

SOUTHEAST ECUADOR :
Orange-Throated Tanager & Foothill Specialties
February 13 - 22, 2025



The White-necked Parakeet, a near endemic of Ecuador, is one of the foothill specialties we'll seek. We've had good luck finding this lovely parakeet on the old Loja-Zamora Road. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Southeast Ecuador: Orange-throated Tanager & Foothill Specialties 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- 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 Field Guides checklist for preparing for, and keeping track of, the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, an annotated list of birds seen on the tour

The foothills of Ecuador's far southeast are still among some of the least explored areas of the country, partly because of their remoteness and rugged terrain, but also because the area had been, up until the late 1990s, a zone of conflict with the much mightier Peru. But not to worry, as these are all issues of the past! Nowadays, with decent access, getting there to bird is a relative breeze, and the fact that the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1999 rendered the zone a very safe place to visit. We will target two major areas: the deep southeast, along the western slope of the Cordillera del Condor right along the Peruvian border, and then the lower eastern slopes of the famous Podocarpus National Park, and areas nearby, including the birdy old Loja-Zamora road.

This weeklong tour's main goal is to come "face-to-face" with the Orange-throated Tanager in probably the most accessible area for it anywhere in its range—the upper Rio Nangaritza valley of Ecuador. Those interested in this trip may already know that this bird was a bomb that shocked the scientific world back in the early 1960s, when Aguaruna natives practically landed a specimen right in the lap of legendary LSU ornithologist John O'Neill during one of those famous expeditions to the wilds of Peru. For decades, the Orange-throated Tanager was considered to be a Peruvian endemic, but in 1990 a population was discovered just over the border in Ecuador during surveys to this remote area.

We stand a very good chance of finding this range-restricted, beautiful, and legendary tanager of the forest canopy along some birdy roadsides, and we plan to get to ground-zero as soon as we can. For years, boat rides necessary to access the key spots made finding the tanager more of an adventure—and the upper Nangaritza river banks are spectacular indeed, with steep rocky cliffs and waterfalls—but new roads have penetrated since, and they now can get us on wheels right into where we need to be.



*Fork-tailed Woodnymph is just one of many brilliant hummingbirds we'll watch for at Copalinga.
Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.*

Although we will be birding all the while, we will hope to land the tanager early on; this will then allow us to relax a bit and lend our attention to the extremely diverse avifauna that really makes the area come alive and a blast to bird. Early-morning and late-afternoon roadside strolls should produce some exciting flocks, as well as numerous, more sedentary species lurking about away from flocks. Since we will be flying into and out of the Loja airport, which lies within a dry rain shadow valley, we will want to have a quick look around there as well (at either the beginning or the end of the tour) for some of the common species of the zone. This area will not be a focus of our birding, though.

The first half of our trip will be based out of the well-appointed and comfortable, but rustic, Yankuam Lodge for three nights. We'll then stay at a comfortable hosteria or hotel near the small town of Yantzaza, which will allow for easier access to some birdy areas nearby in the Cordillera del Condor. The vast majority of our birding in these areas will be along easily walked roads and gravel trails, but our trip is Andean-based; even though most of the roads are relatively flat, do expect some hills. We also plan to explore a couple of steep trails that will be more challenging, with un-level footing, corduroy logs, and possibly muddy conditions, but this will always be outlined before any outing, and the rough trails will be minimal. In the Yankuam/Yantzaza area, we will be in the vicinity of a number of range-restricted, "tepui" endemics, but many of these, as of this writing, are still not easily accessible, as the trails to reach them are still quite rugged and long, and these birds are best searched for on some of our northern Peru tours. We will, however, take advantage of any new developments as new inroads are made!

The second phase of our trip will be based out of the birder-friendly and comfortable Copalinga Lodge, a few hours northwest of Yankuam. From here, we will explore the lush forests on the lodge property a bit closer to the Andean chain,

as well as in the lower sector of the diverse Podocarpus National Park (Río Bombuscaro), which protects some of the most accessible and well-preserved tracts of eastern foothill forests in Ecuador. Slight geographical changes can mean a lot in the tropics with respect to organismal distribution (especially when even slight elevation changes are involved), and birds are no exception, so we can expect to capitalize on our efforts up to this point and really round out our eastern foothill list. On one full morning we will also want to explore the upper tropical and pre-montane zones along the old Loja-Zamora road, where the scenery is awesome, and the birding even better.

*This tour may be combined with **SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES: JOCOTOCO FOUNDATION RESERVES, February 22 – March 6, 2025.***



*We'll spend a good bit of time on our feet, and some of the trails may be steep and muddy.
Photograph by participant Alice Whitmore.*

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

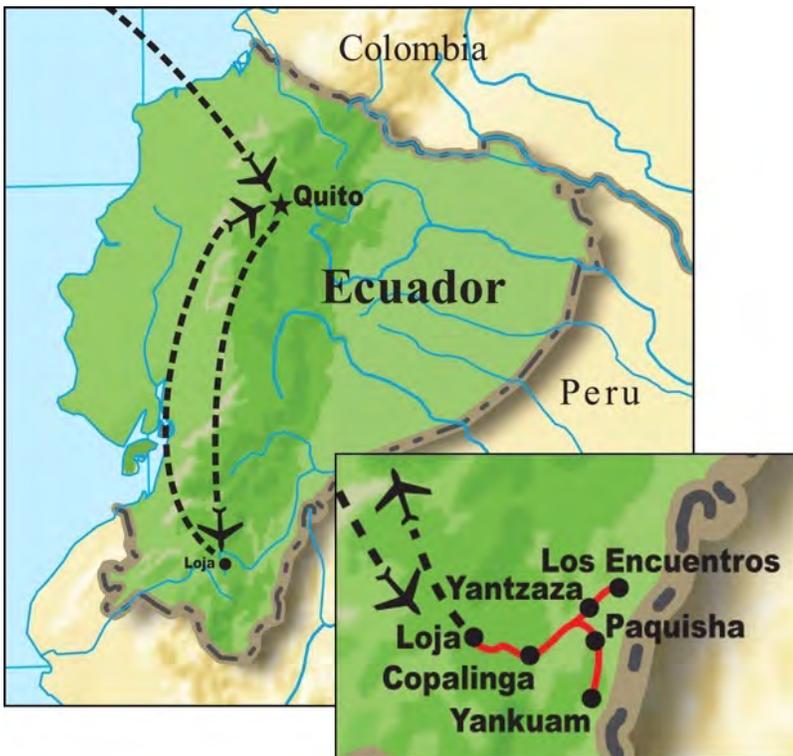
Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Good amounts of walking (up to 3.5 miles per day) along roadsides and trails, some of which will be on even ground, but the trails around Copalinga and Yankuam are steep, narrow, uneven, and usually muddy and slippery, with obstacles such as rocks or tree roots. Walking sticks can be useful.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We drive for long periods several times on this tour. Participants should be able to step up (and step down) 10-12 inches to get into and out of our vehicles, whether small buses, vans, 4x4 Land Rover-style vehicles, or jeeps. Several roads are rough, and although we drive slowly, there is still a fair bit of bouncing around.

- **PACE:** After breakfast (usually at 5:30 a.m.), we bird until lunch time. We sometimes pack a picnic lunch, to extend our time in the field. Normally, weather permitting, we bird after lunch or travel to our next destination. On occasion, we take a siesta of several hours after lunch.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the low 60s F at night in higher elevations to the low 90s F in lower elevations during the day. Rain showers are likely, but weather is highly variable, even in short periods of time.
- **ELEVATION:** We reach elevations of up to 7300 feet on this tour, but only briefly. Almost all of our birding will take place at elevations around 3500 feet.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on many sections of this tour's route.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible when we are changing locations.

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 for the tour.

About the Birding Areas



Yankuam Lodge is set on the banks of the Nangaritza River at the base of the west slope of the Cordillera del Condor. We will explore the bird-rich areas of the outlying foothills that are surrounded by gorgeous ridges and rugged, tepui-like geological formations. In the words of well-known botanist David Neill (of the Missouri Botanical Gardens), who has done a great deal of research in the area, "The geology of the Condor region is known only in general terms. The entire region is composed of marine and continental sediments deposited during the Cretaceous and early Tertiary and uplifted from the Miocene onwards to its present elevations. The lowermost strata along the Nangaritza River are Cretaceous shales with abundant fossil ammonites. These strata are overlain by limestone, which in places has eroded into karst formations. The uppermost strata are sandstones, which form flat-topped ridges and table-mountains. Oligotrophic sandstone substrates are unusual in the Andes. We believe that the geological composition of the Cordillera del Condor is an important key to understanding its unique floristic composition and its putative biogeographic links to the Guayana Highlands." OK, a lot of tech-talk there, but it does

lay the foundation in order try and understand the uniqueness and geological history of the zone.

This is where we'll spend time searching for the Orange-throated Tanager. Birding mostly along wide gravel roads, we will listen for the loud and odd calls of the tanager that are often the first clue to its presence. Other species that we will be on the lookout for include White Hawk, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, Spot-fronted and White-chinned swifts, Purplish Jacamar, Rufous-winged Antwren, Black, Spot-backed, and White-browed antbirds, with luck Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner, Speckled Spinetail, White-bellied Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-and-white and Golden-winged tody-flycatchers, Blackish Pewee, Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant, Foothill Schiffornis, Sharpbill, Gray-tailed Piha, Flame-crested, Green-and-gold, and Yellow-backed tanagers, and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak.

A trail across the road from the lodge climbs rather steeply up to a nearby “tepui.” While we won’t climb to the top, we will want to have a peek into the lower sections that can be productive for Zimmer’s Antbird, Green Manakin, and Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater.

Yantzaza town and its surrounding slopes up to the central ridge of the Cordillera del Condor (right on the border with Peru) allow access to some higher elevations that can be hard to get to in this region. Birdy forest patches (with interesting species) and little traffic are what we’ve experienced here. We will take advantage of this access and get as high in elevation as we can—with luck up to about 1700 meters—and hope for mid-elevation flocks that could yield Black-streaked Puffbird, Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and Yellow-throated Tanager, and possibly even some of the species of the higher ridges.

As of this writing, access up to the stunted forests on the ridges above was not possible as the road to these areas was not finished up to the border, but keep those fingers crossed for this possible bonus, because we could even stumble across Cinnamon-breasted Tody-Tyrant or Roraiman Flycatcher! If we can’t make it up, there is still plenty of excellent forest to bird for a wonderful day of productive birding, with even some outrageous possibilities that include Black-chested Fruiteater and the rare Jet Manakin. Keep in mind that for those particularly interested in that small set of outlying foothill, ridge-top species, the Field Guides Northern Peru trips might be a better option.



On recent tours we’ve gotten wonderful views of Gray Tinamou at Copalinga. Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.

Copalinga is a superb lodge situated on a beautiful hillside in the Bombuscaro River valley, right near the northeasternmost fringes of Podocarpus National Park. The lodge itself has private, very attractive, wooden cabins that extend up through the lush and birdy tropical gardens behind the open-air dining room.

We have had some great birding here, with Ash-browed Spinetail, Strong-billed Woodcreeper (eastern foothill form), White-crowned Tapaculo, Mottle-backed Elaenia, Yellow-olive Flatbill, and Yellow-bellied and Masked tanagers, just for starters. Along some of the trails a little further in we can hope for Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper as they sneak about at stream edges. Fruit feeders right next to the dining area often attract a healthy selection of tanagers, saltators and Incas throughout the day, while a corn feeder up along the lodge’s trail system has been a hotspot of late for attracting Gray Tinamou...we had wonderful studies on our 2018 trip and will hope it is around during our stay! The hummingbird feeders right at the dining room attract Violet-fronted and Black-throated brilliants, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Many-spotted Hummingbird, and Golden-tailed Sapphire, while the Verbena flowers outside abound with Violet-headed Hummingbirds and Glittering-throated Emeralds. With luck we could even encounter a male Spangled Coquette or a Peruvian Racket-tail.

The Rio Bombuscaro entrance to Podocarpus Park is in the heart of the upper tropical zone at the eastern base of the Andes. This overwhelmingly beautiful, forested zone is full of rushing water and a terrific diversity of birds, many of them genuinely scarce. Foothill specialties we've seen here on past tours include Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Sickle-winged Guan, White-tipped Sicklebill, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Wire-crested Thorntail, Violet-fronted and Black-throated brilliants, Brown Violetear, Andean Motmot, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Lanceolated Monklet, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, Equatorial Graytail, Ash-browed Spinetail, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper, Black-billed Treehunter, Olive-backed Woodcreeper, Foothill Stipplethroat and Yellow-breasted antwren, Scale-backed and Blackish antbirds, Plain-backed Antpitta (usually heard only), White-crowned Tapaculo, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Orange-crested and Lemon-browed flycatchers, Foothill Elaenia (a little *Myiopagis* flycatcher that was officially described after the Ecuador field guide text went to press), Amazonian Umbrellabird, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Blue-rumped Manakin (rare), White-crowned Manakin, Gray-mantled Wren, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Orange-billed Sparrow, Olive Finch, and dozens of glittering tanagers, including Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Orange-eared, Paradise, Golden, Golden-eared, Yellow-bellied, Spotted, and Blue-necked. The well-designed trails climb gradually upriver through absolutely glorious forest.



*The unusual Amazonian Umbrellabird is one of the species we'll watch for when we visit Podocarpus National Park.
Photograph by participant Jerzy Majka.*

Old Loja-Zamora road. The city of Loja is in a dry intermontane valley at 6800 feet (2070 m), still in the Pacific drainage. The road to Zamora climbs eastward from Loja, cresting the eastern Andes at a rather low pass at 9000 feet (2700 m) and winding down through still relatively undisturbed temperate and subtropical forest. Middle-elevation subtropical forest lines much of the road. On a cloudy day—especially with mist—this forest can teem with activity, from Long-tailed Sylphs and Andean Cocks-of-the-rock feeding at the roadside to mixed flocks of brilliant tanagers, with as many as twenty species possible (including Yellow-throated, Rufous-crested, Saffron-crowned, Flame-faced, Blue-necked, Blue-browed, Golden, Golden-eared, Orange-eared, Vermilion, and Blue-winged Mountain). And there's always a chance we'll encounter a noisy flock of wide-ranging White-capped Tanagers, an anomalous species that behaves more like a jay or a blackbird than a tanager! Near 5000 feet, mixed flocks could include numerous tanagers as well as such rarities as Equatorial Graytail and Fulvous-breasted Flatbill. One of our main targets in the lower subtropical/upper tropical forest zone is the lovely White-necked Parakeet, an Ecuadorian near-endemic known from only four specimens until 1981 when it was rediscovered above Zamora. It has now been found in the Cordillera del Condor on the Peruvian side of the border as well.



*We've seen the rare Orange-throated Tanager well near Yankuam Lodge on our tours!
Photograph by participant John Rounds.*

Itinerary for Southeast Ecuador: Orange-throated Tanager & Foothill Specialties

Day 1, Thu, 13 Feb. Arrival in Quito. Most flights originate from Miami, usually arriving between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.; our office staff can help find the schedule best for you. Once you have passed through baggage claim and cleared customs, watch for a Hotel San Jose de Puenbo sign with your name on it near the exit to the outside; our representative will meet you for transfer to our modern hotel, some twenty minutes away in the suburbs outside of Quito. If arriving late to the hotel, be sure to ask at the desk for a note from your guide detailing plans for tomorrow.

We encourage you to come a day early to rest up before the tour starts—with an early flight to the city of Loja tomorrow, you will have a short night if you get in at midnight or later. The Hotel San Jose de Puenbo offers wonderful central-valley birding right on the grounds, modern and cozy (to even luxurious) rooms, a swimming pool, free WIFI, and a full-service restaurant. If you would like to do some shopping in Ecuador (there will be virtually no opportunity during the tour), we recommend coming a day early; there are excellent shops and markets in Quito, and we can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide if you like. Quito's colonial old-town is one of the most beautiful and well preserved in all of Latin America, and is more than worth the visit. While the city is relatively safe, you should, however, be cautious while strolling the streets, especially if alone and sporting cameras or jewelry. Night at Hotel San Jose de Puenbo.

Day 2, Fri, 14 Feb. Flight to Loja and travel by bus to Yankuam. We will likely have to rise very early for our flight to Loja, but luckily our hotel is close to the airport. The early flight is a blessing in disguise because it essentially affords us a full day of birding and relaxes the land travel pace a bit. After an early breakfast, we will transfer to the Quito airport for the 50-minute flight to the south of Ecuador. Upon arriving at the Loja airport we'll gather our bags, meet up with our bus and driver, and load up for the trip east. This will be our longest travel day, crossing the continental divide, but we plan to break it up with birding stops along the way.

The temptation to bird right out of the blocks will certainly overwhelm us, so we will take some time to land a few of the species typical of the area before getting on the road. The immediate habitat near Loja will be dominated by central valley scrub, heavily influenced by the drier Tumbesian zone (shared with NW Peru), so it should yield numerous species that we will not encounter on the rest of our route, such as Croaking Ground-Dove, Pacific Parrotlet, Fasciated Wren,

Peruvian Meadowlark, and maybe even Peruvian Pygmy-Owl. We won't linger too long in this habitat though, as this is very well covered on our *Jewels of Ecuador* and *SW Ecuador* tours.

The drive up and over the mighty Andes will take us through the northern fringes of Ecuador's fourth largest city, Loja, en route to the humid foothills around Yankuam lodge. It will be a long drive, but the scenery is amazing as we pass by almost the entire northern edge of Podocarpus National Park. The weather and specific road conditions will dictate exactly how we orchestrate our birding, but we do plan to make some key stops. Ideally we want to bird our way down the humid east slope along the old Loja-Zamora road for a first go at mixed flocks; hitting things right can yield an amazing array of colorful tanagers and insectivores, but road conditions and weather are factors that we will have to deal with. A stop next to the various bridges along the way could yield Oilbirds on a day roost, or a Fasciated Tiger-Heron fishing from the boulders of the Zamora River. Depending on our progress—birding time will be limited—we will try and fit in a few more birding stops along the way as we make our way closer to Yankuam, where we could turn up the newly discovered (for Ecuador) Bluish-fronted Jacamar, or even Speckled Spinetail with a flock. We will aim to get into our lodge before nightfall to settle in. Dinner and night at Yankuam Lodge.



The Fasciated Tiger-Heron prefers to hunt along rocky, fast-moving streams. We'll look for these uncommon herons along the Zamora River. Photograph by participant Sid England

Days 3-4, Sat-Sun, 15-16 Feb. Days birding out of Yankuam Lodge. Yankuam Lodge is set right on the banks of the Nangaritza River at the base of the west slope of the Cordillera del Condor, and it's surrounded by beautiful and towering ridges and hills. While on the rustic side, the lodge is comfortable and has hot showers and very tasty food. Several buildings with private rooms are set about in a garden setting; the birding right around the lodge can be great for Yellow-bellied and Blue dacnises, Turquoise Tanager, and other treetop species; sometimes Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle can be seen soaring over. With luck we might even encounter the rare and furtive Uniform Crakes that inhabit the wet areas next to the lodge, but we will need some luck here.

Two full days (and another full morning if needed) are at our disposal to explore the bird-rich areas of the outlying foothills that are surrounded by the gorgeous ridges and rugged, tepui-like geological formations. We will want to get out early each day to take advantage of the early-morning activity that is so important in the tropics, before the sun starts to beat down, or if the rains decide to set in.

To get to the best Orange-throated Tanager territories, it used to have to be necessary to rent rudimentary, motorized canoes to make our way up the rapids of the Nangaritza River, but a "relatively" new bridge right next to the lodge has changed all of this, making vehicular access across the river a breeze to get to the best spots in only minutes. Other species that we will watch for include White Hawk, Spot-fronted and White-chinned swifts, Purplish Jacamar, Black and White-browed antbirds, Ocellated Woodcreeper, with luck Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner, Speckled Spinetail, White-bellied Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-and-white and Golden-winged tody-flycatchers, Blackish Pewee, Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant, Wing-

barred Piprites, Sharpbill, Gray-tailed Piha, Flame-crested, Green-and-gold, and Yellow-backed tanagers, and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak.

A trail across the road from the lodge climbs rather steeply up to a nearby “tepui.” While this climb in its entirety is a three-hour, hard jaunt fit for hardcore trekkers (which we won't undertake), we will check the lower sections for Zimmer's Antbird, Green Manakin, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, and Yellow-throated Tanager.

We will return for a relaxing, sit-down lunch at the lodge on these days since it will be close by, and it's the perfect spot to take a midday break during the hotter, non-productive hours. Nights at Yankuam.

Day 5, Mon, 17 Feb. Last morning around Yankuam; afternoon drive north to Yantzaza area. We will spend one last morning in the Yankuam area for any major last cleanups, especially on the outside chance that we are still in need of looks at the coveted Orange-throated Tanager; on our most recent trip we had our best and most leisurely views on this morning!

We will bird our way back north towards the town of Yantzaza, stopping at a new hot-spot for Spangled Coquette and other fancy, eastern-foothill hummers. Night in hotel in Yantzaza.



As its name suggests, the Ecuadorian Tyrannulet is a near-endemic, found on the eastern slope of the Andes throughout Ecuador. This one posed nicely for a previous tour group at Copalinga. Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.

Day 6, Tue, 18 Feb. Foothills around Yantzaza; afternoon to Copalinga. The road up into the Cordillera del Condor east out of Yantzaza harbors some great birding, and we'll spend a full morning working the flocks and other birds of the area. Interesting possibilities include Greenish Puffleg, Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner, Spectacled Prickletail, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Black-chested and Scarlet-breasted fruiteaters, Bar-winged Wood-Wren, and Metallic-green and Yellow-throated tanagers. The road we will be birding is fairly new and still under construction, so it is possible that it has been extended to higher elevations than we have previously been able to bird here, potentially opening up some bird surprises.

After lunch we will set our sights on getting to Copalinga. Once there, we will want to have a first go at the purple verbena flowers that line the gardens; the hummingbird activity here can be thrilling, with more opportunities to admire Spangled Coquette, Peruvian Racket-tail, Blue-tailed Emerald, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Glittering-throated Emerald, and Golden-headed Sapphire, while the actual feeders tend to be dominated by Violet-fronted Brilliants and Fork-tailed Woodnymphs, but Black-throated Brilliant does sneak in from time to time.

Copalinga is a superb lodge situated on a beautiful hillside in the Bombuscaro River valley, right near the northeasternmost fringes of Podocarpus National Park. We have had some great birding here, with Ash-browed Spinetail, Strong-billed Woodcreeper (distinctively vocal foothill race), White-crowned Tapaculo, Mottle-backed Elaenia, Yellow-olive

Flatbill, and Yellow-bellied and Masked tanagers, just for starters. Along some of the trails a little further in we can hope for Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper as they sneak about at stream edges. Fruit feeders right next to the dining often attract a healthy selection of tanagers, saltators, and sparrows throughout the day, while a corn feeder up along the lodge's trail system has been a hotspot of late for attracting Gray Tinamou...we will hope it is around during our stay! Dinner and night at Copalinga.

Day 7, Wed, 19 Feb. Day birding Bombuscaro sector of Podocarpus National Park and Copalinga grounds.

Today we will spend the bulk of the day birding along the trails in the Bombuscaro sector of Podocarpus National Park, only a short drive from Copalinga. This will get us into some of the finest tall foothill-forest habitats of the trip; the forest is simply breathtaking and the birding fabulous. The main track into the park headquarters can be very productive for Ecuadorian Piedtail, Andean Motmot, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Blackish Antbird, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Amazonian Umbrellabird, and Blue-rumped Manakin.

To maximize our time in the field, we will want to take pack lunches (bring plenty of water!) prepared by the lodge; since we will be hiking up to 5-6 kms (round trip) we won't want to have to come rushing back for lunch outside of the park. We will be away from our vehicle for much of the day, so this will be one of the most important days to have along raingear. A slightly overcast day would be ideal, but even if we get some rainy spells, the headquarter houses are there to give us some shelter, and since they are in a clearing surrounded by beautiful forest, they can be a great place from which to bird; here we frequently nab Foothill Elaenia, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, and Golden-eared and Orange-eared tanagers. We will be on the look-out for the very range-restricted White-necked Parakeet, moving up and down the valley in screeching groups in search of fruiting trees; one never knows where they will turn up, but the headquarters clearing, and even the lodge at Copalinga, are common haunts for them.



Among the gorgeous tanagers we'll see is the stunning Green-and-Gold Tanager. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

The canopy flocks here can be particularly rewarding, if somewhat challenging, but if we can get one at a bird-able angle—meaning not neck-breaking!—we will have excellent shots at finding (in addition to many aforementioned species) Russet Antshrike, Yellow-breasted Antwren, Olive-backed Woodcreeper, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops, Equatorial Graytail, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Gray-mantled Wren, Flame-crested Tanager, and Deep-blue Flowerpiercer.

The understory will also deserve its due attention, with denizens including Foothill Stipplethroat, Chestnut-crowned Gnatcatcher, Black-billed Treehunter, Dusky Spinetail, Orange-crested Flycatcher, and many others. Sometimes Blue-fronted Lancebill can be found in the small, shaded waterfalls along the trails.

After a long day in the field we will make our way back to Copalinga and spend the rest of the afternoon around the lodge for any last sightings! A road cut nearby is often a great place for Blackish Nightjars, so weather permitting we will give this a try at dusk when they become active and sometimes sit right on the road. We will also want to give the resident Band-bellied Owls a try as they sometimes swoop in and perch in the Cecropias right over the dining room; the song of this species is memorable and haunting. Dinner and night at Copalinga.

Day 8, Thu, 20 Feb. All day birding out of Copalinga. The way we structure today's birding will depend largely on our luck to date, but we will almost certainly want to head up to bird the lower and middle stretches of the old Loja-Zamora (up to about 1500-1600 m in elevation) for a shot at some of the birds of these slightly higher elevations, such as Blue-browed and Vermilion tanagers and Short-billed Chlorospingus; we have also had decent luck with Lanceolated Monklet and Chestnut-tipped Toucanet at a few spots along here. At this point we will very likely be in target-birding mode in order to try and fill in any holes in our list, and this area is a great place to hope to cleanup a number of the birds we might have missed. We may do a field lunch or return to Copalinga for a sit-down meal at the dining room, but this will be programmed from Copalinga once we have a better idea of where we want to spend our last afternoon of birding. Dinner and night at Copalinga.

Day 9, Fri, 21 Feb. Today, we will need to make our way to the Loja airport for our flight to Quito, and flight times will dictate the amount of birding that we can fit in. Ideally, we shoot for a mid-afternoon flight to allow for maximum birding with time still to get into the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo to clean up and enjoy our farewell meal at the hotel. If you have to take an international flight out this evening, we recommend it be for later hours (11 p.m. or later...) as the flights from Loja to Quito can vary; it is best to avoid cutting it too close. Dinner and night at Hotel San Jose de Puenbo.

Day 10, Sat, 22 Feb. Complimentary buffet breakfast on your own provided by the hotel. International flights homeward. *Buen Viaje!*

About Your Guide

Willy Perez has been leading birding tours for more than fifteen 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, Chile, Argentina and the UK. 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 Willy and his family have relocated from Ecuador 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.

*"Guide **Willy Perez** exemplifies the quintessential birding guide: always 'on' and totally tuned in to both the surrounding avian environment and the needs of the birders he is guiding. Charismatic, funny, and engaging, Willy made our tour fun, exciting, and immensely memorable."
D.B., Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Willy's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$4,225 from Quito

DEPOSIT: \$425

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 17, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$500

LIMIT: 8

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

Other Things You Need to Know

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

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations are generally good, varying from a very good hotel near Quito to two comfortable lodges in the southeast. All accommodations have private baths and hot-water showers. Overall, we stay in comfort, eat good food, and have good, quiet conditions for sleeping.

Copalinga is a superb lodge situated on a beautiful hillside in the Bombuscaro River valley, right near the northeasternmost fringes of Podocarpus National Park. The lodge offers six standard cabins and four rustic cabins. We most likely will use the six standard cabins unless there is a large number of participants each needing a single room. In that case, some of us will stay in the more rustic cabins. The lower, more rustic rooms are fine, just not as spruced-up as the finely lacquered standard cabins, and they have a bathroom and shower area just outside of the room. The upper rustic rooms are about as comfortable as the standard cabins too, and also have bathroom/shower facilities just outside of the room. Apart from appearance, the only real difference is that the lower, more rustic cabin is on flatter ground and an easier jaunt from the dining area; the upper rustic cabin is accessed by a fairly tall flight of steps. Rooms will be assigned on a first come, first served basis.

DOCUMENTS: A **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Ecuador. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. You will be issued a **tourist card** upon arrival; please keep this in your passport, in a safe place, as you will need the tourist card 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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: **Please note that the tour begins and ends in Quito.** 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. Internal flights in Ecuador are usually on either an Airbus A-319 or A-320, or an Embraer, so normal baggage constraints comply.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is **\$4,225** for one person in double occupancy from Quito. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 10, the flight from Quito to Loja, and Loja to Quito, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of your tour leader. 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 additional tips, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$500**. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. 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 REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$425** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due **180 days** prior to departure, or **by August 17, 2024**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 information from us 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, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

NCP 7/2020

ML 5/20; NC 5/20;NCB 6/20, NC, peg 7/21, 8/22NC; peg 9/22; 6/23NC; peg; 5/25NC; 6/24peg