

ITINERARY

***Ecuador's Deep Northwest Lowlands***

*September 28-October 7, 2018*



*The Guayaquil Woodpecker resembles a number of large Campephilus species, but this one occurs only in a small area of lowland Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. These beautiful woodpeckers are one of the lowland species that are being threatened by human activities such as farming and grazing. We'll look for them, as well as many other interesting denizens of this region. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2018 Field Guides Ecuador's Deep NW Lowlands tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

From the stunning landscapes of the west highlands of the Pichincha volcano (which we can marvel at on our first and last days on our drives through), down through the cloudforests of the Mashpi reserve area, and all the way into the deep lowlands, this new tour is full of unique specialties and Choco endemics. Our exciting itinerary offers the opportunity to combine top-quality birding in some of the most birdy Choco ecosystems with spectacular landscapes, all the while supporting conservation efforts in this important and vulnerable area. Our trip should record a wide variety of great species as we bird through a highly endemic middle and lower altitudinal range—Ecuador is amazingly rich—and what follows is just a small sample of what we might see.

Anyone interested in this trip probably already knows the importance of this region. The Chocó biome has long been known to be one of the most endemic-rich zones on the planet; over 70 bird species (many threatened or near-threatened) are restricted to these forests that extend from eastern Panama, down through the west slope of Colombia, and then finally into NW Ecuador (although there are a few fingers of humid forest [with Chocó influences] that approach Perú).

The Chocó region in Ecuador is isolated by two of the most effective natural genetic barriers of them all: the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the mighty Andes to the east. The Panama current that circulates off the northern coast bathes this corner of the country with warm, humid air, and creates one of the wettest regions on the planet, with over 500 inches of rain annually; possibly only New Guinea can rival this! The result of these high levels of rain and humidity is the creation of one of the most miraculous greenhouses on the planet, a place where genetic diversity has grown at a quicker and more constant rate for thousands of years! Despite this over-all wet and rainy climate, there tends to be a fairly well-defined, but intense, rainy season; we've planned our visit for the end of the "dry" period, to avoid the wettest period.

Since this tour focuses on the specialties to be found at middle and lower altitudes, we'll leave the highlands behind early on our first day - enjoy stunning views all the while - to get to our first birding venue as early as possible along the Mashpi road and areas nearby - where we will spend the better part of three days - to look for birds such as Rufous-crowned Antpitta, Moss-backed Tanager, Narino Tapaculo, Indigo Flowerpiercer, and the other many specialties of the area. The two lodges that we recently scouted for this leg of the tour are simple but comfortable. Four full days will be dedicated to scouring the lowland forests and roadsides at Río Canandé Reserve. Our itinerary has been designed to stay in strategic lodges very close to or right at the birding spots.



*The Speckled Mourner has a large range that includes northwestern Ecuador. We'll look for it in the Canandé area. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

At Canandé, the true "meat" of the tour, we will bird one of the most accessible chunks of intact forest tracts remaining in the lowlands of NW Ecuador, where Great Green Macaws still fly, and Rose-faced Parrots can be daily fare, and where healthy mixed flocks of insectivores and tanagers can breeze through at any moment. The lodge itself at Canandé is surrounded by towering escarpments amongst more rolling hills.

The reserve - at about 1,000ft., and named for the nearby Canandé River - is one of the Jocotoco Foundation's more recent conservation projects. To help preserve what few expanses of intact Chocó forest are left, the Jocotoco Foundation teamed up with ABC, Rainforest Trust, World Land Trust (WLT), and the March Conservation Fund to buy properties adjacent to the relatively minimal, original purchase where the small lodge lies. In total, they purchased six plots amounting to about 500 hectares each, bringing the total area of Río Canandé Reserve up to around 2,500 hectares, but it continues to grow, albeit slowly; piecing together a reserve is hard work and a slow process! The logging in this area has been intense, but thanks to the efforts of the Jocotoco Foundation, a formidable chunk is now protected. The four guest rooms are clean and attractive, but bunk style, so singles will not be available with eight participants. Although each room has a bunk bed, there is also an accompanying twin, so no need for anybody to have to climb up and down. Mosquito nets are provided, but as of this writing, hot water was not something the lodge offers. The beautiful screened dining room serves tasty food and is a great place to relax in the evening, or during the heat of the day. Five nights will be spent at this remote location, for four full days of birding the trails and nearby roadsides.

As a general note, birding in the pristine forests of the western lowlands of Ecuador is challenging and takes patience, as many of the species we will be after live in the canopy. Since we will not have the help of canopy towers, such as those found in many areas of the Amazon at more developed lodges, we will have to bird the old fashioned way, by making use of edges, tree falls, and overlooks, where we often see Black-tipped Cotinga. This having been said, there are plenty of middle and understory species to pursue as well, so your neck will have plenty of rest. At any rate, the birds are there, and we will get quite a haul!

Some of what we will be after include Berlepsch's Tinamou, Tawny-faced Quail, Olive-backed Quail-Dove, Speckled Mourner, Chocó Tapaculo and Gold-chested Tanager (at its lowest elevational reaches up on the ridges above the lodge). Our list of targets is a long one, so here is a taste of both common species, as well as those on the rarer side, to warm you up. We'll be on the lookout for Black-and-white and Ornate hawk-eagles, Tiny Hawk, Barred and the rare Plumbeous forest-falcons, Brown Wood-Rail, Scaled Pigeon, the *pacifica* form of Maroon-tailed Parakeet, Red-lored Amazon, the Chocó form of the Vermiculated Screech-Owl, the rare Central American Pygmy-Owl, some big owls like Crested, Spectacled, and Black-and-white, Chocó Poorwill, Bronzy and Stripe-throated hermits, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Slaty-tailed and Blue-tailed (Chocó) trogons, Broad-billed and Rufous motmots, Rufous-tailed and Great jacamars, Barred

Puffbird, Lanceolated Monklet, Orange-fronted Barbet, Yellow-throated and Choco toucans, Stripe-billed and Pale-mandibled aracaris, Lita Woodpecker, Scaly-throated Leaf-tosser, Western Woodhaunter, Northern-Barred and Black-striped woodcreepers, Black-crowned Antshrike, the *ignota* form of Moustached Antwren, Dot-winged Antwren, Dusky Antbird, Black-headed Antthrush, Brown-capped and Chocó tyrannulets, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Pacific Flatbill, Golden-crowned Spadebill, White-ringed Flycatcher, Chocó Sirystes, Rufous Mourner, Rufous Piha, White-bearded Manakin, Northern Schiffornis, Cinnamon Becard, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Band-backed, Stripe-throated, and Bay Wrens, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Dagua Thrush, Emerald and Silver-throated tanagers, Yellow-tufted (Black-faced) Dacnis, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Black-winged Saltator, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, and Orange-crowned, Fulvous-vented, and White-vented euphonias. Long-wattled Umbrellabird is even a possibility, if we hit it right.



*Bicolored Hawk is found throughout much of the South and Central American lowlands. Photograph by participant Merl Arnot.*

Given the fact that we will be in some outback areas, this is a tour that has the potential to score some interesting mammals. Theoretically anything is possible-- even a wild cat like an Ocelot! Though unlikely, Jaguar is even possible as they still persist in small numbers within the deeper corners of the western lowlands. More realistically, we have excellent chances of crossings paths with some lowland monkey species at the two reserves, and we'll keep our eyes and ears out for Mantled Howler Monkey, White-throated Capuchin, and Brown-headed Spider Monkey, all three of which we have seen at Canandé. Any wild mammal species will be a welcome sight, and will add spice to the trip, so keep your fingers crossed!

On a more serious note, unfortunately, the deforestation of the Chocó has been so extreme that it is estimated that only about 3-4% remains... an eye-opening statistic to say the least. Logging companies and local "campesinos" have been ravaging these forests for many decades for its valuable timber and farming possibilities. Until about the 60's, these forests were mostly in their original condition, but roads and colonization have taken their toll like wildfire. In the wake of such detrimental activity, this leaves birders, nature enthusiasts, and biologists, scrambling for prime habitat in which to find vanishing species, or to simply absorb the true wilds of the Chocó. This is not meant to depress you, but rather to present reality, and help set the stage for the fabulous places that we are headed to. The overall situation is dire, but not without hope, and as you will see, birding tourism is one of the main industries that drives the conservation effort, so welcome aboard, and thank you for your contribution!

So, now for the good news: lucky for us, there still remain a few oases of classic, old-growth, protected forest, in reserves that harbor just about everything that we humans have done away with in more accessible areas, places where the closed canopy can reach heights of 45m, with emergents getting close to 60m... Now, this is *real* forest, and the kind we will be birding in. It is still out there, and waiting for us, so let's dive in!

#### **About the Physical Requirements & Pace:**

For the first three days of the tour, the terrain can be characterized as easy or moderate (there are a few trails that require patience and/or being limber because of some fallen trees, rocks, and mud). You should be prepared for one or two trail forays of up to about 2 miles in length where footing can be slick and uneven, but in general this section of the tour is fairly easy. All walking will be at an enjoyable, steady pace. Early mornings and late afternoons can be magical times, and we will often be out early and late and on our feet most of the time in between (though not setting any distance records). Field lunches will likely be the norm.

We'll spend most of our time birding, in the process seeing many of the birds typical of the middle elevation Choco forests, whilst also searching for some of the rarest species, all in the context of enjoying the magnificent western foothills. This tour is not designed to run up a long list of species, yet we can expect to see more than 250. By staying at two lodges at slightly different elevations here we will certainly round out our list quite respectably!

Canandé, where we will spend the bulk of the trip, is still a wild place, where most birding on foot requires hiking along forest trails, some quite steep and muddy, requiring rubber boots.

The terrain varies from flatter trails on the plateau above the lodge, to hillier in between. All of the trails can be muddy and/or slippery, but are usually firm underfoot with a few muddy or watery sections (depending on recent rains in the area). Trails are well maintained but still have numerous large, protruding roots and stumps, as well as the occasional fallen tree trunk. Roadside birding is easier, but often out in the open, so heat will be a factor, especially if sunny.

We will rise early each day and, after a pre-dawn breakfast, take trails or bird along roadsides. On some days, we may take a box lunch and be out for much of the day; on several evenings we'll try for nocturnal birds pre-dinner, though we usually do not venture out after dinner.

The average temperature range for this tour will be on the higher end, ranging from possibly the mid 70's on cooler nights, to the high 80's-low 90's on warmer afternoons as the sun beats down; the lowlands of NW Ecuador are humid and muggy, but temperatures do cool down with cloud cover, making sleeping comfortable.

Much of our time will be spent standing in one spot watching for birds, picking through a mixed flock, and/or trying to tape them in, and when we do move, it will usually be at a birder's pace (in other words, not very fast). It is important to understand that we will spend much of every day of the tour on our feet, and some people find the cumulative effect of a week's worth of this kind of activity quite tiring, especially under hot and humid conditions. Fortunately, Canandé lends itself well to taking time off, and the lodge is a comfortable place to relax and catch up on rest. By carefully choosing the activities in which to participate, this tour can range from easy to rigorous. We will always discuss the following day's plans the evening before.

In short, this section of the trip is *not* a trip for those who feel that hiking 3-4 miles a day, over hill-and-dale, will be too arduous. None of the trails are world-class difficult or dangerous, but they do require some stamina, muscle, and concentration at times. Most fit people should be capable of the majority of the hikes we do; folks with particular hip or knee issues will find some of the slopes difficult.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

## About the Birding Areas



**Mashpi Road**—Located about 3 hours from Quito, this unique road is relatively new to birders and holds fantastic variety. As it descends from typical cloudforest habitat at 5000 ft (1500 m) to tropical rainforest at 1800 ft (600 m), it provides an ideal setting for viewing birds. Possibilities here are endless, but our main targets will be Moss-backed Tanager, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Glistening-green Tanager, Esmeraldas Antbird, Black Solitaire, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, and many other Choco endemics. Our birding here will be along the road, with a combination of walking downhill as our vehicle follows, interspersed with driving to the next interesting location; it is very easy walking and a full birding day. On one morning we will also want to spend a morning birding at the nearby Amagusa feeding station where many of the aforementioned species are possible, but at much closer range! Sometimes even Orange-breasted Fruiteater even puts in an appearance.

**Mashpi-shungo farm**—One of the more recent feeding station developments in Ecuador is one developed by a birding friend of ours that attracts the rare and hard to find Rufous-crowned Antpitta (or Gnatpitta, as it is becoming known, since it was recently proven to be more closely allied to the Gnateaters). Seeing this species under normal birding conditions can be a real effort, and it is often missed, but Mashpi-shungo is the place

where we stand a very good chance of seeing this beauty at close range. There is also excellent birding around the property on trails, and at forest edges for flocks... for more tanagers and insectivores, so a morning here should be well spent!

**Choco lowlands and foothills below Mashpi**—The great rainforest that once cloaked all of the lowlands and foothills of northwestern Ecuador and western Colombia—known as the Choco (with an accent on the final “o”)—is one of the wettest rainforests in the world. Sadly, most of the easily accessible lowland forest in western Ecuador has been cleared or converted to oil palm plantations, leaving small patches here and there. Birding in these patches is a bit like birding on an island, a very rich island, with an avifauna primarily of Middle American (more specifically, Panamanian) affinities, but with some South American specialties tossed in. We plan to spend a couple of afternoons - after our main morning venues - down the road from the Mashpi area to get our first sampling before diving headfirst into Canandé. Over the years we've had good luck with some of the South American specialties here: Dusky Pigeon, Bronze-winged and Rose-faced parrots, Purple-chested Hummingbird, Blue-tailed (Choco) Trogon, Collared (Pale-mandibled) Aracari, Guayaquil Woodpecker, Ochre-breasted, Blue-whiskered, Scarlet-browed, and Scarlet-and-white tanagers, as well as hordes of more widespread (Panama-type) species. Long-wattled Umbrellabird is even a possibility, so watch for large, all black birds, with an undulating flight.



*Broad-billed Motmot is a lowland species found both east and west of the Andes. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.*

**Río Canandé Reserve**—The Río Canandé Reserve is another important conservation project driven by the private Jocotoco Foundation and, you guessed it, right in some key, remaining chunks of Ecuador's Chocó forest. It is bordered by other protected areas, such as the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, and is a stronghold for Chocó wildlife.

What awaits us bird-wise? More than plenty. Baudo Guan occurs on the higher ridges above the lodge, and Crested Guan could be anywhere. Mixed tanager flocks could materialize at any moment, with the likes of Scarlet-breasted and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, as well as Scarlet-browed, Rufous-headed, Blue-whiskered, Golden-hooded, and Gray-and-gold tanagers. The unpredictable Scarlet-and-white Tanager could very well grace our presence in any flock, but the upper ridge is probably the best place for them, as they tend to prefer wetter, and mossier spots. Dusky Pigeons will certainly be hooting away, with their distinctive "hooót... hoot, hoot" calls, and they can often be called right in. There are also outrageous possibilities that await along the trails, such as Banded Ground-Cuckoo (which has been seen along the trails right behind the lodge) and Great Curassow, which the lodge staff continues to try and lure in at some feeders up along the ridge, but sightings are rare, indeed. Should we hear one calling, we'll try to see the stupendous Purple Quail-Dove, which although shy, sometimes can be coaxed in to march right in for views. Some time at the hummingbird feeders at the lodge will surely produce Purple-chested Hummingbird, among others.

We will tailor our time at Río Canandé to prioritize the Chocó species we still have not seen, and there will probably still be a healthy list after our visit to Playa de Oro, but at least by this time we should have narrowed things down considerably. However we manage our time, it will be a wonderful visit and one that we are sure to remember.

## Itinerary for Ecuador's Deep Northwest Lowlands

**Day 1, Fri, 28 Sep. To Quito.** When you arrive (usually between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m.), a BirdEcuador representative will meet you just outside the baggage claim. If you are arriving tonight, be sure to check for a message from your guide at the hotel front desk with any additional information you may need for tomorrow. The very comfortable - if not bordering on luxurious - San Jose Garden Hotel, will be our place for the night, and great place to rest up for the trip. There is a complimentary bottle of drinking water in your bathroom; bring any excess with you tomorrow, along with your canteen or water bottle. Quito lies at 9300 feet and has a cool, pleasant climate year-round. But don't overdo it when carrying heavy bags off the plane at this elevation; it usually takes a night or so to adjust to the altitude.

If you have the time, we suggest arriving a day early, especially since we will have an early morning flight on day 2; missing this flight could seriously complicate your logistics for connecting with the tour. We can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide for city tours and other excursions, if you like. Please give your tour manager at least 60 days notice before the trip if you choose to plan extra arrangements. Night in Quito.

**Day 2, Sat, 29 Sep. Quito to Mashpi area.** After an early exit from Quito, we will bolt down the west slope where we'll spend a day along the Mashpi Road—an area known for fantastic foothill Choco endemics. This gravel road descends from 6000 ft (1800 m) to 3500 ft (1000 m), with a unique diversity of birds including Moss-backed Tanager, Narino Tapaculo, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Black Solitaire, Esmeraldas Antbird, and even Long-wattled Umbrellabird. We will have a picnic lunch, so that we can be more mobile; evening will find us at a nearby lodge. Night at Belle Vue lodge.

**Day 3, Sun, 30 Sep. Amagusa feeding station and nearby Chocó lowlands.** Amagusa is a small private property along the roadside in the Mashpi area (right at ground-zero!) where feeding stations attract a surprising array of fabulous, foothill Choco endemics, among many others. We will probably end up spending much of our morning watching the feeders, and birding the property and other nearby hotspots before heading further downslope to warmer climes to be in position for the following day's activities. Night Cielo Verde lodge.



*The lovely Rufous-crowned Antpitta will be our goal when we visit Mashpi-shungo Farm.  
Photograph by participant Carl Manning.*

**Day 4, Mon, 1 Oct. Mashpi-shungo farm; mid-morning transfer to Río Canandé Reserve.** As usual, we will want to be out early to make the feeding time for "Shunguito", the resident, worm-fed Rufous-crowned Antpitta at Mashpi-shungo Farm. "Shunguito" means "little heart" in the native Quichuan language, so it is a fitting and loving name for such a special bird. Once we've clinched the antpitta, we'll bird out the rest of the early morning along the trails on the property for our first real shot at some lowland Choco endemics.

After a few quality hours birding at Mashpi-shungo, we will undertake our trip to Canandé Reserve. While the trip is not particularly far, going can be slow, but we may make a quick roadside stop or two if something catches our eye, we will want to keep a good pace to leave some time for some afternoon birding closer to the Canandé Reserve, where the forest quality will noticeably improve after crossing the ferry at the Canandé River. The final leg of our travels getting into Canandé will be rugged as the roads are in poor shape, but we plan to transfer to 4-wheel drive vehicles to make the going easier, however we will still experience some bumps and some slow-going. Night at Canandé Reserve.

**Days 5-8, Tue-Fri, 2-5 Oct. Birding the Río Canandé Reserve and surroundings.** We will waste no time getting out into the field on our first morning here - or on the second either! - so that we take advantage of our four full days in this rich zone. As always, weather will have a big hand in dictating how and where we bird. After what will have probably been a long travel day with much time spent in vehicles the previous day, we will probably be ready - and have the energy - to dive in and undertake the trails right behind the lodge. Tanager and flock activity will probably abound near the lodge, and we will be on the lookout for Blue-whiskered and Rufous-headed tanagers, as well as Scarlet-breasted Dacnis, all of which we have seen here in the past. Soon, we'll get onto the trail, which has many switchbacks and tends on a definite uphill grade. We plan to plod along and work the birds that we encounter on our way up to the ridge where there are

some fine viewpoints. Once up on the ridge plateau, it is easier going, and we will want to spend some quality time up here.

The following day may very well find us back in our 4-wheel drive pick-ups, venturing further in along the road past the lodge and the town of Hoja Blanca where there are some nice forest patches that are worth exploring. One in particular, near the settlement of Tesoro Escondido (and a forest reserve connected to and now run by the Jocotoco Foundation), has come to attention recently with sightings of Five-colored Barbet and even reports of nesting Harpy Eagle, a seriously rare bird in western Ecuador these days. We will need some luck, and hope road conditions aren't too difficult, but this side trip might very well be worth a morning. Nights at Canandé Reserve.

**Day 9, Sat, 6 Oct. Transfer from Canandé back to Quito.** Unfortunately, today we will have to wrap up our birding at Canandé, and load up for the trip back to Quito. Depending on road conditions and weather, we will do our best to have another strong round of birding around the lodge and along the road on the way out to the flatboat to get us back across the Canandé River, where we have seen the rare and enigmatic Slate-colored Seedeater right near the dock. Getting back to our hotel in Quito will take about 5-6 hours of driving, but by leaving early, we should easily be able to squeeze a few more birds out along the journey. For folks that have flights out this evening, we will arrive in time to check in to our rooms, shower up, have a group farewell dinner to celebrate the birding. Night at the San Jose de Puenbo Hotel.

**Day 10, Sun, 7 Oct. Departure for home.** International flights to the US generally depart in the morning and require an early check-in to arrive mid-day in time for connections home. Because of the varying departures, breakfast is on your own; if you prefer to eat before your flight, there's a casual restaurant beyond security in the airport. *Vayan bien!*

## About Your Guide

**Willy Perez** has been leading birding tours for more than ten years. He has also worked as a resident guide at Maquipucuna Reserve on the west slopes of the Andes, on a project protecting marine turtles in Costa Rica, and on bird conservation in northwestern Ecuador. He was a resident guide at Kapawi Lodge in the Ecuadorian Amazon for three years, mastering the art of finding and identifying the many secretive birds of the lowland rainforest. He has since guided throughout Ecuador including both the east and west slopes of the Andes, the Amazon basin, the Galapagos Islands, and southern Ecuador. During the last few years he has also guided birding groups in Bolivia. In his free time he trains local guides and is a frequent lecturer, in English and in Spanish, on birding and conservation issues in the Neotropics.

Willy's wife, Fiona, is British and he has traveled with her to England several times to bird and visit family, and Willy and his family have relocated to England for a few years. He speaks excellent English and has an engaging and outgoing personality that makes every tour he leads a great deal of fun.

*"Willy Perez was a consummate professional, and one of the best guides I've had. I can't think of a single thing he could have done better. As a college professor, I assigned grades on merit routinely. Willy Perez is the easiest A+ I've ever given!" D.W., Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands*

Please visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Willy's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3,350 from Quito**

**DEPOSIT:** \$350 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** July 7, 2018

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$400

**LIMIT:** 8

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Mandy Mantzel. Mandy will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** While the lodges are not up to the luxurious standards of some of those along the Napo, on the other side of the Andes in the Amazon (That's not why we are here, right?), they offer the comforts of good (but simple) food and plenty of it, and simple but comfortable rooms that well surpass the status of a basic, jungle cabin. Canandé is small, and any singles will need to double, or even triple-up (depending on distributional needs) as there are only four available tourist rooms, but they are comfortable and tastefully done in wood. Neither lodge offers hot water as of this writing. Each room has its own private bathroom.

Meals are served at screened-in dining rooms, which really help to keep the bugs from landing on our plates. The dining room at Canandé is only a short trot from the rooms. While the lodge stocks a small supply of beer, it does not stock wine or alcoholic beverages for mixed drinks, *so you might want to consider planning ahead (and communicating with your tour manager) if you like to enjoy a drink in the evenings; a quick and easy option is a run through duty-free upon your arrival to Quito should you have a specific poison in mind.* Bottled drinking water is furnished in the dining rooms, and you should get in the habit of bringing your canteen with you to meals to refill from the filtered water supply.

Canandé is on the main electricity grid, and there is power for charging batteries. We strongly recommend a high quality flashlight that can be used for night activities, extra room lighting, or even at birdlist time, to see the relatively small print after dark!

**DOCUMENTS:** A **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Ecuador. You will be issued a **tourist card** upon arrival; please keep this in a safe place, as you will need it to depart Ecuador.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Ecuadorian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp, and as a precaution, it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

**VACCINATIONS:** No vaccinations are required for a visit to the western lowlands, but malaria does exist in the zone, and is something you should plan for with a visit to your doctor for the proper prophylactics. The chances of contracting malaria on this tour are probably quite low, as this is a short tour, but it is best to be on the safer side.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

**Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is \$3350 for one person in double occupancy from Quito. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 10, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 9, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Ecuador, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.



The **single supplement** for the tour is \$400. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$350** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by July 7, 2018. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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