

# Ecuador

## Andes to Amazon

### A Greentours Itinerary

#### Day 1 To Quito

After our arrival in Quito's capital we will be transferred to a Quito hotel for the night. If your flight arrives early then this day will be taken to acclimatize to the elevation in Quito.

#### Day 2 Yananacocha Reserve. Old Nino to Mindo Road.

After breakfast we will drive to Yanacocha Reserve Yanacocha is famous for its high-elevation specialties, and we will spend the morning birding the Trocha Inca Trail. Here we will see at least ten species of hummingbirds, and the mixed feeding flocks we will encounter will add many more tantalizing birds to the list! These include Barred Fruiteater, Great Sapphirewing, Golden-breasted and Sapphire-vented Pufflegs, Sword billed Hummingbirds, and much more. We will enjoy a picnic lunch while taking in the grandiose montane vista, after which we will begin the drive to Mindo via the Old Nono to Mindo Road, birding along the way. This road offers spectacular views of the forest and excellent birding, with the possibility of such sought-after birds such as Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. In the evening we will arrive at the well-known Septimo Paraiso Lodge in Mindo.

#### Days 3 & 4 Mindo: Cock-of-the-Rock Lek, Antpitta Reserve, Tandapaya Pass, Masphi Reserve and Oilbird Cave

Early morning on Day 3 we will head to Paz de las Antpittas Reserve to observe the Andean Cock of the Rocks at their lek, where males assemble during the mating season and engage in competitive displays that attract females. Afterwards we will join Angel (the owner of the reserve) as she draws her "charges" in for breakfast - Maria the Giant Antpitta, Willi the Yellow-breasted Antpitta, and Susan the Moustached Antpitta!

After the Antpittas reserve, we will drive to the Tandayapa Valley, where the Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve is located. Our target species will include Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Toucan Barbet, and one of the most rare and sought-after birds: the Tanager Finch. We will relax by the feeders and enjoy up to 20 species of hummingbirds, including Brown and Collared Incas, Violet-tailed Sylph, and Booted Rackettail.

This is superb butterfly country. The shimmering blue *Morpho cypris* flies back and forth along the paths. There's the mimic-white *Dismorphia crisia* and its weird

cousin the Clearwing Mimic-White *Dismorphia theucharila*. We'll see the plush-velvet *Corades enyo*, lovely green and black *Philaethria dido*, wide-white-banded *Oressinoma typhla*, delicate *Mechanitis menapis*, and the striking skipper *Vettius coryna*. There's many other species too such as *Memphis arginussa*, *Mesosemis loruhama*, *Oxeoschistus simplex*, *Taygetis celia*, *Taygetis lineata*, *Epiphile oreia*, *Siproeta epaphus* and the brilliant blue and orange daggerwing *Marpesia marcella*. We'll see both the owlet *Opsiphanes tamarindi* and the Bogota Owl *Opsiphanes bogotanus*.

During Day 4 we will visit the Masphi Reserve to look for Moss-backed Tanager, Black Solitaire, Indigo Flowerpiercer and Esmeraldas Antbird. There are some beautiful Tanagers here including Rufous-throated, Flame-faced and Golden. An hour's drive will see us at the Oilbird Caves where we'll have a good chance to see this enigmatic bird! In the afternoon we will drive to Quito.

## **Day 5**

### **Volcan Antisana & Guango**

We start at a high Andean site offering awesome views of 5800m+ Volcan Antisana. It is also the very best site in Ecuador for the declining Andean Condor, in addition to Ecuadorian Hillstars, Black-faced Ibis, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, and a good selection of high Andean waterfowl (e.g. Silvery Grebe). Here we will also get the chance to see the picturesque Chuquiragua flowers that attract the dazzling Ecuadorian Hillstar on the grasslands of the plateau, also feeding grounds for hundreds of Carunculated Caracaras. In the afternoon after a packed lunch in the shadow of the Antisana Volcano in the midst of this fascinating paramo habitat we will drive to the highland lodge of Guango Lodge close to the town of Papallacta. This quaint Andean lodge is one of the best hummingbird spots on the east side of the Andes. It is set within wet temperate forest and is located alongside the rushing Guango River that often plays host to Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers. The hummingbird feeders will be a big attraction for both birders and photographers in the group with more than ten species possible including the striking Collared Inca, outrageous Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, and White-bellied Woodstar.

## **Day 6**

### **Papallacta Paramo**

We will spend much of the day in the vastly different paramo of Papallacta: much wetter in nature with more diverse plant and birdlife to Antisana visited the day before. Flowers up at Papallacta attract other hummingbirds like Blue-mantled Thornbill. We will check the roads for Tawny Antpittas hopping along them in the early hours of the morning and check the horizon for volcanoes: Cotopaxi and Antisana providing a spectacular backdrop to our birding on clear days. Bar-winged and Stout-billed Cinclodes will hop on and off the road as we make our way to the highest point where on clear days we have a real chance of finding the odd, ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe among the cushion-moss that is dotted with attractive high Andean flowers. We will keep our eyes open among

the high Andean shrubbery for White-chinned Thistletails, Many-striped Canasteros and Paramo Ground-Tyrants, and also visit an area of polylepis woodland where we hope to find Black-backed Bush-Tanagers and Giant Conebills among these distinctive trees. As the sun warms this slightly surreal landscape we'll start to see the butterflies too. *Colias* species are typical – here we can see *Colias dimera*, *Colias dinora* and *Colias lesbia*, and we'll also enjoy *Zerene cesonia*, *Pyrameis myrinna*, *Hypanartia kefersteini*, the Painted-Lady-like *Junonia vestina* and striking *Corades ulema*.

In the afternoon after a full morning in the paramo we will take a drive downslope to our next accommodations the mountain cabins of San Isidro... After settling in to our comfortable new home for the next two nights we will enjoy one of the lodge's famous dinners, and take check around the lodge for their most famous resident: a boldly-marked "Mystery Owl" that is attracted to the abundant moths that come into the lights each night. No one is sure exactly what this striking owl is that appears like a cross between a Black-and-white and Black-banded Owl. No matter what it is, this bird comes in regularly around the cabins and along with the multitude of moths themselves will be an undoubted highlight of our time in the subtropical forest of the eastern Andes.

## **Day 7**

### **San Isidro**

We will have a whole day in the subtropical forest of San Isidro to enjoy the myriad of wildlife on offer. Early mornings are superb for birds and moths as the birds come out of the forest to feed around the lights that have brought in an abundance of moths overnight. The birds could include both resident species and (during the northern winter) boreal migrants from North America such as Blackburnian Warbler and Canada Warbler. Resident birds of interest could be the striking Masked Trogon, beautiful Inca Jay, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Russet-backed Oropendola, Black-eared Hemispingus and others. During much of the year it is also possible to observe one of the strangest modern practices in South American birding: the feeding of shy and secretive antpittas. After the early morning flurry has died down we will take a short walk into the forest nowhere White-bellied Antpittas come in to feed on worms laid down on the trail for them, allowing rare close-ups of this normally shy species. Our day in the subtropical cloudforests will also see us check in on the lodge feeders which regularly attract Bronzy Incas, Long-tailed Sylphs, Chestnut-breasted Coronets, and Collared Incas among others.

It is to be hoped that you catch *Fountainea nessus* sunning itself. This butterfly has the most incredible shimmering purple-pink-blue upperside to the forewing whilst hardly less stunning is the bronze-shaded clearwing *Godyris duillia*. Indeed San Isidro is rich in beautiful butterflies such as the 'Emperors' *Doxocopa cherubina* *Doxocopa cyane* and *Doxocopa Laurentia* all with shimmering blue(-green) uppersides. There's the 'Catone' *Catonephele chromis*, the fabulous orange and navy-blue striped 'Banner' *Epiphile dilecta* as well as the lovely 'Eighty-eight' *Diaethria eluina*. We'll see a range of 'Mapwings' including *Hypanartia dione*,

*Hypanartia kefersteini* and *Hypanartia lethe*, *Adelphas*, *Tegosias* and the intricately-marked leaf-mimic *Hypna Clytemnestra*.

## **Day 8**

### **Guacamayos Ridge**

A short drive up from San Isidro will take us to an old Incan trade route: a trail that traverses through the mossy forest of the Guacamayos Ridge, a famed Andean birding destination. Such scarcities occur along there including Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Slate-crowned Antpitta, Dusky Piha and even the very rare Greater Scythebill. Regular feeding flocks roam the area holding such thrillers as Grass-green Tanager and Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Green-and-black Fruiteater, as well as local specialties like Rufous-breasted Flycatcher. After a full morning within this scenic forest we continue to journey downslope to the new WildSumaco Lodge, nestled within the foothills of the Andes, and home to some of the rarest birds of the tour.

## **Days 9 & 10**

### **WildSumaco**

WildSumaco, a lodge within the foothills of the east slope of the Andes, has risen to prominence since its recent opening due to being close to rich forest that is home to many rare birds that are only regularly found here. This long list of rare birds includes Greytailed Piha, Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, and Yellow-throated Spadebill. Other possibilities include some other foothill specialties that include the colourful Coppery-chested Jacamar, Blue-browed Tanager, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, Crimson-bellied Woodpecker, Plain-breasted Antpitta, and Wing-banded Wren. The long list of specialties also includes a host of hummingbirds, many of which can be found at their sensational feeders (that can boast up to 17 species in an hour!). Some of these species are only represented at feeders at this one lodge, and therefore WildSumaco provides an unrivalled opportunity to catch up with them. This includes Ecuadorian Piedtail, Napo Sabrewing, and Rufous-vented 5 Whitetip. At night the birding does not stop either as the scarce Band-bellied Owl and Foothill Screech-Owls occur close to the lodge.

It is also rapidly gaining prominence as a place to see some of South America's most gorgeous butterflies, notably The fabulous *Perisama humboldtii* whose complex patterns of turquoise, red and gold are something to behold. Strikingly marked *Heliconius clysonymus* *Heliconius numata* and *Heliconius telesiphe* are all common. Swallowtails include *Parides anchises drucei* and the long-tailed *Protographium servile*. We'll see the Dartwhites *Catantopha sisamnis* and *Catantopha teutamis*, a range of *Actinotes*, and the Frosted Mimic-White *Lieinix nemesis*. Daggerwings include *Marpesia berania*, *Marpesia coresia*, *Marpesia hermione* *Marpesia livius*, *Marpesia marcella* and *Marpesia zerynthia*, and there is a nice variety of clearwings here including *Greta libethris* and *Greta umbrosa*, *Ithomia epona*, *Napeogenes flossina*, and several *Oleria* species.

## Days 11 - 13

### The Amazon - Sacha Lodge

After a final few hours in the eastern foothills of the Andes, we will drive down into the "oil town" of Coca that sits on the edge of the mighty Rio Napo, a large river that is a major tributary of the Amazon. After a lunch in town we will board large motorized canoes to travel the two-hour journey downriver to our first luxurious Amazon getaway: Sacha Lodge. Once we have docked at their small dock on the edge of the rainforest we will take short ten minute walk through the rainforest before reaching another small dock with awaiting narrow canoes that will take us across this blackwater lake to the lodge itself. This short boat ride may see us come across some classic Amazon birds as we go, like the prehistoric Hoatzin, (above), which can often be found right around the dock. We will arrive at Sacha Lodge in the late afternoon, settle in to our wooden cabins, take in our rainforest surroundings and get fitted with rubber/wellington boots for our time at Sacha. At night we can check around the cabins for our first night species, such as Tropical Screech-Owls or frogs such as South American Bullfrog or Polkadot Treefrog, (left) both of which can often be found along with multiple other frog, spider, and insect species on one of the lodge's organized night walks in the Amazon jungle.

Sacha Lodge has become a long-established favourite among visitors to the Ecuadorian Amazon: the screened cabins are very comfortable (with 24 hour electricity), the food is plentiful and tasty, and the birding around the lodge superb. Sacha also boasts a 300m long metal canopy walkway which gives great access to the rainforest canopy and the multitude of wildlife that exists within it. We will ensure we have at least one visit up there to see some of Sacha's most colourful and striking birds like Spangled and Plum-throated Cotingas, White-throated Toucan, Ivory-billed Aracari, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, and Opal-rumped and Opal-crowned Tanagers. The dawn up there will see us greeted by the unmistakable gruff calls of Red Howler Monkeys which regularly show themselves up there. Indeed our time in the Amazon offers some great opportunities to catch up with up to ten different monkey species; Pygmy Marmoset (below) and Common Squirrel Monkey (above) also occurring regularly in the Sacha area.

Some of the Amazon's finest butterflies occur around the lodge. The sheer complexity of *Baeotus japetus*'s marking have to be seen to be believed, yet even that is eclipsed by *Batesia hypochlora*, the Painted Beauty, an insect of the purest brilliance. Two of Sacha's most noticeable butterflies are *Morpho achilles* and *Morpho deidamia*, both flash brilliant blue as they bully past us on the lodge's trails. We'll see red and blue *Callicore zephanta* and the shining purple emperor *Doxocopa agathina*. Two lovely Kite Swallowtails *Protesilaus molops* and *Protesilaus telesilaus* gather in small groups mud-puddling by the waterside. There's delicate *Methona grandior* with its long partially translucent wings and we'll see the almost transparent Blushing Phantoms *Cithaerias menander*, *Cithaerias aurorina* and *Cithaerias merolina*, whose hindwings blush pinky-red. There's the Red-rim *Biblis hyperia* and the Red-rings *Pyrrhogyra amphira* and *Pyrrhogyra crameri*, and *Panacea prola* whose pretty blue uppers contrast with shocking red undersides! Gorgeous *Nessaea hewitsoni* has flashes of turquoise on its uppersides

and lime-green undersides... Other lovely butterflies we'll see include *Heliconius wallacei*, *Hypothyris euclea*, the 'Eighty-eight' *Diaethria clymena*, and ghostly *Leucidia brephos*.

Our position at Sacha Lodge will also be ideal for exploring the rich islands within the Napo River, which are home to a handful of important bird specialties that are confined to these ephemeral sandy islands. We will check these for Castelnau's Antshrike, Lesser Hornero, Oriole Blackbird, White-bellied Spinetail, Graybreasted Crane, and Orange-headed Tanager. At night we will have the option to take nightwalks for nightbirds and other wildlife (moths, frogs, spiders etc.), as Sacha has a long list of nocturnal birds near the lodge including Tawny-bellied Screech-owl, Crested Owl, Spectacled Owl, Black-banded Owl, Common and Great Potoo, some of which can be found by our expert local guides at daytime roosts.

We'll visit one of the major avian highlights in the Napo region: the Yasuni National Park clay lick, where hundreds of parrots come in daily to take in vital minerals provided at the clay lick. A purpose built hide will see us overlook a lick where the scarce Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet, Orange-cheeked Parrot, Blue-headed Parrot and perhaps even a few Scarlet Macaws may make star appearances. Forest-lined creeks will provide ample wildlife viewing opportunities, as birds abound, and also monkeys such as Monk Saki and White-fronted Capuchin, as well as the possibility of a Giant Otter making a star appearance. We'll likely meet some Amazonian waterbirds like Rufescent Tiger-Heron, the rare Zigzag Heron, the multicolored Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, and all five species of South American kingfisher, as well as other riparian species such as White-chinned Jacamar and Chestnut-capped Puffbird. The classic Amazon experience of meeting an antswarm can be one of the most thrilling birding experiences in the Amazon, when dozens of birds of up to half a dozen species come in to pick off insects fleeing the moving antswarm, and could include such species as White-plumed, Sooty, Lunulated, Hairy-crested and Scale-backed Antbirds. Blue-and-yellow Macaws, and a variety of colorful striking canopy birds like oropendolas, parrots, caciques, puffbirds, cotingas, woodpeckers and antwrens, among a host of others, are found here.

## **Day 14**

### **Napo River and by road to Quito**

We will bid farewell to our local Amazon guides and board our motorized canoe for the ride back to the town of Coca (checking for terns, Pied Lapwings and others en-route), where we'll start to journey back up to Quito. This road journey takes several hours but is through constantly changing environments and we'll stop often to enjoy new sightings along the route. Arriving early in the evening, you'll have some time to explore Quito, or go souvenir shopping locally to the hotel.

## **Day 15**

### **Departure Quito**

## **Day 16**

### **Arrive UK**

or...

## **Southern Ecuador Extension**

### **Day 15**

#### **Quito to Cajanuma**

After a morning flight to the southern city of Loja we will take a short drive outside the city into the Cajanuma sector of Podocarpus National Park (on the outskirts of the city). An open tracks leads through stunning cloudforest that is home to some striking birds like Barred and Green-and-Black Fruiteaters, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, and excellent feeding flocks that can host a variety of stunning tanagers and birds such as Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Black-capped Hemispingus and others. While flowering shrubs along this scenic track may hold glistening Glowing Pufflegs taking advantage of the nectar crop. In the afternoon we will continue journeying south by bus this time to the Tapichalaca reserve in Zamora-Chinchipe province. This temperate cloudforest reserve is the only stronghold for the recently described Jocotoco Antpitta, and plays host to a whole bunch of other species besides. Our afternoon arrival will give us time to check out their busy feeders before the sun comes down, that often attracts Flame-throated and Amethyst-throated Sunangels (previous page) among many others. As the afternoon comes to a close we will keep an eye out for Golden-plumed Parakeets coming in to roost behind the lodge and check for Swallow-tailed Nightjars feeding around the lodge entrance at dusk.

### **Day 16 & 17 (am)**

#### **Tapichalaca**

Tapichalaca reserve was created after the 1997 discovery of the rare Jocotoco Antpitta, (below) which had been unknown to science until then. To this day it remains a very rare and hard to find bird (in spite of extensive surveys in suitable habitat in southern Ecuador and Peru), and Tapichalaca is the only reliable place to see it. Indeed, these days it has become one of the easiest antpittas to find in Ecuador as a pair of these scarce antpittas has become habituated and come in to feed on worms daily. We will start our day with a walk up to the feeding area, where several of these striking antpittas will bounce around at our feet, making for great photo opportunities of what it is a truly rare species. The forested trail may also yield such other thrillers and local specialties such as Bearded Guan, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Orange-banded Flycatcher, and Black-throated Tody-Flycatcher. After a morning in the forest we will head back to lodge for lunch checking any roadside flowers for the local Rufous-capped Thornbill. In the afternoon we will have the option of returning into the rich mossy forest at Tapichalaca, or taking a short drive downslope to beyond the town of Valladolid

where forest patches are home to local birds like Marañon Thrush and some foothill species like Black-faced Tanager and Yellow-cheeked Becard.

## **Day 17 (pm) – 19**

### **Podocarpus National Park & Copalinga Lodge**

After a final morning in the temperate zone around Tapichalaca we will drive down to the wonderful tanager-themed lodge of Copalinga in the eastern foothills. This fantastic lodge has become a firm favourite among guides and visitors on southern Ecuador tours by virtue of its wonderful setting (on the edge of some rich forest), fine food, and amazing hosts. After reaching the lodge in the afternoon we will focus on picking up some of the regular hummingbirds around the garden that may include Spangled Coquette, Violet-headed Hummingbird, and Wire-crested Thorntail before the sun goes down. After dark if needed we can check for Blackish Nightjars along the road near the lodge.

We will explore the wide open track through the beautiful forests of the Rio Bombuscaro sector of Podocarpus National Park. The park holds many local foothill bird species, from Foothill Antwren, Blackstreaked Puffbird, Foothill Elaenia, Orange-crested Flycatcher, and Ecuadorian Tyrannulet among many others. This area is rich in tanagers especially (hence the tanager theme to the lodge at Copalinga) and it is possible to rack up as many as 20 species in this area, which may include Paradise, Golden-eared, Orange-eared, Yellow-bellied, Spotted and Flame-crested Tanagers. After much of the day in the park (with a well-prepared delicious packed lunch from Copalinga to picnic with in the park) we will return to the lodge for some light afternoon birding in this area and to wind down after our forest walk that will abound with birds and interesting plantlife.

*Telenassa jana Doxocopa cherubina Doxocopa cyane Heliconius sara thamar Pedaliodes pelinna*

## **Day 20**

### **Old Loja-Zamora Road & Cuenca**

This narrow road leads through patches of foothill forest up into subtropical forest and is close to Copalinga. After another fine breakfast at the lodge we will pack up and head to this road en-route to the city of Cuenca. The open forest patches and rise provided by the road provides great views of the forest canopy that may offer up yet more birds such as the scarce Vermilion and Bluebrowed Tanagers, Copper-chested Jacamar, (above) White-browed Antbird, Olivaceous Greenlet, or even the endemic White-breasted Parakeet, along with wonderful views of the surrounding landscape. We will also get further chances at Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper (previous page) from the river that cuts through this scenic valley. After another morning in the foothills and a picnic lunch on site we will board our bus and spend the afternoon traveling to the colonial city of Cuenca.



## **Day 21**

### **El Cajas National Park & Quito**

Once again we will take a foray into the high Andean paramo, although the nature of these southern paramos is different from those in the north and will offer some different birds among others. We will start our day around a scenic lake in one of the lower sections of the park, where Grass Wrens will sing from the reedbeds, and Andean Ruddy Ducks and Andean Teals float on the water. A little higher up we will specifically search for the endemic Violetthroated Metaltail among the high Andean shrubbery, before climbing higher into open paramo grasslands interspersed with distinctive groves of red-barked polylepis trees. The open paramo might yield such rarities as Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant, while the patches of polylepis may produce Tit-like Dacnis and Giant Conebill, in addition to the odd Mouse-colored Thistletail. Butterflies might include *Dione glycera*, *Altopedaliodes tena* and *Pedaliodes Phaedra*.

After a fine morning in one of the most scenic parks in Ecuador we will return to the city of Cuenca and take a short flight back to Ecuador's capital Quito for one final night before departure

## **Day 22**

### **Depart Quito**

## **Day 23**

### **Arrive UK**

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