



**BIRDING TOUR PERU: CUSCO AND
APURÍMAC JEWELS**

12 – 19 DECEMBER 2020



Buff-fronted Owl (photo Alan van Norman) is one of our targets on this trip.

Our itinerary “Birding Tour Peru: Cusco and Apurímac Jewels” is designed to provide you with one of the best selections of endemic, range-restricted, and classic Andean species in one of the most popular and famous locations in South America and the world, Cusco – and in one week only. Cusco is visited by thousands of tourists every year due to its rich culture and archaeology, but few people know that the Cusco region also possesses a large number of different ecosystems and holds several endemic birds that are only found here.

We will start our trip in Cusco, visiting the Huacarpay wetlands as an introduction to several Andean species and looking for our first endemic, **Rusty-fronted Canastero**. Then the trip will take us to the picturesque town of Ollantaytambo to stay at the comfortable Hotel Pakaritampu. The gardens of this beautiful, small hotel hold our second target of the day, the endemic **Bearded Mountaineer**. We will use the Hotel Pakaritampu as our base for the next three nights in order to explore the famous Abra Malaga Pass mountain area.

The Polylepis temperate forest is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the Andes, with only a few patches of forest remaining. We will spend a full day at the base of the snow-capped Veronica mountain, looking for the endemics **White-browed Tit-Spinetail**, **Creamy-crested Spinetail**, **Junin Canastero**, and **White-tufted Sunbeam** and for **Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant**, **Tawny Tit-Spinetail**, and with luck the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Royal Cinclodes**. Below the mountain pass the road descends into the cloudforest, where several flocks of mountain tanagers are often seen, including the endemic **Parodi’s Hemispingus**, and here we have our first chance for the endemics **Inca Wren** and **Cuzco Brushfinch**.

After three nights in Ollantaytambo we will take a train to Aguas Calientes (now officially Machu Picchu Pueblo) and visit Machu Picchu. We shall spend a couple of hours on the site for those who want to briefly visit and take pictures of the site, but, most importantly, we will have another chance for **Inca Wren**. Birding the lush tropical forest below Machu Picchu will provide also good chances for the endemic **Masked Fruiteater** and the range-restricted **Slaty Tanager**.

Finally, the Apurímac valley near Cusco provides excellent chances to add more endemic birds to the trip list, such as **Apurimac Spinetail**, **Apurimac Brushfinch**, **Chestnut-breasted Mountain Finch**, the localized **Vilcabamba Tapaculo**, and **Koepcke’s Screech Owl**. In addition to this amazing list of species you will be able to have close-up views of the majestic **Andean Condor** at the condor viewpoint at Chonta and a good opportunity for the mysterious **Buff-fronted Owl**.

This itinerary could easily be combined with custom dates for our Central Peru Tour, Northern Peru Tour, and Northern Ecuador Tour with one night in Lima required. Please ask us for details.

Itinerary (8 days, 7 nights)

Day 1. Flight to Cusco, birding the Cusco area, transfer to Ollantaytambo

We will have an early flight from Lima to the city of Cusco and transfer to the Huacarpay Lake. We will explore the arid scrub surroundings, looking for the endemic **Rusty-fronted Canastero**.

The reeds around the lake hold **Yellow-winged Blackbird**, **Many-colored Rush Tyrant**, and **Wren-like Rushbird**. Other birds include **Band-tailed Seedeater**, **Blue-and-yellow Tanager**, **Chiguanco Thrush**, **Streak-fronted Thornbird**, **Andean Flicker**, **Green-tailed Trainbearer**, **Golden-billed Saltator**, **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**, **Andean Lapwing**, and several waterfowl such as **Puna Teal**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Yellow-billed Teal**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **White-tufted Grebe**, **Andean Coot**, **Puna Ibis**, and others. We will then transfer to Ollantaytambo, where we will spend the rest of the afternoon enjoying the hotel gardens, looking for **Black-throated Flowerpiercer** and the endemic **Bearded Mountaineer**.

Overnight: Hotel Pakaritampu, Ollantaytambo

Day 2. Birding the Abra Malaga mountain pass

We will have an early start to explore the famous Abra Malaga mountain pass at the base of the snowcapped Veronica Mountain. This area is good for several range-restricted *Polylepis* species such as **White-browed Tit-Spinetail**, **Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant**, **Giant Conebill**, **Line-fronted Canastero**, **Streak-headed Antpitta**, **Puna Tapaculo**, **Tit-like Dacnis**, **Junin Canastero**, **Tawny Tit-Spinetail**, and with some luck the Critical Endangered (IUCN) **Royal Cinclodes**. Other birds in the area might include our first chance for **Andean Condor**, **Andean Goose**, **Great Sapphirewing**, the endemic **White-tufted Sunbeam**, **Shining Sunbeam**, **Andean Parakeet**, **Short-billed Pipit**, and **Mountain Caracara**.

Overnight: Hotel Pakaritampu, Ollantaytambo

Day 3. Birding the Quillabamba road

Today we will focus on species that occur at the lowest parts of the Abra Malaga mountain pass along the Quillabamba road. We will look for the endemics **Parodi's Hemispingus**, **Inca Wren**, **Cuzco Brushfinch**, **Marcapata Spinetail**, and **Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant**, and for **Golden-collared Tanager**, **Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager**, **Grass-green Tanager**, **Plushcap**, **Black-eared Hemispingus**, **Three-striped Hemispingus**, **Puna Thistletail**, **Diademed Tapaculo** and **Yungas Pygmy Owl**.

Overnight: Pakaritampu, Ollantaytambo

Day 4. Visit to Machu Picchu and birding the area

After a 1.5-hour train ride from Ollantaytambo we will reach Aguas Calientes, the gateway to the world-famous Machu Picchu ruins. We will spend a couple of hours visiting the ruins and looking for the endemic **Inca Wren** and for **Pale-legged Warbler**. In the afternoon we will walk along the railway, looking for **Highland Motmot**, **Torrent Duck**, **White-capped Dipper**, **Saffron-crowned** and **Blue-necked Tanagers**, **Azara's Spinetail**, **Grey-breasted Wood Wren**, **Torrent Tyrannulet**, **White-bellied Hummingbird**, **Slate-throated Whitestart**, and others.

Overnight: Casa Andina Classic Machu Picchu

Day 5. Birding the Mandor Valley, transfer to Cusco

We have a full morning to explore the lush forest on the way to the Mandor Valley near Aguas Calientes, looking for the endemic **Masked Fruiteater**, **Versicolored Barbet**, **Golden-naped** and **Silver-backed Tanager**, **Blue-naped Chlorophonia**, **White-eared** and **Andean Solitaires**, **Ashy-headed**, **Plumbeous-crowned**, **Mottle-cheeked**, and **Sclater's Tyrannulets**, **Ocellated Piculet**, **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch**, **Mitred Parakeet**, **Plum-crowned Parrot**, **Slaty Tanager**, **Barred Becard**, **Golden-olive Woodpecker**, **Capped Conebill**, the endemic **Green-**

and-white Hummingbird, and **Dusky-green Oropendola**. In the afternoon we will return to Ollantaytambo by train and then transfer to Cusco.

Overnight: Casa Andina Cusco Hotel

Day 6. The Andean Condor and Limatambo

We will drive to Limatambo and explore the condor viewpoint at Chonta, where we will have close-up encounters with **Andean Condor**. Other birds in the area include **American Kestrel**, **Variable Hawk**, **Aplomado Falcon**, and **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**. Our lodge grounds are good for the seldom-seen **Buff-fronted Owl** (which will be the main target here), **Pacific Pygmy Owl**, and the localized subspecies of the endemic **Koepcke's Screech Owl** (sometimes called 'Apurimac Screech Owl').

Overnight: Yoga Limatomba Guesthouse, Limatomba

Day 7. Birding the Mollepata area

Today we will explore the Mollepata valley, looking for the endemics **Vilcabamba Tapaculo**, **Creamy-crested Spinetail**, **Apurimac Brushfinch**, **Apurimac Spinetail** and for the localized **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch**, **Tyrian Metaltail**, and others. Here we also will have a second chance for **Buff-fronted Owl** after dusk.

Overnight: Yoga Limatomba Guesthouse, Limatomba

Day 8. Departure

After an exciting week of birding in the Andes we will return to Cusco to connect with our domestic flight back to Lima, where the tour ends.

Duration: 8 Days
Dates: 12 – 19 December 2019
Limit (Group size): 4 - 8
Start: Lima
End: Lima

Price: US\$ 3150 per person sharing (4 - 8 participants) plus US\$ 400 for domestic flights, which we will book for you

Single Supplement: US\$ 548

Price includes:

Accommodation in hotels and lodges (except where indicated)
 Transfer Lima hotel to airport on day 1
 Private transport
 Private tour leader
 Meals (except where indicated)
 Bottled water (during activities in the field)
 Train tickets Ollantaytambo – Aguas Calientes – Ollantaytambo
 Bus ticket Aguas Calientes – Machu Picchu – Aguas Calientes
 Admission fees

Price excludes:

International and domestic flights

Accommodation in Lima before the tour starts and on day 8

Transfer from the airport to the hotel before the tour starts

Any meals before the tour starts and all meals on day 8 except breakfast

Personal expenses such as drinks, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.

Gratuities

Any activities that are not described in the itinerary, such as city tours, museum visits, markets, etc.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide to the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Trip Notes

This tour starts early in the morning on day 1; therefore clients need to arrive in Lima the day before.

We will stay at comfortable and nice accommodations during the trip, but they are not luxurious. We will use the Pakaritampu Hotel for three nights and the Casa Andina chain for two different nights in Cusco and Aguas Calientes. Our small lodge in Limatambo is basic but charming; they serve only vegetarian food there. We will have many breakfasts and lunches in the field while birding, but always a hot dinner at the hotels.

The trip involves early starts every day with not many breaks during the first days. We will walk and hike near the vehicle quite often. We have to walk some steep terrain throughout the trip (even though we will try to do so as little as possible), including a short hike at 4200 – 4400 meters at the Abra Malaga pass. Visiting Machu Picchu also requires dealing with steep terrain and quite a few steps.

Snacks and hot coffee and tea are always available in the car.