

PRIVATE JOURNEYS



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Birding in South Ecuador

Duration: **14 days**Best time to travel: **October to March (rainy season)**

This time of year is nesting season for resident birds and also allows observation of overwintering migrants.

With over 1600 bird species recorded and many more likely awaiting detection and description, Ecuador hosts one of the highest concentrations of biodiversity in the world. This diversity is due in no small part to the Andes. Acting as a physical barrier between the Amazon basin and the Pacific lowlands, the Andes' numerous ranges, height, and extent have created a variety of micro-climates, with a corresponding (and dizzying) variety of ecosystems! Southern Ecuador lies at the convergence of several ecosystems and hosts a corresponding and impressive array of birds! On this private journey, you can discover the wonderful suite of bird life encompassing the regional specialties and endemic species in addition to many more cosmopolitan South American birds.

Beginning in the Andean highland city of Cuenca, travel south towards the junction of the humid montane forest of the Chocó and seasonally dry forest of Tumbes, an ecoregion mostly found in Peru with only a small extension into southwest Ecuador. Many of the species in this region can be found nowhere else in the country. From there we will travel to the dry forest of Jorupe before heading back north towards Cuenca along the east slope of the Andes via Tapichalaca – home of the Jocotoco Antpitta – and the lush primary rainforests of Copalinga. We'll be able to see firsthand just how dramatically the diversity of hummingbirds, tanagers, and dozens of other bird families changes with this geography along the way. Please enquire now to begin your own discoveries of this region!

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Quito

You will be met upon arrival in Quito by a local representative and transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José Aeropuerto (standard room) similar

Day 2: Fly Quito - Cuenca

Today you can take the hotel's complimentary shared shuttle service to the airport for your flight to Cuenca. Upon arrival in Cuenca, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Here you can enjoy the afternoon at leisure. In the early evening, you will meet your private birding guide for a briefing about your program. Should you wish for more time to explore the historic city of Cuenca and its cultural highlights or have a guided tour, please let us know and we can extend your stay. For plant aficionados, it may be possible to visit a nearby orchid farm as well.

Overnight: Hotel Los Balcones or similar

Meals: Breakfast

Day 3: Cuenca - Buenaventura

This morning after breakfast, you will depart to the southwest to Buenaventura, a 2800-hectare reserve set aside to protect one of the most extensive patches of cloud forest in the Andean foothills of southwest Ecuador. Here, the humid Chocó forests of northwest Ecuador meet the dry Tumbesian forests characteristic of southwest Ecuador and northwest Peru, resulting in a unique and diverse assemblage of flora and fauna, many of which are endangered and locally endemic. We will arrive in the afternoon and have some time to enjoy the grounds and observe the birds coming to the feeders, or alternatively, go for a short walk on one of the trails.

Overnight: Umbrellabird Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Band-bellied Owl © Dominic Sherony



Day 4: Buenaventura

We'll enjoy a full day of guided birding in the Buenaventura Reserve. You may wish for an early start on the lodge trails to seek out the breeding lek of the spectacular Long-wattled Umbrellabird, as well as the peculiar and enigmatic Club-winged Manakin, which "sings" with its wings! A morning drive along the lodge road can also be quite productive. There are several scenic stops along the way, and the nearby Scientific Research Station is a great place to search for colourful dart frogs and other creatures of the forest floor. The tiny El Oro Parakeet – a species only discovered in 1980 – also has a stronghold here, and nest boxes have been erected to encourage this endangered species to flourish in the reserve. Back at the lodge, nectar and fruit feeders provide a perfect opportunity to photograph colourful hummingbirds and tanagers right from the patio.

Overnight: Umbrellabird Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Buenaventura – Jorupe Reserve

After breakfast, you will depart Buenaventura for the Jorupe Reserve in the heart of the Tumbesian Dry Forest. This ecoregion is dominated by deciduous tropical forest, arid scrub, and desert, with its own suite of characteristic fauna that occur nowhere else in Ecuador. Massive Ceiba trees with buttresses as tall as a fully-grown human dominate the forests here. Upon arrival in the afternoon, you will have some time to settle in and watch the feeders for a numbers of Tumbes specialties including White-edged Oriole, Pale-browed Tinamou, and the bird for which Urraca Lodge was named, the striking White-tailed Jay.

Overnight: Urraca Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 6: Jorupe Reserve

Today we'll spend the full day in the reserve on the lodge trails and in the surrounding area with a dedicated guide, watching for Elegant Crescentchest and Ecuadorian Trogons in the Ceiba forest, among many other regional endemics and species at the northern edge of their range here. The afternoon is a great time to watch for King Vultures soaring high over the reserve, and West Peruvian Screech-Owl and Spectacled Owl are frequently heard on the grounds in the evening.

Overnight: Urraca Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7: Jorupe Reserve - Tapichalaca Reserve

This morning we'll depart Jorupe for Tapichalaca Reserve in southeast Ecuador, which should take approximately 6 hours. This stunning reserve sits high on the east slope of the Andes at an elevation of 2500 m. It is known for being the best place in the world to see the Jocotoco Antpitta, as most of the global population resides here. In addition to supporting an impressive diversity of montane bird species, orchids, and endemic plants, it is also an important migration corridor for large mammals including the Andean Tapir and Spectacled Bear, though we would be very lucky to see either.

Overnight: Casa Simpson Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Tapichalaca Reserve

We will spend the full day in Tapichalaca seeking out higher elevation specialties such as the Masked Mountain Tanager, Coppery-chested Jacamar, and Bearded Guan, among the 300+ other species of bird that have been recorded here. There are trails of varying difficulty and length ranging from short 1.5 km walks to more difficult hikes up to the treeless páramo. Whichever your choice, this pristine reserve will not fail to impress with both scenery and birdlife!

Overnight: Casa Simpson Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Jocotoco Antpitta

**Day 9: Tapichalaca Reserve - Zamora**

This morning after breakfast we will depart for the Copalinga Reserve approximately 3 hours to the north. In contrast to many other areas of southern Ecuador which have been altered and later restored, much of Copalinga is intact primary forest and was formerly privately owned before it was reinstated as a reserve. Sharp relief, steep slopes, and gorges characterize the region, which is humid and considered subtropical temperate in climate. Several trails wind their way through the site, leading to scenic viewpoints, a waterfall, and other natural features. Garden flowers, fruiting trees, and feeders on the lodge grounds attract a variety of hummingbirds, toucans, tanagers, and other creatures seeking a sugary meal. The shy and chicken-like Gray Tinamou is one of the specialty species of the area, and one we hope to see during our stay, with some patience. With three evenings here, we can also listen for various nocturnal species such as Blackish Nightjar and Band-bellied Owl.

Overnight: Copalinga Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Days 10-11: Zamora

We will enjoy two full days of guided birding in Copalinga and the surrounding area. Many different habitats are within a short drive of the lodge, and the elevational gradient of over 700 m over a relatively small area means that many species may be observed across a short distance. Over 30 species of hummingbird alone have been documented in the reserve, including the rare Spangled Coquette, and the lodge and grounds are also home to many other signature Andean species such as the Red-headed Barbet, the Inca form of Green Jay, and Andean Cock-of-the-rock. We'll enjoy our last evening in the cloud forest before our departure tomorrow morning.

Overnight: Copalinga Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12: Zamora - Cuenca

After breakfast, we'll make our way back to Cuenca and have lunch en route, as the drive is approximately 5 hours. You may enjoy dinner at the hotel or alternatively dine at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel Los Balcones or similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 13: Fly Cuenca - Quito

Today you'll be transferred to the airport for your flight to Quito by private vehicle. Upon arrival in Quito, you can take the complimentary shared shuttle to your hotel. You can enjoy the rest of the day in Quito at leisure.

Overnight: Garden Hotel San José Aeropuerto (standard room) similar

Meals: Breakfast

Day 14: Depart Quito

Today you can take the hotel shuttle to the airport for your departure.

Meals: Breakfast

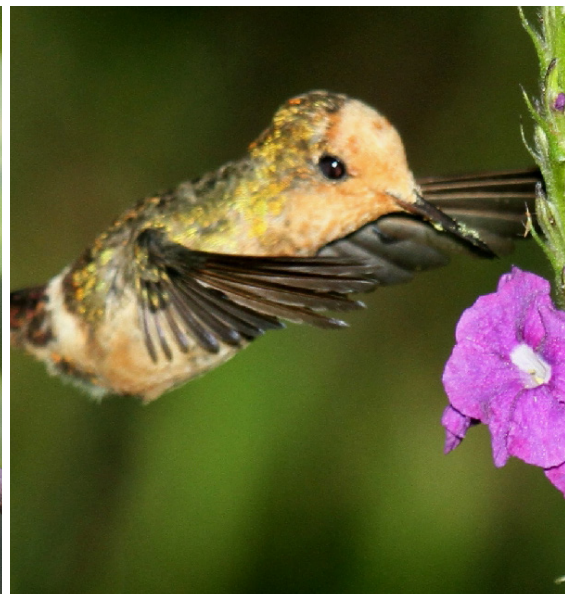
Note: The itinerary and accommodation described in these notes are provided as suggestions. Your Private Journey may be modified to reflect your interests, budget and time available. The approximate price is a guideline only.



Long-wattled Umbrellabird
© Francesco Veronesi



Golden Tanager



Spangled Coquette
© Tony Castro



Blackish Nightjar

TOUR DETAILS

Private Journey Cost (per person):

Minimum of 2 people: From approx. US\$5325

Minimum of 4 people: From approx. US\$4495

Minimum of 6 people: From approx. US\$3645

Minimum of 8 people: From approx. US\$3195

Single Supplement: The cost listed is based on a minimum of two people on the extension.

If you wish single accommodation or we cannot match you up with a roommate, a single supplement for this trip is approximately US\$395. This is payable at 90 days prior to departure.

What's Included:

- Accommodation in hotels listed or similar based on double occupancy
- Private ground transportation
- Meals as described in itinerary
- Services of a private bilingual expert Ecuadorean bird guide from Day 3 to Day 12 inclusive

Not Included:

- International airfare
- Domestic airfare (premium Quito-Cuenca return flight estimated at US\$380 per person)
- Extra meals and hotels in Quito (if required)
- Entrance fees for optional private reserve visits (i.e. Yungillas and Utuana, US\$15 per person each)
- Fuel surcharge, if applicable
- Gratuities
- Optional activities
- Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
- Phone calls and items of a personal nature
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation

Payment Details:

A deposit of US\$500 per person is required to reserve a space on this tour. A second non-refundable deposit of US\$1000 per person is required at six months prior to departure. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.



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WHAT TO EXPECT

Level of Activity: Moderate

While many of our sightings may be made within sight of our lodges or from our vehicles, you should be able to hike over uneven terrain for up to 3 hours in order to enjoy the full extent of bird life on adjoining trails. Elevations vary from a maximum of approximately 2560 metres at Cuenca down to about 400 metres. You should be prepared for the thinner highland air at some of the locales. The terrain in the damper sections of cloud forest can be muddy.

Accommodation

We will be staying in a number of comfortable lodges throughout. Standard accommodations have private washroom facilities. Some rustic cabins may be available with shared washrooms. While the accommodations we are at the various bird reserves may be simple, they are clean and provide us the opportunity to be in the right locations for the best bird viewing. In addition, our patronage directly supports the maintenance of these important reserves!

Transportation

We will be travelling in a comfortable air-conditioned vehicle driven by a professional driver. Vehicle size and configuration will depend on the size of your group.

Travel Documents

You will require a passport for your trip to Ecuador. Please make sure it is valid for six months after the date of your return home. A visa is not required for Canadian or US passport holders at this time.

Weather

Daytime temperature in most of Ecuador's highlands average around a comfortable 20°C, with night-time lows averaging around 10°C. A refreshing mist can sometimes hang in the air, especially in the cloud forest where it may be slightly warmer. The weather can be unpredictable, but generally rains commence after September. There may be a dry spell in the highlands from mid-November to the end of December after the initial rain. In any event, you should have a raincoat and rain pants in case of afternoon showers. A sweater, wind-resistant jacket and pair of gloves is recommended for evenings, mornings and the highest elevations.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Flights

Roundtrip international flights are not included in the cost of your Private Journey and must be arranged separately. Worldwide Quest would be pleased to arrange your flights. Please contact our office for suggested routing and a quote on airfare. If you are making your own flight arrangements, please verify your schedule with your consultant to ensure that your schedule fits the program prior to confirming your arrangements.

Cancellation Policy

All payments are non-refundable, however you may transfer your initial deposit for any land tour to another tour 90 days or more prior to your scheduled departure date. Initial deposits for cruises are non-refundable and non-transferable. Your second payment and your final payment are non-refundable and non-transferable. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. The tour price is quoted as a package. No partial refunds or credits will be given for services not used. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing.

Travel Insurance

Please note that all payments are non-refundable. We urge you to ensure that you have adequate cancellation and medical insurance in place, should an unexpected event cause you to cancel or interrupt your trip or should the tour not be operable per our terms and conditions. We will offer you Manulife insurance coverage. Should you decline this coverage, you must sign a waiver and provide details of your own medical coverage. Medical insurance including emergency medical evacuation coverage is mandatory on all our tours.

Terms and Conditions

For additional information about our terms and conditions, please refer to your booking form, the current brochure or our website. All participants booking with Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946).