

ITINERARY

Ecuador's Deep Northwest Lowlands

September 28-October 6, 2018



*The Guayaquil Woodpecker resembles a number of large *Campephilus* species, but this one occurs only in a small area of coastal 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

Field Guides is thrilled to offer our first official trip to Ecuador's Chocó lowlands in September 2018. 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.



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.

On this tour, we will bird two of the most accessible chunks of intact forest tracts remaining in the lowlands of NW Ecuador, and they are indeed some gorgeous and pristine chunks, 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. Playa de Oro offers lowlands in the strictest sense, with a flatter landscape out closer to the coast. Canandé, on the other hand, is surrounded by towering escarpments amongst more rolling hills.

There is, obviously, a large overlap in their bird communities as they are both in the lowlands not far from each other as the crow flies, but both offer up some of their own special species. Berlepsch's Tinamou, Tawny-faced Quail, Olive-backed Quail-Dove, and Five-colored Barbet are more typical of the lower western plain around Playa de Oro, while at Canandé we can hope more for 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-lore 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 Plumeteer, 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 aracarís, 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.

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 both Playa de Oro and 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!



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

Our first venue, Playa de Oro reserve (at about 350 ft elevation), lies along the remote banks of the Santiago River, whose sterling and pristine, green waters wash down from the large Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, a park still mostly (and thankfully) not all that accessible. Playa de Oro - translated "Golden Beach", and named for its rich gold deposits - stands as a bastion for private conservation efforts throughout the continent, and we will see why. The Afro-Ecuadorian community that settled here, and that has inhabited the area for hundreds of years, decided long ago to leave a large chunk of its well over 20,000 acre property completely wild and untouched; this thanks to their grandfathers, as one lady from the community explains it. Wood cutting and gold mining have traditionally been two of their major subsistence activities, but conservation has always been a part of their way of thinking, which goes against the grain with respect to other communities downriver, so the forest remained... yes! The community still has to battle illegal mining, but new government regulations are helping with their efforts.

In the more recent past - and we are talking of only a few decades ago - key community leaders stood firm with a more profound vision, realizing the value and importance of leaving large tracts alone for what we now term "ecotourism". Over the last five years, the community has poured all of its resources into the restoration of an old structure left by a mining company, creating "Tigrillo (Ocelot) Lodge", which offers comfortable rooms (with mosquito nets, although the rooms are well enough sealed) and modern bathrooms. The transformation was quite unbelievable, really, especially for its remoteness - we have seen the before and after, so we speak from

experience. Hot water was in the works as of our last scouting visit, but this cannot be guaranteed; given the warmer temperatures, a cool shower can be just as inviting. We will have three full days here to explore the trails and soak it all in.

The Canandé Reserve - 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 will continue 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. This reserve is a tad higher in elevation than Playa de Oro, lying at about 1,000 ft., still quite low, but just high enough to add some key species to our hit-list. 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. Three nights will be spent at this remote location, for two 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!

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Playa de Oro and Canandé are wild places, where most birding on foot requires hiking along forest trails, some quite steep and muddy, requiring rubber boots.

The terrain varies from flatter trails nearest the lodges, to hillier (on the north side of the Río Santiago at Playa de Oro, and behind the cabins at Canandé). 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 near the lodges are well maintained but still have numerous large, protruding roots and stumps, as well as the occasional fallen tree trunk. A few of the paths cross streams, and we'll have to wade straight through, or cross on narrow bridges (with a helping hand if needed). These bridges require a decent sense of balance. The boat that we use on the Santiago River while at Playa de Oro is a sturdy, wooden motor canoe; keep in mind that it is not covered, so raingear is always desirable. Boarding and disembarking is along the river bank where conditions can be slippery, requiring good balance, although there will always be a helping hand if needed.

We will rise early each day and, after a pre-dawn breakfast, take trails, or canoe rides (Playa de Oro a few times) away from the lodge to a nearby trail. 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, both lodges lend themselves well to taking time off, and the lodges are comfortable places 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 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.



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

About the Birding Areas

Playa de Oro – This is one of the crown jewels of private conservation in Ecuador. The Afro-Ecuadorian community of Playa de Oro has made a pact to preserve its forests, and really seems to mean it. The quality of the forest here is inspiring, and it really is a treat to feel enveloped in real primary, Chocó forest; this is what much of NW Ecuador was once like. Much of the community's land is now formally registered in a 20-year government program that offers incentives for leaving the forest alone, so Playa de Oro stands a good chance of continuing its conservation ethic.

Our scouting trips here along the trail systems have always turned up a fabulous selection of lowland species, endemic and more wide-ranging. A first round along the trails behind the lodge could turn up the strange and enigmatic Sapayoa, Blue-crowned and Red-capped manakins, or loud Lemon-spectacled Tanagers in the understory; an antswarm will almost

certainly reward us with Ocellated, Bicolored, and Spotted antbirds. Plumbeous and Semiplumbeous hawks could be anywhere, and Rufous-crowned (we will be all ears for its excited, rattled calls!) and Streak-chested antpittas await us on the hillier trails across the Santiago River. Some flashy woodpeckers will be hiding out as well, and waiting for us to "knock" on their doors, such as Chocó, Red-rumped, Cinnamon, and even Splendid (Crimson-bellied split). A nearby riverine swamp harbors the reclusive Uniform Crake, but we will need some serious luck to pry it out, and Blue Cotinga has been known to visit the fruiting shrubs around the lodge, so let's hope that the fruit is in season! Tooth-billed Hummingbird is often vocal and quite findable along the trails here, so we will keep our ears on high alert. Double-banded Graytail moves with the high canopy flocks, and if we can get them to sound off, we have a good chance of seeing this bizarre little, warbler-like furnariid. Stub-tailed Antbird can be found in the secondary habitats, usually somewhere near water, as it sounds off with its recognizable, whistled song. We will also do our best to cross paths with a nice assortment of trogons, motmots, and puffbirds, birds so typical of the neotropics; Black-breasted Puffbird, Blue-tailed Trogon, and Broad-billed Motmot will all be there watching us, but it will be our job to pry them from their haunts!



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. To Playa de Oro. We plan to be up early today for the flight to Esmeraldas that we expect will be around 6:00 A.M. Our breakfast time will depend on the flight schedule, but the staff at the San Jose Garden Hotel is usually quite accommodating with early fare. Our thirty-minute flight takes us from the inter-montane highlands of the Quito valley across the western cordillera of the Andes. Esmeraldas is known as the "Green State" because of its green forests, and as we descend to Ecuador's western lowlands, we should have views of some nice expanses of undisturbed forest to the north, where the western foothills spill into the lowlands, before we arrive at Esmeraldas, the capital city of the province with the same name, and a port city tied to the oil industry. After the flight, we'll gather our bags (and make a quick rest stop at the airport), then we will meet our transfer driver and head northeast along the main coastal highway for the scenic 2-3 hour drive to our rendezvous point at the small hamlet of Selva Alegre, where our staff from the Playa de Oro lodge will be waiting to get us prepared for the hour-and-a half, motorized canoe ride up-river to the lodge. Our journey will take us up the Santiago River as we venture deeper into the wilds of the true Chocó biome. We will shoot some small rapids as we buzz by some local communities, leaving any sort of civilization behind. Once past the small hamlet of Playa de Oro (after about an hour of travel), we will be surrounded by unbroken greenery, and be submersed into exactly what we have come for: expansive Chocó forest on all sides.

We will travel this day, as other days, dressed for birding (rubber boots not required today until possibly after lunch), as we'll be birding on the river en route to the landing, and around lodge upon arrival. Our luggage will be transported by lodge staff so that we can be comfortably unencumbered. Expect the weather to be warm and humid; we'll hope to luck out with some cloud cover over the duration of the trip, but be prepared for hot conditions during sunny days sometimes reaching up into the high 80's-low 90's. The moving canoe does indeed offer some welcome windiness to cool things off!

Our plan is to get to the lodge for a late lunch, get settled into our rooms, and then get to birding along the trails behind the lodge. Night at Playa de Oro.



The chunky Ochre-breasted Tanager is now allied with the cardinals, and we have some excellent chances of finding this noisy species.

Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.

Days 3-5, Sun-Tue, 30 Sep-2 Oct. Birding the forest trails based out of Playa de Oro. We'll start early each morning (with pre-dawn breakfasts) to take advantage of the precious first hours of maximum bird activity, so that we can find those species that tend to get harder to find during the heat of the day. Most of our birding will be on foot along forest trails. As with all rainforest birding, calf-high rubber boots and raingear will be essential. Not only are there likely to be muddy areas on the trails and shallow stream crossings, but rubber boots provide foot and lower leg protection against briars, insects, and other trail hazards. Some downed trees across trails are inevitable.

At times, we will bird the river edges from a motorized canoe handled by skilled local boatmen. Some birding hikes will begin - or end - with a canoe ride, as some trails are only reachable (or exited) by boat, and while we don't tend to invest much time along the river, we will invariably find something interesting during our short trips between the trails and lodge.

Birding hikes will mostly be conducted in the morning hours with a return to the lodge for lunch, but we may arrange for a carry-along lunch to enable us to cover some of the more distant trails, especially across the Santiago River.

We will have three full days to bird this rich zone. Nights at Playa de Oro Lodge.

Day 6, Wed, 3 Oct. Transfer from Playa De Oro to Río Canandé Reserve. Sadly, we will have to say our farewells to the forests and staff at Playa Oro this morning to set our sights on Canandé. This will be a longish travel day. Our plan is

to exit Playa de Oro early in our motor canoe, and travel back down the Santiago River so that we can rendezvous with our vehicle and get on the road as soon as possible. While we may make a quick roadside stop or two if something catches our eye, we will want to keep a good pace this morning 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 7-8, Thu- Fri, 4-5 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 two full days in this rich zone. As at Playa de Oro, we will want to be up and out early. 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. 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 Garden 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: May 31, 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. Playa de Oro has plenty of space room-wise, so any potential singles will likely be able to be accommodated. The lodge is a rustic wooden building, but the bathrooms have been recently renovated with modern tile, toilets, and sinks. Canandé is smaller, 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, but Playa de Oro does plan to offer this service at some point. Each room has its own private bathroom.

Meals at both lodges are served at screened-in dining rooms, which really help to keep the bugs from landing on our plates. At the Playa de Oro, the dining room is within the main lodge building, while at Canandé it is only a short trot from the rooms. While both lodges stock a small supply of beer, they do 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, but Playa de Oro's entire power system is a well-designed, solar set-up; rooms are well-enough lit, 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, the flights within Ecuador (Quito/Esmeraldas), 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 May 31, 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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