Tanager and often more than a dozen tanager species start the first day of the trip. Velvet-purple Coronet and at least 10 other hummingbird species are found on most trips the first day. Rufous Motmot, Toucan Barbet, Pale-mandibled Aracari and much more will make the first day spectacular.

The lodging will be at a nice eco-lodge (one of our customer's favorites) in a nice preserved forested area. The birding is great at the lodge too. Getting to bed at a reasonable hour is a good idea to start in the morning early.



Day 3: Refugio Paz de las Aves

The day begins just before dark, as we drive to Paz de las Aves for an early start. Upon arrival, we walk to the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek. Besides seeing and hearing these beautiful birds, we will also see several other species, such as Toucan Barbet and perhaps Crimson-rumped Toucanet.



The Refugio is world famous for opportunities to see Antpitta species. With some luck, we will be able to see Giant Antpitta, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, and Moustached Antpitta. We may also see Dark-backed Wood Quail, Golden-headed Quetzal, another six more hummingbird species, and much more. Fawn-breasted Tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, Lemon-rumped Tanager, and more seem fill every new opening with new bird species.

Like many other parts of Ecuador, large flocks of multiple species can be found. On the 2007 trip we found a flock with over 20 different species, proving over one hour of fantastic bird watching.



Hummingbird species found at their feeders include Empress Brilliant, Tawny-bellied Hermit, and Collared Inca, and several others.

After enjoying the Refugio and once the birding slows down, we will head back towards the lodge for birding in that area.

Day 4: Rio Silanche

An early start will be a good plan to get to Rio Silanche and the top of the tower as the birds get busy just after sunrise. This area was preserved by the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation and includes Choco lowland forest at about 1000 to 1200 feet above sea level. The reserve is comprised of a mixture of primary forest, regenerating forest, with some grassland and former plantation. In addition to the canopy observation tower, extensive trails and a footbridge make for easy exploration of the forest.



From the top of the tower, we saw 80 species between 6 AM at 9:30 AM in April 2007. We saw several new hummingbird species in a nearby tree, including Purple-chested Hummingbird. Great looks were had of Dot-winged Antwren, Purple Honeycreeper, Green Honeycreeper and the spectacular Scarlet-breasted Tanager. Griscom's Antwren, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Scarlet-and-White Tanager, Guira Tanager, Blue-whiskered Tanager, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Chestnut-fronted Macaw and Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher could also be seen from the tower. Watch the guide as he visually sorts large flocks and listens carefully to allow the bird-watching participants the opportunity to see new species.



A short walk down the trail included Black-striped Woodcreeper, Plain Xenops, Pacific Antwren, Immaculate Antbird, Western Woodhaunter, Russet Antshrike, and Blue-crowned Manakin. In one 20 foot segment of the trail we added Western White-tailed Trogon, Collared Trogon, Broad-billed Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, and Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant to our day list which reached 139 species.

We will then drive back to Mindo and birding back along the way will be worthwhile that afternoon (sometimes late afternoon).

Day 5: Milpe Reserves

The main destination for the day will be the Milpe Bird Sanctuary in the Andean Foothills. This sanctuary is located in a Birdlife International Important Bird Area (IBA), Los Bancos—Milpe. The sanctuary has an altitudinal range from 3350-3770 feet and includes two small rivers that converge in a steep, forested valley. Many birders consider this one of the finest sites in all of Ecuador. Many of the most spectacular Choco Endemics occur here: Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, Moss-backed Tanager, Choco Trogon, and Club-winged Manakin. At some point, we may see Chocó Toucans and Pale-mandibled Araçaris in the more open areas.

This sight is long famous for good tanager viewing days. The road hosts good mixed flocks, and new trails in the reserve allow access to the forest. We can expect a host of tanagers, including Ochre-breasted Tanager, Rufous-throated Tanager, Lemon-rumped Tanager, and we may get lucky and find the dazzling Glistening Green Tanager. Over twenty species from this spectacular family are possible here in a day.



On our last trip, we found Choco Toucan, Choco Warbler, Yellow-tufted Dacnis, Thick-billed Euphonia, Bay Wren, Rufous-throated Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager, Yellow-bellied Siskin, Choco Brush-Finch, Striped Cuckoo, Chestnut-collard Swift and Russet Antshrike. We will also add a few more species of hummingbird species, possibly Purple-crowned Fairy, Green-crowned Brilliant, White-whiskered Hermit, and Green-crowned Woodnymph. In total, the day could reach 100 species.

We may have time to cool off at nearby restaurant where up to a dozen species of tanager come to feed on the bananas put out for them. Several species which come here include Emerald Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, and several others. A number of hummingbird species (including Green Thorntail) can be seen here. In addition, we may find Crimson-rumped Toucanet. This both leisurely and productive stop is a hit with all bird watchers.

Once the birding has slowed down in the Milpe area, we will then head towards the Tandayapa Valley for the night so that we may have an early start at the great birding in that area. We will likely see a few more great birds as we drive about one to one and one-half hours, and the feeders at the lodge are always worth checking out.



Day 6 - Bellavista & Tandayapa Valley

On the sixth day, we will start birding early at the areas surrounding our lodge. Some of the species we are more likely to see include Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Golden-crowned Flycatcher, Plain-breasted Hawk, Blue and White Swallow, Plain-tailed Wren, Sickle-winged Guan, Great Thrush, Plumbeous Pigeon, Glossy-black Thrush, Red-billed Parrot, Turquoise Jay, Spectacled Whitestart, Band-winged Nightjar (hopefully more than a song), Slate-throated Whitestart, White-collared Swift, Russet-crowned Warbler, Masked Trogon, Grass-green Tanager, Dusky Bush-Tanager, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Rufous-chested Tanager, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Powerful Woodpecker, Thick-billed Euphonia, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Montane Woodcreeper, Golden Tanager, Azara's Spinetail, Flame-faced Tanager, Red-faced Spinetail, and Beryl-spangled Tanager, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Blue-and-black Tanager, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Spillmann's Tapaculo, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, Green and black Fruiteater, White-winged Brush-Finch, Streak-necked Flycatcher, White-sided Flowerpiercer, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Masked Flowerpiercer, Cinnamon Flycatcher, and Smoke-coloured Pewee.

Several hummingbird feeders in the area can be accessed, and we are likely to add an additional ten to twenty species to the trip list here, including Velvet-purple Coronet, Sparkling Violetear, Buff-tailed Coronet, Gorgeted Sunangel, Purple-bibbed White-tip, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Booted Racket-Tail, and Purple-throated Woodstar, Andean Emerald, Speckled Hummingbird, Violet-tailed Sylph, and Brown Inca.

Other birds which we may find in the area include Rufescent Screech-Owl, White-faced Nunbird, Cloud Forest Pygmy-Owl (likely to hear), Swallow-tailed Nightjar, Ocellated Tapaculo, and Green-fronted Lancebill. We will also look for Crested Quetzal, Plushcap, Tanager Finch, and Beautiful Jay.

We will end the evening back in Quito.

Day 7: Yanacocha and Other Key Spots Near Quito:

On the seventh day, participants will have a choice between taking a break from bird-watching (and resting that day in Quito) or continue bird watching.

For those embracing another day of bird-watching and a brisk early start, the day starts with an early breakfast as we head towards the Yanacocha Reserve or “Inca Ditch”.

Yanacocha is famous for high elevation hummingbirds (such as Shining Sunbeam, Great Sapphirewing, Sapphire-vented Puffleg and many more). We may also see White-crested Elaenia, Tufted Tit-

Tyrant, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Brown-bellied Swallow, Black-crested Warbler, Masked Flower-Piercer, Glossy Flower-piercer, Black Flower-Piercer, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Stripe-headed Brush-Finch, Hooded Siskin, and more.

On the trip back to Quito, we will also stop along the way to bird some additional key habitat in the mountainous and foothills areas above Quito.

We may have time to visit some of the dry valleys near Quito to look for Giant Hummingbird, Ash-breasted Sierra Finch, Tufted Tit-tyrant, Golden-rumped Euphonia, and the rare White-tailed Shrike Tanager, and Grassland Yellow-Finch.

For those needing a break from birding, the day can be spent however you like, including sleeping in and exploring Quito. However, by about 2 PM in the afternoon, we will arrange a transfer for you to join the rest of the group.

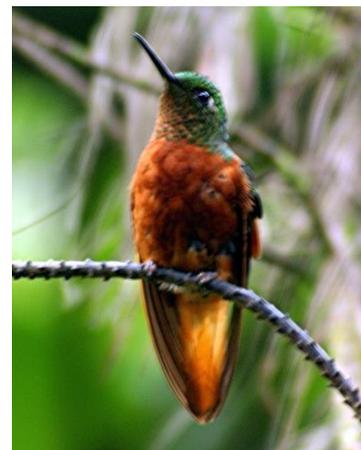


In the late afternoon, we will drive 1 or 2 hours to our next lodging location over Papallacta Pass. We will take some time to stop at a high elevation lake, and we may see several key waterfowl species (sometimes plentiful birding and sometimes not), such as Andean Coot, Andean Teal, Andean Ruddy Duck, Yellow-billed Pintails, and Silvery Grebe (with some luck). Andean Gull is sometimes present. We may also get lucky with a few other species on the forested area near the lake.

Day 8: High Mountain Temperate Forest near Guango and Papallacta Hot Springs Area, Guango Lodge Hummingbird Feeders and San Isidro

In the morning (if the weather is good), we will have two good options for birding high elevation temperate forest areas. Both are slightly different, and weather conditions will determine our chances for productive birding here.

- At a slightly higher elevation is the forested area just above Papallacta Hot Springs. Here, we will look around the lodge for Red-crested Cotinga, Spectacled Whitestart, Brown-bellied Swallow, Cinereous Conebill, Blue-backed Conebill, Black Flowerpiercer, Plain-colored Seedeater, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, and Hooded Siskin. We may also get better looks at Pearled Treerunner, White-crested Elaenia, White-banded Tyrannulet, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant, Turquoise Jay, Mountain Wren, Citrine Warbler, Mountain Cacique, and Superciliaried Hemispingus.
- Many of these same species can also be found near Guango Lodge, and we may take some additional time here for short walk which has included other species like Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, Hooded Mountain Tanager, Plushcap (difficult), Slaty Brush-Finch and can end with watching Torrent Ducks.



After birding one or both of these forested areas, we will take the opportunity to bird the feeders at Guango Lodge. The hummingbird feeders can be seen at anytime and include some world famous looks at Swordbill Hummingbird, Long-tailed Sylph, Tourmaline Sunangel, Glowing Puffleg, and Mountain Avocetbill. We may also find Mountain Velvetbreast and Tyrian Metaltail here.

In the afternoon (and earlier if the weather is poor), we will head towards San Isidro Lodge and reserve (about one hour away). Should we need to spend more time in this area, San Isidro has a number of birding options including Antpitta feeding, Hummingbird feeders, several excellent birding trails here and nearby, and the road outside the lodge is often incredibly productive. See more details on Day 9.

You will also have an opportunity for some great night birding at San Isidro where Andean Potoo (though rare) is sometimes staked-out and where Rufous-bellied Nighthawk is often found, along with Rufous-banded Owl, and Mottled Owls. The most spectacular night bird found during most trips to San Isidro is a large and beautiful species of owl. This owl species is similar in appearance to the Black-banded Owl, but it clearly has a visible and identifiable striped cap. These species may one-day be new to science. It tends to emerge in the early evening and often hunts right next to the cabins for a spectacular find to end most evenings at San Isidro.



Day 9: San Isidro and Papallacta Pass

We will likely spend the morning birding one of the many birding trails at San Isidro. The montane cloudforest around this lodge supports similar species to the Cordillera de Guacamayos and the lodge is an ideal base from which to explore the area. Several features make the area attractive to birders immediately. Birding the reserve often results in view of the stunning Highland Motmot and Andean Solitaire. Other potential trip birds likely to be added in the morning at San Isidro include White-capped Parrot, Powerful Woodpecker, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Inca Jay, Black-billed Peppershrike, Saffron-crowned Tanager and hundreds of other species.

A short walk from the cabins, the forest awaits, where mixed understory and canopy flocks seemingly drip from the foliage. One of our top Ecuadorian bird guides will be along to help find Masked Trogon, Black-billed Mountain-

Toucan, Streak-capped Treehunter, Striped Treehunter, Long-tailed Antbird, and Barred Antthrush. Marble-faced Bristle Tyrant, Variegated Bristle-Tyrants and Sulphur-

bellied Tyrannulet are a few of the list of varied tyrannids to be found in the mixed species flocks. Also be on the look out for Black-chested Fruiteater, Dusky Piha, Pale-footed Swallow, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, and Golden-collared

Honeycreeper. Also a wonderful selection of colorful tanager species can be found, including Red-hooded Tanager and White-capped Tanager. Also, the gregarious Northern Mountain Cacique and Subtropical Cacique should be found. All of these species, among many others, are residents here and are frequently seen by visiting birders.

San Isidro birds include a few rarities, which may be found, including Highland Tinamou, Greater Scythebill, Bicolored Antvireo, Peruvian Antpitta, Giant Antpitta, White-rimmed Brush-Finch, and maybe the White-faced Nunbird.

At some point during our visit to San Isidro, we will have time to check out their hummingbird feeders and their Antpitta feeding station(s).

- Everyone will enjoy the hummingbird feeders and will likely add Bronzy Inca, adding to our burgeoning list of nearly 40 hummingbirds. A few more hummingbirds may also be added to the trip list including Bronzy Inca, Buff-tailed Coronet, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Long-tailed Sylph, Gorgeted Woodstar and likely a few more species.
- Another birding extra will be the opportunity to see several species of Antpitta, including stunning views of Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (likely) and White-bellied Antpitta (less reliable in recent years).



At about noon and shortly after a delicious lunch, we will head back towards Quito and take most of the day to explore Papallacta Pass. The pass is the highest easily accessible point in Ecuador, the eastern lowlands back to Quito. This area has an excellent selection of montane species. As we travel around and over the pass, we can access tundra-like páramo and scattered patches of Polylepis woodland.

In the páramo areas at the higher elevations, we will hope to find Bar-winged Cinclodes, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Páramo Pipit and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. Here we also see Ecuadorian Hillstar feeding on the orange thistle-shrubs (Chuquiraga) while Many-striped Canastero and Andean Tit-Spinetails skulk in the bushes. Tawny Antpittas call all around and can be found with some luck.

Lower down, elfin forest and montane cloud forest occur. These areas support beautiful and interesting species, including Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Band-tailed Seedeater, Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Curve-billed Tinamou, Carunculated Caracara, Black-chested Eagle, Puna Hawk, Plain-breasted Hawk, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Andean Condor, Giant Conebill, Black-backed Bush-Tanager, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe (difficult) and others. .

At about 4 PM on the 9th day of the trip, we will head back to Quito for flights home late that night (on Delta and after 11 PM) or the next day (American Airlines, Continental/United and many others).

Note: This trip also offers a number of extension options including Wild Sumaco, the Amazon Basin, and Galapagos Islands.

Day 10: Flights Home

Flights home for all with pleasant memories of an excellent and worthwhile birding trip.

