

ITINERARY  
***SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES:***  
***Jocotoco Foundation Reserves***  
*March 1-15, 2020*



*The Red-masked Parakeet is a specialty of the Tumbes region of southwestern Ecuador and northern Peru. We've gotten good views of these colorful small parrots, as well as good views of the endangered El Oro Parakeet which can be found nearby. Photograph by participant Brian Armstrong.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2020 Field Guides Southwestern Ecuador 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

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

- 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 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, an annotated list of birds seen on the tour

**T**his tour visits the marvelous dry deciduous and humid evergreen forests that comprise a large yet endangered area of southwestern Ecuador. This region contributes a number of unique species to the country's great avian diversity, as it is the northern extension of the Tumbesian endemic center, a critical area for many bird species that can only be found here and in adjacent northwestern Peru. The habitats we will be birding range from high misty Andean forested ridges and dry desert-like intermontane valleys to humid, west-slope foothills and the deciduous *Bombax* forests and semi-deserts of the central Pacific coast. Several Ecuadorian endemics, including the El Oro Parakeet, the recently rediscovered Pale-headed Brush-Finch (thought to be extinct until 1998), and the newly described Jocotoco Antpitta occur along our route, and we will prioritize finding these specialties.

Our tour is designed to maximize our chances for southwestern specialties that complement the avifauna seen on our *Jewels of Ecuador* tour, and minimize overlap. We begin in Guayaquil, bird west of the city, and then do a large loop to the south and east, birding the new Buenaventura Reserve near Pinas (3 nights, Umbrellabird Lodge), the newest of the foundation's lodges at Jorupe Reserve near Macara (3 nights, Urraca Lodge), and the Tapichalaca Reserve (2 nights, Tapichalaca Lodge), home of the Jocotoco Antpitta, as we work our way up to the higher elevations. We conclude with an early expedition to see the Pale-headed Brush-Finch at Yunguilla Reserve southwest of Cuenca before catching an evening flight to Quito in order to connect with our international flights home the following day. Our tour route overlaps with that of our *Jewels Of Ecuador* tour only for a morning at Cajanuma and for the (mostly) travel day between Loja and Cuenca, when we'll start early to try for Red-faced Parrot and Crescent-faced Antpitta.

As Frank Chapman realized as early as the 1920s, southwestern Ecuador is one of the most complex regions in South America with regard to its biogeography and its avifauna; it is a showcase of diversity and endemism. The dry forests of the southwest (Tumbesian Center of Endemism) support a very high proportion of unique forms (more than forty taxa) and comprise one of the most threatened habitats in South America. We will be in the range of almost half of Ecuador's forty Threatened Birds (Birdlife International/ICBP classification). Our birding will take us to wonderfully biodiverse areas critically in need of protection, as well as to such established preserves as Podocarpus National Park, Huashapamba Reserve, and the Jocotoco Foundation reserves at Buenaventura, Jorupe, Utuana, Tapichalaca, and Yunguilla. In addition to the numerous species typical of each of the habitats on our route, with the help of some keen, sharp-eyed participants, we can hope to see half to two-thirds of these rarities.



*Our group had an amazing experience in 2019 with this Crescent-faced Antbird. The little sprite came very close to the group; so close that guide Willy Perez said it was his best view ever of this bird! Photograph by guide Willy Perez.*

The highlights of this birding fortnight are the birds themselves, a remarkable grouping of beautiful, behaviorally fascinating, endangered, and little-known species. They range from a distinctive Ecuadorian endemic parakeet of the genus *Pyrrhura*, the El Oro Parakeet (described in 1986 from the province for which it was named; and still known only from El Oro and adjacent Canar) to more than thirty species of hummingbirds, including such fantastics as White-tipped Sicklebill, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Collared Inca, Violet-tailed and Long-tailed sylphs, Little (Flame-throated) and Purple-throated sunangels, Glowing Puffleg, Green-crowned Woodnymph (of the race *hypochlora*, by some authorities considered a species distinct from Green-crowned and called Emerald-bellied), Green Thorntail, and Rufous-capped Thornbill. Expect good looks at most of the long list of Tumbesian specialties (including the secretive Watkins' Antpitta and Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner), and witness at close range such knock-outs as displaying Club-winged Manakins and singing Red-hooded Tanagers. Past tour groups have had good looks at such wonderful species as Pale-browed Tinamou, Horned Screamer, Gray-backed Hawk, Golden-plumed, White-necked, Red-masked, and Gray-cheeked parakeets, Pacific Parrotlet, Gray-capped Cuckoo, Peruvian Screech-Owl, Andean Pygmy-Owl, Peruvian Pygmy-Owl (often voted most valuable bird for its assistance in attracting many others), Ecuadorian Trogon, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Choco and Yellow-throated (Chestnut-mandibled) toucans, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed, Crimson-mantled, Powerful, and Guayaquil woodpeckers, Pacific Tuftedcheek,

Collared and Chapman's antshrikes, Gray-headed Antbird; Chestnut-naped, Rufous, Plain-backed, and Ochre-breasted antpittas, Elegant Crescent-chest, Ecuadorian, Chusquea, and Ocellated tapaculos, displaying Pacific Elaenias, Black-crested Tit-Tyrant (a favorite of many participants), Agile Tit-Tyrant, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Orange-banded and Gray-breasted flycatchers, Jelski's Chat-Tyrant, Ochraceous Attila, Snowy-throated Kingbird, One-colored and Slaty becards, Long-wattled Umbrellabirds, Chestnut-collared Swallow, Speckle-breasted and Superciliated wrens, Maranon, Ecuadorian, and Plumbeous-backed thrushes, the spectacular White-tailed Jay, Gray-and-gold Warbler, Crimson-breasted Finch, Black-capped Sparrow, Black-cowled Saltator, White-edged Oriole, Bay-crowned, White-winged, White-headed, Pale-naped, and the distinctive Pale-headed brush-finches; and around thirty species of tanagers and their relatives including Black-eared Hemispingus (of the race *piurae*, as well as Red-hooded and Golden-crowned tanagers.

The Jocotoco Foundation has been hard at work during the past few years erecting some comfortable lodges right on their reserves, and we plan to stay at three of them. One of the highlights of the tour will be staying in their lovely lodge right at the reserve for the Jocotoco Antpitta, and with luck we should see at least one of the group of Jocotoco Antpittas that have been "trained" to come to the trail for earthworms! This Ecuadorian specialty, recently found in adjacent Peru as well, was described new to science in 1999. (But remember that antpittas have a mind of their own, and if the ground has been wet—and hence good for earthworms to be active—they may have less incentive to come "on call." But they have been quite reliable in recent years, and we have allowed enough time at Tapichalaca for two tries if need be.) We will also stay at the Jocotoco Foundation's two newest lodges: first at the Buenaventura Reserve's Umbrellabird Lodge (near Pinas), in the lush foothills of the west where we will be very near prime habitat for the El Oro Parakeet and the Long-wattled Umbrellabird; and then at the beautifully designed Jorupe Reserve's Urraca Lodge (near Macara), where we will bird right in the heart of some of the most well preserved *Bombax*-dominated, deciduous forest accessible in Ecuador! The Southwest has much to offer!

Visit <http://fieldguides.smugmug.com/SHOWS/South-America/SW-Ecuador-Slideshow> for an annotated slideshow of the tour.

*Note: In the following we have highlighted in green any text that we consider requires your special attention.*



*This is Ecuador, so some of the trails we take may well be muddy!  
Photograph by guide Rose Ann Rowlett.*

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** This is a specialties tour, and we expect it to attract some birders with a keen interest in their world bird lists who have never had the opportunity to search for El Oro Parakeet, Jocotoco Antpitta, Pale-headed Brush-Finch, and/or some of the Tumbesian endemics. Our intention is to prioritize the geographic specialties of the Southwest, while enjoying the more common and widespread species as time permits. Depending on weather and road conditions, time can be tight on this tour. A few years ago, a landslide across a road cost us a whole morning, causing the second half of our tour to be particularly fast-paced. We've revised the itinerary to relax the pace, allow more birding time in critical areas, and to serve as insurance against such impacts as road closings or bad-weather conditions. But there is still far more to see than we'll have time for, so you'll need a good bit of stamina to bird day after day amid such riches. In search of the Jocotoco Antpitta and other montane specialties, **we'll take some relatively difficult, muddy trails requiring steady walking skills and good balance in potentially deep mud.** And we may decide to spend one entire morning walking the old road through the Buenaventura Reserve, requiring that folks carry their own water and snacks in a daypack.

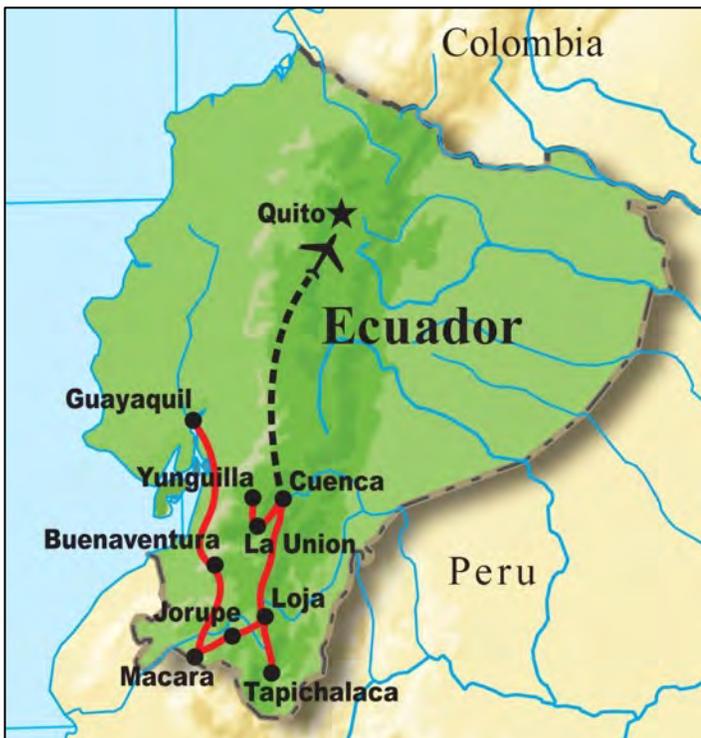
Accommodations are generally quite good, varying from a fine hotel in Guayaquil to a simpler, but clean and well run, hotel in Loja. We are delighted, of course, with the development of the beautifully designed Jocotoco Foundation lodges (Umbrellabird Lodge, Urraca Lodge, and Tapichalaca) right in three of our major birding areas. And we're happy to be contributing to the Foundation by staying in their lodges. It does mean, however, that singles are not available for the nights we stay in at least two of these lodges: the Foundation has recently added rooms at Tapichalaca and now has seven available to us, which is usually sufficient to accommodate all single room requests, but singles may not

be available for the nights we stay at Umbrellabird and Urraca; people may have to double up, and depending on the group size, even make use of triples at Umbrellabird (Buenaventura). The lodges are well situated for our needs. For example, at Tapichalaca, each room has a private bathroom with hot-water shower, and there is an extra bathroom downstairs available to all. Tasty meals are prepared in the downstairs dining room, and there is a sitting area/library beside the fireplace. The place is right in the forest and surrounded by birds. By staying here, we eliminate a 90-minute drive one-way from Vilcabamba, the nearest town with good private accommodations, and enable our group to try for the Jocotoco Antpitta early and on two different mornings if need be. We will adopt a similar strategy when staying at the similarly designed Umbrellabird Lodge, right in the Buenaventura reserve. And we now stay at the lovely and beautifully designed Jocotoco Foundation's Urraca Lodge, right in the heart of the Jorupe Reserve, in the warm foothills not far from the small town of Macara. The gorgeous facilities here are surrounded by excellent and mature deciduous forest, where large *Bombax* trees draped with Spanish moss hang over the lodge and drip with birds typical of the zone. Anybody who has ever stayed the night in Macara will understand what a treat this is: no all-night car alarms or squealing pigs, only crickets and owls as lullabies right in the middle of some of the nicest tropical dry forest accessible. Overall, we stay in comfort, eat good food, and have good, quiet conditions for sleeping; most people are surprised and delighted at how good the accommodations are.

But birding such remote and seldom-visited areas necessitates some long drives and travel days (with picnic lunches), with road conditions (dust, mud, or fog!) depending on the vagaries of local weather. Fortunately, many of the roads in southwestern Ecuador are now paved, reducing the driving times of the past, and our bus is surprisingly comfortable. But there are still many bad roads, including some of the paved ones that have developed potholes during past unseasonably heavy rainy seasons. To reach the Pale-headed Brush-Finch area at a good time requires about 30 minute drive over rough roads in the dark from our comfortable lodging nearby. In general, you should expect pre-dawn starts, full and active days of birding (mostly along roads, but including some muddy trails), and late closes. We try to return to our lodgings by 6:00 p.m., for a 7:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. dinner and checklist session. Where we have two- and three-night stays, one has the option of taking a day (or part of a day) off at the cost of missing some birds. On our final day out of La Union, we intend to start by 5:00 a.m. to get to the Pale-headed Brush-Finch reserve in time to maximize our chances of seeing this spectacular bird, which often sings in the early morning and then becomes more difficult to find as the day heats up. On many previous tours, it was one of the favorite birds of the trip!

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

## About the Birding Areas



**Tumbesian semi-desert and deciduous forests of the Southwest**—Well to the west of Guayaquil lies a barren coastal desert—the northernmost finger of the great Atacama. To the east (and inland) the drying effects of the Humboldt Current are moderated by the influence of the great estuaries near Guayaquil and by outlying hills uplifted enough to trap moisture from the low-lying clouds. Here acacias and cacti scattered across coastal desert sands give way inland to dense semi-desert thornbush. The canyons that drain the hills near Guayaquil support sizable stands of bromeliad-festooned deciduous forest that penetrates well out into the desert scrub. Huge *Bombax*, related to the wonderful baobab trees of Africa, dominate the woodlands of the Chongon Hills and other outlying hills.

Similar habitat is found to the southeast in arid intermontane valleys, inland from the first chain of Andean foothills that rise high enough to trap the Pacific moisture. In this region of transition occur many species of birds that are restricted to the arid coasts and semi-arid foothills of southwestern Ecuador and adjacent northwestern Peru. Named for the northwesternmost department of Peru (Tumbes), this region is known as the Tumbesian Endemic Center, and its dry and transitional habitats are among the most distinctive, and most threatened, on the continent. At



*The Tumbes Sparrow is one of our targets.  
Photograph by participant Tristan Jobin.*

least fifty species are endemic to this region, an area of less than 50,000 square kilometers; almost two-thirds of these are possible on the tour. A partial list of the specialties of the more arid and semi-arid habitats includes: Pale-browed Tinamou, Gray-backed Hawk, Red-masked and Gray-cheeked parakeets, Pacific Parrotlet, Ecuadorian Ground-Dove, Ochre-bellied Dove, Peruvian Screech-Owl, Scrub Nightjar, Short-tailed Swift (of the Tumbesian race *ocypetes*), Long-billed Hermit (of the Tumbesian race *baroni*), two distinctive races of *Amazilia* Hummingbird (the northern race in the lowlands, and the 'Loja' Hummingbird, now considered an inland, highland race of *Amazilia* but split in vol. 5 of *Handbook of Birds of the World*), Tumbes Hummingbird, Short-tailed Woodstar, Ecuadorian Trogon, Whooping Motmot (as one of five splits of the Blue-crowned Motmot group), Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed and Guayaquil woodpeckers, "Pacific" Pale-legged Hornero (the Tumbesian race *cinnamomeus* having been split by some authors), Blackish-headed and Necklaced spinetails, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Collared Antshrike, Watkins's Antpitta, Elegant Crescentchest, Snowy-throated Kingbird, Baird's and Sooty-crowned flycatchers, Pacific Elaenia, "Tumbes"

Mouse-colored Tyrannulet (a split, by some, of the Tumbesian race *tumbeza* from Mouse-colored Tyrannulet east of the Andes), Gray-and-white Tyrannulet, Gray-breasted Flycatcher, Slaty and One-colored becards, White-tailed Jay, Plumbeous-backed, and Ecuadorian thrushes, Superciliated and Speckle-breasted wrens, Saffron Siskin, Gray-and-gold Warbler, the Tumbesian form of Masked Yellowthroat (considered a separate species, *Geothlypis auricularis*, Black-lored Yellowthroat, by Ridgely et al.), Tumbes and Black-capped sparrows, Crimson-breasted Finch, White-headed Brush-Finch, White-edged Oriole, and the disjunct (and weird-sounding) Tumbesian race *flavicrissus* of Yellow-rumped Cacique. Additional species of interest include numerous raptors, Red-billed Scythebill, Fasciated Wren, and such rarities as Rufous-headed Chachalaca and Great Green Macaw (although we would need much luck for the latter!).

It is this group of Tumbesian specialties—some common and others scarce or difficult to see—that constitute the focus of our search near Guayaquil, near Macara, at Jorupe Reserve, and in other arid parts of Loja province.

**Marshes of the coastal plain**—South of Guayaquil, all the way to Machala, much of the coastal plain has been appropriated for banana plantations, cacao, or grazing. But there are some good remnants of what used to be a vast coastal marshland. These wetlands support the largest population of Horned Screamers in Ecuador, as well as a few Pinnated Bitterns and other waders. We'll make stops to bird these remnant marshes near Manglares-Churute Reserve south of Guayaquil and inland from Machala near Santa Rosa. Additional species of interest in such areas include Cocoli Heron, Limpkin, Snail Kite, Savanna Hawk, White-throated Crake, and the Tumbesian race *atripennis* of Masked Water-Tyrant.

**Humid foothill forest west of Pinas (Buenaventura Reserve)**—The montane rainforest that once cloaked the west-facing slopes of Ecuador's western Andes is now largely fragmented, especially near roads giving access. That forest remaining in the southwestern foothills of the provinces of Canar and El Oro is of particular interest—aside from the sheer aesthetics of its bird life—for four reasons: 1) it constitutes the southern range limit for a number of upper-tropical species restricted to the humid west slope of Colombia and Ecuador; 2) the degree to which it is geographically isolated from the more continuous chain of Andean foothill forest to the north has allowed the evolution of some genetically isolated populations, some of which are distinct enough to be considered full species, e.g., the El Oro Parakeet, *Pyrhura orcesi*, discovered as recently as 1980; 3) the occurrence here at 2500 feet of species generally considered subtropical, i.e., of elevations 5000-8500 feet, (e.g., Andean Solitaire and Gray-breasted Wood-Wren) exemplifies a fascinating expansion of ecological niches; and 4) the unusual mixture of species of diverse geographic origins occurring together here reflects a complex and fascinating biogeographic history still being slowly unraveled. More simply said, these west-slope foothills present an extremely birdy area that invites almost constant questions about the evolutionary process.

This same exciting mix is enough to make an excited birder forget about everything else: Rarely—in decent weather—is there a dull moment when there isn't something to look at and ogle! Combine the strong showing of species restricted to the Choco endemic center with a few Tumbesian birds that barely creep into these more humid forests, and

add a few very local endemics known only from this area, and you have a unique and exciting mix. Fortunately, the Jocotoco Foundation now has under its control a large tract of this forest type, known as the Buenaventura Reserve, and we will be right in the middle of it for the better part of three days.

Among the many possible species in this zone are: Barred and Gray-backed hawks, Bronze-winged Parrot, Red-masked Parakeet, the endemic El Oro Parakeet, White-whiskered Hermit, White-tipped Sicklebill, Brown Inca, Violet-tailed Sylph, Green-crowned Woodnymph (of the SW Ecuador/N Peru race *hypochlora*, considered by some to represent a full species called “Emerald-bellied Woodnymph”), the race *intermedia* of White-vented Plumeleteer (a taxonomic puzzle that may best prove to be a distinct species limited to Southwest Ecuador), Wedge-billed Hummingbird, Green-crowned Brilliant, Green Thorntail, Andean Emerald, Golden-headed Quetzal, Rufous and Broad-billed motmots, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Collared (“Pale-mandibled”) Aracari, Choco and Chestnut-mandibled toucans, Line-cheeked Spinetail, Buffy Tuftedcheek (of the race *johnsoni* of W Colombia and W Ecuador, raised to specific status and called “Pacific Tuftedcheek” by Ridgely et al.), Striped Woodhaunter (of the subgroup that occurs west of the Andes and in Middle America, which Ridgely et al. elevated to full-species rank and called “Western Woodhaunter”), Uniform Treehunter, Brown-billed Scythebill, Russet and Uniform antshrikes, Esmeraldas and Immaculate antbirds, Ochre-breasted Antpitta, Ecuadorian Tapaculo (a rare, recently described species that is very hard to find), “Loja” Golden-faced tyrannulets, Ochraceous Attila, Scaled Fruiteater, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Club-winged and Golden-winged manakins, Whiskered and Bay wrens, Three-banded Warbler, numerous tanagers (including Rufous-throated), and Black-winged Saltator.

We’ll bird the Buenaventura Reserve and surrounding humid west-slope foothills for three days; the reserve alone protects some of these species.



The Long-wattled Umbrellabird has a limited distribution on the Pacific slope of Ecuador and southern Colombia. We’ve been able to get good views of these large cotingas, and even seen the males displaying on recent tours.  
Photograph by participant Brian Armstrong.

**Tumbesian humid montane forest**—Toward the crest of the western Andes, which is surprisingly low in the Southwest, enough moisture accumulates, at least locally, to support a subtropical-elevation humid forest. This is perhaps the most endangered of all the Tumbesian habitats. Here the forest is mossy, stunted and wet, offering quite a contrast to the semi-desert scrub and deciduous forests nearby. The weather of this zone is characteristically unpredictable, varying from sunny and windy to calm and totally fogged in. Should we be lucky enough to encounter conditions somewhere in between, we could add several montane Tumbesian specialties: Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Chapman’s Antshrike, Gray-headed Antbird (a rare bamboo specialist), Black-crested Tit-Tyrant, Jelski’s Chat-Tyrant, the very distinctive *piurae* race of Black-eared Hemispingus (elevated to full-species status by Ridgely et al.), the disjunct northwestern *viridicollis* race of Silver-backed Tanager, Bay-crowned Brush-Finch, and Black-cowled Saltator. Other intriguing species in these montane habitats include: Rainbow Starfrontlet, Purple-throated Sunangel, Undulated, Scaled, and Chestnut-crowned antpittas, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, the Andean race *nigriceps* of Slaty Thrush (breeding in southwestern Ecuador, contra older literature), and White-winged, Yellow-breasted (Rufous-naped), and Gray-browed brush-finches. Our 2002 tour even encountered one of Ecuador’s first sightings of the Rusty-breasted Antpitta, a bird not even covered in the *Birds of Ecuador*, and we heard it again in 2010 and 2011.

We’ll sample this Tumbesian humid montane forest zone near Sozoranga and Utuana, in southwestern Loja province, from our base at Urraca Lodge.

**Humid montane forest on the east slope of the Andes and near its crest**—Settlements in the Ecuadorian Andes have traditionally been concentrated in the relatively dry intermontane valleys west of the crest of the eastern cordillera...for good reason. The outer (east) slope of the eastern Andean chain, especially near the equator, captures so much moisture from Amazonia that traditional food crops would be waterlogged. Soils are relatively thin and prone to erosion from the prolific rains. Yet the humid east slope supports some of the most magnificent forest in the world. And the very factors that have deterred settlement of the upper east slope have contributed to the persistence to this day of some seemingly boundless stretches of gloriously beautiful temperate and subtropical evergreen forest. Extensive stands of native bamboos and a wondrous array of terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, bromeliads, and other flowering plants enrich the cloaking forest and enhance its biodiversity. At certain, often-wind-swept low passes in southern Ecuador, this lush montane forest spills over to the western slope of the eastern cordillera.

The pass near Quebrada Honda is one such place. The misty Andean ridges that line the western edge of Podocarpus National Park have a mysterious air about them and have become known among birders as among the premier sites to find some of the rarest and most poorly known Andean birds, among them Golden-plumed Parakeet, Masked Saltator, and now the newly discovered Jocotoco Antpitta. Gnarled trees of seemingly more temperate-forest affinity dominate the landscape here, which is unusual for an elevation of around 7000-8000 feet. One does not need to wonder for long why this is so, as persistent winds, rain, and cold temperatures punish the slopes on an almost daily basis. Elevation plays a major part in species partitioning, and it is not surprising either that from this unusual mix of conditions and altitudes, in a relatively isolated cluster of ridges, arose something completely different and somehow specifically adapted to only this tiny area: *Grallaria ridgelyi*, the Jocotoco Antpitta, discovered at the roadside here just east of the pass in late 1997 and officially described in the October 1999 issue of *The Auk*. So distinctive is it that scientists had even considered naming an entirely new genus for it. As it is a remarkably tricky species to see (unless it happens to be responding to earthworms offered it along the trail), we will be devoting at least one morning, and possibly two, to finding it. Our recent tours have enjoyed the hard-won success of local guide Franco (or others, such as Diego, who have now been handed the torch) in training and maintaining the attention of several Jocotoco Antpittas to come in to a feeding station along the “Antpitta Trail,” and we’ll hope the happy development continues. In the process we are sure to see many other fascinating birds.



*The large Jocotoco Antpitta was not discovered until quite recently, in part because they are restricted to a small range in southwestern Ecuador. Photograph by participant Brian Armstrong.*

Very little birding had been done in this area until recently, and some interesting finds have resulted, including Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner and Chestnut-crested Cotinga. We will certainly need some luck to encounter either of these, but there is a long list of interesting Andean possibilities, some of which are more regularly seen, some of them right at the feeders or just outside our lodge: Bearded Guan, White-throated Screech-Owl, Swallow-tailed Nightjar, Rufous-capped Thornbill, Collared Inca, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Little and Amethyst-throated sunangels, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker, Rufous and Chestnut-naped antpittas, Chusquea and Ash-colored tapaculos, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-capped Tyrannulet, Orange-banded Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Barred and Green-and-black fruiteaters, Pale-footed Swallow, Rufous and

Plain-tailed wrens, Black-crested and Russet-crowned warblers, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager, Black-capped and Black-headed hemispinguses, Red-hooded, Golden-crowned, and Grass-green tanagers, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, White-capped Tanager, Plushcap, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. In addition to the antpitta feeding program, exciting new management programs include a nest-box program for Golden-plumed Parakeets in upper Quebrada Honda. There is also a feeding station for White-throated Quail-Doves along the Antpitta Trail. Based at Tapichalaca for two nights, we'll hope to have time to bird down the east slope at some point. Additional species of note that we could see at lower elevations here include Mottle-backed Elaenia, Marañon Thrush, and Black-faced Tanager.

Closer to Loja, we'll sample further the montane east-slope avifauna where it spills over to the west slope of the eastern cordillera. A morning at Cajanuma, Podocarpus National Park, offers further possibilities for Bearded Guan, Glowing Puffleg, a host of montane tanagers, and many of the species listed above. To the north of Loja, we'll hope for three additional much-sought specialties: Red-faced Parrot, Crescent-faced Antpitta, and Ocellated Tapaculo.



*Pale-browed Tinamou is another Tumbesian endemic that we've seen well on recent tours. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.*

## Itinerary for Southwestern Ecuador Specialties

**Day 1, Sun, 1 Mar. Arrival in Guayaquil.** It is possible to arrange flights 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 Grand Hotel Guayaquil sign with your name on it near the exit to the outside; our representative will meet you for transfer to our modern hotel, some fifteen minutes away in downtown Guayaquil. We have two nights here, but we'll be out all day tomorrow. 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 a 5:30 a.m. breakfast tomorrow morning, you will have a short night if you get in at midnight or later. The Grand Hotel Guayaquil offers air-conditioning, a swimming pool, a 24-hour restaurant, and a nearby tree-filled plaza with large iguanas and a few native birds. It's only a few blocks to the Malecon, a fenced parkway along the estuary, where Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nest in the big banyan trees. 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 in Guayaquil, and we can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide if you like. You should, however, be very cautious about walking around alone in Guayaquil. Night at the Grand Hotel Guayaquil.

**Day 2, Mon, 2 Mar. Birding west of Guayaquil.** After a full buffet breakfast at 5:30 a.m., we'll head west, with the makings for a picnic lunch, to bird the Tumbesian zone. We may decide to start at Cerro Blanco Reserve, a private reserve in the Chongon Hills just west of Guayaquil. Sponsored by a national cement company, it was established to protect the Tumbesian avifauna, which here includes a small population of Great Green Macaws that inhabit the remote upper portions of the reserve. (We would need a lot of luck to stumble upon this rarity, as we won't be able to reach the distant upper section of the reserve.) The reserve is but a short distance from Guayaquil's main center (only thirty minutes or less before the morning traffic picks up!), but it is one of the largest and most important dry/deciduous forest

reserves in Ecuador. It boasts an impressive list of birds that includes some of the most endangered of the Tumbesian endemics, species that overlap considerably with those of the Jorupe Reserve farther south. *Bombax* forests, reminiscent of baobab woodlands, dominate the landscape in these uplifted limestone hills, and even the entrance road, lined with tall trees and viny tangles, can be quite productive. We could also explore them from the inside, along well maintained forest trails. Among the many possibilities here are Gray-cheeked Parakeet, Pacific Parrotlet, Red-lored Parrot, Gray-capped Cuckoo, Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed Woodpecker, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Gray-breasted Flycatcher, One-colored, Black-and-white, and Slaty becards, Speckle-breasted Wren, Crimson-breasted Finch, and Black-capped Sparrow. The strange western race of Yellow-rumped Cacique has noisy nesting colonies here.

Or we may want to head farther west, to reach a more arid section of Tumbesia, where possibilities include Pearl Kite, Croaking Ground-Dove, Short-tailed Woodstar, Necklaced Spinetail, Elegant Crescentchest, Chestnut-collared Swallow, Baird's Flycatcher, Snowy-throated Kingbird, Masked Yellowthroat, Parrot-billed Seed-eater, and Peruvian Meadowlark. On our way back toward Guayaquil, we may want to stop in at the Parque El Lago, especially to check for Pinnated Bittern. Exactly how we orchestrate today's birding will depend on the weather and the interests of the group. We'll be back to our hotel in time to shower before dinner and the list. Night at the Grand Hotel Guayaquil.



*The endangered El Oro Parakeet is protected at Buenaventura Reserve, where nest boxes are helping to increase the population. Photograph by participants David and Judy Smith.*

**Day 3, Tue, 3 Mar. Guayaquil; to Buenaventura.** Today is primarily a travel day. We'll head south this morning along the coastal plain toward Machala. About 45 kms south of Guayaquil the highway passes right through the Manglares-Churute Reserve, an effort to protect freshwater marshes and mangroves of the Guayas River delta as well as dry tropical woodlands of the nearby Churute Hills. The freshwater marshes here support the largest breeding population of Horned Screamers in Ecuador—and the only population in western Ecuador. We plan a brief stop here to check for screamers and other inhabitants, from Pinnated Bittern to Masked Water-Tyrant. Depending on water levels, waders can abound.

Most of the habitat of the coastal plain has long since been converted to agriculture. Rice fields and flooded marshes give way to vast plantations of bananas and other tropical fruits. We will push to get through this altered habitat, stopping again in the Santa Rosa marshes, where we've turned away from the coast toward the distant Andean foothills. Here, flooded fields and shrimp ponds provide habitat for waterbirds and waders, as well as such marsh lovers as White-throated Crake and Masked Water-Tyrant. If conditions look good, we plan to bird the levees for a break on our way to our destination, the Jocotoco Foundation reserve at Buenaventura. We'll start birding the Buenaventura Reserve this afternoon en route to Umbrellabird Lodge, our base for three nights. We should arrive in time to enjoy the many hummers and other species attracted to the feeders right at the lodge. Watch (and listen!) for Rufous-headed Chachalacas even as you get into your room. Night at Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura.

**Days 4-5, Wed-Thu, 4-5 Mar. Buenaventura Reserve.** Rising out of the flat and drier lowlands, not far from the coast, is a remnant finger of very humid forest at about 2500 feet that we have long referred to as Pinas (for the nearest town). These forests are near the southernmost extension of the western humid (Choco) forests, whose northern boundary reaches eastern Panama. We have two full days and a morning to bird the area. The weather will inform exactly how we spend our time. If it's not fogged in or raining, we'll probably want to start early one morning to look for the flagship Long-wattled Umbrellabirds. We may then get a ride up to the upper section of good forest and bird our way down on foot, along the old cobblestone road that winds down through the reserve. This passes through some wonderful patches of forest that are usually teeming with birds. The road itself can be muddy in places, showing little trace of the old cobblestones, and we'll want to bird along one trail that is sure to be deeply muddy. We strongly recommend rubber boots, rain gear, and plenty of water for this excursion.

The Buenaventura Reserve is the only protected area for the globally threatened El Oro Parakeet, now numbering around 220 individuals—an increase from around 160 in 2001. Researchers have placed some nest boxes for the parakeets as part of a recovery plan, and some are now being used. We'll hope to be lucky enough to observe the beneficiaries of these nest boxes, but we can't count on it. The mornings here are often bright and clear—and good for watching for El Oro Parakeets and other potentially distant perched or flying parrots and raptors. But come early afternoon, don't be surprised if the rising moisture from the nearby lowlands closes in, condenses, and creates a thick fog, making visibility almost impossible. On a good day, we may get lucky and avoid the fog, but we will do our best to get as much birding in before this (often) daily phenomenon occurs. We will also have opportunities to stake out the hummingbird feeders and banana feeders maintained by the Jocotoco Foundation at the lodge and at a nearby site further up the main road. Nights at Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura.

**Day 6, Fri, 6 Mar. Buenaventura to Jorupe.** After a last shot at some early morning cleanup birding in the Buenaventura area, we'll set our sights southward and embark on one of our longest drives. We plan select stops for Tumbesian species in the lovely semi-arid hills, woodlands, and cactus deserts en route to Jorupe Lodge, near the small town of Macara on the Peruvian border. The deciduous woodland along our route supports White-headed Brush-Finch, Saffron Siskin, and Tumbes Hummingbird. All of our birding will be roadside birding, and, fortunately, much of the road has been paved in the last few years. But there are still some bad stretches, so be prepared for a long travel day. We'll try to get in at a reasonable hour; we'll have three nights based at the new and elegantly designed Urraca Lodge. Night at Urraca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve (near Macara).

**Days 7-8, Sat-Sun, 7-8 Mar. Jorupe/Sozoranga/Utuana area.** We will concentrate our birding efforts today in the bizarre, deciduous bombax forests along the beautiful forested roadsides and trails that surround the lodge and work on finding the specialty birds here, possibly continuing upslope from Sozoranga for a round of wet-forest montane birding, especially should it be hot and windy down low. We have found that many of the species we've often had to work extra hard for in the past, such as Blackish-headed Spinetail, Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Watkins's Antpitta, and Slaty Becard are regularly found very close to the lodge. While the roads and trails are in relatively good shape, there may be some muddy spots, so make sure your rubber boots are handy. At some point we'll probably want to check out the Chestnut-collared Swallows that nest in the church at Sozoranga. One morning we'll get an early start in order to reach the humid forest above Sozoranga and near Utuana before the fog rolls in. Utuana Forest Reserve is yet another Jocotoco Foundation Reserve that protects remnant evergreen forest at 7800 feet and offers some wonderful trails through epiphyte-laden forest and well developed *Chusquea* bamboo, habitat for Gray-headed Antbird and "Piura" Black-eared Hemispingus. Black-crested Tit-Tyrant and Black-cowled Saltator inhabit the more open areas, and hummingbird feeders here attract Rainbow Starfrontlet and Purple-throated Sunangel, two species rarely seen at feeders. The trails are good, and we'll select our footwear based on the recent weather. We'll also want to try some owling (for Peruvian Screech-Owl and Spectacled Owl), either in the evenings or in the pre-dawn hours (bring your small flashlight); some responsive pairs haunt the forests around the cabins. Nights at Urraca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve.

**Day 9, Mon, 9 Mar. Jorupe to Loja.** We'll cover a lot of ground today, choosing our route depending on what birds we are still targeting. Along our route northeastward, we'll pass through varied wet and dry zones, with at least one planned stop for Tumbes Sparrow before reaching Loja. Once we start traveling, any birding will be along roadsides, so hiking boots should be fine. Expect a lot of sun and warm temperatures if it is sunny; here, we hope for cloudy weather to keep the birds active. Loja is not a major tourist destination, but we'll stay in one of the best (and quietest) hotels in town. You may want to leave some laundry here while we're gone to Tapichalaca, to be picked up on our return. You may also safely store any luggage that you won't need for the next two days. Night in Loja.

**Day 10, Tue, 10 Mar. Podocarpus National Park at Cajanuma; to Tapichalaca.** We'll spend the early morning birding the beautiful temperate forest (mostly 9000-9500 feet) at nearby Podocarpus National Park. Exactly how we utilize our time will depend on the (ever-changing) weather, but we'll have an early start (with hotel breakfast) and carry with us a picnic lunch. We may want to bird along the entrance road in search of hummingbirds, canopy flocks, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucans, Red-hooded Tanagers, and other birds that sit up, or we may decide to head straight for the trail in hopes of Undulated, Rufous, and Chestnut-naped antpittas that sometimes emerge onto muddy trails to forage for earthworms in the early morn. Other targets could include *Chusquea* Tapaculo, Rufous and Plain-tailed wrens, Plushcap, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. This is a raingear and rubber boots kind of place, as it almost always rains some here and the trails are muddy. It's often cold on cloudy or rainy days, but it can be quite warm (short-sleeve weather) if the sun is out. The sheer vistas of forest canopy and the delicate details of the lush vegetation are alone soul satisfying—and that's not to mention the birds. We should have some fun at Cajanuma.

From Cajanuma we'll continue south, through Vilcabamba, to the southern boundary of Podocarpus National Park and the Jocotoco Antpitta reserve at Tapichalaca. Another Ecuadorian reserve established by the Jocotoco Foundation, Tapichalaca protects the type of ridgetop forest preferred by the Jocotoco Antpitta. Our accommodations here are shared—in a beautiful two-story lodge with four bedrooms, each with a private bath and hot-water shower. There is a separate building for guides and drivers. If we arrive in time, we'll enjoy the wonderfully active hummingbird feeders surrounding the lodge where we can hope for Rufous-capped Thornbill among the many more common species. We'll have two nights here. Night at Tapichalaca.

**Days 11-12, Wed-Thu, 11-12 Mar. Tapichalaca Reserve.** We have one-and-a-half days to bird the humid montane east-slope forest of the Quebrada Honda area and down the east slope. The Jocotoco Antpitta search will probably involve some climbing along a couple of mud-boot trails, where rain or fog could materialize at any time—even if we're lucky enough to arrive during a period when a "trained" antpitta is coming to the trail for earthworms. We will probably spend about equal time birding the roadside and mule trails right where the first pairs of the antpittas were discovered.

Again, we're hoping for good birding weather, but expect anything from sunny to rainy and windy conditions. Although we will not be at particularly high altitudes, the forest here is somewhat stunted as a result of the often blustery and cold conditions. It's heartening that such magnificent montane forest, complete with some nice *Podocarpus* trees (heavily timbered and poached for their use in furniture manufacturing), is visible for miles right from the main highway south. In the afternoon, we'll plan to bird farther down the east slope, at least as far as the good forest occurs; often this works to get below the afternoon fog or rain and get to some new birds as well. Weather permitting, we may want to do some optional evening owling and might even luck into a Swallow-tailed Nightjar. On the afternoon of our second day, we'll return to our hotel in Loja for the night. Night of Day 11 at Tapichalaca; Night of Day 12 in Loja.



*We've gotten very good views of the endangered Pale-headed Brush-Finch on recent tours. Photograph by participant Brian Armstrong.*

**Day 13, Fri, 13 Mar. Loja to La Union, with birding near Acacana.** We'll hope for good luck today! We'll start early for some birding in the humid montane forest near Acacana, about an hour-and-a-half north of Loja. We'll try for the endangered Red-faced Parrot in an early stop at the Huashapamba Reserve, a Saraguro Indian reserve that protects a lovely patch of cloudforest on the continental divide between 9200 and 10,400 feet. Then we'll head for some high-elevation bamboo in hopes of Crescent-faced Antpitta and Ocellated Tapaculo. After lunch we'll continue northward (and up and down) through Saraguro country, into a series of arid, eroded valleys near Ona. We then climb over a series of high transverse ridges into remnant paramo habitat and then down, down toward Cuenca. At the highway junction south of Cuenca, we'll turn west toward Giron, following the canyons downward to near the village of La Union, where the road starts that leads up to the Pale-headed Brush-Finch reserve. We should pull into our rural resort *hosteria* in the Yunguilla Valley in the early evening, in time to have dinner and get to bed. Night at Hosteria Jardin del Valle near La Union.

**Day 14, Sat, 14 Mar. Yunguilla Reserve for the Pale-headed Brush-Finch; flight to Quito.** We'll start around 5:30am with a quick breakfast at our lodgings and head up to the reserve, where we'll meet our local guide to help us locate the endemic Pale-headed Brush-Finch, one of the rarest birds in the world. We need to be in the brush-finch habitat early, while the birds are still singing and up, before activity wanes or the wind picks up. Once there, and after some patience, we will have likely already found at least one vocal bird up on a singing perch. We'll plan to return to our lodging for lunch and a shower before heading to historic Cuenca (7700 feet), perhaps the prettiest city in the country, for our late-afternoon flight to Quito; for later flights we will enjoy a wonderful, late afternoon farewell dinner at a fabulous restaurant on the main square. Our flight typically arrives into Quito around 7:30 p.m., and it is possible to stay at the airport and depart near midnight for international flights to the States (doing so will mean sacrificing the opportunity for a chance to shower before

the overnight flight). Participants departing tomorrow morning will have a room at our nice hotel near the Quito airport. Night in Quito or on late night flights home.

**Day 15, Sun, 15 Mar. Departure for home.** We will arrange a transfer to the airport for anyone leaving today. 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. Have a safe trip home!

## 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 is an exceptionally competent guide, not only in his knowledge of the birds, but he also brings exceptional optimism and positive energy, with careful attention to the experience of every participant. He is an outstanding ambassador for his country's culture, environment and history. And he's also a lot of FUN! He's one of my favorite FG Guides." W. M.; Holiday at Wildsumaco*

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

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$5475 from Guayaquil**

**DEPOSIT:** \$550 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** November 2, 2019

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$500 (Singles may be limited at the Jocotoco Foundation Lodges.)

**LIMIT:** 8

## 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 quite good, varying from a very good hotel in Guayaquil, a comfortable hosteria in Quito, to simple hotels in Loja and near La Union. We will also spend a total of 8 nights in three beautifully designed lodges at the Jocotoco Foundation reserves. Singles may be limited at one or more of these lodges so folks may have to double up for those nights. It's well worth sharing in order to stay right in some of the best birding habitats of the tour, eliminating long round-trip drives from the nearest accommodations of equal quality. At Tapichalaca, several of the rooms are upstairs (let us know if you prefer ground floor). All accommodations have private baths and all have hot-water showers. Overall, we stay in comfort, eat good food, and have good, quiet conditions for sleeping.

**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 in Guayaquil 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.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is **\$5475** for one person in double occupancy from Guayaquil. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 14, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 14, the flight from Cuenca 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**. (Singles may not be available at the three Jocotoco Foundation Lodges.) 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, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$550** 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 November 2, 2019**. **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. U.S. 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, and emergency medical transportation. **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 with InsureMyTrip ([www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of 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.  
6/19NC, peg