

ITINERARY
AMAZONIAN ECUADOR: SACHA LODGE

I. January 10-19, 2020

II. June 26-July 5, 2020



The little Collared Puffbird is widespread in the Amazonian region, but since it is a sit-and-wait predator, it may be overlooked by many visitors. This is one of 11 puffbirds and other bucconids that we may see on the tour.

Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.

We include here information for those interested in a 2020 Field Guides Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge tour:

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

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

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

A few years ago, a birding trip to Amazonia was definitely for the hardy. Only those willing to do without most amenities and willing to run certain health risks could unlock the treasure chest of the single richest biome on Earth. No longer. With the opening in recent years of lodges such as Sacha in Ecuador's Amazonian forest, this incredible biological masterpiece has never been so accessible and so comfortable. Over the last decade, Sacha (a native Quechua Indian word for rainforest) has become known as one of the most comfortable and best-run lodges in upper Amazonia, and it encompasses a wide variety of rich Amazonian habitats. This tour offers a full week-long stay at a single site, affording

the time necessary to probe the challenges of Amazonian forest birding while providing excellent chances to encounter some genuine rarities of considerable allure—Zigzag Heron, Harpy and Crested Eagles, Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet, Lanceolated Monklet, Collared Puffbird, Rufous-headed Woodpecker, Short-billed Leaf-tosser, Dot-backed Antbird, and Orange-crested Manakin to name a few.

Situated along the north bank of the giant Rio Napo, one of the three major tributaries that combine to form the upper Amazon, Sacha Lodge is located only two hours down-river from the Amazonian frontier town of Coca. It's accessible from Quito in a 30-minute flight over the crest of the eastern Andes (spectacular if clear). The broad meander plain between the Napo and the Aguarico River to the north is low-lying and filled with a number of blackwater inlets and classic Amazonian oxbow lakes (called *cochas* in the native Quechua dialect), overlooking one of which sits Sacha. Sacha is reached from the banks of the Napo by a thirty-minute walk along the riverbank and then on an elevated boardwalk through palm-rich swamp forest, followed by a twenty-minute ride in locally crafted dugout canoes along a narrow inlet that opens onto picturesque Pilchicocha. On the opposite bank stands the lodge itself, our base for exploring the many habitats of Amazonia. A network of trails from the lodge offers easy (if sometimes muddy!) access to a wonderful expanse of seasonally flooded forest (*varzea*) and to one of the finest canopy platforms we have encountered anywhere, opening a whole new dimension to formerly earth-bound birders.

Even on the north bank, pockets of well-drained soil on somewhat higher ground support taller forest and a few species normally associated with *terra firme* (upland) forest, the richest and most complex single habitat in the world. An immense expanse of undisturbed *terra firme* lies across the Napo from Sacha in Yasuni National Park, a vast reservoir of wilderness. We will make at least one day-trip to the rich south bank of the Napo for a sampling of *terra firme* specialties, as well as to visit two wonderful parrot licks, one of the premier attractions of the region.

But Sacha's strengths are twofold: its canopy towers and its easy access to virtually a full range of river-created habitats, from lake margin, *Mauritia* palm swamp, river margin, and sandbars, to river-created islands, young and old. The "Orquidea trails," actually a blackwater stream that drains Pilchicocha, is one of the most enchanting canoe trails we've seen. It is narrow and perfectly reflective of the overhanging spiny palms and dark-green forest. It is hushed quiet punctuated by the occasional outburst of a Red Howler Monkey or the insistent calling of a territorial Dot-backed Antbird. We plan this tour to play to Sacha's strengths.



*The canopy walkways at Sacha allow us to get into the upper levels where many of the more spectacular birds can be seen.
Photograph by participant Nancy Barnhart.*

Sacha's bird list approaches 500 species and boasts such regularly occurring Amazonian inhabitants as Great Tinamou and Marbled Wood-Quail (both sometimes seen at roosts!), Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Slender-billed Kite, Lined Forest-Falcon, Hoatzin, Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Crested Owl, Great and Common potoos (sometimes at day roosts), Great-billed Hermit, Green-and-rufous and American Pygmy kingfishers, White-eared, Yellow-billed, White-chinned, Purplish, and Great jacamars, Chestnut-capped, Collared, and White-chested puffbirds, Brown Nunlet, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Scarlet-crowned, Gilded, and Lemon-throated barbets, four species of aracarís, two big toucans, Golden-collared

Toucanet, Lafresnaye's Piculet, Chestnut, Cream-colored, and Rufous-headed woodpeckers, White-bellied and Parker's spinetails (river island specialists), Short-billed and Black-tailed leaftossers, Long-billed Woodcreeper, Castelnau's Antshrike and Black-and-white Antbird (both on river islands), Dugand's Antwren (a regular visitor to the canopy near one of the platforms), White-shouldered, Sooty, Black-throated, Spot-backed, Dot-backed, and Common Scale-backed antbirds, the spectacular Striated Antthrush, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, White-browed Purpletuft, Plum-throated and Spangled cotingas, displaying Wire-tailed and Golden-headed manakins, Gray Elaenia and Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher (both regulars to the canopy tower tree), Mottle-backed Elaenia, Ringed Antpipit, Rufous-tailed Flatbill, Cinnamon Attila, White-winged, Black-capped, and Pink-throated becards, Black-capped Donacobius, Scaly-breasted and Musician wrens, Lawrence's Thrush (a great mimic), Caqueta Seedeater (a split from Variable), and a dazzling array of tanagers, many of which can be seen eye-to-eye from the canopy towers, including Masked Crimson, Turquoise, Paradise, Green-and-gold, Yellow-bellied, Masked, Opal-rumped, Opal-crowned, as well as three dacnises (and we even had brushes with the rare White bellied recently!) and three honeycreepers. Additional but less predictable lures are Agami Heron, Harpy and Crested Eagles, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, Buckley's Forest-Falcon, Black-banded Crake, Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet (across the Napo), Long-tailed Potoo, Gould's Jewelfront, Black-bellied Thorntail, Lanceolated Monklet, Orange-fronted Plushcrown, Fulvus Antshrike, Banded, Yellow-browed, and White-plumed antbirds, Black-spotted Bare-eye, Orange-eyed Flycatcher, Purple-throated Cotinga, Amazonian Umbrellabird (we've seen it displaying from the canopy platform!), Western Striped Manakin, Large-billed Seed-Finch, and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak, all of which we have encountered during past tours. We're sure to see an impressive array of fascinating birds and scenery. Combining the tour checklist with Ridgely and Greenfield's *The Birds of Ecuador* makes preparation for the most likely species easy. *(In addition, once you reach Sacha, you may buy a simple-but-functional, lightweight field pamphlet illustrating the birds; it's perfect for carrying in the field!)*

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: We will rise early each day and, after breakfast before daylight, take trails or canoe rides away from the lodge. We'll usually return for lunch and some time off in the hot early afternoon before walking another trail near the lodge or taking a late afternoon canoe ride through the varzea forest. On two or three days, we will take a box lunch and be out for much of the day; on several evenings we'll also try for nocturnal birds, though we usually do not venture out after dinner.

As no single activity on this tour is overly strenuous with respect to hill work (besides the 14 flights of stairs to get to the top of the towers!), most reasonably fit people should be capable of any of the hikes we do. We generally walk 2-3 miles per day, although on two or three days we are away from the lodge all day and may walk up to 4 miles. The eastern lowlands can be surprisingly comfortable when there is cloud-cover; in the evenings it can even cool down enough to need a blanket for sleeping. During the day though, especially when sunny, it will likely be humid and hot, so be

prepared to bring along a couple of bottles of water to re-hydrate for longer hikes; the lodge will provide additional bottles of water on these days as well. While the ground is often uneven, for the most part there is very little up and down (other than a couple of sections of trail on the south bank of the Napo and the aforementioned stairs to the towers). Much of our time will be spent standing in one spot watching for birds and/or trying to tape them in, and when we do move, it will usually be at a birder's pace (in other words, not very fast). Though each day's activities should be no problem for most people to manage, it is important to remember that we will spend much of every day of the tour on our feet, and some people find the cumulative effect of a week's worth of this kind of activity tiring. On one day across the river - trail conditions and weather dependent - we will try and bird a higher area of terra firme forest (for some special species found only there) that requires some endurance and strength to navigate a few steep sections in order to make the climb. We have found that with several guides at your disposal, offering their helping hands, most folks will be able to make this jaunt just fine, but anybody preferring to opt out of this can certainly relax at the comfortable shelter right at one of the most exciting parrot salt licks on the continent, were anything is possible; one year a group of Collared Peccaries came in for a visit, and repeated views of the parrots are always welcome. Fortunately, Sacha lends itself well to taking time off, and



Field Guides group canoeing in Orquidea Creek. We'll see many special birds on forays onto the river. Photo by guide Dan Lane.

the lodge is a great place to relax and catch up on rest. While the tour should not be considered an “easy” tour, by carefully choosing the activities in which to participate, this tour can range from quite easy to rigorous.

The terrain varies from flat trails nearest the lodge to hillier on the south side of the Rio Napo, and all of the trails can be muddy and/or slippery, but are usually firm underfoot with a few muddy or watery sections (depending on recent rains in the area). All of the trails nearest the lodge are well maintained but still have numerous, large protruding roots and stumps, as well as the occasional fallen tree trunk. Trails south of the Napo are less well maintained but are still in good shape. A few of the paths cross permanently wet areas, and we’ll have to cross these on narrow bridges with the help of either handrails or poles stuck in the mud. These require a decent sense of balance. In addition to the trail system at the lodge, we will on a few occasions cross a long wooden boardwalk between the Rio Napo and the *cocha* in front of the lodge that can be very slippery if wet (and it usually is). Many sections have handrails, but some do not. The center strip of the entire boardwalk does have plastic mesh that gives much better traction and surer footing.

On a few days (and upon our arrival at the lodge), we will cross the small lake, or *cocha*, between the end of the boardwalk and the lodge itself. The canoes that we use - once dugout, but now more modern fiberglass, stream-lined and stable vessels - to make these crossings are accessed from wooden docks and require good balance and a steady helping hand while boarding and disembarking. The canoes themselves are about fifteen to thirty feet long and are now provided with cushions to increase comfort during our waterway explorations. We plan to use these canoes for a few hours on at least one day to bird in a section of flooded forest near the lodge. The boats that we use while on the Rio Napo are larger and wider. Boarding and disembarking at the town of Coca is from a stable metal and concrete dock, while boarding and disembarking near the lodge will entail a “wet” landing into as much as a foot of water on a sandy river beach or a “dry” landing onto a muddy bank on the south side of the Rio Napo. Both of these require good balance and a helping hand.



The tiny Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher is an example of the birds we'll see from the towers and walkway. These birds have a wide distribution, but they are not often seen, possibly because they prefer to stay high in the canopy. We'll be able to get great views of many species that are normally difficult to see from these wonderful vantage points. Photograph by participant Rachael Hopper.

We plan to spend a couple of mornings and at least one afternoon birding from the fabulous canopy platforms. The primary canopy tower is a sturdy metal platform 130 feet up among the spreading limbs of a giant ceiba tree. Reached by a railed stairway that spirals up alongside the trunk of a canopy giant, it is large and more than sturdy enough for eleven birders and a couple of scopes and offers 360 degrees of viewing—out over the rainforest canopy and back to the Rio Napo. This modern structure provides plenty of room for maneuvering, with two primary platforms from which to bird. Watching the procession of aracarís, puffbirds, honeycreepers, tanagers, cotingas, parrots, raptors, and mixed-species flocks from this platform is usually one of the highlights of the tour. The other three platforms, also reached by railed staircases, are metal and connected by a canopy walkway, which is about two feet wide and enmeshed on each side by sturdy netting. It swings or wobbles slightly as one walks on it, but overall it is easy to transect—and it would be impossible to fall out of it. Most of our time birding the canopy will be from the platforms themselves. We will also try to work in a visit (perhaps during an afternoon shower) to the impressive butterfly house at the lodge—a greenhouse teeming with a wonderful variety of butterflies—where larvae are grown for export.

One of the many advantages of birding out of a single site is the flexibility afforded birders who would like to skip a planned group activity or do something (or nothing) on their own. This is certainly a happy option at Sacha; the beautiful wooden boat dock and barbeque area at the edge of the cocha make a marvelous place to hang out with a wonderful view. There is also a small open-air cupola above the main dining room that offers a canopy view of the palms and marsh vegetation at the edge of the lake. Please note that guests at Sacha are not allowed to swim in the open lake or walk the trail system behind the lodge without a guide, but there is a new enclosed swimming area for a safe dip into the cool, refreshing lake water.

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 one of the guides.

Tour II may be combined with GALAPAGOS: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT DARWIN'S ISLANDS II, July 4-14, 2020, for our most comprehensive single sampling of Ecuador.

About the Birding Areas



River-created Forest Habitats—The river has generated a mosaic of different habitats that lend richness and species diversity to Amazonia. Permanent swamp forest, often dominated by *Mauritia* palms, is found in low-lying areas of poor drainage, such as those in the broad meander plain of the Napo. Sacha is particularly rich in swamp forest. It is here that such specialties as Slender-billed Kite, Striped and Straight-billed woodcreepers, Sulphury Flycatcher, and Epulet (Moriche) Oriole are found, as well as various aquatic species, such as Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and Rufescent Tiger-Heron. The margins of oxbow lakes contribute their own specialties—Blue-crowned Trogon, Hauxwell's Thrush, and Cinnamon Attila inhabit the lake-margin forests while Greater Anis, Lesser Kiskadees, Black-capped Donacobius, and Hoatzins may be found out in vegetation over the water edge itself.

Seasonally flooded *varzea* or transition forest is found adjacent to streams and on somewhat higher ground that has poor drainage. With its tall trees, it looks much like *terra firme* forest to the casual observer but has a lower, less diverse tree-species component that favors those plants which can tolerate being inundated for weeks, or even months, at a time. As one might expect, the bird diversity of *varzea* forest is centered in its canopy, as the understory is sometimes underwater for long periods. Many fruit-eating species

favor *varzea*, including a variety of parrots and macaws and the bizarre Bare-necked Fruitcrow. In the darker understory along the edges of flooded forest, we'll seek such specialties as Dot-backed, (Varzea) Spot-backed, Silvered, Plumbeous, and White-shouldered antbirds, Orange-crested Manakin, Rufous-tailed Flatbill, and the secretive Agami Heron.

Perhaps the jewel in Sacha's crown is its magnificent wooden canopy platform, which gives nearly 360 degrees of visibility into and out over that biological frontier that we are just beginning to understand—the rainforest canopy. With the top limbs still forty feet overhead, the platform gives a window to a world that has only been open to us in the last few years. Prior to the establishment of canopy platforms, tour participants had to accept on faith their guides' assurances that the various voices and tiny movements a hundred feet overhead did indeed belong to a collection of antwrens, colorful tanagers and dacnises, foliage-gleaners, and tyrannulets. Now it is quite common to look *down* on these creatures at close range. No one has fully experienced the rainforest who has not been eye-to-eye with a Tiny Hawk or a Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle or thrilled to the spectacle of a pair of Blue-and-yellow Macaws winging close by in golden afternoon light.

A number of sturdy (but often slippery) boardwalks provide access to *varzea* and swamp forest, and the native boatmen are expert at maneuvering the dugout canoes on the *cochas* and other waterways. As the extremely high diversity of Amazonian birds is dependent on the large number of microhabitats available within the structural complexity of the forests, this access becomes all-important in the success of an attempt to sample this wealth of birds.

For the purposes of preparation, you can assume that most of the species listed on the checklist which are not specified below as river-island species or *terra firme* forest birds are found in these seasonally flooded forest habitats.

Amazonian River Islands—With seasonal flooding—rather unpredictable of late—Amazonian river islands are forever changing. Some are entirely washed away while sand deposits elsewhere form incipient new islands. Sacha is located along a section of the Napo that has a fair number of established river islands, such that as conditions change, some island is always accessible. We'll hope to visit an island that allows us to locate quite a good sample of birds that have evolved on these islands—indeed, some have never been found anywhere else, not even where these islands are close to similar habitats on the nearby riverbanks. Heavy rains on the precipitous eastern slopes of the Andes ensure that rivers originating there carry heavy sediment loads. This material is deposited as sandbars and islands where the terrain flattens out for the long, relatively slow flow to the Atlantic, more than 2000 miles away. The greatly varying levels of river flow ensure that vegetation along a river's banks and on islands is in a constant state of succession. The islands erode at the upstream end, and sediment is deposited at the downstream end. Thus, the old growth (woodland that can resemble mainland *varzea*) is at the head and the youngest (bare sand and low grass growth) at the foot of each island. The greatest number of island-specialty species is found in the earlier successional stages and includes Ladder-tailed Nightjar, Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Lesser Hornero, Parker's, White-bellied, and Plain-crowned spinetails, Black-and-white Antbird, River Tyrannulet, Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant, Orange-headed Tanager, and Oriole Blackbird. Where cane, willows, and *Tessaria* give way to cecropias and taller growth, some additional species occur that favor this older growth: Castelnau's Antshrike, White-eared Jacamar, Scarlet-crowned Barbet, Spot-breasted and Rufous-headed woodpeckers, and Spotted Tody-Flycatcher. Pied Lapwings, Collared Plovers, and Yellow-billed Terns are sometimes seen along the sandbars.



River islands in Amazonia are specialized habitats that support a unique suite of species. One of these is the Ladder-tailed Nightjar, which we will look for when we visit some islands along the Napo. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

Terra Firme Forest—South of the Napo, most of the land area above the old river terrace is covered with primary *terra firme* forest. This upland rainforest lies above the levels of the highest floods and is the single richest habitat in the world—for birds as well as for many of the other organisms found in it. By way of example, the highest diversity of trees in North America is found in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where an expanse of about half a million acres and an altitudinal gradient of more than 5000 feet contributes to a total of around 170 species of trees. Working in the Amazonian rainforests of northeastern Peru (not far from Sacha), botanist Al Gentry found the highest tree diversity in the world—an astounding 603 species per *hectare* (two-and-one-quarter acres)! Other Amazonian rainforest sites in Peru and Ecuador, where a great deal of field work has been focused over the past decade or so, have shown bird species diversities of more than 500 species per site. Given its access to both *varzea* and *terra firme* forest, there is every reason to think the diversity of the Sacha area will prove to be similar. We'll bird *terra firme* forest in pockets near Sacha and along trails across the Napo in Yasuní National Park. *Terra firme* specialties that are most often found on the south bank of the Napo include Sapphire Quail-Dove, Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet and Orange-cheeked Parrot (they both come to an interior-forest mineral lick along a trail on the south bank), Yellow-billed Jacamar, Brown Nunlet, Rio Suno Antwren, Banded, Yellow-browed, and White-plumed antbirds (with army ants), Ochre-striped Antpitta (tough), Ash-throated Gnatcatcher (rare), White-crested Spadebill, and Western Striped Manakin. These species are more easily found when based in a lodge within *terra firme* forest, but we'll see a sampling of them on our day across the river.



Many-banded Aracari is one of the larger species we might see on our tour. These toucans are on the the western edge of their range in Ecuador. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

Itinerary for Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge

Day 1, Fri, 10 Jan, or 26 Jun. To Quito. It is possible to arrange flights from Miami, Atlanta, or Houston, and our office staff can help you arrange the schedule best for you. Whenever you arrive (usually between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m.), our representative will meet you just outside the baggage claim. Watch for a sign with your name and/or Field Guides as you exit Customs. You will be transferred to the Garden Hotel San Jose, about 20 minutes away, where you'll check into your room. If you are arriving tonight, be sure to check for a message from your guide with any additional information you may need for tomorrow. There is a complimentary bottle of drinking water in your bathroom; bring any excess with you tomorrow, along with your canteen or water bottle. Quito lies at 9300 feet and has a cool, pleasant climate year-round. But don't overdo it when carrying heavy bags off the plane at this elevation; it usually takes a night or so to adjust to the altitude.

If you have the time, we suggest arriving a day early. We can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide if you like. Night in Quito.

Day 2, Sat, 11 Jan, or 27 Jun. To Sacha Lodge. After breakfast at the hotel we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Coca, usually departing around mid-morning. Our 30-minute flight takes us from the inter-montane highlands of the Quito valley across the eastern cordillera of the Andes. On a clear day you can see snow-capped Volcan Cayambe to the north, gorgeous Volcan Antisana, and in the distance to the south the perfect crater of Volcan Cotopaxi. As we descend to Ecuador's Oriente, we'll see some nice expanses of undisturbed forest where the eastern foothills spill into the Amazonian lowlands before we arrive at Coca, frontier oil town and jumping-off point for Amazonian exploration in Ecuador. We will travel dressed for birding (rubber boots not required), as we'll be birding on the river en route and along the boardwalk between the river landing and the lodge upon arrival. (Our luggage will be transported by lodge staff so that we can be comfortably unencumbered.) The weather should be cool in Quito and warm and humid in Coca and for the duration of our stay in Amazonia.

From the Coca airport we travel ten minutes by bus to the Sacha headquarters near the river dock. Bathrooms are available here, and we will have a light lunch before heading downriver. At the dock we'll transfer to a motorized, covered canoe for the two-hour trip down river to the lodge. Upon landing, we'll carry only what we want for birding. Bathrooms are available below a sheltered observation deck near the landing. Slightly elevated and overlooking a pasture at the edge of forest, the covered deck affords good viewing in the afternoon light, and we may want to start birding here. Numerous species are possible—from White-eared Jacamar and Mottle-backed Elaenia to Black-billed Thrush and Swallow Tanager. We'll continue along a trail and then a boardwalk—a thirty-minute walk through swamp forest, where an active troop of Common Squirrel Monkeys could interrupt our progress. From the end of the boardwalk, it is a twenty-minute trip by dugout canoe across the Pilchicocha to the lodge, where we'll be received in the bar with a welcome drink and an orientation talk.

The lodge itself offers the comforts of good food attractively prepared and served buffet-style for breakfast and lunch, and a set menu for dinner; attractive, thatched-roof cabanas built of native materials with electric lighting and hot-water showers in modern, tiled private bathrooms; and (usually) pleasant nights in an amazingly insect-free environment and well-screened rooms. Meals are served in a central dining area. A full-service bar with a unique observation tower provides all the amenities along with a superb view. Fresh-pureed juices from tropical fruits of the region are provided at breakfast, and bottled soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquor are available at an additional charge from the bar. Bottled drinking water is furnished in the dining room, and you should get in the habit of bringing your canteen with you to meals to refill from the filtered water supply near the coffee. The generator, located at a distance so as not to intrude, operates all night long, so lights and ceiling fans are functional all night. If you want to turn off the light outside your cabana, check for the switch just outside your door. We should sleep tonight to the songs of frogs and the mellow whistling of the Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl. Night at Sacha Lodge.



*One of the highlights of our Sacha Lodge tour is visiting clay licks along the Napo River. These mineral-rich deposits attract many species, including large flocks of Cobalt-winged Parakeets and other parrots.
Photograph by participant Lisa Spellman.*

Days 3-8, Sun-Fri, 12-17 Jan, or 28 Jun-3 Jul. Sacha Lodge. We'll start early each morning to take advantage of the precious first hours of maximum activity, but we will have some time for resting (during the heat of midday or the occasional rain shower) and individual exploration near the lodge as well. Much of our birding will be on foot on forest trails. As with all rainforest birding, calf-high rubber boots and raingear will be essential. Not only are there likely to be muddy areas on the trails, but rubber boots provide foot and lower leg protection against briars, insects, and other trail hazards. Sacha has a large number of Ecuadorian rubber boots, with an array of sizes that include large men's sizes, so that you don't need to bring your own; but you probably will want insoles to fit inside them. And you are welcome to bring your own boots if you prefer. Some downed trees across trails are inevitable.

We will bird the lake margins, areas of flooded forest, and the river from dugout canoes handled by skilled native boatmen. Some birding hikes will begin with a canoe ride as well, as a few trails are only reachable by boat. Birding hikes will mostly be conducted in the morning hours with a return for lunch, but we may arrange for a carry-along lunch to enable us to cover some of the more distant trails, especially across the Napo. We will arrange to spend time on several days and at various times of the day in the canopy platforms so that we can take full advantage of this fantastic resource. Nights at Sacha Lodge.

Day 9, Sat, 18 Jan, or 4 Jul. Departure from Sacha; flight to Quito. Today we'll rise early and have breakfast before embarking for Coca and the (usually) late-morning flight to Quito, arriving there in time to reorganize and clean up before our farewell dinner. Participants flying home on Delta, United, or LAN Airlines may choose to book flights departing near midnight tonight but will still have a room for showering before the overnight flight. Night in Quito or on the flight home.

Day 10, Sun, 19 Jan, or 5 Jul. Departure for home. American Airlines flights to the US generally depart in the morning and require an early check-in to arrive mid-day in time for connections home. *Vayan bien!*

About Your Guide

Willy Perez has been leading birding tours for more than ten years. He has also worked as a resident guide at Maquipucuna Reserve on the west slopes of the Andes, on a project protecting marine turtles in Costa Rica, and on bird conservation in northwestern Ecuador. He was a resident guide at Kapawi Lodge in the Ecuadorian Amazon for three years, mastering the art of finding and identifying the many secretive birds of the lowland rainforest. He has since guided throughout Ecuador, including the East and West slopes of the Andes, the Amazon Basin, the Galapagos Islands, and southern Ecuador. During the last few years he has also guided birding groups in Bolivia, Chile and Argentina.

In his free time Willy trains local guides and is a frequent lecturer, in English and in Spanish, on birding and conservation issues in the Neotropics. His wife, Fiona, is British and Willy and his family live now in England. He speaks excellent English and has an engaging and outgoing personality that makes every tour he leads enjoyable and fun.

"Willy Perez was a consummate professional and one of the best guides I've had. He dealt very well with an eclectic group and 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

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$3925 from Quito

Tour II-- \$100 discount on one tour if combined with *GALAPAGOS: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT DARWIN'S ISLANDS, Jul 4-14, 2020*

DEPOSIT: \$400 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 12, 2019 (Tour I); February 27, 2020 (Tour II)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$900 (Singles are limited at Sacha Lodge.)

LIMIT: 8

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for Tour I is Ruth Kuhl, and Tour II is Christine Boilard. Ruth or Christine will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call!

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations at Sacha are rustic but quite comfortable, in fact probably *the* most comfortable overall of any Ecuadorian rainforest lodge. Sacha offers the comforts of good food, attractively prepared and served buffet-style for breakfast and lunch, and with a set menu for dinner; attractive, thatched-roof cabanas built of native materials with electric lighting and hot-water showers in modern, tiled private bathrooms; and (usually) pleasant nights in an amazingly insect-free environment and well-screened rooms. Meals are served in a central and open dining area. A full-service bar with a unique observation tower provides all the amenities along with a superb view. Free bottled water is always available, and fresh-pureed juices from tropical fruits of the region are provided with meals. Bottled soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquor are available at an additional charge from the bar. The generator, located at a distance so as not to intrude, operates all night long, so lights and ceiling fans are functional all night. **A limited number of singles are available at Sacha Lodge.**

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

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Ecuadorian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

VACCINATIONS: It is recommended that all travelers to Sacha Lodge provide **proof of yellow fever vaccination** upon arrival at the airport at Coca, although this has not been enforced in recent years. Previously, the vaccine was considered good for ten years. As of July 2016 the vaccine is considered valid for the lifetime of the vaccine according to the CDC. Despite these recent changes, it is uncertain whether all countries will adopt this change. Please consult with your physician about whether it is appropriate for you to receive the vaccine or the 10-year booster (there are contraindications for some individuals).

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 \$3925 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 dinner on Day 9, the flights within Ecuador (Quito/Coca/Quito), all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

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

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$900. (Singles are limited at Sacha Lodge.) 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 \$400** 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 September 12, 2019 (Tour I); February 27, 2020 (Tour II).** **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so

it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

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

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. **Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance with InsureMyTrip (www.insuremytrip.com) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

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

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

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