



Tico Tours

Ecuador- "A Country for Birdwatchers"

Duration- 10 Days (9 Full Days of Birding)

Includes: Accommodations, all meals, private transportation, bilingual naturalist guide (specialized on birdwatching), and all entrance fees.

INTRODUCTION: The smallest country in the rugged Andean highlands, Ecuador has an array of vibrant indigenous cultures, well-preserved colonial architecture, otherworldly volcanic landscapes and dense rainforest. And all that in a nation no bigger than the US state of Nevada. Ecuador is one of the premiere destinations for birding in the world, with about **1,535 known bird species** in the continental area plus 38 more endemic to the Galapagos Islands. Geographic good fortune has blessed Ecuador with a wide variety of faunal zones, including some of the richest on this planet, each with its characteristic birds. Ecuador's Amazonian faunal zone alone has more than 600 species of birds, and several other Ecuadorian zones are nearly as rich.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Upon your arrival to Quito, our guides will be waiting for you to meet and transfer you to your hotel.

Night at Dann Carlton, Sebastian, or Cafe Cultura Hotels

Day 2: Very early in the morning we will drive to Yanacocha Reserve in the high montane cloud forest on Volcan Pichincha at 11,300ft, traveling to the northwest of Quito crossing the west slope of the Andes range to the Tandayapa region enjoying our box lunch en-route. The reserve protects 964 ha of elfin Polylepis forest, which is home to the **Black-breasted Puffleg** (*Eriocnemis nigrivestis*). As far as we are aware, the reserve contains the entire world range of this very rare

hummingbird. Birds in this area may include *Black-collared Jay*, *Barred Fruiteater*, *Hooded* and *Scarlet-bellied* and the Choco Endemic *Black-chested Mountain-Tanagers*.

In the afternoon, we will visit the famous Tony's House, where with a cup of coffee and accompanied by Tony, we will see a great variety of birds, especially hummingbirds with more than 30 species recorded, including *Green-tailed Trainbearer*, *Shining Sunbeam*, *Tyrian Metaltail*, *Sword-billed Hummingbird*, *Buff-rumped Starfrontlet*, *Buff-tailed Coronets*, *Collared Inca* and *White-tailed Hillstar*, Choco Endemics here may include *Brown Inca*, *Violet-tailed Sylph* and *Gorgeted Sunangel*. Whilst on Tony's Balcony we will look skywards for the rare *Spot-fronted Swift* in amongst the common *Chestnut-collared Swift* and we will seek raptors such as *Plain-breasted Hawk* and *Barred Forest-Falcon*. Late afternoon departure to Maquipucuna Reserve.

Night at Maquipucuna Lodge

Day 3: We will arise very early and, after a cup of coffee or tea and a quick bite, we will hike one of the trails close to the lodge. Here we will likely encounter a great deal of bird activity. Exciting birds we hope to encounter include *Golden-headed Quetzal*, *Crimson-rumped Toucanet*, *Violet-tailed Sylph*, and *Broad-billed Motmot*. After breakfast we will visit some of the projects of this foundation. Later we will have lunch and then take a short walk in the area to spot more incredible birds.

Night at Maquipucuna Lodge

Day 4: Birding in the morning around Maquipucuna Lodge, followed by breakfast and departure to the outstanding Mindo, one of the best known birding localities in Ecuador, with an impressive bird list of 360 species, highlights including *Maroon-tailed Parakeet*, *Toucan Barbet*, *Nariño Tapaculo*, *Golden-headed Quetzal* and *Golden and Flame-faced Tanager*. Along the way to Mindo, more exactly, Sachatamia Lodge, we will be keeping an eye open for many species that we may observe from roadside flocks. On arrival at Sachatamia a delicious lunch will be waiting for us. In the afternoon, we will walk near Sachatamia seeking out the beautiful *Long-wattled Umbrellabird* and other species such as *Giant* and *Scaled Antpitta*, *Choco Toucan*, *Scaled Fruiteater*, *Tanager-Finch* and *Club-winged Manakin*. Target birds here include *Wattled* and *Sickle-winged Guan*, *Bronze-winged Parrot*, *Sparkling Violet-ear*, *Andean Emerald*, *Booted Racket-tail* and *Long-tailed Sylph*. We will also investigate their hummingbird feeders, which attract many of the resident hummingbirds of the Mindo region, but also include the rare Choco endemics *Empress Brilliant* and *Velvet-Purple Coronet*.

Night at Sachatamia Lodge (Dinner Breakfast, Lunch included)

Day 5: Early in the morning, we will have the opportunity to have one of the most amazing experiences, visiting the *Andean Cock-of-the Rock* lek. In the breeding season, the males produce a special sound and fly and dance about like acrobats waiting for the female to choose one of them to mate with. This is truly one of the most awe-inspiring sights in the neotropics. After breakfast we will walk through the different trails of Mindo-Nambillo Reserve. This is an excellent area for birding. We will have lunch in Mindo Gardens thus enabling us to continue exploring this beautiful forest where highlights are likely to include *Toucan Barbet*, *Sunbittern*, and *Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl* before returning to Sachatamia.

Night at Sachatamia Lodge

Day 6: We will have breakfast and time to walk in the area looking for more bird species such as *Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan*, *Crested Quetzal*, *Masked Trogon*, *Choco Toucan*, and *Powerful Woodpecker*. Other colorful birds we may see here include *Blue-winged Mountain-tanager*, *Green and Black Fruiteater*, and *Moss-backed Tanager*. After lunch we will continue our trip back to Quito. On the way, we will stop at the Mitad del Mundo "Middle of the World" to have the unusual opportunity to be in two hemispheres at the same time!

Night - Dann Carlton, Sebastian, or Cafe Cultura Hotels (Dinner, Breakfast included)

Day 7: After breakfast we will be transferred to the Antisana Ecological Reserve (Volcan Antisana is the 4th largest volcano in Ecuador at 5758m, 17274ft), where we will observe many representative bird species of the highlands including *Shining Sunbeam*, *Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant*, *Paramo Pipit*, *Giant Conebill*, and *Spectacled Whitestart*. In the morning we will go to Mica Lake in order to see *Silvery Grebe*, *Andean Teal*, *Andean Duck*, *Yellow-billed Pintail*, *Andean Coot* and other high Andean waterfowl, as well as many land birds such as *Aplomado Falcon*, *Andean Gull*, *Andean Lapwing* and *Carunculated Caracara*. Here we have a high probability of connecting with the majestic *Andean Condor* and while we are looking upwards for this we will also be on the lookout for *Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle* and *Variable Hawk*. We should also find both *Bar-winged* and *Stout-billed Cinclodes* here and *Black-faced Ibis*, an extremely rare species in Ecuador, all of this set amongst some of the most spectacular scenery in the country.

We will enjoy a nice lunch in Hacienda Antisana. After lunch, we will travel to the Papallacta region. This area has well conserved patches of Polylepis forest and is an excellent place to observe high mountain bird species. The 4000-meter high páramo holds a fascinating group of high-altitude species. We hope to see *Variable Hawk*, *Many-striped Canastero*, *Tawny Antpitta* and, perhaps, an *Andean Condor* or two. We search nearby "polylepis" groves for specialties such

as *Black-backed Bush-Tanager*. Lower down near the town of Papallacta, we watch for the spectacular *Sword-billed Hummingbird* as well as a host of other great birds like *Great Sapphire-wing*, and the colorful *Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager*. We will also scan the Río Papallacta for the "torrent trio" of *Torrent Duck*, *Torrent Tyrannulet* and the superb *White-capped Dipper*. From here, we will continue our trip to Cabañas San Isidro.

Night Cabañas San Isidro

Day 8: Early in the morning we will begin our hike through some of the different trails of the lodge, searching for bird activity. We will seek out specialties such as *Black-chested Fruiteater*, *Long-tailed Antbird*, *Barred Antthrush* and the little-known *Peruvian Antpitta*, a nest of which was discovered right on the property! We will return to the lodge for breakfast and later we will travel to the Cordillera de Los Huacamayos where we walk one of the trails specialized for birdwatching. Here it is possible to see many different species and we'll look for *Black-billed Mountain-Toucan*, *White-bellied Antpitta*, *Bicolored Antvireo* and the very local *White-rimmed Brush-Finch* among others. We will have a box lunch en route on our way back to San Isidro.

Night Cabañas San Isidro

Day 9: Breakfast and departure to Quito after an enlightening trip of birding, full of a variety of ecosystems, beautiful views, cozy places, wonderful food, and the most spectacular, colorful birds. In Quito we will have time to rest or visit the city followed by a Farewell dinner party.

Night at- Dann Carlton, Sebastian, or Cafe Cultura Hotels

Day 10: After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport for flights home.