

# Birding Ecotours



## BIRDING TOUR ECUADOR: SOUTHERN ECUADOR — A FEAST OF ENDEMIC

02 - 20 MARCH 2025



*Jocotoco Antpitta* is one of our main targets on this trip.

Although it is not as famous as the northern Ecuador birding circuit, the southern Ecuador route is truly a gem for birders, offering a very unique set of birds, including some country endemics and several range-restricted species shared with adjacent northern Peru only, with several of them hard to get in that neighboring country.

During these 19 days we will have the chance to explore a unique suite of highly endangered natural habitats, including the Chocó forest found only in western Colombia and Ecuador and home to the amazing **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** and **Club-winged Manakin**, and the Tumbesian zone, a very localized habitat that extends through southwest Ecuador and northwest Peru only and is home to a large number of range-restricted species such as **Pale-browed Tinamou**, **Grey-backed Hawk**, and **Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner**.

We also will cross different deciduous lowlands, high-elevation cloudforest, and páramo, looking for **Jocotoco Antpitta**, as well as tropical valleys extending the number of habitats encountered during this trip while visiting a few of the Jocotoco Foundation's private bird reserves. On the foothills of the Andes of the Cordillera del Condor we will visit Cabañas Yankuam in search of the mythical **Orange-throated Tanager** and **Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher**.

The Podocarpus National Park and the foothills of the Cabañas Ecológica Copalinga are home to several tanager flocks and a high diversity of hummingbirds, such as the beautiful **Spangled Coquette**, **Amazonian Umbrellabird**, **Wire-crested Thorntail**, and the shy **Grey Tinamou**.

We will also explore the Cerro de Arcos in search of the endemic **Blue-throated Hillstar**, which inhabit a small portion of the southern Andes and was only discovered in 2017!

Finally, the Polylepis Forest, which is rapidly vanishing in the Andes of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, is home to special birds like the endemic **Violet-throated Metaltail** and the sought-after **Giant Conebill**.

Please do join us on this amazing 19-day Birding Ecotours birding trip! We are sure you will have a fantastic and bird-filled time with us!



*We should see many special birds on this tour like this **White-necked Parakeet**.*

### Itinerary (19 days/18 nights)

#### Day 1. Arrival in Quito and transfer to the hotel

You will arrive at Quito airport and transfer to

Overnight: Hacienda Jimenita, Quito

#### Day 2. Churute Mangroves Ecological Reserve, transfer to Buenaventura Reserve

After enjoying the grounds of the Hacienda Jimenita Wildlife Reserve, we will take our flight to Santa Rosa, two hours from our first lodge in southern Ecuador. We'll bird the humid montane forest on the west slope of the Andes. Much of this habitat has been heavily fragmented in the country, but there is still some well-protected forest such as the private Buenaventura Reserve.

Overnight: Umbrellabird Lodge, Reserva Buenaventura



*Buenaventura is the best place to see the near endemic **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**.*

#### Days 3 - 4. Birding Buenaventura Reserve including the Umbrellabird lek

We will spend two more nights in the Buenaventura Reserve, looking for the endangered **El Oro Parakeet**, **Choco Toucan**, **Ochraceous Attila**, **Song Wren**, **Club-winged Manakin**, **Rufous** and **Broad-billed Motmots**, **White-whiskered** and **Barred Puffbirds**, **Rufous-throated Tanager**, **Black-winged Saltator**, of course the big star of the reserve, the impressive **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**, and, if we are lucky, the secretive **El Oro Tapaculo**. Hummingbird feeders are not exclusive to northern Ecuador, and here in Buenaventura you will have nice views of **White-tipped Sickbill**, **White-booted Racket-tail**, **Crowned Woodnymph**, **White-necked Jacobin**, **Green Thorntail**, **Brown Violetear**, **Violet-bellied Hummingbird**, **Andean Emerald**, **Green-crowned Brilliant**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, and **Wedge-tailed Hummingbird**.



Overnight: Umbrellabird Lodge, Reserva Buenaventura

### Days 5 - 7. Birding the Macara and Zapotillo Roads and Jorupe Reserve

We will be birding the Macara and Zapotillo Roads en route to Jorupe Reserve, where we will spend three nights. We'll have the chance to explore the well-renowned Tumbesian zone, which is a famous endemic hotspot that ranges from the southwest coast of Ecuador to extreme northwestern Peru and is considered one of the most endangered bird habitats in the world.

This habitat is characterized by dry deciduous and humid evergreen forest and is home to several species found only in this habitat. We will spend these days looking for **Pale-browed Tinamou**, **Tumbes Hummingbird**, **Tumbes Pewee**, **Red-masked** and **Grey-cheeked Parakeet**, the elusive **Grey-backed Hawk**, **Pacific Parrotlet**, **West Peruvian Screech Owl**, **Blackish-headed Spinetail**, **Elegant Crescentchest**, **Watkins's Antpitta**, **Crimson-breasted Finch**, **Ecuadorian Trogon**, **Saffron Siskin**, **Pacific Elaenia**, **Red-billed Scythebill**, **Ochre-bellied Dove**, **Ecuadorian Piculet**, and **Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner**, among others.

Overnight: Urraca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve



*The localized **Pallid Dove** can be seen in the Jorupe Reserve.*

### Day 8. Exploring the Sozoranga Road and the Utuana Reserve, transfer to Loja

Today we will leave Urraca Lodge and explore the Sozoranga Road, looking for higher-elevation species such as **Grey-headed Antbird**, **Piura Hemispingus**, **Black-cowled Saltator**, **Black-crested Tit-Tyrant**, **Rainbow Starfrontlet**, **Purple-throated Sunangel**, **Jelski's Chat-Tyrant**, **Chapman's Antshrike**, the localized **Loja Tyrannulet**, **Chestnut-collared Swallow**, **Bay-crowned** and **White-winged Brushfinches**, **Amazilia Hummingbird**, and **Collared Warbling Finch**. We will head to Loja and after supper, we will look for the recently discovered Ecuadorian population of **Koepcke's Screech Owl**, which until recently, was considered a Peruvian endemic.

Overnight: Grand Victoria Boutique Hotel, Loja

### Day 9. Exploring Podocarpus National Park and transfer to Tapichalaca Reserve

Today we will explore the Podocarpus National Park and the Tapichalaca Reserve. We will focus on the sought-after **Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan**, **Peruvian Antpitta**, **Plushcap**, **Chusquea Tapaculo**, **Rufous** and **Plain-tailed Wrens**, and with luck **Chestnut-crowned** and **Undulated Antpittas**. Other birds will include **Masked Mountain Tanager**, **Neblina Metaltail**, **Mouse-colored Thistletail**, **White-throated Tyrannulet**, **Blue-backed Conebill**, and **Andean Pygmy Owl**.

Overnight: Casa Simpson, Tapichalaca Reserve



*Tapichalaca Reserve is a good spot for Chestnut-naped Antpitta.*

### Day 10. Tapichalaca Reserve and Valladolid Road

Tapichalaca Reserve is famous as the major spot for the recently described, regionally endemic, and striking **Jocotoco Antpitta**. We should have great views at the worm feeding stations. Other good birds found in Tapichalaca Reserve include **Golden-plumed Parakeet**, **Bearded Guan**, **Lacrimose Mountain Tanager**, **Hooded Mountain Tanager**, **Barred Fruiteater**, **Turquoise Jay**, **Black-throated Tody-Tyrant**, **White-browed Spinetail**, and **Chusquea Tapaculo**. The hummingbird feeders attract **Collared Inca**, **Flame-throated Sunangel**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **Long-tailed Sylph**, and **Amethyst-throated Sunangel**.

Overnight: Casa Simpson, Tapichalaca Reserve

### Day 11. Birding the Zamora Road and transfer to Copalinga Lodge

We will descend into the upper tropical forest, birding the Zamora Road, where we should find species like **Torrent Duck**, **Oilbird**, **White-capped Tanager**, **Red-headed Barbet**, and the



most wanted **Vermilion Tanager**. Other flocks of tanagers include **Saffron-crowned, Golden, Orange-eared, Spotted, and Golden-eared Tanagers**. Here we may also see the range-restricted **Equatorial Greytail, Black-billed Seed Finch, Black-capped Donacobius**, and others. We will reach the nice Cabañas Ecológica Copalinga, where we will stay for two nights.

Overnight: Copalinga Lodge, Zamora

### Day 12. Birding Podocarpus National Park and Copalinga

Copalinga is famous for its very good service and for perhaps the easiest place to see the secretive **Grey Tinamou** at the lodge feeders. Other birds here include **Little Tinamou, White-throated Quail Dove, Wire-crested Thorntail, Spangled Coquette, Little Woodstar, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Lanceolated Monklet, White-fronted Tyrannulet, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Western Striped Manakin, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet**, and with luck the elusive **Amazonian Umbrellabird**.

Overnight Copalinga Lodge, Zamora



*The secretive **Grey Tinamou** is one of the Copalinga Lodge specials.*

### Day 13 - 15. Drive to the Cordillera del Condor and Cabañas Yankuam

The Cabañas Yankuam have become the most accessible and easiest place on earth to see the highly prized, monotypic **Orange-throated Tanager**.

Other birds include **Black-and-white Tody-Flycatcher, Gilded Barbet, Lemon-throated Barbet, Blue-headed Parrot, Green-and-gold, Yellow-backed, and Paradise Tanagers, Eastern Woodhaunter, Pygmy Antwren, and Chestnut-eared Aracari**. We will then explore neighboring territories in search of the handsome and most-desired **Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher, Golden-collared Toucanet, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak, Red-billed Tyrannulet, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, Yellow-cheeked**

**Becard**, and others. At night, we will try for **Band-bellied Owl** and **Blackish Nightjar**.

Overnight: Cabañas Yankuam



*Yankuam Lodge is the best place to see the mythical **Orange-throated Tanager**.*

#### **Day 16. Maycu Reserve and transfer to Loja**

We will spend the morning exploring the Maycu Reserve looking for **Speckled Tanager**, **Collared Puffbird**, **Hairy-crested Antbird**, **Peruvian Warbling Antbird**, **Black Antbird**, **Purplish Jacamar**, **Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo**, **Speckled Spinetail**, **White-browed Antbird**, **Blue-crowned** and **Collared Trogons**, **Duida Woodcreeper**, **Many-banded Aracari** and many more. After lunch we will be transferred back to Loja.

Overnight: Grand Victoria Boutique Hotel, Loja

#### **Day 17. Explore Cerro Acanana, Blue-throated Hillstar and transfer to Giron**

Today we will have an early start to explore Cerro Acanama where we will spend the first couple hours of the morning looking for the sought-after **Crescent-faced Antpitta** and **Red-faced Parrot**. Other interesting species include **Black-headed Hemispingus**, **Black-capped Tyrannulet**, **Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan**, **Black-chested Mountain Tanager**, **Chusquea Tapaculo**, **Northern Mountain Cacique** and **Masked Trogon**. If we are extremely lucky, we could score with the rare and seldom-seen **Chestnut-bellied Cotinga**.



*Crescent-faced Antpitta* is another target to look for at Cerro Acanana (photo Daniel Orozco).

After a few hours of exploring the area, we will head towards the Cerro de los Arcos in search of the endemic **Blue-throated Hillstar**, which was described to science, as recently as 2017! This will be the main target of the area however we should find other classic high elevation species such as **Carunculated Caracara**, **Variable Hawk**, **Andean Lapwing**, **Tawny Antpitta**, **Andean Tit-Spinetail**, **Streak-backed Canastero**, **Black-tailed** and **Green-tailed Trainbearers**, **Shining Sunbeam**, **Paramo Seedeater** and if we are lucky **Jameson's Snipe**. We'll then drive to Giron and stay overnight at Santuario Hibiscus, which will allow easy access to birding the Yunguilla Reserve tomorrow.

Overnight: Santuario Hibiscus, Giron

### Day 18. Birding Yunguilla Reserve and heading to Cuenca

The Yunguilla Reserve is home to the Endangered (IUCN) **Pale-headed Brushfinch**, a country endemic which was rediscovered in the reserve in 1999, after an absence of 30 years. It will be our main target for the area. Other targets here include **Pale-naped Brushfinch**, **Grey-browed Brushfinch**, **Golden-olive Woodpecker**, **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**, **Peruvian Pygmy Owl**, **Line-cheeked Spinetail**, **Rainbow Starfrontlet**, **Fawn-breasted Tanager**, **Little Woodstar**, **Blackish Tapaculo**, **Golden-rumped Euphonia**, **Black-lored Yellowthroat**, and with luck **Scaled Antpitta**. After birding the area we will continue onto the charming Hosteria Dos Chorreras near the Cajas National Park.

Overnight: Hosteria Dos Chorreras, Cuenca

### Day 19. Explore Cajas National Park, transfer to Quito for departure

We will spend the last morning birding in the Cajas National Park near Cuenca, looking for high-elevation species such as **Tawny Antpitta**, **Stout-billed Cinclodes**, the endemic **Violet-**



throated Metaltail, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Ecuadorian Rail, Giant Conebill, Tit-like Dacnis, Blue-mantled Thornbill, Plumbeous Sierra Finch, and Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant.



*Green-and-gold Tanager is another gorgeous species we may see on this tour.*

After a pleasant morning birding the park, you will be transferred to the Cuenca airport to connect with a domestic flight to Quito, from where you will catch your international flights.

*Please note that the itinerary 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 from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

<b>Duration:</b>	19 days
<b>Group size:</b>	4 - 8
<b>Dates:</b>	02 - 20 March 2025
<b>Start:</b>	Quito
<b>End:</b>	Quito
<b>Prices:</b>	US\$8,390 per person sharing, based on 4-8 participants, <b>includes domestic flight (2025)</b>
<b>Single supplements:</b>	US\$950 (2025)

**Price includes:**

Domestic flights (Quito to Santa Rosa and Cuenca to Quito)  
All transfers airport/hotel/airport  
All accommodation  
All meals except dinner in Guayaquil the first night of the tour  
Private transportation  
Tour leader  
Entrance fees

**Price excludes:**

International flights  
Dinners in Quito  
Insurance  
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))  
Personal expenses such as drinks, alcoholic drinks, laundry, phone calls, internet access,  
etc. Any activity not described in the itinerary