SOUTHERN ECUADOR

Hummingbird & Tanager Extravaganza

August 15 - 26, 2027



Amethyst-throated Sunangel © John Sevenair

Ecuador has long been regarded as the planet's hummingbird and tanager epicenter, and on this exciting sequel to our Northern Ecuador Extravaganza, we'll experience many of southern Ecuador's prime habitats and ecosystems while in pursuit of these spectacular living gems that exemplify the glory of the Neotropics. This trip has been designed specifically for birding enthusiasts and photographers, along with anyone sporting a whim for the joys of Neotropical birding and a special focus on color and glitter! Of the nearly 200 species of hummingbirds and tanagers found in this region (including their allies), we hope to enjoy well over half of them, including many of the same actors present on our "Northern" tour, along with a whole new cast of superstars!

In the high temperate and páramo-zone elevations of El Cajas National Park, we'll search for mixed foraging flocks and their attendant tanagers and scan flowering trees and shrubs for an array of hummingbirds with names as angelic as their appearances, including Green-tailed Trainbearer, Shining

Sunbeam, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Purple-throated Sunangel, and Viridian Metaltail. We will focus especially on locating the Violet-throated Metaltail, one of South America's most range-restricted hummers. Tanagers could include Hooded and Scarlet-bellied mountain-tanagers, Grass-green and Blue-and-black tanagers, Tit-like Dacnis, and Giant Conebill. A number of other specialties might show up as well, among them, Bearded Guan, Andean Condor, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, and Giant Conebill to name just a few.



Violet-throated Metaltail at El Cajas National Park © Pam Higginbotham

In the Amazonian foothills – a region of exceptional diversity – at the lovely Copalinga Lodge, the many possibilities can be overwhelming. With a list far too extensive to present here, consider this tiny sample: Orange-eared, Green-and-gold, Yellow-bellied, Turquoise, Blue-necked, Paradise, Golden-eared, Golden, Spotted, and Saffron-crowned tanagers; Golden-collared Honeycreeper along with Green and Gray-chinned hermits; Buff-tailed and White-tipped sicklebills; Violet-headed Hummingbird; Wire-crested Thorntail; Spangled Coquette; Peruvian Racket-tail; Black-eared Fairy; Violet-fronted and Black-throated brilliants; Glittering-throated Emerald; and Golden-tailed Sapphire.

We could even be distracted by a parade of parakeets, jacamars, umbrellabirds, cocks-of-the-rock, manakins, and more.

At the Jocotoco Foundation's Tapichalaca Reserve, the nectar feeders and temperate-zone vegetation should be alive with birds. Some of the new hummingbirds we'll seek include Andean Emerald, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Collared Inca, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Amethyst-throated and Flame-throated sunangels, Glowing Puffleg, Tyrian Metaltail, and Rainbow-bearded and Rufous-capped thornbills. Tanagers could include Red-hooded and Grass-green, along with Hooded & Lacrimose mountain-tanager. This area is also home to many other specialties—including the recently discovered Jocotoco Antpitta—and we will offer an optional walk in hopes of locating some key species. We will also venture to lower elevations not far from the reserve where we may run into some upper Amazonian and Marañón valley species; Silver-backed, Straw-backed, and Buff-bellied tanagers are possibilities.



Male Emerald-bellied Woodnymph © Rob Gill

At the Jocotoco Foundation-owned Buenaventura Reserve, the nectar feeders and flowers at Umbrellabird Lodge teem with a diversity of hummingbird species that include such beauties as Band-tailed Barbthroat, Stripe-throated and White-whiskered hermits, Green Thorntail, Emerald-bellied Woodnymph, Violet-bellied Hummingbird, White-vented Plumeleteer, Velvet-purple Coronet, Gorgeted Sunangel, Violet-tailed Sylph, and Purple-crowned Fairy. We will also keep our "eyes peeled" for Gray-backed Hawk; El Oro and Red-masked parakeets; Bronze-winged Parrot; Crimson-rumped Toucanet; Pale-mandibled Araçari; Long-wattled Umbrellabird; Club-winged Manakin; Fawn-breasted, Rufous-throated, Silver-throated, Bay-headed & Blue-necked tanagers; and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager.

This tour has been designed to show you a wide array of birds, with a particular focus on hummingbirds and tanagers, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding the neotropics, we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing

and more active. Most days we will be up early, and some days we will be afield all day; especially due to some fairly long road-trips between sites. Overall, our travel and birding will be varied, including some walking and optional hiking on forest trails and along roadside habitats, from the tropical lowlands and foothills to higher elevations in temperate elfin forests and tundra-like páramo. We can expect heat and humidity at lower elevations, while some rain and fog are also possible, especially along the Andean slopes (which, of course, is why these forests are so incomparably lush) and cold weather is the norm in the thin air of the highlands. Accommodations are generally comfortable and more than adequate (the best in the region), but they are of necessity often relatively simple. This trip has been planned to show you some of the best of Ecuador, but may be too strenuous for those not in good health or not wishing to spend a good portion of their time in the field.

Our mini-disclaimer: This trip is slated as a focus on hummingbirds and tanagers, which it is, but because Ecuador is one of the richest 'bird-countries' on Earth, it is ultimately inevitable that some non-hummingbirds will inadvertently slip into view at times. Neither VENT nor your trip leaders can be held responsible for these annoying interruptions from a possible raptor, guan, parrot, quetzal, trogon, motmot, puffbird, jacamar, barbet, toucan, woodpecker, furnariid, antbird, cotinga, manakin, jay or other feathered creatures.

August 15, Day 1: Arrival to Ecuador's Capital City (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Quito

Participants should plan on arriving at Quito's *Mariscal Sucre International Airport* (airport code UIO) today. Most flights are scheduled to arrive in the evening. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred a short distance to our hotel, which is located east of the city in the InterAndean valley. Due to the late hour of some arriving flights, dinner is not included tonight. Please note that we will depart from the hotel fairly early on Day 2. You may wish to arrive a day or two early to spend time familiarizing yourself with the Capital City and avoid complications in the event of flight delays. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with early arrival hotel and airport transfer arrangements.

NIGHT: San José de Puembo, Puembo

August 16, Day 2: Morning Departure from Quito; Flight to the Andean City of Cuenca; Morning Birding at El Cajas National Park, at Laguna de Llaviucu; Transfer over to our Hotel, Dos Chorreras, and Afternoon Birding in the Páramo Zone at El Cajas

Today, after an early breakfast, we initiate our journey with a short transfer over to Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport for a 40-minute flight to the charming Andean city and Ecuador's cultural capital, Cuenca; its colonial center was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. After meeting up at Cuenca's airport with our ground agent and driver, Juan Veintimilla, we will head directly to the lower sector of El Cajas National Park, to the Laguna de Llaviucu. Located in the upper temperate zone, just above the city, we will explore a high-elevation forest edge, a trail through *Polylepis* woodland, and check out the lake and shoreline for White-cheeked & Yellow-billed pintails, Andean Teal, Andean Duck, Andean Guan, White-collared Swift, Purple-throated Sunangel, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Sapphire-vented Puffleg, White-bellied Woodstar, Collared Inca, Shining Sunbeam Ecuadorian Rail, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Gull, Variable Hawk, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Masked Trogon, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Tawny Antpitta, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Pearled Treerunner, and among the possible high-Andean tanagers, we'll look for the beautiful Grass-green, Golden-crowned & Blue-and-black, along with Hooded & Scarlet-bellied mountain-tanagers and a number of smaller highland species that are plentiful here. With some luck, we may see the stunning Purple-backed Thornbill (the shortest-billed hummingbird of all!). We will then head a short distance to our lovely hotel—Dos Chorreras where, after settling into our rooms and enjoying a wonderful lunch with a little R&R included, we'll head out again upslope to the National Park's páramo zone. On our way, we will want to try for the endemic and range restricted Violet-throated Metaltail, while surveying some shrubby second growth, scrub and humid temperate woodland and forest edge from just about timberline to *Polylepis* woodland and páramo shrub and grassland. There are no nectar or fruit feeding stations in this area—but fear-not, we will be duly spoiled by them a bit later on—but we will check out flowering shrubs and trees here in hopes of spotting several specialties. Surprisingly, or not so, there are quite a few pretty fantastic species to be found here, and we will work at spotting several of them: Sparkling Violetear; Mountain Velvetbreast;

Black-tailed & Green-tailed trainbearers; Tyrian Metaltail; Collared Inca; Buff-winged Starfrontlet; the relatively huge (for a hummingbird!) Great Sapphirewing; Red-crested Cotinga; Tufted Tit-Tyrant; White-crested Elaenia; Streak-throated & Smoky bush-tyrants; and perhaps a Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager. As we climb a bit more in elevation into the páramo zone, we will look for the enigmatic Ecuadorian Hillstar at its favored food-source—the *Chuquiragua* shrub—and (the tiny-billed) Blue-mantled Thornbill (which often feeds on the ground!) along with the rare and local tanager-ally—Tit-like Dacnis. Additional high elevation and páramo species we will be looking for include: Andean Lapwing; Andean Condor (possible); Carunculated Caracara; Páramo Tapaculo; Chestnut-winged & Stout-billed cinclodes; Andean Tit-Spinetail; Many-striped Canastero; Mouse-colored Thistletail; Plain-capped (Páramo) Ground-Tyrant; Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant; Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant; Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant; Brown-bellied Swallow; Grass Wren; Giant Conebill; Glossy Flowerpiercer; Plumbeous Sierra-Finch; and Plain-colored Seedeater. This should turn out to be a really fun-packed day, and happily, we will spend the night close-by.

NIGHT: Dos Chorreras, El Cajas National Park



Hooded Mountain-Tanager © Paul J. Greenfield

August 17, Day 3: Pre-breakfast Birding around Dos Chorreras; Drive South to the Andean City of Loja and Then Descend Eastward to the Andean Foothills at Zamora

After some optional early morning birding and a hearty breakfast, we will pack up and initiate our drive southward through the highlands towards the city of Loja and then due east as we descend the

eastern Andean slope to the quaint town of Zamora, nestled in the humid foothills of the western Amazon Basin. We will make a few key stops along the way in a variety of habitats. We will look for Giant Hummingbird as we travel through the arid Oña Valley, and stop briefly at a high temperate-zone area of patchy elfin forest along the Acanama sideroad, along with other potential stops as time permits, before we reach our 'new' lodge by mid-to-late afternoon. We will then settle into our rooms with time to check out this site's impressive nectar and fruit feeders along with some productive *Verbena* shrubs. A sample of today's species possibilities could include: Torrent Duck; Bearded Guan; Long-tailed Sylph; Rufous-capped Thornbill; Emerald-bellied Puffleg; Plain-breasted (Sharp-shinned) Hawk; Mountain Caracara; Red-faced Parrot; Speckle-faced (White-capped) Parrot; Scaly-naped Amazon; Crescent-faced Antpitta (rare); Pacific Hornero; Line-cheeked Spinetail; Cinnamon Flycatcher & Cliff flycatchers; Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet; Sierran Elaenia; Fulvous-faced Scrub-Tyrant; Rufous Wren; White-capped Dipper; Chiguanco Thrush; and Black-headed Hemispingus; among quite a few additional possibilities.

NIGHT: Copalinga Lodge, Zamora

August 18-19, Days 4-5: Two Days at Copalinga Lodge and the Bombuscaro Entrance Area of Podocarpus National Park

This pleasant lodge is set within the mega-rich Amazonian foothills and is home to a spectacular variety of birds, including, of course, a nice selection of hummingbirds and tanagers! We will spend much of our days enjoying the feeding station set up just outside the open-air dining terrace, which will surely be entertaining; we'll visit a blind where Gray Tinamou often shows; we will bird the Bombuscaro entrance area of Podocarpus National Park, located just a short distance up the quite birdy road; and check out flowering trees and shrubs in the area, including *Heliconia,* for the chance of finding White-tipped and maybe even Buff-tailed sicklebills. Other hummingbird species we will be aiming for include Pale-tailed Barbthroat; Green, Great-billed & Gray-chinned hermits; Green-fronted Lancebill; Wire-crested Thorntail; Spangled Coquette; Brown & Lesser violetears; Fawn-breasted, Violet-fronted & Black-throated brilliants; Golden-tailed Sapphire; Many-spotted Hummingbird; Glittering-throated Emerald; Fork-tailed Woodnymph; Black-eared Fairy; Blue-tailed Emerald; Violet-headed Hummingbird; and, with luck, Peruvian (Booted) Racket-tail; Equatorial Piedtail; and Napo

Sabrewing. This is a particularly rich region for some spectacular tanagers and we'll be eying plantain feeders and forest edge for Magpie, Silver-beaked, White-shouldered, Guira, Paradise, Golden-eared, Orange-eared, Bay-headed, Green-and-gold, Spotted & Blue-necked tanagers among the many possibilities. Alas, our eyes may get diverted to many other amazing birds—think Gray Tinamou; Speckled Chachalaca; Gray-fronted Dove; Blackish & Lyre-tailed nightjars; Fasciated Tiger-Heron; White Hawk; Band-bellied Owl; Andean Motmot; Lanceolated Monklet; Black-streaked Puffbird; Coppery-chested Jacamar; White-breasted Parakeet, Military Macaw; Lined, Plain & Russet antshrikes; Stripe-chested, Slaty, Yellow-breasted & Rufous-winged antwrens; Foothill Stipplethroat; Black & White-browed antbirds; Chestnut-crowned Gnateater; Olivaceous Woodcreeper; Several foliage-gleaners; Streaked, Slender-billed & Amazonian Plain-Xenops; Amazonian Umbrellabird, and Andean Cock-of-the-rock, along with several manakins (i.e., Green, Blue-rumped, Striolated, White-crowned & Golden-headed), and the list goes on… and we'll surely see a lot!

NIGHTS: Copalinga Lodge, Zamora



Golden-eared Tanager © Paul J. Greenfield

August 20, Day 6: Morning at Copalinga; Then Drive Back to the Andean Highlands, with a Lunch/Birding Break at Cajanuma Entrance Area of Podocarpus National Park; and then South to Tapichalaca Reserve

After some morning hummingbirds, tanagers and whatever else shows up, we will pack up and head off to partially retrace our steps back upslope to the highland city of Loja and then turn due south (yes, farther south!) to the Jocotoco Foundation's Tapichalaca Reserve, with a few stops *en route* to take in the ever-changing scenery, allow us to stretch our legs, and maybe spot more hummers and tanagers. Our first stop will entail a detour upon leaving the town of Zamora, along the narrow Las Fragancias Road, where we will bird for an hour or two searching for mixed-species foraging flocks that can be very productive here. Aside from perhaps encountering species we may have already seen, or missed, around Copalinga Lodge, we will surely come up with additions to our growing trip-list; a few possibilities could include: Black-and-chestnut Eagle; Andean Motmot; Red-headed Barbet; Chestnut-tipped Toucanet; Montane Foliage-gleaner; Equatorial Graytail; Ash-browed Spinetail; Scarlet-breasted fruiteater; Yellow-cheeked Becard; Golden-faced, Red-billed & Ecuadorian tyrannulets; Foothill Elaenia; Spectacled Bristle-Tyrant; Lemon-browed Flycatcher; Olivaceous Greenlet; Gray-mantled Wren; Blue-naped Chorophonia; Short-billed (Yellow-whiskered) Chlorospingus; Magpie Tanager; Black-faced Dacnis; and Chestnut-vented Conebill, to name some. We will then return to the main road and continue our ascent to the city of Loja, and detour again upslope along the entrance road to the Cajanuma (Podocarpus National Park) Station, where we will break for a packed lunch and a little birding before moving on. Depending on timing and opportunities, we may make a few birding stops as we pass through a variety of distinctive habitats, towns and villages, and some forests as we reach our lodge, Casa Simpson, in the mid- to late afternoon, in time to enjoy some hummingbird feeder action.

NIGHT: Casa Simpson, Tapichalaca Reserve



Black-throated Brilliant © Paul J. Greenfield

August 21, Day 7: All-day at Tapichalaca Reserve

Today, we will enjoy the nectar feeders set up around our lodge, and additionally, we will offer an optional hike along a mountain trail to the famous Jocotoco Antpitta feeding station; this special antpitta (aren't they all?) was discovered not too many years ago, generating much excitement in ornithological circles and in the birding world in general. This walk will provide the opportunity to see a variety of high-Andean bird species as we come across mixed-species foraging flocks and listen for a number of understory skulkers. Back at the feeders, we will look forward to several high-elevation hummingbirds—possibly including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Speckled Hummingbird, Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing, Collared Inca, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Amethyst-throated & Flame-throated (Little) sunangels, Rufous-capped Thornbill, and Long-tailed Sylph—and around the lodge, we will watch for more foraging flocks and a variety of temperate-zone tanagers—Blue-and black; Red-hooded & Golden-crowned tanagers; Scarlet-bellied, Lacrimose & Hooded mountain-tanagers. In the afternoon, we will head to lower elevations around the villages of Valladolid and Palanda, an area that harbors *many* upper Amazonian and Marañón valley species of interest, which could include Silver-backed, Straw-backed & Buff-bellied tanagers.

NIGHT: Casa Simpson, Tapichalaca Reserve



Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager © Paul J. Greenfield

August 22, Day 8: Drive Northward to Buenaventura Lodge

This morning we will depart from Tapichalaca Reserve after breakfast and drive northwestward to the Buenaventura Reserve, which is set in a remnant stretch of rich humid foothill cloud-forest not far from the quaint town of Piñas in the El Oro Province. We will make a birding stop above the more arid Catamayo Valley to search for some Tumbesian ecoregional endemic species, which could include: Andean Tinamou; Lesser Nighthawk; Scrub Nightjar; Purple-collared & Short-tailed woodstars; Amazilia Hummingbird; Peruvian Pygmy-Owl; Burrowing Owl; Cordilleran Parakeet (rare); Collared Antshrike; Elegant Crescentchest; Pacific Hornero; Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Fulvous-faced Scrub-Tyrant; Tumbes Pewee; Rufous-browed Peppershrike; White-tailed Jay; Fasciated Wren; Long-tailed Mockingbird; Tumbes Sparrow; Scrub Blackbird; Ash-breasted & Band-tailed sierra-finches; Saffron Finch; and Drab Seedeater. Habitat becomes more humid as we work our way down the west Andean slope; Buenaventura is an area of high endemism with an impressive number of unique species, many tied to the world's richest Chocó endemic bioregion, or the Tumbesian endemic bioregion. *En route* we may make a few roadside stops before reaching the upper section of the reserve, where we will check out some active nectar feeders before working our way to Umbrellabird Lodge in time to do some exciting birding and check out the incredibly active nectar feeders—there is a whole lot to see here!

NIGHT: Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura Reserve

August 23-24, Days 9-10: Two Days at Buenaventura Lodge



Female Emerald-bellied Woodnymph © Rob Gill

We will enjoy two full days at this incredibly birdy reserve. Among the possible hummingbirds are White-whiskered, Baron's & Stripe-throated hermits; White-tipped Sicklebill; White-necked Jacobin; Brown Violetear; Green Thorntail; Emerald-bellied Woodnymph; Violet-bellied Hummingbird; Rufous-tailed Hummingbird; Amazilia Hummingbird; Andean Emerald; Ecuadorian (White-vented) Plumeleteer; Purple-bibbed Whitetip; Green-crowned Brilliant; Fawn-breasted Brilliant; Brown Inca; Velvet-purple Coronet; Violet-tailed Sylph; White-throated Daggerbill; Purple-crowned Fairy; and Long-billed Starthroat. Tanagers can also be numerous here, and we will watch for Fawn-breasted, Guira, Rufous-throated, Golden, Silver-throated, Flame-faced, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, Blue-necked, Speckled, Bay-headed, & Swallow tanagers; Blue & Yellow-tufted dacnises; Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager; and so on! We will also offer optional walks in hopes of locating an impressive number of specialties including Gray-backed Hawk, Rufous-headed Chachalaca, the endemic El Oro Parakeet, Bronze-winged Parrot, Red-masked & Gray-cheeked parakeets, Chocó & Chestnut-mandibled toucans, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Club-winged Manakin and a plethora of flycatchers, antbirds, furnariids, wrens and more.

NIGHT: Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura Reserve

August 25, Day 11: Morning at Buenaventura Lodge; Drive to Puerto Jelí; Transfer to Guayaquil's Joaquim de Olmedo International Airport for Return Flight to Quito

We will have a final morning to enjoy the hummingbirds, tanagers and other forest denizens in this wonderful reserve. After lunch we will pack up and drive downslope to visit coastal mangroves, shrimp ponds and wetlands at Puerto Jelí where we will be on the lookout for: Black-bellied & Fulvous

whistling-ducks, possible Muscovy & Comb ducks; Southern Pochard (rare); Cinnamon Teal; White-cheeked Pintail; least & Pied-billed grebes; Pale-vented Pigeons; Ecuadorian & Croaking ground-doves; Groove-billed & (Possible) Greater anis; Tumbes (Short-tailed) Swift; Amazilia Hummingbird; Common & Purple gallinules; Limpkin; Black-necked Stilt; American oystercatcher; various plovers and sandpipers; Wattled Jacana; Gray-hooded Gull; Wood Stork; Magnificent Frigatebird; Anhinga; Neotropic Cormorant; Brown Pelican; Cocoi and other herons; Pearl Kite; Snail Kite; Common Black-Hawk; Peruvian Pygmy-Owl; Ringed & Green kingfishers; Pacific & (possibly) Gray-cheeked parakeets; along with several tyrant flycatchers. We will then drive north to the city of Guayaquil's Joaquim de Olmedo International Airport in time for our early evening return flight to Quito's Mariscal Sucre International Airport, and transfer to our hotel for our final checklist session and farewell dinner after settling in. Some participants may choose to take advantage of a late-night depart for home tonight.

NIGHT: San José de Puembo, Puembo

August 26, Day 12: Departure Day

Transfers will be provided to Quito's *Mariscal Sucre International Airport* in time for all departures.

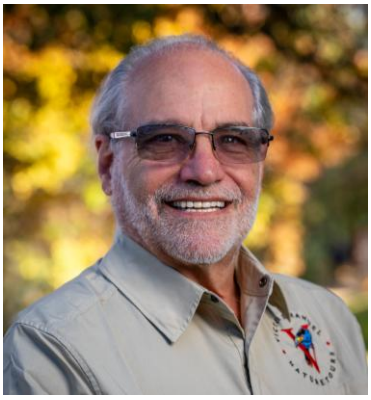


Female Long-wattled Umbrellabird © Paul J. Greenfield

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour is led by Paul Greenfield & Remigio Grefa.



Paul Greenfield grew up near New York City and became interested in birds as a child. He received his B.F.A. from Temple University where he was an art major at the Tyler School of Art. Since 1972, he has lived in Ecuador where his fascination for birds and art has culminated with the completion of 20 years of work illustrating *The Birds of Ecuador*, which he co-authored with Robert Ridgely. He is also co-author of *Birds of Western Ecuador, a Photographic Guide* (Princeton University Press) and is presently working with Bob Ridgely on an App for *The Birds of Ecuador*, which hopefully will be available in 2018. Paul is very involved in saving Ecuador's avian diversity and important habitats through his involvement with various foundations, as well as working with local government and communities to encourage their involvement in the protection of "their" biodiversity and the promotion of birding tourism in Ecuador. He has been showing visitors the birds of this fascinating country for over four decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. He and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.



Remigio (Remi) Grefa was born and raised along the shores of the Napo River in the tiny indigenous Kichwa community of Añangu, in the upper Amazon Basin of Ecuador. As a child of the rainforest, he developed a close tie with the rich biodiversity of the Amazonian jungle and became especially interested in birds as a young boy when he noticed foreign visiting birdwatchers arriving at a nearby nature lodge. It was then that he promised himself that when he grew up he would learn the names of the local birds, in English. . . and he eventually did! Throughout his formative years, his community had embarked on a groundbreaking nature tourism project of their own—the building and co-management (and eventually outright ownership) of the fabulous Napo Wildlife Center—and by the time Remi graduated from high school he was ready to join the ranks of this incredible endeavor. He

began working at the lodge from the ground up (odd jobs, dishwasher, laundry brigade, etc.); after a few months he was promoted to waiting tables, and after six months he became one of the lodge's bartenders for a year-and-a-half. He then graduated to boatman, where he was the second canoe paddler for many, many birding groups, which gave him the perfect opportunity to receive hands-on apprenticeship in birding, as well as English. In 2009, he took a job as a waiter on the *Manatee Amazon Explorer*, a houseboat style vessel that cruises the country's Napo and Aguarico rivers. He was eventually promoted again as an official birding and naturalist guide at Napo Wildlife Center by 2017 and continues to fill that role exceptionally to this day. Remi and his wife, Lola, along with their two daughters, Kayana and Wita, live in the parish of Dayuma, not far from the frontier town of Puerto Francisco de Orellana (more commonly known as "Coca").

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **$6,025** per person based on double occupancy or **$6,815** for a person requiring single accomodations. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT website or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is **$1,000** per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (April 18, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, $5 to $10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) $15 to $20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)

- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT: If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A "***Force Majeure***" event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of $50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. **For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour**. This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist** plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please refer to the TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION section for additional information.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive **Ripcord** plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit**.** With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel

insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.* For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: **Ripcord Travel Insurance;** or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The "pay as you go" approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to "pay as you go," you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

About Medjet's MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions. For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: Medjet.com/VentBird or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: $50 domestic; $75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Ecuador is required.

VISAs: Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to this destination. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

IMPORTANT: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of October 23, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Dress is casual or informal throughout. Lightweight field clothing is the norm for most areas visited. Clothing that you can wash yourself and which dries quickly is preferred. Please wear darker colors, not whites, and avoid striking patterns that frighten the birds. At higher elevations the temperatures can be as low as the 40s on occasion (especially in the morning) and you should be prepared to layer for warmth. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on both slopes. We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing (see the Insect Repellent Section for more details).

- **Dark Field Pants:** suggested for forest birding.
- **Dark Long-sleeved shirts:** lightweight, that dry quickly (long sleeves are not essential but offer additional protection from sun and biting insects)
- **Hat and sunscreen:** for sun protection
- **Warm sweater or Jacket and/or thermal underwear**: for extra warmth at higher elevations
- **Rain jacket, poncho or umbrella**
- **Gloves and a warm hat:** if you chill easily
- **FOOTWEAR:** Good footwear is essential. Your footgear for the field should at the very least be rated “water resistant,” as in areas with damp climate, even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

- **Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots:** strongly suggested
- **Lightweight sneakers, loafers or sandals**: useful for wearing around our different lodges

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well prepared.

A belt pack or day pack: for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: During the tour we will experience the dry or 'local summer' season in the southwestern lowlands with, at most, some mist in certain areas. On the more humid western Andean slope, especially at Buenaventura, we may experience some fog and perhaps a little rain. The east slope will present wetter conditions, with rain being present mostly in short intervals and often at night. Highland regions throughout more humid areas in the Andes (e.g., Tapichalaca Reserve) may present rain. The coastal lowlands will be cooler in the mornings (low 70s) and will warm up quickly by mid-morning, possibly reaching the 90s by midday. In the foothills, temperatures will range mostly in the upper 70s by day and upper 50s at night. However, at higher elevations (especially at El Cajas National Park) the temperatures can fall to as low as the 40s on occasion, and you should be prepared to layer for warmth.

CONDITIONS: We will be spending much time leisurely studying hummingbirds at nectar feeders and nearby flowering shrubs and trees, but optional walks will be offered on most days, mostly along forest trails and along gravel roads

CURRENCY & SPENDING: The U.S. dollar is the currency in Ecuador. Cash is needed only for your personal expenses, such as bar bills, laundry, and souvenirs. It is strongly advised that most of your

money be in U.S. Dollars. ATMs are available in many locations. MasterCard and Visa are generally accepted at larger businesses.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts AC, the same as the U.S.

INTERNET ACCESS: Available in the public areas of the lodges

LANGUAGE: Spanish, with Quechua or Indian dialects; some English

TIME: Eastern Standard Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Available throughout the tour

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin)**: is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-

hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul J. Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador.* Cornell University Press. June, 2001. Primary field guide.

Nick Athanas and Paul J. Greenfield. *Birds of Western Ecuador; a Photographic Guide.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. An excellent photo guide of most of the bird species found in western Ecuador, complete with accompanying text and distribution maps.

Fjeldsa, Jon and Niels Krabbe. *Birds of the High Andes*. Copenhagen: Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen; Svendborg, Denmark: Apollo Books, 1990. A good reference book for the birds of the mountains above 7,500 ft, with adequate illustrations, but too large to carry and expensive.

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity." **Highly recommended** as the most readable and informative book on many different aspects of bird ecology (and birding!) in the Neotropics.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume I, the Oscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989. Excellent reference volumes, with text entries for all species and fantastic illustrations of many. This volume and the next together include all of the passerines.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume II, the Suboscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989.

Restall, Robin; Rodner, Clemencia and Miguel Lentino. *Birds of Northern South America.* Volume 2: Plates and Maps. Helms Field Guides, 2006. An identification guide.

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "***VENT***") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 21, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "***Airline***") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete Terms and Conditions on our website.

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