

ITINERARY

**MONTANE ECUADOR: CLOUDFORESTS OF THE ANDES**

*June 25 – July 4, 2021*



*The Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan is one of the species we'll hope comes to visit the feeders at Birdwatcher's House while we are there. These range-restricted birds are found on the west slope of the Andes in Ecuador and far southern Colombia. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2021 Field Guides Montane Ecuador 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 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 the tour and noting the birds we see
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**C**omposed of volcano-punctuated cordilleras and folded in a 4500-mile concatenation, the Andes form one of the late wonders of Earth. Our tour provides an opportunity to bird a superior cross section of these spectacular mountains with the substantial improvement of being able to stay at two mid-montane lodges, one on each slope, that offer forest birding right on the grounds with additional interesting areas nearby.

Equatorial Quito, bustling at 9000 feet, has been nestled for centuries on the slopes of an arid, intermontane valley between the two cordilleras that transect Ecuador from its northern border with Colombia to its southern border with Peru. Nowadays a modern metropolis, Quito remains thickly layered with its Andean and Spanish pasts. From humid montane

forests on the outer slopes of each cordillera to páramo grassland and *Polylepis* woodland, breathtaking scenery and electrifying bird species abound.

In order to immerse ourselves in the birds and the invigorating beauty of the high Andes, most of our birding will be at elevations between 6000 and 13,000 feet, and virtually all will be above 5000 feet. In addition, we'll want to take many opportunities to bird on foot, whether it be along a road, a temperate trail, a *Polylepis* path, or a paramo bog as high as 14,000 feet; our pace will reflect the oxygen content of the atmosphere! Since flights generally arrive in the evening, we'll get a good night's sleep before exerting our bodies at such high elevation. Moreover, the bulk of the first four days will be spent birding at lower elevations in the upper subtropical and lower temperate zone so that we have a bit of a chance to acclimate before we spend any substantial amount of time higher than Quito itself.

All of this said, this reincarnation of the Montane Ecuador tour - a tour that we have not run in some years - gets a new kick in that it will concentrate more on spending time at the numerous bird feeding stations that have been developing over the past decade in the north on the slopes east and west of Quito. While some spots will be familiar places that we have visited for years, such as Angel Paz's antpitta show, other hotspots have popped up that we will incorporate on this trip. What this means is that the pace will be a bit slower than other Montane Ecuador trips, with more time spent trying to see birds well as they come in to close range, whether at fruit or hummingbird feeders. This is not to say that we won't spend considerable time birding roadsides and forest trails when we are away from feeding stations, because this can be very rewarding, but the emphasis will be shifted from trying to dig out each and every bird in order to build a larger list, and more to enjoying great looks at birds that come to us, many tough to find under traditional birding circumstances, such as using playback techniques. While not to be considered a full-on photography tour, this trip does aim to spend more time focusing on getting some quality pics and simply watching the birds do what they do; as an example, in lieu of spending hours trying to dig every tapaculo out of the understory in the rain, colorful tanagers, hummingbirds, barbets, and toucans will be the order of the day... at least this is our aim, but there are always plans "B" and "C"!

Bird possibilities range from the generalities of long lists of beautiful tanagers and striking hummingbirds to the increasingly threatened Giant Conebill, which could be lifting the flaky bark of a venerable *Polylepis* even as we delight in a striking Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant. Some interesting mammal species are a possibility on this tour, with many recent sightings of Spectacled Bear in the paramos, and Mountain Tapir on the grounds around San Isidro, so we'll keep our fingers crossed.



*The Sword-billed Hummingbird is a striking species when seen close-up at feeders; we'll have plenty of opportunities to see these spectacular birds! Photograph by participant Steve Parrish.*

**Focus of this tour:** This tour is not designed to run up a long list of species, though we regularly see more than 300. We'll simply spend most of our time birding, often at feeders, in the process seeing many of the avian species typical of the middle and upper montane forests, all in the context of enjoying the magnificent high Andes. Because we'll see many of them well and repeatedly, the tour makes an ideal introduction to the Andes or just a nice birding vacation for those wishing another immersion in these rich habitats. By staying at lodges in the habitat we will also have time to become acquainted with the voices of the forest, and then to try to see many of these voices, in the process fathoming the extent of the avifauna that lives undercover in the forest.

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:** Very little walking will be on difficult terrain; most can be characterized as easy or moderate, although some trails require patience and being able to negotiate fallen trees, rocks, and mud. Some trail forays will be up to 1.5 miles in length where footing can be slick and uneven.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We'll spend time standing and waiting for birds to come in; this can be tiring. We will walk slowly, especially at the higher elevations, but the high elevation may be problematic.
- **PACE:** We will start 5:30 - 6:00 a.m. on most days, and may get back to the lodge before 5:30 p.m. Some evenings we will have optional night-birding sessions before dinner when night birds are more active.
- **ELEVATION:** We spend virtually the entire tour above 5000 feet elevation, and we will reach elevations of 11,500 feet at Yanacocha and 14,000 feet near Papallacta Pass. The central valley – where we stay near Quito – is at 8400 feet. Just about all of our time on the west slope will be between about 5,000-6000 feet; Cabanas San Isidro is at 6800 feet.
- **WEATHER:** Temperature ranges from about 30 to 85 degrees F, mostly 45 to 70 degrees F. Expect some dust on unpaved roads, and be prepared for rain in all areas, although we do expect drier weather on the west slope this time of the year.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** This tour spends relatively little time undertaking long drives, especially when at the lodges on the slopes. 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:** There are no indoor restrooms on roadside birding or trail excursions, so participants must be prepared to make comfort stops in nature. At lodges and feeder stations bathrooms are usually available.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days 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.

*This tour may be combined with **GALAPAGOS II**, July 3 - 13, 2021.*



*We'll have eight days in some of the best habitat of the Ecuadorian mountains. Here, a Field Guides group takes in the view as they search for birds at Yanacocha. Photograph by guide Richard Webster.*

## About the Birding Areas



**WEST SLOPE: Yanacocha**—Only about an hour's drive from central Quito, on the backside of the upper slopes of Volcán Pichincha, lies Yanacocha, a spectacular temperate forest reserve (run by the Jocotoco Foundation) to be found at the end of an insignificant looking side road that cuts off of the upper stretches of Old Quito-Mindo Road. Birding in temperate zones can be difficult due to harsh weather conditions and rough terrain, but Yanacocha is the exception, assuming the weather cooperates—which it usually does this time of year up until about midday or so. Once we are able to drive no farther and have to leave the bus behind, a level and wide trail continues on for many kilometers through stunning and bird-infested temperate forest. What has really made Yanacocha the birding bomb of late though are the excellent fruit feeders right near to the carpark, with the likes of Andean Guan, three species of mountain-tanager, Gray-browed and Yellow-breasted Brushfinches, and more. The hummer feeders right at this same spot attract all the goodies we can reasonably hope for, including Sword-billed Hummingbird, Great Sapphirewing, Golden-breasted Puffleg, and Shining Sunbeam. We will only have time to walk the first kilometer or two, but all of the goodies are right along this stretch.

As hinted above, Yanacocha is a hummingbird-lover's paradise, and we should see lots of them; more than ten species is not unusual. Not all species visit the feeders, so a stroll along the forest edges can be rewarding for species such as Rainbow-bearded Thornbill or Green-tailed Trainbearer. Although more research needs to be done, the rare and very localized Black-breasted Puffleg apparently comes down from slightly higher elevations to raid the pinkish *Ericaceae* flowers that abound this time of the year. We'll keep our fingers crossed and hope to see this very rare hummer even though it can be very hard to find. This area is also one of the best spots for some typically hard-to-find high-elevation species, including White-browed Spinetail, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, and Barred Fruiteater. Depending on how the weather treats us, we will probably want to pick a scenic lunch perch from which to enjoy the fabulous view of the western slope below before continuing down to Tandayapa. Be sure also to keep your eyes on the road during our trip into and out of the reserve as Curve-billed Tinamou could be stalking about!

**Old Nono-Mindo Road**—These fabulous birding areas are located west of Quito along roads that run from Quito to Mindo (and beyond) via the small town of Nanegalito and the even smaller town of Tandayapa. These areas have long been favorites of birders since they wind down from well over 10,000 feet through the lush temperate and subtropical west slope of the western cordillera, so rich in Ecuadorian birdlife. We will work our way down the old Nono-Mindo road from Quito towards the Tandayapa area, making select stops along the way at key elevations. In the higher areas we can hope for Sapphire-vented Puffleg, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Plain-tailed Wren, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, and Grass-green Tanager.

Lower in elevation, at about 6000 feet, the lower Nono-Mindo road continues to be a mecca for birders. With a full range of subtropical and upper-tropical birding, this area is accessible by in-forest trail birding as well as seemingly endless forested roadside birding. The roads of the area receive very little traffic, making them ideal for birders in search of such west-slope specialties as Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Toucan Barbet, Spillman's Tapaculo, and the very rare and local Tanager Finch. Our visit should coincide with the beginning of the dry season for this area and make for good long birding days without interruption by rain showers, but bring along your raingear anyway just in case. We will hope for a light mist to keep the bird activity at its best.

Our base here, the relatively new Birdwatcher's House, will allow us to bird this region under relaxed and comfortable conditions: a few early mornings and late afternoons are critical to increasing our chances for a number of species, and

we will be right in the middle of it all. In addition to this, double rooms with private baths and hot water, not to mention the good food, will help keep us well charged for the next day's birding.

Even though the birding can be superb along the roadsides, we will want to put in some time along some very birdy trails in the west for some of the more forest-based species, including such mid-elevation specialties as Wedge-billed Hummingbird and Golden-winged Manakin (both sometimes at leks), Olivaceous Piha, and if we are really lucky, the hard-to-find White-faced Nunbird or an Ochre-breasted Antpitta.

Most importantly, the bird-blind feeders at Birdwatcher's House have become well-known in that they offer an explosion of activity in the early mornings, with sometimes more than twenty species possible! It is truly a marvelous spectacle to watch antpittas, tanagers, and even Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan at such close range; there should be plenty of photo ops.! Hummer feeders attract Buff-tailed Coronets, Fawn-breasted Brilliants, Brown Incas, Violet-tailed Sylphs, and Purple-throated Woodstars, so these will also keep us busy. If we are lucky, an Empress Brilliant or Purple-bibbed Whitetip might even put in an appearance. By staying overnight in this area, we increase our chances of seeing such rare possibilities as Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Colombian (Rufescent) Screech-Owl, and Mottled Owl. We also plan to visit and spend quality time at some other feeding spots in the area that should be attracting different sets of birds to help round out what will certainly be a head-spinning experience at feeders.



*The amazing Giant Antpitta is rare, and found in only a few locations in the Andes, but we have an excellent chance of seeing it at Refugio Paz de las Aves. Photograph by participant Larry Peavler.*

Another blind, which we'll get to before dawn, promises a marvelous show of male Andean Cocks-of-the-rock (which are red, west of the Andes) at the place where they gather to display almost daily. Yes, we'll go early to what has become one of Ecuador's most popular birding destinations: Refugio Paz de las Aves, the reserve of "the Antpitta Whisperer." On our way back from the blind at the lek (assuming good weather), we'll hope to see Dark-backed Wood-Quail and as many as four species of antpittas—Ochre-breasted, Yellow-breasted, Moustached, and Giant—all of which have been habituated to coming out for earthworms offered by Angel and (his brother) Rodrigo Paz! If it's not been too rainy and the antpittas are responding, it's quite a show to behold. Even if the antpittas are otherwise occupied, there are sure to be some goodies at the Paz fruit feeders: such knockouts as Toucan Barbet, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, and Blue-winged and Black-chinned mountain-tanagers. With luck we could see a shy Sickle-winged Guan or White-throated Quail-Dove, a pair of Olivaceous Pihás, an Orange-breasted Fruiteater, or even the rare and aberrant White-faced Nunbird. Plus Angel usually has a surprise or two in store. One year it was an Ocellated Tapaculo that he coaxed into view!

Birding our way down the old road towards Mindo, we'll encounter a number of additional birds. Possibilities include Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Barred Hawk, Red-billed Parrot, Golden-headed and Crested quetzals, Crimson-mantled and Powerful woodpeckers, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Striped Treehunter, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Narino Tapaculo, Andean Cock-of-the-rock (red, west of the Andes), Sharpe's Wren, and the scarce Beautiful Jay (also confined to the west slope). Crested Eagle has even been seen recently in the area!



*The Long-tailed Sylph is another spectacular hummingbird that we'll find on the tour. These beauties are regularly seen at the Guango Lodge feeders. Photograph by participant Peter Nelson.*

**EAST SLOPE: Antisana Ecological Reserve and Guango; afternoon arrival to San Isidro** — Volcan Antisana is one of the spectacular snow-capped peaks of Ecuador's eastern cordillera, just 50 kms (about 30 miles) east of Quito. Rising to almost 19,000 feet (5,758m), the volcano is a spectacular backdrop (on a clear day) to the tracts of land recently acquired by the Jocotoco Foundation and the World Land Trust to secure the future of the existing Antisana Ecological Reserve and expand its boundary. We will have only a few hours to visit the first part of the 120,000-hectare (297,000-acre) reserve, but it is an area that most of you probably have not visited. It can be spectacular, and we should see many species otherwise not possible on this trip, with the more exciting targets including Andean Condor (probably the best place in Ecuador for this species), Aplomado Falcon, the rare-in-Ecuador Black-faced (Andean) Ibis, and Ecuadorian (Chimborazo) Hillstar. More regular high-elevation species include Carunculated Caracara, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Chestnut-winged and Stout-billed cinclodes, Many-striped Canastero, Tawny Antpitta, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant (nominata), Paramo Pipit, and the Brazilian Rabbit and a highland form of White-tailed Deer. The birds here are often close and tame, so photographic opportunities should be abundant. During our stops here we will visit some feeders that should have Giant Hummingbird as well as flowers that will almost certainly have a few Black Flowerpiercers lurking about. The nearby hillside is one of the best spots in Ecuador to hope for the rare Spectacled Bear as they come to raid the succulent new shoots of terrestrial bromeliads, so never stop scanning!

Although our route will zigzag (as it usually does!), and cross over the mighty Andes mountain chain where the watershed changes from Pacific to Amazonian (we will let you know the spot), this stop also sets the stage for the elevational transect that we will visit over the next week. The Antisana Ecological Reserve descends to the Sumaco Napo-Galeras National Park, but the "conservation corridor" is not quite complete, and efforts of private entities (San Isidro through the Napo Andean Forest Foundation) and small NGOs are filling in some of the holes in the swath started by large government reserves.

On our way down the east slope toward Baeza and San Isidro, we plan a birding stop/break at Guango, around 8900 feet (2700m). Well-established hummingbird feeders just outside the dining room attract fabulous Sword-billed Hummingbirds, lots of Tourmaline Sunangels, Collared Inca, Long-tailed Sylph, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, White-bellied Woodstar, an occasional Glowing Puffleg, and, on rare occasion, a Mountain Avocetbill.

**East-slope birding based at San Isidro Cloud Forest Lodge.** (Cabañas) San Isidro Cloud Forest Lodge is surrounded by middle elevation forest at about 6,800 feet with quite a view of the Sierra de Guacamayos. Owned by a lover of nature who welcomes birders—and is also Mitch's wife, Carmen—the lodge will allow us to enjoy home-style settings and out-of-this-world meals between birding forays. The lodge itself is surrounded by a large private, primary forest reserve that

connects to two huge government reserves – one at each end - so the forest, and gorgeous views, are seemingly endless! Hummingbird feeders adorn the large porch that wraps around the wooden-framed, glass dining room; this is a fabulous spot to stake out and enjoy the views of the forest below and the clouds of hummingbirds, where Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, and Gorgeted Woodstar should be in attendance. A network of well built trails into the forest, as well as forested roadsides, offer the chance to see myriad birds, including mixed flocks, fruiteaters, and quetzals from just outside our lodgings. Other forest patches from five to twenty minutes away by vehicle also offer tremendous subtropical birding and awe-inspiring vistas of primary forest as far as the eye can see. And each morning at daybreak a varied assortment of insectivorous birds gathers to search for moths along the lighted walkway, affording some wonderful opportunities for photography on a sunny day (of both the birds *and* a diversity of colorful moths). By night we're within earshot of hollering Rufous-banded Owls, as well as the mysterious "San Isidro Owl," which seems to be an undescribed species.

A couple of worm-fed antpitta species sneak in daily at specific spots near the lodge – the White-bellied and Chestnut-crowned, to be exact – and we have excellent chances of seeing them at close range and for photos. Moths that gather at the mercury vapor light next to the dining room often attract Masked Trogon, Green Jay, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, and many others, including mixed flocks that often come through to take advantage of the extra bounty of food.

While on one day we will work our way down toward 5000 feet to take advantage of a few very active hummingbird feeder spots – think Golden-tailed Sapphire, Wire-crested Thorntail, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Many-spotted Hummingbird, and White-tailed Hillstar - we'll spend most of our time around 7000 feet surveying the rich San Isidro elevation. Some of our birding will be along easy roads, while some of the trails can be slippery (laid with cut logs) and muddy (we'll take them slowly and carefully). But many of the most used trails are now graveled and easily walked. The weather will be highly variable, and our birding destinations will be influenced by guesses about clouds, mist, and rain. You'll want your umbrella whenever you walk to the dining area, and bring your flashlight mornings and evenings; the mystery owl of San Isidro could be perched on a power pole along your route.



*Golden-headed Quetzal is another high-elevation specialty that we'll watch for. These rather large and colorful birds can be surprisingly difficult to spot, as they tend to sit quietly, but we've had good luck on our tours.*

*Photograph by participant Charlotte Byers.*

In general the San Isidro is simply a wonderful area to bird. Our exact plan may vary according to the weather, but we will likely also check forest edge for flocks and venture into the forest interior in pursuit of some skulkers. Some of Ecuador's rarest birds occur here, including White-faced Nunbird, White-chested Swift, Greater Scythebill, Moustached Antpitta, and Bicolored Antvireo (we will be very fortunate to see any one of these); these make species such as Dusky Piha, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, and White-capped Tanager seem like ordinary rarities. And although there are no guarantees, a recent tour even had Spectacled Bear! With the outer bounds of possibility so marvelously high, be

assured that more common species are in rich supply, and we will actually spend most of our time looking for such typical Andean joys as Crested and Golden-headed quetzals, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant and Rufous-crowned Tody-Tyrant (a couple of fancy small flycatchers, among many small flycatchers), Banded Becard, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Long-tailed Antbird, Rufous Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Pearled Treerunner, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Capped Conebill, Hooded, Blue-winged, and Lacrimose mountain-tanagers, Saffron-crowned and Flame-faced tanagers, and Scarlet-rumped (Subtropical) and Mountain caciques. Some skulkers on which we will work include White-bellied and Slate-crowned antpittas, the seldom-seen Banded Antthrush, Plain-tailed and Sharpe's (Sepia-brown) wrens, and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch.



*The Toucan Barbet has a small range in the Andes of northern Ecuador and southern Colombia. These colorful birds come to feeders offering fruit, so we'll likely see them at Birdwatcher's House. Photograph by participant Pete Peterman.*

## Itinerary for Montane Ecuador: Cloudforests of the Andes

**Day 1, Fri, 25 Jun. Arrival.** You may plan to arrive in Quito at any time today. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by our representative and transferred to the hotel for an overnight stay. Since most flights from the US arrive into Quito between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m., we have not included dinner in the tour fee this evening.

If you have time, we encourage you to arrive a day or two early. The late arrival of international flights from the US means that passengers don't usually get to the hotel until 10:30 p.m. at the earliest, and sometimes well after midnight. Participants on many of our Ecuador tours have recommended a relaxing day in Quito, a lovely city, to rest up and begin to adjust to the 9000-foot elevation. If you would like to do some shopping in Ecuador, there are good shops in Quito, or we can help arrange a trip to the world-famous Otavalo market with an English speaking guide. Our office will be happy to assist you with these or other arrangements; visit our website to see optional birding or cultural tours available from Quito, (<https://fieldguides.com/ecuador-add-to-your-tour/>) or give Nicole in our office a call on her direct line at 512-900-7792. Night in Quito at the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo.

**Day 2, Sat, 26 Jun. Yanacocha to Birdwatcher's House.** Most of our birding for the next four days will be along little-traveled roads and at comfortable bird feeder stations at subtropical elevations. You should have rain gear with you throughout the entire trip. Since we will have a private bus with us at all times, you can leave your rubber boots on the bus.

We will start our birding not far from Quito on the west side of Volcan Pichincha at a very birdy reserve known as Yanacocha. Except for our visit to Papallacta Pass later on in the trip, this will be the highest elevation at which we will



bird (10,000–10,500 feet), so we will want to take it slowly. Luckily, the road up to the best birding leads us to a wide and level trail that runs through some of the most beautiful and intact temperate forest anywhere in the country. We will plan to spend most of the morning here before continuing down the old Quito-Mindo Road. On a good day at Yanacocha, ten species of hummingbirds are possible, including (if we are extremely lucky) the rare and endemic Black-breasted Puffleg; a past tour found two males! Other more likely hummer possibilities are the following: Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sapphire-vented and Golden-breasted pufflegs, Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing, Tyrian Metaltail, and maybe even a Rainbow-bearded Thornbill or two. Some great flocks rove back-and-forth through the understory and stunted treetops, and we will be on the lookout for such species typical of the high temperate zone as White-browed Spinetail, Tawny and Rufous antpittas, White-throated Tyrannulet, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Rufous Wren, Blue-backed Conebill, Superciliaried Hemispingus, and Scarlet-bellied, Hooded, and Black-chested mountain-tanagers. If we are very attentive and fortunate, we may even happen upon a Curve-billed Tinamou.

The rest of today's birding will be primarily in the lower temperate and subtropical zones along the upper portions of the Old Nono-Mindo Road and the Tandayapa valley. Stops will be dependent on the weather and how we decide to budget our time. We should reach our lodge by late afternoon, possibly in time to enjoy the swarms of hummers at the feeders. We may also want to do some night birding around the lodge, so be sure to pack your flashlight. Night at Birdwatcher's House.



*Black-chested Mountain-Tanager is a high-elevation species that we'll look for on our way to Birdwatcher's House. These tanagers are found along the Andes from Venezuela to northern Peru, but are highly local in distribution, so they are not common. Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.*

**Days 3-4, Sun-Mon, 27-28 Jun. West-slope birding based at Birdwatcher's House.** Birdwatcher's House is a relatively new and comfortable lodge in the lower subtropical zone, nestled above the town of Mindo, known for decades as a birding mecca. Comfortable rooms with private bathrooms (with hot water) and sitting and dining areas make Birdwatcher's House an exciting base for our operations over the next three days. The real show that we are hoping for here is the activity at the bird blinds that can attract an incredible variety of forest species that are otherwise very tricky to see. It's wonderfully exciting to watch such goodies as White-throated Quail-Doves, Streak-capped Treehunters, Strong-billed Woodcreepers, and Immaculate Antbirds feeding at close range! With luck, a Rufous-breasted Antthrush could walk across the little opening or an Ochre-breasted Antpitta or a Scaled Antpitta could come in close to forage. While we enjoy breakfast, we could be watching Red-headed Barbets and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers feeding at the bananas just outside the dining room, or a Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan making its way through the trees above... one just never

knows. Or our breakfast could be interrupted by a Golden-headed Quetzal or a Crimson-rumped Toucanet demanding our attention just outside the door. We also plan to visit several other exciting feeder spots over the course of the next few days to expand our list of possibilities - Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager would be a huge target – as well as bird on foot along forested roadsides and trails.

Bird possibilities in the west are many, but some of our targets will include Dark-backed Wood-Quail, Giant Antpitta, Toucan Barbet, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker, and Golden Tanager. We'll let the weather inform our decisions about when we bird and where; sunny days are gorgeous, but often the worst birding. Our dream is of days with some sunshine early and late, and with overcast skies and intermittent light mist in between. Nights at Birdwatcher's House.

**Day 5, Tue, 29 Jun. Paz de Las Aves; return to Quito.** We plan to leave by 5:00 a.m. this morning (after a quick light breakfast) to head for a wonderful patch of mossy forest with an active lek of Andean Cocks-of-the-rock. This is the lek where we must reach the blind before daylight, by carefully climbing down a steep trail for about half kilometer (by headlamp or flashlight) so as not to disturb the birds.

When the cock show is over, we'll work back up the trail network slowly, with our hosts Angel and Rodrigo Paz, stopping to try for four species of antpittas and for the wood-quail that they have trained to come to the trail for earthworms. We'll sit and watch the fruit feeders for a while, check out the hummingbird feeders, and doubtless spend most of the morning enjoying the magic of Refugio Paz de las Aves. When we get back up to the top of the hill, we'll have a hot breakfast (or mid-morning brunch) prepared by Angel's wife while we watch for raptors and tanager flocks from an open-air dining area. We have the remainder of the day, with a picnic lunch, to work on whatever still eludes us, back in Angel's forest, along the Tandayapa Ridge, or along the old Nono/Mindo road, before heading back to Quito for the night. Night at the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo.



*We'll spend some time in the paramo grasslands of Antisana, where we'll look for species such as the Carunculated Caracara, another species with a small range. Photograph by participant François Grenon.*

**Day 6, Wed, 30 Jun. Antisana Reserve; to San Isidro.** We'll start with an early buffet breakfast with a departure from the hotel shortly after. (Bags should be outside your room before you arrive for breakfast.) We'll take a box lunch with us to eat during our travels. We'll head straight for Antisana Reserve, where we'll be birding mostly above treeline, from the road's edge near the bus, for several hours. We'll be moving *slowly* at these high elevations, where the weather can vary from cloudy and cold to sunny and warm, so layer up and bring raingear just in case. Chances are that it will be warming up some by the time we reach the birding areas, and you'll want to peel a layer; but a wind or a cold mist can reverse that. We'll have water on the bus, but you'll need your own water bottle with you (to sip frequently), as one dehydrates easily in these high climes. After our picnic lunch en route, we'll plan to stop at Guango Lodge for a short break. We can sort through the hummingbirds at the feeders, watching especially for any interesting puffleg, the Sword-bill, and the scarce Mountain Avocetbill. Then we'll continue to San Isidro for the night. We'll hope to meet the San Isidro Owl after dinner. Night at the Cabañas San Isidro near Cosanga.

**Days 7-8, Thu-Fri, 1-2 Jul. San Isidro area and the Guacamayos ridge.** Exactly how we spend our time here will depend on the weather and what we've already seen. Activities we expect to include are early morning birding right along the driveway and dining room to watch birds collecting insects at the lamps; some trail birding right at San Isidro, including scheduled attempts to see White-bellied Antpitta and any other specialties that are coming in for earthworms; birding along the dirt road beyond San Isidro; a morning along the Guacamayos ridge trail, with a descent to lower elevations on at least one morning for a shot at an entirely different set of upper tropical zone hummingbirds; and an afternoon/evening for night-birding, wherever it seems most promising. Nights at San Isidro.

**Day 9, Sat, 3 Jul. San Isidro to Quito via Guango/Papallacta.** Depending on how things have gone, we'll decide whether to opt for early birding near San Isidro or a morning departure for birding up at Guango Lodge to tackle the hummingbird feeders and temperate forest edges there again. Whatever we do, we'll spend the afternoon traveling back to Quito, with a few well-appointed stops at higher elevations, arriving in time to clean up and reorganize before dinner. This will be our farewell dinner. Participants flying home on Delta, United, or LAN Airlines may choose to book flights departing 10:00 p.m. or later tonight but will still have a room for showering before the overnight flight. Night at the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo.

**Day 10, Sun, 4 Jul. Departure.** You may plan to depart Quito at any time today.

## About Your Guide

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

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

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

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

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3450 from Quito** (\$100 discount on one tour if combined with GALAPAGOS II)

**DEPOSIT:** \$340 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** February 25, 2021

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$425

**LIMIT:** 8

### **Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.**

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

## 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!

**A NOTE ON ELEVATION:** We plan to spend most of our time at elevations below 10,000 feet; on two days we will spend time at around 13,000 - 14,000 feet. We'll take our time and do much of our walking downhill, but if you know you have problems with high elevations, you might want to consider another tour.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid at least six months beyond the date of your return is required of US citizens for entry into 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 also generally available on-line; alternatively, you can contact our office, and your tour manager 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:** 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 **\$3450** 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 (if your flight departure time allows for it), all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

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

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$425**. 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 \$340** 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 **February 25, 2021**. **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.

Field Guides reserves the right 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

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

US citizens will receive 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 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. 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

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