



GOLDEN Tanager BY REINIER MUNGUIA

ECUADOR

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

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

An extraordinary abundance of bird life inhabits the forests of northwestern Ecuador. Amid cloud forest, rainforest, páramo, and the eastern and western slopes of the Andes Mountains, you'll seek out as many of the country's 1,640-plus species as possible with assistance from your expert guide on this 10-day adventure. In particular, much of the avifauna you'll encounter is endemic to the Chocó region, while other species are more easily found here than any place else. 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, Toucan Barbet, Chocó Trogon, and dozens of tanagers.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

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



ANTISANA VOLCANO BY MARCIO RAMALHO



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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.*

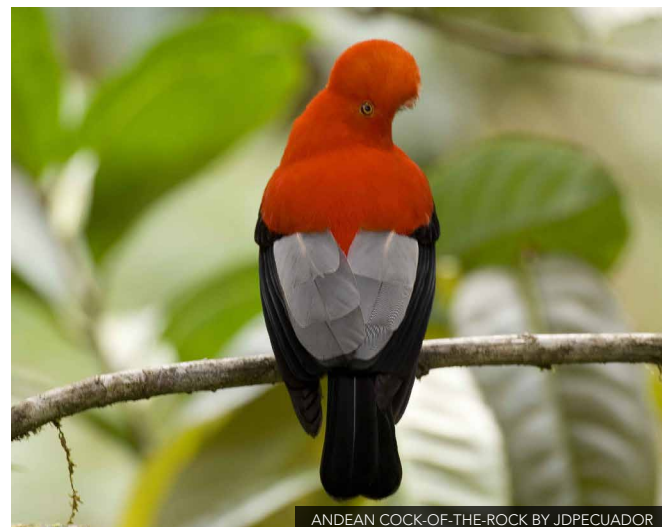
DAY 2 - MINDO

Depart early for Mindo, making several stops en route along the Paseo del Quinde ecoroute, known also as Nono-Mindo Road. Your first stop is at Yanacocha Biological Reserve. Clinging to the slopes of Pichincha Volcano at an altitude of approximately 10,000 feet, and protecting 2,371 acres of mostly elfin *Polylepis* forest, this protected area was established to safeguard the critically endangered and endemic Black-breasted Puffleg. Other high-altitude species include Andean Guan, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Golden-breasted and Sapphire-vented Pufflegs, Great Sapphirewing, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Rufous and Tawny Antpittas, Ocellated and Blackish Tapaculos, Black-chested and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers, Golden-crowned Tanager, and many more. After a picnic lunch at the reserve, continue driving with quick stops to look for stunners such as Toucan Barbet, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, and 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. Next, stop at Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve to check out the feeders and neighboring forest. Regulars include Brown Violetear, Booted Racket-tail, Fawn-breasted and Green-crowned Brilliants, and Golden and Silver-throated Tanagers. There are 250 species—including 32 hummingbirds—recorded in the reserve, which covers a large range of altitudes (4,750 to 7,210 feet) and spans two major basins: the Alambi Valley and the pristine Goaycape Valley. Continue to Mindo in time for a program orientation and dinner. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - MINDO

This morning, visit Milpe Bird Sanctuary, a 250-acre reserve with an altitudinal range of 3,350 to 3,770 feet and protecting

an important tract of remnant forest in the Chocó foothills. The Chocó is an ecoregion and biodiversity hotspot that ranges from the Pacific coast of Colombia south to Ecuador, and it supports the largest number of restricted-range birds of any Endemic Bird Area in the Americas, with 62 species. Chocó endemics reliably found at Milpe include Pallid Dove, White-whiskered Hermit, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Blue-tailed (Chocó) Trogon, Chocó Toucan, Esmeraldas Antbird, Club-winged Manakin, and Rufous-throated Tanager. Endemics that require a little more luck include Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Glistening-green Tanager, and Moss-backed Tanager. The reserve is also famous for its numerous manakin leks, both Club-winged and Golden-winged Manakins. In the afternoon, visit the productive feeders at the family-run San Tadeo Birdwatching. The mix of birds here often includes standouts such as Violet-tailed Sylph, Red-headed Barbet, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Flame-faced Tanager, Black-capped Tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, and more Chocó endemics: Brown Inca, Velvet-purple Coronet, Empress Brilliant, Dusky Chlorospingus, and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. Return to the hotel for dinner. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*



ANDEAN COCK-OF-THE-ROCK BY JDPECUADOR

DAY 4 - MINDO

Spend the day at Amagusa Reserve, a 320-acre protected area in the Chocó foothills that functions as a critical link between lower subtropical forest and higher montane forest at neighboring Mashpi Lodge. The altitude here ranges from 2,450 to 5,600 feet. The birding is fantastic along this corridor, with many Chocó endemics that are difficult to find elsewhere, such as Rose-faced Parrot, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Chocó Vireo, Moss-backed Tanager, Black Solitaire (seasonal), and Indigo Flowerpiercer; a few, like Long-wattled Umbrellabird, require a little luck. Feeders on-site have many of the same hummingbirds and tanagers seen at Milpe and offer another great opportunity for photos. Enjoy a boxed lunch during the excursion and return to the lodge in the afternoon. Dinner at the lodge. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 5 - MINDO

Depart early for the one-hour drive to Rio Silanche, another reserve owned and managed by the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation. At an altitudinal range of 985 to 1,150 feet, the reserve sits firmly in the western lowlands, a region of Ecuador that has experienced considerable change from logging, agriculture, and other pressures. Famous for its large mixed flocks, a stroll on the preserve's trails is rewarded with specialties that include Dusky Pigeon, Purple-chested Hummingbird, Orange-fronted Barbet, Stub-tailed Antbird, Black-tipped Cotinga, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Gray-and-gold Tanager, Scarlet-breasted Dacnis, Scarlet-and-white Tanager, Blue-whiskered Tanager, and many more. Continue to Mirador Rio Blanco for lunch and to check out the feeders. Regular visitors include Green Thorntail, Crowned Woodnymph, Ecuadorian Thrush, and several euphonias and tanagers. Return to the lodge in the late afternoon. Dinner at the lodge. *Overnight at Sachatamia Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - SANGOLQUÍ

Check out and start early with a visit to Refugio Paz de las Aves near Nanegalito (13 miles northeast of Mindo, at 4,590 feet). Angel Paz is the proprietor of this private reserve northeast of Mindo, and his story is an excellent example of community conservation. Angel was formerly a local logger who transformed his property into a haven for antpittas and Andean Cocks-of-the-rock over a decade ago. His early fame came quickly when he learned how to coax the rare and elusive Giant Antpitta into the open with earthworms. He now has six different species of antpittas staked out on his property: Giant, Yellow-breasted, Ochre-breasted, Chestnut-crowned, Moustached, and Scaled. Other incredible birds on the property include Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Olivaceous Piha, Dark-backed Wood-Quail, and a fantastic mix of hummingbirds. En route to Quito, make a quick stop at the Mitad del Mundo Monument. Dinner at the hotel in Sangolquí. *Overnight at Hacienda La Carriona. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - COSANGA

Spend a full morning exploring the wind-swept highlands below the snow-capped Antisana Volcano, Ecuador's fourth-

highest peak. Bird a mix of elfin forest, páramo grassland (18,886 feet), and alpine lakes in Antisana Ecological Reserve. At the tree line, look for Shining Sunbeam, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, and Pearled Treerunner, among others. In the brushier areas, species such as Ecuadorian Hillstar, Many-striped Canastero, and Andean Tit-Spinetail can be found. Further up, in the grasslands and lakes, search for Andean Condor, Giant Hummingbird, Black-faced Ibis, Silvery Grebe, Andean Gull, Andean Lapwing, and more. In the afternoon, continue to San Isidro Lodge. The lodge's 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.

Dinner is at the lodge. *Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - COSANGA

The cloud forest reserve at San Isidro Lodge encompasses nearly 3,000 acres on the eastern slope of the Andes at an elevational range of 6,069 to 7,874 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. Nearly 500 species have been recorded in the area, and several such as the mysterious "San Isidro" Owl and Peruvian Antpitta are extremely local and rare. Birds regularly encountered include Wattled and Sickie-winged Guans, Golden-headed and Crested Quetzals, Masked Trogon, Andean Motmot,

Southern Emerald-Toucanet, Powerful and Crimson-mantled Woodpeckers, Speckle-faced Parrot, Chestnut-crowned and White-bellied Antpittas, the beautiful Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Black-billed Peppershrike, Green (Inca) Jay, Saffron-crowned Tanager, and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia. Have dinner at the lodge. *Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - QUITO

After breakfast, return to Quito with a stop en route at Guango Lodge, another private reserve on the eastern slope located above San Isidro at an elevation of 8,858 feet. Cooler and often shrouded in mist, habitats here include humid temperate forest, chusquea bamboo thickets, and swift mountain streams. The area is characterized by its more stunted trees, thicker canopy, cooler climate, and different bird and plant composition. The feeders at the lodge are often hopping with birds; enjoy close views of Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Turquoise Jay, and more. Birds regularly found in the surrounding reserve include Torrent Duck, Andean Guan, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, White-capped Dipper, Slaty Brushfinch, Lacrimose and Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanagers, and Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager. Have lunch at Guango, and in the afternoon, continue through the Cumbayá Valley to Quito. Enjoy a lecture given by a local ornithologist and learn more about some of the species seen throughout the program. This evening, reflect on the journey during a farewell dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (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.



PROGRAM PRICING

\$2,695 (12 participants + 1 leader)

\$2,795 (10 participants + 1 leader)

\$3,195 (7 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, local guides in each region for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel in 2021.

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. 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 are required to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payment is due at 95 days prior to departure.

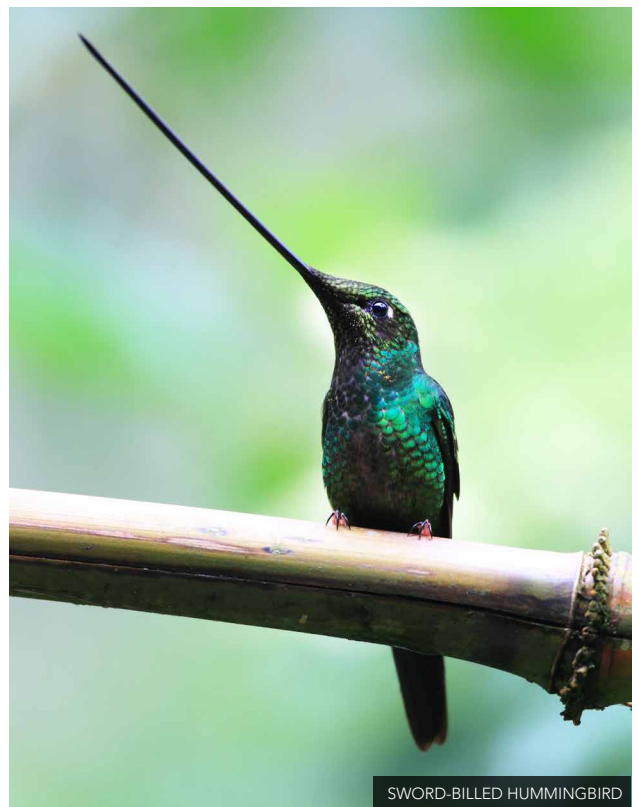
ACTIVITY LEVEL

3

MODERATE

WHAT TO EXPECT

This birding adventure journeys through a cross-section of Andean landscapes while exploring an abundance of avifauna. You will traverse various ecosystems, at a range of elevations throughout the 10-day program. The program begins with 4 nights in Mindo where you'll bird through temperate forest alongside a volcano (elevation ~10,000 ft.), cloud forest (elevation ~3,350-3,370), and subtropical rainforest (elevation ~985 – 1150 ft.) Continue for one night at medium elevation cloud forest in Sangolquí and 3 nights in Cosanga to bird through high elevation (~11,500 ft.) páramo, lowland rainforest (~6,069 ft.) and humid temperate forest (~8,858 ft.). The program is moderately paced. Expect 4-8 hours of birding each day through consistently varying elevations on uneven, occasionally slippery terrain. Overland transfers are about 2–2.5 hours in a private air conditioned vehicles. Pack clothing that can be worn in layers as temperature will change with elevation variations.



SWORD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe