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Equador Birding Trip – Best of the North

14 DAY/ 13 NIGHT TRIP

OVERVIEW

For sheer diversity of birds in a short trip, it is hard to beat Ecuador. Boasting a bird list of over 1,700 species, Ecuador has entrenched itself as a premier South American birding tour destination. Ecuador has a wide variety of faunal zones, including some of the richest on this planet, each with its characteristic birds. Furthermore, its small size, great infrastructure, spectacular scenery and friendly people make an Ecuador birding trip a highly productive and enjoyable experience.

Some of the spectacular birds we might encounter include: Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Giant Antpitta, Plate-billed Mountain and Choco Toucans, Toucan Barbet, Club-winged Manakin, Glistening-green Tanager, Orange-breasted and Scaled Fruiteaters and Velvet-purple Coronet to mention but a few.

DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Arrive in Quito – Mariscal Sucre International Airport and transfer to Puemba Birding Garden
DAY 2	Jocotoco Reserve and Yanacocha Reserve
DAY 3	Milpe and Rio Silanche
DAY 4	Bellavista Cloud Reserve
DAY 5	Angel Paz Reserve
DAY 6	Mashpi Road and Amagusa Reserve
DAY 7	Papallacta Pass and Wildsumaco
DAY 8	Full day birding around Wildsumaco Lodge
DAY 9	Birding around the San Isidro Lodge forests
DAY 10	Birding around the San Isidro Lodge forests
DAY 11	Guango

DAY 12	Birding en route to Quito
DAY 13	Antisana Reserve
DAY 14	End of Ecuador birding trip and transfer to airport

DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrive in Quito – Mariscal Sucre International Airport and transfer to Puemba Birding Garden

On your arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (Quito) you will be met by a company representative and transferred to Puemba Birding Garden. Depending on your time of arrival, you can explore the grounds of Puemba Birding Garden which boasts a list of more than 35 bird species.

🏠 **Accommodation: Puemba Birding Garden**

DAY 2: Jocotoco Reserve and Tandayapa Valley

We leave very early to visit Yanacocha. The first hours of the morning will be spent at the Jocotoco Reserve of Yanacocha where we will also have lunch. Some of the species we might see are Superciliated Hemispingus, Ocellated Tapaculo, White-browed Spinetail, Andean and Sickle-winged Guan.

In the afternoon we will be birding along the road connects Yanacocha to the Tandayapa Valley. By the end of the afternoon you will arrive in Sacha Tamia for dinner and overnight. During dinner we will update the list of bird species that we have seen during the day.

🏠 **Accommodation: Sacha Tamia Lodge**

DAY 3: Milpe and Rio Silanche

After an early breakfast, we will head down to Milpe and Rio Silanche for the day. Milpe is a Chocó-Andean foothills reserve. Milpe Bird Sanctuary is a 62 hectare sanctuary protecting one of the most important remnant forests in the Choco Endemic Area of Ecuador. The sanctuary encompasses a steep forested valley between two small rivers and offers a network of trails along with hummingbird feeders, an orchid nursery, a birding viewpoint, and a visitor center with cafeteria. The reserve is a mixture of primary forest, regenerating forest, and pasture. Since the reserve is some 500 meters lower in elevation than Mindo, it harbors many endemic birds not found in the Mindo Valley. Trails are relatively level and easy walking. Many birders consider the Milpe Bird Sanctuary one of the finest birding sites on the west slope of the Andes because of the many lowland

specialties and Choco endemics that can be seen. Endemics regularly seen in the reserve include Choco Trogon, Choco Toucan, Club-winged Manakin, Choco Warbler, Moss-backed Tanager, Yellow-collared Chlorophonia, and Glistening-green Tanager. A number of hummingbirds can be seen visiting the feeders or flowering plants in the more open areas, including the locally distributed Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Green Thorntail, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Wedge-billed Hummingbird, and Purple-throated Woodstar. We break for lunch in the reserve with our packed lunches.

Rio Silanche is a bird sanctuary in the western lowlands managed by Mindo Cloud Forest. The best part about birding at Rio Silanche is alternating between short walks in the dense humid forest and scouting the treetops from the canopy tower. Notable birds that can be seen are Swallow-tailed Kite, White-whiskered Hermit, Western White-tailed Trogon, Collared Trogon, Pale-mandibled Aracari, Lineated Woodpecker, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Spotted Woodcreeper, Checker-throated Antwren, White-flanked Antwren, Dot-winged Antwren, Black-headed Antthrush, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Streaked Flycatcher, Masked Tityra, Yellow-tufted Dacnis, Guira Tanager, Grey-and-gold Tanager, Blue-whiskered Tanager, Rufous-winged Tanager, Scarlet-browed Tanager, Orange-Billed Sparrow and Scarlet-rumped Cacique. We return to Sacha Tamia Lodge for dinner.

🏠 **Accommodation: Sacha Tamia Lodge**

DAY 4: Bellavista Cloud Reserve

Today we will bird and explore the road that leads from our hotel in Mindo to the Bellavista Reserve. The Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve is a 2,000-acre certified conservation area on the North-Western slopes of the Andean mountain range and is located 52 km from the Ecuadorian capital city of Quito. The lodge straddles the ridgeline and offers superb vantage points for watching birds. The veranda outside the dining area is a good place to observe the endemic Toucan Barbet and a variety of other species including Green-and-black Fruiteater and Russet-crowned Warbler. The Choco endemic Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan can usually be seen from the veranda or walking the road or trails through the forest near the lodge. Numerous hummingbird feeders near the lodge attract a variety of species, including some not seen in the valleys below. Some of the common species are Andean Emerald, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Empress Brilliant, Brown Inca, Collared Inca, Gorgeted Sunangel, Booted Racket-tail, and Violet-tailed Sylph. We return to Sacha Tamia Lodge for dinner and our overnight stay.

🏠 **Accommodation: Sacha Tamia Lodge**

DAY 5: Angel Paz Reserve

After a very early cup of coffee, we depart the lodge at no later than 4:30am as we need to drive to the Angel Paz reserve. This is the place we will see the Cock of the Rock

lek, five species of Antpittas being fed and other many species. We have breakfast here with Angel's family. Some of the species we might see are Giant Antpitta, Andean-cock of-the-rock, Club-winged Manakin, Toucan Barbet and Beautiful Jay.

We will continue birding this day in the vast forests of Mindo. Species that we might see are Swallow Tanager, Golden Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Palm Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Dull-coloured Seedeater, Streak-capped Treehunter, Uniform Treehunter, Streaked Xenops, Little Cuckoo, Andean Pygmy Owl, Wedge-billed Hummingbird, Spotted Sandpiper and many more. By the end of the evening we will reach the town of Pacto, where we will overnight and have dinner at La Cañita.

🏠 **Accommodation: La Cañita**

DAY 6: Mashpi Road and Amagusa Reserve

Today we will take a packed lunch and visit the Mashpi road with some time for Amagusa feeders. They have set up a small but nice hummingbird garden with a few well visited feeders that attract some of the sought choco endemic hummingbirds like the Empress Brilliant, Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph, Brown Inca, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and White-whiskered Hermit. The hummingbird garden also has a shelter where you can comfortably look at hummingbirds even if it is raining.

Some of the local tanagers are also being attracted to feeders, so you will be able to see and photograph more of the choco endemics like Glistening-green Tanager and the Black-chinned Mountain Tanager. They also have other colorful tanagers that visit the feeders like the Golden-naped Tanager, Golden Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, and others.

Mashpi road is in the midst of the Choco forest. The Mashpi protected area has the highest number of choco birds in a single site in Ecuador. We will be out birding for the whole day, returning to Puenbo Birding Garden by late afternoon.

🏠 **Accommodation: Puenbo Birding Garden**

DAY 7: Papallacta Pass and Wildsumaco

After breakfast, we will head to the Eastern slope of the Andes. We will pass the Papallacta Pass, highest birding spot on our itinerary. Silvery Grebe, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean Titspinetail, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Black-backed Bush Tanager, Giant Conebill are some of the birds we might encounter. After birding Papallacta we head to Wildsumaco Lodge.

Wild Sumaco Lodge is set on a ridge in the Andes' Eastern Foothills and has panoramic views reaching across the Rio Pucuno Valley and to the Andes beyond. The lodge is located at a comfortable elevation of about 1480m (4900 feet) and the forest reserve

ranges from 1200 to about 1600m (3900 to 4900 feet). Possible birds we might see are Scaled Pigeon, Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Maroon-tailed Parakeet, Red-headed Barbet, Black-mandibled Toucan, White-throated Toucan, Channel-billed Toucan, Lafresnaye's Piculet, Lineated Woodpecker, Dark-breasted Spinetail, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Lined Antshrike, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Olive-chested Flycatcher, Black-billed Thrush, Spotted Tanager, Paradise Tanager, and Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finch. After a wonderful day's birding, we settle in at Wildsumaco Lodge where we will have dinner and overnight.

🏠 Accommodation: Wildsumaco Lodge

DAY 8: Full day birding around Wildsumaco Lodge

Today we will spend a full day at Wildsumaco Lodge and surrounding area. Due to its location on the Equator, the steep Andean Foothills, and the close proximity of the Amazon, the Sumaco area holds one of the richest avifaunas in the world. A wonderful mix of cloudforest species, foothill specialties, and typically Amazonian birds share Wildsumaco's lush subtropical rainforest with a myriad of other animals.

From Wildsumaco's trails you might see Grey-tailed Piha, Blue-rumped Manakin, and Chestnut-crowned Gnatcatcher. Short-tailed Antthrush and Wing-banded Wren often sing, while more uncommon species like Grey-throated Leaf-tosser and Plain-backed Antpittas are seen occasionally, and more often heard. The very rare Yellow-throated Spadebill has territories along several of our trails, and at any time the endangered Military Macaw or rare Spot-winged Parrotlet might fly by, or Black Hawk-Eagle soar overhead.

The road passing through the reserve offers great road birding, and this is one of many areas from which to see flocks of birds. Possibilities here include Blue-browed Tanager, Yellow-breasted Antwren, and Coppery-chested Jacamar. Many colorful species of tanager may be accompanied by Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, the recently described Foothill Elaenia, and sometimes Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater joins in. We return to Wildsumaco Lodge to update our lists, have dinner and overnight.

🏠 Accommodation: Wildsumaco Lodge

DAY 9: San Isidro

We will drive and bird the Cosanga Road up to San Isidro. The birds here belong to the eastern cloudforest, many species overlap the Mindo ones and give us many new ones such as the Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Moustached and Peruvian Antpittas, Bicolored Antwren, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Highland Tinamou, Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, White-capped Tanager. We will have dinner and overnight in San Isidro.

🏠 Accommodation: Cabañas San Isidro's lodge

DAY 10: San Isidro and Guacamayos Ridge

After an early breakfast we set off to the Guacamayos Ridge where we could see birds such as Highland Tinamou, Slate-crowned Antpitta, Striped Treehunter, Bicoloured and Broad-winged Hawks, Masked Trogon, Powerful Woodpecker, and Green-and-Black Fruiteater, Masked Flowerpiercer, Pearled Treerunner, Lacrimose and Blue-Winged Mountain-Tanagers, Blue-and-Black Tanager and Montane Woodcreeper. We return to San Isidro for dinner and overnight.

🏠 **Accommodation: Cabañas San Isidro lodge**

DAY 11: Guango

We will slowly drive up to the Papallacta area and bird around Guango Lodge which is located near the paramo and hot springs of Papallacta, is a paradise for hummingbird lovers and photographers. Seeing 14 species of hummingbirds within an hour is not uncommon, and the Sword-billed hummingbird with its unique and its long bill is sure to amaze you. We return to Guango Lodge for dinner and overnight.

🏠 **Accommodation: Guango Lodge**

DAY 12: Guango and return to Puemba Birding Garden

After a morning of enjoying the many trails at Guango, we will have lunch and drive to Puembo Birding Garden for an afternoon of birding the grounds. Birds like the Scrub Tanager which only happens in this interandean valley and the extraordinary Black Trainbearer will be found here.

🏠 **Accommodation: Puembo Birding Garden**

DAY 13: Antisana Reserve

Today we will leave early to visit the Antisana Reserve. This reserve is home of the Andean Condor, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Giant Hummingbird and Black-faced Ibis. The scrub vegetation features Black-winged Ground-Dove, Giant Hummingbird, Andean Tit-Spintail, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, and Giant Conebill. We will lunch at Tambo Condor and return to Puembo Birding Garden late afternoon.

🏠 **Accommodation: Puembo Birding Garden**

DAY 14: End of Ecuador birding trip and transfer to airport

Depending on the time of your departure flight we can bird around Puembo Birding Garden. You will be transferred to Mariscal Sucre International Airport (Quito) for your flight home.

INCLUSIONS:

- Transfers on arrival and departure
- All meals and packed lunches (no drinks throughout)
- Specialized bilingual birding guide and private driver and vehicle
- Entrances to reserves and private gardens such as Antisana and Rolando, Angel Paz, Milpe, Silanche, Amaguza in Mashpi, Alambi, Yanacocha.
- All accommodations in first class hotels with private facilities .

EXCLUSIONS:

- All international flights
- All drinks
- Items of a personal nature
- Tips for staff

Thank you for choosing Nature Travel Birding.