

ITINERARY

***Peru: Machu Picchu, Abra Malaga, & Tambopata  
(Cole Private Tour)  
September 5 - 18, 2026***



*We'll visit the clay lick on the Rio Tambopata known as the Ccolpa de Guacamayos, where many species of parrots and other birds come to eat clay. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2026 Field Guides *Peru: Machu Picchu, Abra Malaga, and Tambopata (Cole Private Tour)* :

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

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

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our website)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen

**T**his tour itinerary has been designed specifically for your group, combining two exceptional routes in the Cusco region—including Machu Picchu—with an immersive experience in the Peruvian Amazon, plus a day in Lima for coastal birding and fine dining. The journey is remarkable for the diversity of habitats and elevations it covers, beginning at the Pacific coast, ascending into the Andes, and then descending into the Amazon Basin.

Along the way, participants will experience a rich cross-section of what Peru has to offer. While the country itself is vast, this itinerary provides an unforgettable introduction—and may just inspire a return visit. The tour features two true bucket-

list destinations: the iconic ruins of Machu Picchu and the Amazon Basin, widely regarded as the biodiversity capital of the world.

The birding will be excellent (the 500+ species barrier is within our grasp) with endemics and regional specialties at every location. We will aim for as many as possible, plus a decent smattering of herps and mammals (especially in the lowlands; there is a chance for Jaguar and tapir on this tour!). We also can't leave out the cultural significance of Cusco and the Inca Empire, which we will learn about as we make our way around the Sacred Valley. Finally, Lima is one of the culinary capitals of the world, and *ceviche*, *lomo saltado*, or *aji de gallina* will be on the menu for us during our time here. (You might want to arrive a day or two early to take advantage of several world-class restaurants [be sure to plan ahead as reservations can be months in the making] or museums.) I can't wait to get started!



*Machu Picchu is one of the world's wonders. We'll visit the ruins, and bird the area around them.  
Photograph by participant Cliff Hensel.*

**W**ithout a doubt, Machu Picchu is one of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the world. It would be fair to say that this architectural masterpiece is on most everyone's short list of silent cultural attractions South America holds—and with good reason. Perched imposingly atop a high ridge surrounded by rugged, forested mountains, the pre-colonial Inca ruins tower above the rushing waters of the Rio Urubamba, snaking its way a thousand feet below. The conception and the sheer craftsmanship are remarkable by any standards. By staying two nights—and two mornings—in the Machu Picchu area (near the town of Aguas Calientes), we can enjoy a more relaxed pace during our visit. For anyone wishing to spend an additional morning enjoying the ruins of Machu Picchu, this may be arranged but must be set up in advance due to limits on the number of visitors allowed daily. If this is of interest to you, please contact Nicole in our office.

As if the ruins alone were not worth the visit, the subtropical slopes and the narrow gorge below are surprisingly good for birds. On the grounds (averaging about 6500 feet) of our lovely hotel we may see such knockouts as Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Andean Motmot, Masked Fruiteater (a Peruvian endemic), *Inga* trees and plentiful feeders full of hummingbirds—including the endemic Green-and-white, the colorful Collared (Gould's) Inca, and the fawn-booted Booted Racket-tail—numerous vivid tanagers (including the scarce Silvery), White-eared Solitaire, White-throated Quail-Dove, Ocellated Piculet, and Speckle-faced (Plum-crowned) Parrot. The bamboo around Machu Picchu itself is, fittingly, one of the best places to see the endemic Inca Wren, and a morning's birding along the tracks below the hotel usually results in a pleasing variety of species, often punctuated by an Andean Guan, a Fasciated Tiger-Heron, a Black-streaked Puffbird, Slaty Tanager, or perhaps a group of Oleaginous Hemispingus, Dusky-green Oropendolas, or Mitred Parakeets (but usually not all together!). Situated at about 8500 feet, the archaeological site is considerably lower in elevation than the Malaga area, yet our visit to "the heights of Machu Picchu" will in many ways be the high point of a very lofty tour.

After visiting Machu Picchu, we're off on a temperate adventure to the fertile Sacred Valley of the Urubamba and the glorious Cordillera Vilcanota. We'll take the afternoon train back to Ollantaytambo, where we'll disembark for our nearby lodge, our base for two nights as we make early departures for the high pass along the road that crosses the Andes on its way to Quillabamba in the lower Urubamba valley, closer to the Amazonian lowlands. This extraordinarily scenic road affords us access to a cross-section of habitats and to some of the best high Andean birding in all Peru. Abra Malaga, at 14,200 feet, is the low point, or pass, along a ridge of rugged peaks called the Vilcanota Mountains separating elfin tree line and humid temperate forest on the northwest from the dry, shrub-covered slopes of the upper Rio Urubamba Valley. Buffering the upper limits of these habitats is the starkly beautiful puna grassland dotted with llamas, alpacas, and the very occasional cluster of stone houses, corrals, and fences erected by Quechua-speaking families who are somehow accustomed to prospering in what seems to most visitors an inhospitable environment.

The bird life to be found in these habitats includes many species endemic to a small geographic area in southern Peru and many species limited to southern Peru and nearby Bolivia. Peruvian endemics we're likely to see include the fancy Bearded Mountaineer, White-tufted Sunbeam, Junin and Rusty-fronted canasteros, White-browed Tit-Spintail, Marcapata and Creamy-crested spinetails, Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant, Parodi's Hemispingus, and Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch. Even Royal Cinclodes is a *very* distant possibility. But this wonderful tour, which we have operated many times yet anticipate with excitement each year, is also distinguished by a wealth of birds that aren't strictly endemics but are seldom seen elsewhere, prizes such as Black-faced (Andean) Ibis, Line-fronted Canastero (a particularly beautiful *Asthenes* if we do say so!), Stripe-headed Antpitta (one of the few antpittas easily seen once found), the well-marked Diademed Tapaculo, Puna Tapaculo, Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant, Three-striped Hemispingus, and the exquisite Golden-collared Tanager. After birding for two days at Abra Malaga, we'll bus back to our hotel in Cusco for an overnight stay before heading back to Lima (and Puerto Maldonado).



*The Stripe-headed Antpitta is one of the easier antpittas to see, but it's also one of the most attractive. We'll look for them when we visit Abra Malaga. Photograph by participant Jeanette Shores.*

**S**outheastern Peru has long been acknowledged as the most species-rich birding region on Earth. During the 1980s, when the Explorer's Inn was intensively birded, that single rainforest site built a cumulative bird list of more than 550 species within a three-mile radius of the lodge. Just to the north, in the huge Manu Biosphere Reserve, which protects habitats from treeline down to lowland rainforest, we regularly encounter more than 500 species on a two-week tour! Back to the south, one of the biggest draws for birders to southeastern Peru is a mysterious and spectacular phenomenon that is generally considered one of the most dazzling wildlife spectacles in the world. The *Ccollpa de Guacamayos*, as it is called locally, is a clay bank along the Rio Tambopata about seven hours by boat upriver from Puerto Maldonado. Here, almost daily and depending on the season of the year, dozens of big macaws and hundreds of other colorful parrots

gather to a vertical section of the riverbank carved out of the foothills to consume a beak full or two of mineral-rich clay, a vital but rather mysterious part of their diet, now thought to protect them against toxic chemicals ingested in various fruits they eat or to supplement their diet with sodium. The phenomenon was richly documented by Charlie Munn in the January 1994 issue of *National Geographic*. The Tambopata Research Center, immediately downstream from the *collpa*, was founded to allow study of the macaws and their fascinating behavior and now makes it possible for tourists to experience this incredible spectacle firsthand. The Tambopata *collpa* used to be the largest known clay lick in South America.

The trail system at TRC also invites exploration of habitats that include floodplain forest, transition forest, palm swamp and some hilly *terra firme* forest (tall rainforest on well-drained soils), as well as extensive areas where clonal giant bamboo flowered and went to seed in 2001; these stands are now in a fascinating successional stage as the bamboo grows back from seed. Most of the bamboo specialists disappeared from here when the bamboo died, and we'll have a first-hand look at what's come back. TRC's location, at the base of the foothills, the very edge of the low-gradient portion of the Amazon basin, offers additional Manu-type species, including some hill-forest birds that are rare or missing at Explorer's Inn (well downriver). And its remoteness results in a much higher density of cracids, trumpeters, big macaws, and large mammals than at the Explorer's Inn. We've seen Tayras and Pacas in the clearing, and the open-air kitchen was visited by an Ocelot during an early tour. In fact, the group mammal list for TRC on that tour included eight species of monkeys, Short-eared Dog, Brazilian Tapir, and a herd of 150-200 White-lipped Peccaries, which sometimes can be seen foraging out at the lodge clearing! On past tours, we've seen a Jaguar strolling along the cobbled riverbed across the river from the lodge!



*Razor-billed Curassow and other large birds are relatively common at the Tambopata Research Center.  
Photograph by guide Pepe Rojas.*

*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:** We will be walking on roads, both paved and dirt, and forest trails. The paths at the Machu Picchu ruins are steep and have many stairs. Expect stairs at some accommodations as well. On our second day at Machu Picchu, we will have an all-day walk of about six or seven miles.

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Some of our birding will involve standing and waiting for birds in potentially cold conditions. Altitude may be a factor, particularly at Abra Malaga (our highest point at 14500 feet). Our walk below Machu Picchu will be fairly easy, but long (6 - 7 miles).
- **PACE:** We will have some variation in breakfast times, mostly between 5 - 5:30 a.m. to take advantage of sunrise for birding; but one morning, going to Abra Malaga, we may leave earlier due to the drive time. We usually have some sort of afternoon break, but expect to be birding for much of the day.
- **ELEVATION:** We will be at high elevation for some of this tour; Machu Picchu is at about 8500 feet, whereas the highest point at Abra Malaga is about 14,500 feet (but our lodging is around 9500 ft). We will take things slowly here, but be aware that these elevations can cause problems for some people. Around Lima and Puerto Maldonado, we are at or near sea level.
- **WEATHER:** Weather and temperatures will vary with altitude; mornings may be below freezing in the higher elevations (Abra Malaga area), with afternoons into the low 80's F in the lower ranges. Expect to encounter rain (especially in the lowlands around TRC), and possibly snow or hail (again, at Abra Malaga).
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Several internal flights on commercial jets. Small motorized boats along the Tambopata. We will travel by train from Ollantaytambo to Machu Picchu, where we'll take a bus to the ruins, but we will be walking while birding around the town in the valley below. For the rest of our travel, we'll have a bus or van. So that each participant has an 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:** Whenever possible, we use indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **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.*

## About the Birding Areas

**Lima Coastal Area**—We will spend just a half-day exploring the coastal areas around Lima, but this will still be a very productive time for anyone who hasn't birded the beaches and coastal marshes of Chile or Peru. Bird life is teeming here. Offshore islands and rocky emergences provide breeding grounds for millions of "seabirds" that are often easily seen from shore, including Inca Tern, Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, and three species of cormorants, Neotropic, Guanay, and Red-legged. Gray and Belcher's gulls are both range-restricted, and we should find them in numbers, plus, if are lucky, we might spot a Humboldt Penguin or a Peruvian Diving-Petrel.

**Machu Picchu: Subtropical Forest**—Most of the slopes below Machu Picchu, from the ruins themselves at 8500 feet to the tracks at 6400 feet, are covered with scrubby vegetation and bamboo, the sheer cliff-faces studded with a striking array of terrestrial bromeliads. This is in part owing to the very steep mountainsides and slopes themselves, which are rocky and support a thin layer of soil. But along the tracks from our hotel downriver to about 6000 feet, the vegetation becomes lush and big trees, like spreading *Erythrina*, line the Urubamba. Here, the wet fingers of the subtropics reach up into the Machu Picchu region and sustain a bird life rich in east-slope species. The cliff walls on either side of the rushing Urubamba are so steep that the subtropical forest is restricted to the path the river has cut through the mountains. The train tracks follow the river where no road goes, and our birding takes place along these tracks in a forest that is full of tanager flocks, parakeets, oropendolas, siskins, hummingbirds, flycatchers, thrushes, and solitaires, and even occasional White-rumped Hawks and Black-and-chestnut Eagles. After we've spent some time in the field here, we think you'll agree that this area is underrated as a birding locale.

**Abra Malaga: Temperate Woodland and Puna**—The eastern cordillera offers, in many ways, the most exciting birding in Peru. The area of the Malaga Pass is high Andean, with beautiful puna grasses, rugged landscapes, jagged peaks (with snow-capped Veronica quietly dominating the cordillera in these parts), and high temperate forest from treeline down to about 9000 feet. Much of the area below 9000 feet on the east slope has been badly disturbed by human activity, so our birding will be above this point and hence restricted to the temperate and puna zones. And since the Urubamba Valley, in

which we'll be staying, is itself about 9500 feet, we will bird above this elevation on the dry slope (or south side of the pass), as well. The lush mixture of bamboo, some *Polylepis*, and moss-festooned trees of the wet slope (on the north side of the pass) is still extremely rich with birds, as is the scrubby canyon of the dry slope (on the south side of the pass). This, of course, is not always apparent since often one can walk the road for fifteen minutes, even under highly favorable weather conditions, and see very little. The main reason for this is that birds in this cloudforest travel in mixed-species flocks, so the situation is often feast or famine for the birder. Yet few phenomena in the tropics hold the excitement of feasting one's eyes on these flocks when they do materialize out of the *neblina* or out of a shady enclave untouched as yet by the sun. We know how to work this area for flocks and are sure to find our share during our two days at Abra Malaga.

"Wet-side" endemics include: Marcapata Spinetail, Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant, Inca Wren, Parodi's Hemispingus, and Cusco Brush-Finch. Also possible are Sapphire-vented (Coppery-naped) Puffleg, Line-fronted Canastero, and Diademed Tapaculo. Should rain (or sun!) set in, we'll head back across the pass to the "dry side," watching for Black-faced (Andean) Ibis, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, White-tufted Sunbeam, Creamy-crested Spinetail, Stripe-headed Antpitta, and the handsome Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch. There will be an opportunity for the hardy to climb into an area of extensive *Polylepis* where we'll have a chance for Andean Hillstar, White-browed and Tawny tit-spinetails, Junin Canastero, Puna Tapaculo, Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant, and Giant Conebill. And at any time on the "dry side," a huge Andean Condor could circle right overhead.



*The Creamy-crested Spinetail is a distinctive furnariid endemic to south-central Peru. We'll look for it on Abra Malaga. Photograph by guide Dan Lane.*

**Tambopata Research Center (TRC)**--Six hours up the Tambopata from Puerto Maldonado, we'll be well within the heart of the 3.7 million-acre Tambopata National Reserve, protecting the entire watersheds of two tributaries to the Tambopata as well as much of the Tambopata basin. In 1990, the Tambopata Reserve Zone (first established as a parcel of rainforest behind the Explorer's Inn in 1977) was greatly expanded, to include almost 1.5 million hectares—30% the total size of Costa Rica! In 1996, 802,750 acres—including the Pampas de Heath (already a National Sanctuary) and part of the Tambopata-Candamo Reserve Zone—were officially designated by the government as Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. On the trip upriver, one's sense of wildness increases dramatically above the boundary of the officially protected national park, and well before reaching TRC, all manmade clearings along the river have disappeared. The wilderness aspect of this remote place is attested by the relative abundance of big birds and mammals, including Razor-billed Curassow, Spix's Guan, eight species of monkeys, White-lipped Peccary, Short-eared Dog, Tapir, Tayra, and even the elusive Jaguar (*which we've seen here five times!*).

That brings us back to the spectacular *Collpa de Guacamayos* that has become the marquee draw for birders to TRC. Whatever the function of that ingested clay, this gathering of brilliant psittacids in the early sunlight, their raucous calls filling the air, is never to be forgotten.



*The Purus Jacamar is a lowland species we'll watch for near Tambopata. Photograph by participant Dana Little.*

## Itinerary for Peru: Machu Picchu, Abra Malaga, and Tambopata (Cole Private Tour)

**Day 1, Sat, 5 Sep. Arrival in Lima.** We recommend the earliest flight possible to arrive in Lima this evening; you may even want to come in a day or two early due to the nature of airline travel right now. Please be sure to inform our office of your arrival plans. Upon arrival, you'll go through Immigration, collect your luggage, and clear Customs. **Our Coltur representative will be waiting at the Arrival International Gate holding a Field Guides sign and will transfer you to our hotel in the Miraflores district.** Peru no longer stamps passports, only registering them electronically at immigration. However, most hotels still require a photocopy of your passport and your arrival date in the country. Please be prepared to submit your passport at check-in for copying. A welcome letter from your guide, with details about tomorrow's departure plans, will be waiting for you at the check-in counter or under the door of your room. Night in the Miraflores district of Lima.

**Day 2, Sun, 6 Sep. Coastal Birding around Lima; Villa Marshes.** Not a super early start today. We will have breakfast at the hotel and depart soon after, heading south down the Lima coastline. We will make stops at various birding sites for coastal birds, including several species of Pacific gulls like Belcher's and Gray, along with the snazzy Inca Tern, and good numbers of Peruvian Boobies and Peruvian Pelicans. The plan will be to have lunch around Barranco or Miraflores, then make our way back to the hotel in the afternoon. This will be a more relaxed day, but the coastal areas of Lima are home to a number of relatively localized species that are only found along the Pacific Coast (dependent on the rich Humboldt Current, which runs just offshore) from Northern Chile to Ecuador. Night in the Miraflores district of Lima.

**Day 3, Mon, 7 Sep. Flight to Cusco; Huacarpay Lakes; to Ollantaytambo.** We'll have an early breakfast at the hotel, cross to the airport, and check in for our flight to Cusco. There, we'll be met by our local agent and our guide to Machu Picchu. We then head southeast by bus to bird the Huacarpay Lakes, less than an hour away. After a few hours of easy birding at Urpicancha (named for the pre-Inca terraces above the lakes) and a picnic lunch, we'll travel down the Urubamba, the river of the Sacred Valley of the Inca, with perhaps a stop or two before arriving at our hotel in Ollantaytambo. One stop will be at a hummingbird garden where we should see several species, including White-bellied

Hummingbirds, Sparkling Violetears, Green-tailed Trainbearers, Tyrian Metaltails, Giant Hummingbirds, and perhaps even Undulated Antpitta, which has been trained to come in for worms! Night in Ollantaytambo.

**Day 4, Tue, 8 Sep. Train to Machu Picchu.** This morning after breakfast, we'll carry the small bags we'll take with us to the Ollantaytambo train station, where we'll board the train for Machu Picchu. *We'll be able to store any unnecessary luggage at the hotel, since we'll need clothes for just the two days at Machu Picchu. For this reason, it is important to have a smaller travel bag to repack into.*

The train follows the rushing Rio Urubamba down the east slope along the Urubamba gorge to Aguas Calientes. As we gradually descend toward the Amazon Basin, the vegetation changes from dry scrub and *Eucalyptus* (introduced here for firewood) to humid subtropical forest, with a whole new complement of birds. We'll count the Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers as we approach the new Machu Picchu train station (about 6400 feet), now located just below our hotel in Aguas Calientes. On arrival, we'll send our luggage by porters directly on to the hotel, where they will be deposited in our rooms; then, after an opportunity to use the facilities, we'll bus up the switchback road to 8200 feet, where we'll make our tour of the ruins, led by our authorized Peruvian guide, who is trained in matters archaeological.

From its rugged setting to its imposing scale and the precision of its stone architecture, Machu Picchu is genuinely awesome. Prior to its modern discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911, Machu Picchu lay abandoned for several centuries, concealed by a dense overgrowth of vegetation. To this day, the reason for the existence of this "lost city" remains uncertain, although many theories have been proposed. Some think it was the last refuge of the Incas near the end of the Spanish conquest. Others believe this site was the Inca gateway to the riches of Amazonia far below; still others postulate that it was a scenic "escape" for a whimsical Incan ruler.

Following our mid-day tour, we'll have a late buffet lunch at the excellent Sanctuary Lodge restaurant. After lunch, we'll take a bus back down to Aguas Calientes and walk the short distance to the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, where we'll check into our rooms and familiarize ourselves with the grounds and beautiful setting. Night in Aguas Calientes.



*Gould's Inca is a large hummingbird found in the montane Andean forest of southern Peru and northern Bolivia.  
Photograph by participant Richard Stilwell.*

**Day 5, Wed, 9 Sep. Machu Picchu.** We'll have today to enjoy the exciting birding on the hotel grounds and along the tracks (in the Mandor Valley). For those who would like to spend an entire morning exploring and photographing the ruins, a time when only a relatively few visitors will be present, we can arrange for an early bus back up the mountain at an additional expense (Please let our office know if you wish to spend another morning at the site). But early morning is also

the best time for birding the cloud-forested chasm along the river below the ruins, so the best time for a morning in the ruins may be Day 5.

Walking along the railroad tracks or the paths along the slopes, we'll watch for Andean Cock-of-the-rock, which displays and nests along the tracks and often feeds on the hotel grounds. Other species present include Andean Guan, Mitred Parakeet, Speckle-faced (Plum-crowned) Parrot, White-tipped Swift, Green-and-white Hummingbird, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Booted Racket-tail (here with fawn-colored "boots"), Long-tailed Sylph, Collared (Gould's) Inca, White-bellied Woodstar, Andean Motmot, Streaked Xenops, Variable Antshrike, Masked Fruiteater, Sclater's, Mottle-cheeked, and Ashy-headed tyrannulets, Barred Becard, Andean and White-eared solitaires, Pale-legged and Russet-crowned warblers, Silvery, Golden-naped, Saffron-crowned, Blue-necked, and Rust-and-yellow tanagers, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Chestnut-capped and Tricolored brushfinches, Olivaceous Siskin, and Dusky-green Oropendola. With luck, we could see a Fasciated Tiger-Heron along the river. Our lovely hotel grounds themselves provide some of the nicest birding to be had at Machu Picchu, even though they are located on a slope, making birding there something of an up-and-down affair. Night in Aguas Calientes.

**Day 6, Thu, 10 Sep. Machu Picchu; train to Ollantaytambo.** After another wonderful morning of birding the area (perhaps returning to the ruins for those who would like)—and after checking out of our rooms (leaving our luggage in storage)—we'll have lunch and then board the afternoon train for Ollantaytambo, where we'll transfer our gear to the hotel. Depending on our time of arrival, we may have a chance to bird the grounds a bit before having dinner. Night in Ollantaytambo.



As we travel by train from Aguas Calientes to Ollantaytambo, we'll watch for Torrent Ducks along the rushing Urubamba River.  
Photograph by participant Sid England.

**Days 7-8, Fri-Sat, 11-12 Sep. Abra Malaga.** As moisture-laden air from Amazonia rises against the ridges, it loses its moisture as cloud or mist, supporting one of the highest cloud-forests in the world (with orchid-clad trees at 12,000 feet), on the "wet-side" of Abra Malaga. The buildup of clouds from the east creates an ever-changing drama of swirling fog and montane sunlight at the pass, sometimes culminating in the breathtaking exposure of jagged, snow-capped Veronica—close and in full sun. From Malaga Pass, the rolling puna grasslands and bogs (where llama and alpaca are shepherded by highlanders in traditional dress) spill down the rain-shadow slopes to the high-temperate shrub zone of the "dry-side." Distant stands of *Polylepis* seem to hang on protected slopes, surrounded by grass. From here, the U-shaped glacial valley falls far away below, through natural shrub and cultivated fields (originally terraced by the Inca), toward the ruins of Ollantaytambo and the Urubamba River. Of special interest in preparing for these days is the paper by Parker & O'Neill (1980) listed in our Tour References, and of course *Birds of Peru* (Princeton, 2010), making preparation a joy!

During our two days in the Abra Malaga area, we'll sample each of these habitats from our base at Ollantaytambo. Even though we'll leave very early, a delicious hot breakfast is available for all who like to start the day off with a meal, no matter how early. While the changeable weather makes birding here tricky, the geography tends to ensure that some zone is always birdable. You will never forget this place once you've experienced it. It's truly grand.

In the late afternoon, as we return to Cusco, we'll pass back through some beautiful, rolling highlands on our return to Cusco, with a stop just off the highway to Laguna Huaypo, where an impressive concentration of waterfowl and some other species is possible. Cusco was once the capital of the vast Inca Empire. Modified dramatically after conquest by the Spanish, Cusco's buildings are a remarkable blend of Spanish Colonial architecture and astonishingly precise Inca stonework. As we transfer to the airport, we'll see traditional mortar-less rock walls, made of huge stones and boulders fitted together with amazing accuracy, now acting as the foundations for beautiful Spanish-built cathedrals and townhouses. 11 Sep. in Ollantaytambo; 12 Sep. in Cusco.



*In Cusco, we'll see an interesting mixture of Inca and Spanish architecture. Photograph by participant Ken Havard.*

**Day 9, Sun, 13 Sep. Cusco to Puerto Maldonado.** We will depart in the morning to catch a flight to Puerto Maldonado. Between Cusco and Puerto Maldonado, we'll fly over a small portion of the Amazon basin, where the endless expanse of tropical forest below is only broken by twisting rivers and an occasional savanna. More clearings become evident as we approach the juncture of two rivers: the Tambopata and the Madre de Dios. Puerto Maldonado is a bustling, booming tropical frontier town. Its principal activities are gold mining, Brazil nut collecting, timber extraction, agriculture, and (nowadays) ecotourism.

From the airport, we'll be transferred to our local outfitter's office, where bottled water with which to fill your canteen is available, as are restrooms. Snacks will be available too. From here, we will drive approximately 1h 30m to the dock where we will load into small motorized boats for the approximately 2-hour boat ride upriver to the Tambopata Research Center (TRC). Once aboard, we'll be seeing White-winged and White-banded swallows flying over the water and an occasional pair of Drab Water-Tyrants hugging the banks. Check the sandbars (if water levels are such that there *are* sandbars) for Pied Lapwing and Collared Plover, and watch for aerial Large-billed and Yellow-billed terns. Along this stretch of river, we'll pass many small farms and clearings where colonists have been living for a long time. But we'll begin to see a few areas of undisturbed forest, green walls of vegetation against the bank. By now, there should be noisy flocks of parakeets dashing overhead. Check exposed perches for raptors, Roadside Hawk being the most common and conspicuous, but Bat Falcons, King Vultures, hawk-eagles, and even a Harpy are among the possibilities. Never knowing what may be around the next bend is part of the suspense of river travel in Amazonia. Night at TRC.

**Days 10-12, Mon-Wed, 14-16 Sep. Tambopata Research Center.** The TRC "camp" is in a small clearing right in the forest. The rooms here are thatch-roofed but open in the back, affording fresh air and a nice view out into the clearing or

the nearby forest. Each room is thin-walled and shares the high ceiling (*so talk quietly unless you intend to be talking to all your neighbors!*), and each bed is supplied with mosquito netting, which you should always use. It's a short walk down the (airy) hall or boardwalk to the open-air dining hall. Be aware that pesky hand-reared macaws (called *chicos*; now free and "wild") could appear on your banister at any time during the day; so, organize your gear and keep small, shiny objects inside the drawers. (*And be sure to put any snacks into the locker, out of reach of hungry mouse opossums.*) Agoutis and Tayras frequent the clearing, and Crested Owls call hauntingly from the adjacent forest; during one breakfast, a Collared Forest-Falcon flew down to attack its prey on the ground beside us, then retreated to the banister for a look around. One rainy morning, an Amazonian Motmot took shelter on the dining-hall railing. A male Plum-throated Cotinga often sits atop a dead tree off the dining hall early in the morning, and macaws and aracarís nest in a big tree at the edge of the clearing. It's always a good idea to bring your binoculars to meals.

At TRC, trails abound—some fifteen miles of them, many with loops we can do in a morning or an afternoon. TRC's proximity to the base of the Andes is reflected in the presence of a few primarily foothill species. Accessible habitats include hill-forest, old-growth floodplain forest, and river-edge *varzea*. We'll concentrate on seeing the specialties of these habitats here.

We'll have time to enjoy the fabulous macaw-lick spectacle on a good-weather morn, leaving pre-dawn (with our headlamps, after a cup of tea or coffee) to boat upriver a short way to a recently formed island where we can sit on stools with a wonderful view of the *collpa*. We'll watch quietly as the parrots and macaws begin to fly in from afar and accumulate in the trees above the bank. Soon, the calls of parrots, parakeets, and macaws blend to a roaring din, occasionally almost deafening as flocks, disturbed by a raptor or who knows what, flush from the trees and circle right overhead. The excitement of these sounds is a soul-stirring part of the experience. If conditions are right, all of a sudden, some of the parrots appear on the ground, and others follow, the big macaws eventually joining them. Vulnerable as they are, they tend to be flighty, and we must wait patiently until researchers studying the macaws give us the word that the show is over. Then we'll return for a hot breakfast at the lodge.



*Musician Wren is one of many forest-dwellers we'll look for at Tambopata. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

Some well-positioned benches above the bluffs provide a delightful viewpoint from which to watch the river-edge canopy. With three full days to explore, we should chance upon some of the toughies (Razor-billed Curassow, Starred Wood-Quail, Pheasant Cuckoo, Semicollared Puffbird, White-throated Woodpecker, Black-tailed Leaf-tosser, Ash-throated Gnatcatcher, or a flock of Pale-winged Trumpeters) and enjoy good looks at many of the regulars, including some tinamous, Blue-throated Piping- and Spix's guans, Pale-tailed Barbthroat, Reddish Hermit, White-throated and Bluish-fronted jacamars, Chestnut-capped Puffbird, Lemon-throated and Scarlet-hooded barbets, a wonderful variety of woodcreepers, foliage-gleaners (including Cinnamon-rumped and Brown-rumped), antbirds (including White-throated should we find an

army ant swarm), and flycatchers; Cinereous Mourner, Dull-capped Attila, Pink-throated Becard, Musician and Scaly-breasted wrens, Lawrence's and Hauxwell's thrushes, Purplish Jay, Pectoral Sparrow, and some pretty fancy tanagers (from Masked Crimson to Paradise and White-winged Shrike-Tanager). We will also have time to invest in ferreting out some of the floodplain's prizes, including Rufous-fronted Antthrush and Amazonian Antpitta. Many of the birds we'll see, such as jacamars, puffbirds, woodcreepers, ovenbirds, antbirds, and cotingas, belong to families that occur only in the New World tropics. From reverberating leks of Screaming Pihas to showier, if more vocally modest, leks of Band-tailed Manakins; from drab-colored furnariids in mixed-species flocks to perky, rail-like antthrushes that walk on the forest floor, we'll witness the stuff of Amazonia. Each day will be a full and rewarding one, as the aesthetics of birding (and mammaling) will wholly absorb us. Nights at TRC.

**Day 13, Thu, 17 Sep. TRC to Puerto Maldonado and on to Lima.** After breakfast, we'll make our way back downriver to Puerto Maldonado and catch our flight to Lima. Once we arrive, we'll check in at the **Grand Wyndham Hotel Lima Airport** and enjoy our final dinner together—one last chance to relax and reminisce about the trip. Most folks will probably have international flights departing late this evening and arriving in the US tomorrow morning. For those with later departures, a day room will be available at the hotel. Night in Lima or on an airplane homeward bound.

**Day 14, Fri, 18 Sep. International flight home, or arrival home** if you took a late-night flight the night before. ¡Buen viaje y que les vaya bien!

## About Your Guide

**Jesse Fagan** (a.k.a. the Motmot or just “Mot”) has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded throughout the United States, including spending seven years in Texas, and since 1995 has been birding and for a time living in northern Central America. He is a co-author of the recently published [Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), a field guide to the region which includes the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize.

In addition, Mot has birded in or led tours to Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, France, Morocco, and Madagascar. He also enjoys leading many of the Field Guides tours in the Caribbean. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds, but most importantly, have a good time. Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He is currently living in Lima, Peru.

*“Jesse is a fantastic guide. He really knows calls, and he is infinitely patient in getting everyone on the difficult birds, fun to be with.” L.F., Bogota, Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta.*

Jesse will be accompanied throughout the tour by **local guides**.

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

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$10,300 from Lima**  
**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$2260**  
**DEPOSIT: \$1050 per person**  
**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: March 9, 2026**  
**LIMIT: 7**

## 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 ALTITUDE:** About a third of the trip will be at or above 10,000 feet, and we will reach elevations in excess of 14,000 feet. Elevations at Machu Picchu are considerably lower—6,400 - 8,500 feet. We will move about deliberately at the high elevations. Lima and the areas around the Tambopata River are at or near sea level.

**DOCUMENTS:** Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

**Passport:** A current passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary. ***Peru has replaced the former tourist card with an electronic version, so you shouldn't have to worry about a paper card anymore.***

**Visa:** U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require a tourist visa to enter Peru. Citizens of other countries should check with the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** The tour begins and ends in Lima, Peru (Jorge Chávez International Airport, LIM).

**Arrival:** Lima on **September 5, at any time.**

**Departure:** Lima on **September 17 after 11:00pm, or September 18, at any time.**

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

**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.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** **The tour fee is \$10,300 for one person in double occupancy from Lima.**

It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 13, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 13 (or breakfast on Day 14 if staying overnight), the flights within Peru (Lima/Cusco/Puerto Maldonado/Lima), all ground transportation, entrance fees (for *one* visit to the ruins), 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 Peru, 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 \$2260.**

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** **To register for this tour, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/).** Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

**Please send the deposit of \$1050 per person;** see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or by March 9, 2026.** We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

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

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot

offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

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

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

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