

ECUADOR

Birding the Chocó-Andes Region: Western and Eastern Slopes of Ecuador

10 DAYS | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: **OCT - JUL**

Per square mile, Ecuador has the highest biodiversity in the world, including some 1,640 species of birds, many of which are rare and endemic. Discover the amazing contrasts of cloud forest and Andean landscapes on this 10-day birding adventure. With assistance from an expert guide, encounter a variety of birds, plants, and other wildlife while traversing a selection of Ecuador's 50 different ecosystems. The program begins with a journey to Mindo Loma Private Reserve and its 17 acres of primary and secondary recovering cloud forest. Also experience the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, an Important Bird Area (IBA) that protects some of the most spectacular Chocó endemics. Along the way, visit the workshop of a famous Ecuadorian ornithologist and artist, view the snow-capped Antisana Volcano, and straddle the equator at the Middle of the World Monument.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore diverse habitats at varying elevations in national and private reserves, including Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve, the subtropical rainforest at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, páramo ecosystem at Antisana Ecological Reserve, and more.
- Seek out some of Ecuador's approximately 130 hummingbird species, including the Giant Hummingbird, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, and Glowing Puffleg.
- Identify other target species like the Andean Condor, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Chocó Trogon, and dozens of tanagers.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting



BUFF-TAILED CORONET BY JULIAN LONDONO



ANTISANA VOLCANO BY MARCIO RAMALHO

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - QUITO

Upon arrival in Quito, you'll be met by your guide and transferred to the hotel. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo.*

DAY 2 - MINDO

Depart from the hotel early in the morning for Mindo via the Yanacocha and Quinde ecoroute for birding. Arrive at Yanacocha, a moss-clad temperate forest and Polylepis woodland on the side of Volcán Pichincha located at an altitude of approximately 10,000 ft. Yanacocha is the last refuge of the emblematic bird of Quito, the Black-breasted Puffleg (categorized as critically endangered). Other birds seen in the area are the Black-chested and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers, Golden-breasted and Sapphire-vented Pufflegs, the Great Sapphirewing, and the Sword-billed Hummingbird. Enjoy lunch at the reserve and continue through the ecoroute, with several stops en route to observe birds like the Toucan Barbet, the Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, and the Beautiful Jay. While driving down to the lower altitudes of the subtropical forest region, be on the lookout for Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and White-winged Brush-Finch. Visit Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve for hummingbird observation. The reserve sits over two major valleys and covers a large range of altitudes (4,750 to 7,210 ft) with several different habitats. Alambi has a recorded list of 250 species of birds and 32 hummingbirds seen either at the feeders or in the reserve. Continue to Mindo for check-in, program orientation, dinner and overnight. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - MINDO

This morning visit Milpe Bird Sanctuary, located in the subtropical rainforest. Milpe Bird Sanctuary covers 49 acres with an altitudinal range of 3,350 to 3,770 feet. Located in the Chocó Andean foothills, Los Bancos Milpe is in a Birdlife International-defined Important Bird Area (IBA), and birding guides consider

this one of the finest sites in all of Ecuador. Many of the most spectacular Chocó endemics are protected here, including Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Glistening-green Tanager, Chocó Trogon, Club-winged Manakin, and Long-wattled Umbrellabird, to name just a few. This site is also known for sightings of the rare Moss-backed Tanager. In the afternoon visit San Tadeo feeders where you can easily see a dozen different tanagers, aracarís, toucanets, and barbets. Return to the hotel for dinner. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - MINDO

Mashpi-Amagusa is the last foothill forest that directly connects to the lower subtropical western forest of Ecuador. Its unique location makes it particularly attractive for birders looking for the highest biodiversity regions with Chocó endemic birds. The altitude range is 2,450 to 5,600 ft. Chocó endemics that can be seen in the reserve or along the road include Rose-faced



ANDEAN COCK-OF-THE-ROCK BY JDPECUADOR

Parrot, Orange-fronted Barbet, Toucan Barbet, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Moss-backed Tanager, Choco Vireo, Long-wattled Umbrellabird and brightly colored passerines like Indigo Flowerpiercer. Boxed lunch during the excursion. In the afternoon return to the lodge. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 5 - MINDO

Depart early from the hotel for the one-hour drive to Pedro Vicente Maldonado, where the Río Silanche Reserve is located. This important site is one of the last remaining accessible forest remnants found in this key life zone. It is situated in hilly lowland forest at an altitude between 985-1,150 ft. The main feature at Río Silanche is its incredible birding. Its mixed-species foraging flocks are packed with many important Chocó regional endemic species. Spend much of the day here searching for species like the Purple-chested Hummingbird, Gray-and-gold Tanager, Orange-fronted Barbet, Stub-tailed Antbird, Black-tipped Cotinga, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Scarlet-breasted Dacnis, Scarlet-and-white Tanager, and Blue-whiskered Tanager. Continue to Mirador Río Blanco for lunch. This location is a birder's dream and great for spotting tanagers. Return to the lodge in the late afternoon. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - SANGOLQUI

Early in the morning depart toward Refugio Paz de las Aves located near Nanegalito (13 miles northeast of Mindo, at 4,590 ft). Angel Paz, resident and owner of the refuge, decided to protect his property and convert it into a sanctuary for antpittas and cocks-of-the-rock. In recent years the reserve has become popular as it is easy to spot at least three species of antipittas: Great, Yellow-breasted and Mustached Antpitta. Other birds seen in the area are the Crested and Golden-headed Quetzals. En route make an additional stop north of Quito at the Mitad del Mundo Monument, and then continue to the hotel in Sangolquí. Dinner and overnight. *Overnight at Hacienda La Carriona. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - COSANGA

Full morning birding along the trails at Antisana Ecological Reserve. Located between the Andes and the Amazon lowlands, the privately owned Antisana Ecological Reserve's 297,000 acres have varied ecological zones ranging from páramo (18,886 ft) to lowland rainforest. More than 70 bird species can be found here, including the Andean Condor, Giant Hummingbird, Carunculated Caracara, Black-faced Ibis, Speckled Teal, Andean Duck, Silvery Grebe, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Gull, Andean Lapwing, and Aplomado Falcon. The snow-capped Antisana Volcano is the fourth highest peak in Ecuador with an altitude of 18,900 feet, adding to the breathtaking Andean scenery that can be enjoyed along the trails. In the afternoon continue to Cabañas San Isidro. This private reserve forms an important bridge between the Antisana and Gran Sumaco Reserves, and the area

boasts a bird list of about 330 species, many of which are more easily found here than anywhere else in the country. *Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - COSANGA

Explore the area accompanied by your guide. San Isidro Lodge is situated at about 6,726 feet above sea level, but the trails lead through elevations ranging from 7,874 feet all the way down to 6,069 feet, making this an ideal base to observe Andean birds from the lower reaches of the temperate zone down into the heart of the subtropical zone. Among the rarities here are Highland Tinamou, Bicolored Antvireo, Peruvian Antpitta, and White-faced Nunbird. Commonly spotted species include Powerful Woodpecker, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Inca Jay, Black-billed Peppershrike, Wattled Guan, and Glossy-black Thrush. Look for Sickle-winged Guan, Masked Trogon, Andean Motmot, Streak-capped and Striped Treehunters, Long-tailed Antbird, Slate-crowned Antpitta, Black-chested Fruiteater, Pale-footed Swallow, and a variety of colorful tanagers among the mixed understory. *Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - QUITO

After breakfast, check out of San Isidro and continue to Guango Lodge. Located about one hour away from San Isidro, Guango lies at an elevation of about 8,858 feet on Ecuador's eastern slope. This area is classified as humid temperate forest, a habitat distinctly different from San Isidro and is characterized by its more stunted trees, thicker canopy, cooler climate, and different bird and plant composition. The hummingbird feeders here are especially popular, with some of the more noteworthy species being

Mountain Velvetbreast, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, Golden-breasted and Glowing Pufflegs, Mountain Avocetbill, and White-bellied and Gorgeted Woodstars. Other birds of particular interest that are seen regularly include the Andean Guan, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan and more. Enjoy lunch at Guango and in the afternoon continue to the Cumbayá Valley to visit the house of the famous Ecuadorian ornithologist, Juan Manuel Carrion. Juan Manuel is also a nature artist, actively involved in conservation as executor of communication and environmental education projects. He is a pioneer in publishing illustrated books on birds of Ecuador and has been recognized as "the painter of the birds of Ecuador." Visit his gardens and workshop to see local birds and admire his wonderful artwork. Enjoy a lecture given by a local ornithologist, learn more about some of the several species seen throughout the program. Afterwards continue the drive to the hotel. This evening reflect on the journey during a farewell dinner. *Overnight at Rincón de Puenbo. (BLD)*

DAY 10 - DEPARTURE

Transfer to the airport for the flight home. (B)



ANDEAN CONDOR BY KEVEN LAW

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Binoculars are required for this program. We recommend wide angle binoculars, something within the range of 7x35, 8x40 or even 10x50 with good light gathering characteristics. Although light and comfortable, pocket binoculars don't work as well in low light conditions.

Participants should be in good physical condition and able to walk unassisted for several hours per day.

PROGRAM PRICING

\$2,665 (12 participants + 1 leader)

\$2,815 (10 participants + 1 leader)

\$3,175 (7 participants + 1 leader)

International airfare, gratuities, alcoholic beverages, and items of a personal nature are not included. Valid for travel in 2020.

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants traveling in 2018 or beyond. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due upon booking and no later than four months prior to departure. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are not refundable.



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