

# Ecuador – Wildlife Festival 2026

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	<u>Fly Quito</u>
<b>Day 2</b>	<u>Fly Coca, transfer to NWC</u>
<b>Day 3 – 6</b>	<u>Napo Wildlife Centre</u>
<b>Day 7</b>	<u>Transfer Coca; fly Quito</u>
<b>Day 8 – 9</b>	<u>Antisana; inbound flights</u>

### Departs

November 2026

### Focus

Birsa and mammals

### Grading

A. wildlife holiday based around easy walks and canoe rides.

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ECU16)

### Highlights

- Spectacular parrot & mammal clay-licks
- Explore creeks near our lodge for resident Giant River Otters
- Watch Golden-mantled Tamarin & other species from canopy-level towers
- Red Howler, Napo Saki, Squirrel, Woolly, Capuchin & Spider Monkeys all possible
- Over 600 species of birds and over 60 mammal species within Yasuni National Park
- Night-time forest walks to look for nocturnal wildlife
- Led by a Naturetrek tour leader alongside local naturalists, including native Kichwa Añangu guides
- A number of extension options available



Scarlet Macaw, Giant River Otter © J. Culebras, Napo Wildlife Centre



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## Introduction

Following the outstanding success of our festival visit to Sacha Lodge, we are delighted to return to the Napo River, deep in the Ecuadorian Amazon, in November 2026. Ecuador has long been one of our most popular destinations and remains a country in which we possess exceptional depth of knowledge and experience. It was here that our Managing Director, Andy Tucker, lived and guided prior to joining Naturetrek in 1998, and where popular Naturetrek tour leader, Byron Palacios – an Ecuadorian naturalist now based in the UK – continues to champion the wildlife and conservation of his homeland. Our strong connection to the country is also reflected in our commitment to protecting its biodiversity: since 2009 we have made a donation for every flight that we book and have used the funds to create the 'Naturetrek Reserves' in the Ecuadorian Andes. Our reserves now cover 2,181 acres, creating an invaluable wildlife corridor between national parks and protecting this extremely biodiverse habitat.

We have secured five nights at the superb Napo Wildlife Centre (NWC), where each morning and afternoon we will divide into small groups to make the most of the lodge's exceptional wildlife watching opportunities. Amongst the highlights are NWC's outstanding observation towers – widely regarded as some of the very best in western Amazonia. On a productive morning, these can yield an astonishing 100 or more bird species, amongst them many birds that can be hard to observe from the forest floor such as White-browed Purpletuft, Spangled Cotinga and a dazzling array of tanagers, aracarís and euphonias.



Excursions by dugout canoe through oxbow lakes and along tranquil rainforest streams are another major feature of our stay, offering chances to encounter the secretive Agami Heron, the delightful Golden-mantled Tamarin, or perhaps even a giant Green Anaconda or Zigzag Heron. A network of

forest trails provides excellent opportunities for understory birding and exploration, where species such as Wire-tailed Manakin, Musician Wren and White-plumed Antbird may be found.

We'll also look for some of the mammals in the area, with possibilities including Pygmy Marmoset, Marañón White-fronted Capuchin, Red Howler Monkey, Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkey, White-tailed Titi Monkey, Spix's Night Monkey, Monk Saki, White-bellied Spider Monkey, Kinkajou, Southern Tamandua and Black Agouti. The cool waters of the oxbow lake beside our lodge offer a wonderfully peaceful and scenic setting for canoe excursions, and the resident family of Giant Otters is usually quite approachable. A visit to the Yasuni National Park parrot lick along the Napo River is another memorable experience.

After dark, spotlighting walks reveal the forest's nocturnal life, while clear equatorial skies offer superb stargazing – the Milky Way arcing overhead is unforgettable. Camera-trapping demonstrations and endless photographic opportunities complete what promises to be an immersive and richly rewarding Amazonian experience.

All of NWC's cabins are equipped with ceiling fans, electrical sockets, and en suite facilities (with hot water) and have been carefully designed to provide comfort for guests whilst preserving the ambience of the rainforest setting and each cabin has its own terrace and hammock – perfect for relaxation and wildlife-viewing between activities.

From this superb base, you will be accompanied on excursions not only by NWC's experienced resident naturalists, but also by popular Naturetrek tour leader Byron Palacios, who will bring his deep knowledge of, and passion for, his homeland's wildlife and conservation.

We very much hope you will join us as we enjoy the birds, butterflies, mammals and plants of the Amazon jungle from Napo Wildlife Centre, as well as of the high-altitude birds and dramatic scenery of Antisana Volcano!

## Itinerary

*NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

### Day 1

### Arrive Quito

If using the group flights, we leave London Heathrow in the morning, usually on KLM's or Iberia's service to Quito. Changing planes in Amsterdam or Madrid, we will arrive in Quito in the evening and transfer to our hotel. Should you wish to travel from elsewhere, please do get in touch and we will be very pleased to assist with such arrangements.

Quito is located in a hollow at the foot of the volcano Pichincha. On clear days, Andean peaks tower around, and the sun is bright and strong. The climate is delightful: the name means "Eternal Spring" in the ancient language of Quechua. Standing at 2,850 meters, Quito is the second highest capital in the world. In our comfortable hotel – in easy reaching distance of the airport – we'll share our first meal together before getting a good rest for the thrilling itinerary which lies in wait!

### Day 2

### Napo Wildlife Centre

A 45-minute flight takes us over the Andes and down to the port town of Coca, properly named Puerto Francisco de Orellana, after the discoverer of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The warm, humid jungle air will hit us as we step from the plane and we will be taken down to the river where we board a covered motorised canoe for the 2½ hour, 50 mile journey downstream to Añangu. The River Napo is Ecuador's principal Amazonian tributary and at this point is about 1/3 of a mile wide. Its waters are sediment-rich and during the dry season huge sandy beaches are exposed. We will look for various herons, kingfishers and birds of prey as we continue downstream.

Upon arrival at the entrance to the NWC Reserve, we switch to smaller, dugout canoes which our local guides paddle up the black water creek to the lake and lodge (no motorised transport is permitted on the creek or lake so as not to disturb wildlife). This paddle can take anywhere from one to three hours, depending what we see en route. Giant Otters, potoos, kingfishers, herons, Hoatzins, jacamars, hawks and monkeys are all possibilities. We will eat lunch en route and arrive at the lodge by late afternoon.



Napo Wildlife Center is a comfortable rainforest lodge within the Yasuni National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; the largest, best conserved and most diverse tract of Amazon rainforest in

Ecuador. Built on the shore of tranquil Añangu Lake, NWC is a conservation project which supports a unique 82 square-mile (22,000 hectare) private nature reserve within the park, an ancestral territory of the Añangu community who co-own the centre. Wildlife viewing possibilities abound in the vicinity of the lodge, with amazing parrot and mammal clay licks, active lake wildlife guarded by the resident family of Giant Otters, stunning endemic monkeys and a huge list of nearly 600 bird species. The lodge also boasts observation towers which transport us into the rainforest canopy at dawn to witness flocks of colourful tanagers and other species which are difficult to see from the rainforest floor.

## Days 3 – 6

## Napo Wildlife Centre

We have four full days to explore this fabulous habitat. Depending on our party size, we will divide into sub-groups daily, and be assigned a native Añangu guide, who doubles up as an official Yasuni Park Ranger. All the local guides at NWC are a wealth of information on the forest's medicinal plants and other useful items of the rainforest. Each group will also have the company of an experienced bilingual naturalist guide with a great deal of knowledge on tropical forest fauna.

We will be sure to take advantage of the highest peaks of activity, together with prevailing weather conditions, with early morning excursions scheduled for dawn and sunrise. After break for lunch and a siesta, further outings will take place in the afternoon and evening and, for those who want to, after dark, when the forest really does come alive and when an overwhelming concert of natural sounds floods the atmosphere!

Expert bird guides are also available for those preferring a "hard core" birding experience. The birding is fantastic with many species occurring here but not on the better-known north bank of the river. Over 560 species of birds have been recorded at the Napo Wildlife Center, more than 1/3 of all of Ecuador's birds. Both Agami and Zigzag herons are found near the lake and creeks, along with all 5 kingfishers. Rare and majestic



Mixed parrot flock at Napo © Jaime Culebras

raptors like Harpy and Crested Eagles find healthy populations of mammalian prey around NWC. Antbird flocks are a highlight of the forest here, and may include White-plumed Antbird. Other highlights might include Rufous-capped Antthrush, Ocellated Poorwill, Ecuadorian and Red-rumped Caciques, Brown Nunlet and Fulvous Shrike-tanager, among many others.

### Parrot Clay Licks

One of the highlights at NWC is an early morning excursion to two of Ecuador's most accessible parrot clay licks. These parrot clay licks are part of the reserve and lodge territory, which has in total a dozen clay licks, some of which are only used seasonally. The parrot clay licks are located near the banks of the River Napo and can be reached by following the Giant Otter creek downstream by

dugout canoe. The Napo Wildlife Center, in conjunction with the local community, have constructed sturdy and comfortable hides beside each parrot lick in order to provide visitors with the best viewing and high-quality photo/video opportunities.

Activity kicks off at the main lick between 0700 and 0800 and at the second lick after midday. Species include Mealy, Blue-headed, Yellow-crowned, Orange-winged and Orange-cheeked Parrots, Cobalt-winged, Dusky-headed, Maroon-tailed and White-eyed Parakeets, along with occasional rarities like Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet and Scarlet Macaw. In ideal weather conditions (dry and sunny) at least 800 individual birds of different species can be spotted.

### Dining Room Tower

There is a 19 metre (60 foot) observation tower on top of a small hill in the vicinity of the lodge. This protrudes sufficiently from the surrounding foliage to give great views of the lake and lodge. Nearby, the active resident birds can be seen nesting and feeding within the lodge grounds, while a family group of the rare and enchanting Golden-mantled Tamarin monkey often forage close by.

### Main Canopy Tower

This magnificent structure, 35-minutes' walk from the lodge and over 125 feet tall, stands adjacent to a giant Kapok tree where an ample platform provides space for over 15 guests and their cameras, 'scopes, tripods and other gear. A dawn ascent is a must during your stay at NWC; the birding is outstanding and for the mammal enthusiasts we will keep an eye out for possible troops of Red Howler Monkey, White-fronted Capuchins, Napo Saki or Black Spider Monkeys in the surrounding forest. On a clear day, views stretch to the high Andes and Volcanos Sumaco, Antisana and Cayambe (the latter two snow-capped). Gazing up at snow-capped, 6,000-meter (20,000 foot) Andean peaks whilst standing in humid lowland forest is an uplifting and awe-inspiring experience!

Active feeding bird flocks of mixed passerines forage in the vicinity of "our" tree. With fruiting trees in the area, red letter days can provide single morning lists of upwards of 100 species – without moving more than a couple of steps! Possibilities are endless: toucans, macaws, colourful tanagers, raptors, flycatchers, or maybe a quiet and lichen-covered Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth.

### Lake and Creeks

NWC has a large oxbow lake with two streams that can be easily explored quietly while sitting on a dugout canoe paddled by our expert guides and staff eager to spot and show you wildlife. A quiet paddle down one of the streams is an ideal way to locate troops of other species of monkeys like Squirrel Monkey, Saddle-backed Tamarin and White-fronted Capuchin Monkeys. Rarer species, or those that by natural distribution only occur on the south side of the Napo, include Napo Saki, Spider, Woolly Monkey and Golden-mantled Tamarin. NWC is home to a total of 11 species of primate, and you can hope to see a fantastic selection of these during your stay.

All four species of native caiman (Black, Spectacled, Schneider's Dwarf and Cuvier's Dwarf) are found at NWC. The main lake provides a home for Black Caiman, the largest of the four. Largely nocturnal, these animals can best be seen during night-time canoe rides when torch light is reflected in their eyes.

The creeks also present a good chance of tracking down the resident family of Giant Otter. It is impossible to say what might be hiding around the next meander; a magnificent Green Anaconda in an area of flooded forest, or perhaps a White-lipped Peccary taking a drink, or possibly a serene Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth.



Black Caiman at Napo © Jaime Culebras

### Forest Trails & Hikes

Visits to a variety of forest ecosystems are possible by walking different trails branching out from the lodge. The forest does not reveal its secrets easily, but by careful exploration we will see bizarre and well camouflaged insects. Monkeys, lizards, tortoises, frogs, army and leafcutter ants will all be appreciated in addition to an array of birds. It is here in the terra firma forest that bird diversity is highest. This is also some of the most challenging birding on the planet! Many of the antbirds and furnarids (ovenbirds) are cryptically coloured and shy. We will need all the expertise of our local guides to recognize them by call and see them. Should we happen to encounter an ant swarm, we will see many of the attendant specialist antbirds which can be a mind-boggling experience!

The largest and most exciting neotropical mammals like Jaguar, Puma, South American Tapir, Giant Anteater and Giant Armadillo have all been recorded in this area, although all are rare, naturally shy or nocturnal. Night walks are possible at NWC and can lead to unexpected highlights!

### The Añangu Community

Añangu has been the ancestral territory of a Quichua indigenous community that has the same name. Añangu people are active participants of the conservation and management of a large territory within the park as well as our partners in ecotourism. They would like to invite us to see the community that had this dream to help manage this vast rain forest territory by establishing their own lodge. Aided by EcoEcuador Foundation, part of the Tropical Nature Conservation System, a leading group of ongoing ecotourism projects, all now collaborate in one nature tourism company. You can join some families on their daily activities when harvesting bananas, coco, manioc (a starchy jungle root, often known as yucca) which is a staple food for Amazonian people), or maybe helping preparing chicha, a traditional drink based on cooked and fermenting manioc.

## Day 7

## Quito

One final, magical, paddle through the flooded palm forest will bring us back out to the River Napo for our journey upstream to Coca. Our flight to Quito will depart in the late morning and we should be back in Quito by early afternoon, where we'll stay near to the new airport. The rest of the afternoon will be spent at leisure in Quito.



Napo Wildlife Centre

## Day 8 – 9

## Antisana and inbound flights

The summit of Antisana Volcano is almost 19,000 feet up – the fourth highest peak of Ecuador and covered by the largest ice cap in the country.

Today we'll drive up to the lower slopes of Antisana, looking out for species such as Ecuadorian Hillstar visiting the Chuquiragua bushes, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spineatil, Many-striped Canastero, Tawny Antpitta, Tufted tit-Tyrant, Red-crested Cotinga, Paramo Pipit, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch and Black-winged Ground-Dove. We're likely to see many Carunculated Caracaras, Andean Gulls, Andean Lapwings, and many other species that are absent or difficult at other sites such as the rare Black-faced Ibis. This reserve has at least four different cliffs in which up to 30 Andean condors have been counted and we will hope to catch a sighting of this iconic species. We will take a walk along Lake "La Mica", where we scan the shoreline for Andean Coot, Andean Teal, Andean Ruddy Duck, and Yellow-billed Pintail. This is also the best place in Ecuador to observe closely the regal Silvery Grebe. We will enjoy a typical Andean lunch in a warm mountain refuge and then drive back down to the airport for our homeward flights.

## Pre-Tour Extension to Mindo (subject to availability)

### Day 1

### In Flight

We depart London in the morning, usually on KLM's or Iberia's service to Quito. Changing planes in Amsterdam or Madrid, we will arrive in Quito in the evening and transfer to our hotel. It is possible to travel to Quito early for those who would prefer time to relax, enjoy a city tour and adjust to the time difference before the drive to Mindo. Contact us for details.

### Day 2

### Mindo

After an early coffee and breakfast in the hotel, we will drive up out of Quito to our first stop at Yanacocha, an area of moss-clad temperate forest on the slopes of Volcano Pichincha protected by the Jocotoco Foundation. Hummingbirds will be especially active during the early morning and possible species include Sapphire-vented Puffleg, Shining Sunbeam, Tyrian Metaltail, Great Sapphirewing and, with a good deal of luck, the very rare and local endemic Black-breasted Puffleg. This will also be our first experience of mixed-species feeding flocks, and we will be on the lookout for mountain-tanagers and the attractive and sought-after Giant Conebill. Tawny, Undulated and Rufous Antpittas are also possible here although we will have to work hard for them.

We next pass over the western ridge of the Andes and drop down onto the pacific slope along the famous old Nono-Tandayapa-Mindo road. Over the years this forested valley has gained an impressive reputation for the quality and number of birds that can be seen along its length including Toucan Barbet, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Masked Trogon, White-capped Dipper, Cinnamon Flycatcher and many species of tanager and hummingbird. Lower down on the approach road towards Mindo, a different suite of birds appear including Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Fawn-breasted Tanager and the unusual-looking Pacific Hornero, surely one of the most attractive all of the furnarids.

We will take a box lunch to eat while birdwatching on the route and aim to arrive at our comfortable birding lodge in Mindo in the late afternoon. We will settle in for four nights here, enjoying a sumptuous welcome dinner and talking through our plans for the days ahead.

### Day 3 – 5

### Mindo

In the three full days that we have in the Mindo region, we will be aiming to explore a wide array of habitats at different altitudinal zones, as well as to enjoy two of the principal 'set piece' attractions in the area: an Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek and a visit to Angel Paz's antpitta feeding station at Refugio Paz de las Aves.

Ángel Paz, a resident of Nanegalito, a small town near Mindo, once had other plans for his beautiful reserve in the forest-clad hills of north-west Ecuador, including agriculture and valuable hardwoods. Talking to neighbours involved in ecotourism, Ángel came to realize that his land might have an even greater value and a sustainable future. He first allowed visitors onto his land to see a small Cock of the Rock lek. He soon discovered that visitors were interested in other birds and at this

point he embarked on a quest that nobody else had ever thought possible: to earn the confidence of these secretive, almost mythical birds, luring them out of their shadowy haunts with food and gentle whistling so that birders could enjoy them in all their splendour. It took time, effort and patience and after several months of hard effort with not a day missed, he had three of Ecuador's most coveted antpittas coming in for their morning breakfast of fat earthworms – Giant, Moustached and Yellow-breasted. To put this feat into context, Giant Antpitta was only rediscovered in the early '90's after decades of being essentially "lost". With no record of its voice – even less was known of Moustached – a few old specimens from Colombia were the only clue to its existence. Yellow-breasted meanwhile was only recorded within Ecuador in the 1980's!

One morning during our stay at Mindo will entail a very early start at 0430 for a short drive to reach El Refugio de las Aves where Angel has developed one of the most impressive examples of set-piece birding anywhere in the world. We may also have an opportunity to see Andean Cock of the Rock at a hide adjacent to a small lek. As the morning unfolds, walks along the trails may reveal Golden-headed Quetzal, Olivaceous Piha, Toucan Barbet and Black-chinned Mountain-tanager. After this we will walk back to the entrance to enjoy a sumptuous breakfast. Further time will then be spent in and around the reserve in search of such species as Scaled and Orange-breasted Fruiteaters, colourful tanagers and various species of hummingbirds around the property.

The lush hilltops and forests that surround Mindo offer almost unparalleled birding and an exciting three days are in prospect as we follow the network of trails that criss-cross the area. The hummingbird list will increase further as we encounter species such as Andean Emerald, Purple-throated Woodstar, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and Speckled Hummingbird. Tanagers are also well represented in this tropical forest habitat. One of the most striking of these is the well-named Grass Green Tanager, whilst other equally bright family members include Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager and also much smaller but yet colorful Golden, Beryl-spangled and Golden-naped Tanagers. Given ideal weather conditions, birding in this area can be hectic with huge mixed-species feeding flocks moving through the forest. Over 450 species of birds have been recorded within the whole valley and so we will make full use of our time here in search of such species as Crimson-mantled and Powerful Woodpeckers, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Toucan Barbet, Golden-headed Quetzal, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Red-billed Parrot, Scaly-naped Amazon, Slate-throated Whitestart, Western Hemispingus, Beautiful Jay and many more!

We will also make time to visit what has become the most spectacular set of hummingbird feeders in South America in a local garden which now has a mind-boggling 24 hummingbird species buzzing around, including such interesting species as Tawny-bellied Hermit, Green-tailed Trainbearer Andean Emerald, Velvet-purple Coronet, Gorgeted Sunangel, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Brown and Collared Incas, Booted Racket-tail, Violet-tailed Sylph, Hoary Puffleg, Wedge-billed Hummingbird and Purple-throated and White-bellied Woodstars!

Further away down the west Andean slope we reach the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary near to the town of Pedro Vicente Maldonado. This reserve, managed by the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation (<http://www.mindocloudforest.org/>) is set in the wet, steamy Chocó lowlands. This is the best location outside of Colombia to see numerous Chocó endemics such as Purple-chested

Hummingbird, Double-banded Graytail, Griscom's Antwren, Stub-tailed Antbird, Black-tipped Cotinga, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher and Semiplumbeous Hawk. The reserve's new canopy tower will hopefully provide unprecedented views of the mixed flocks for which this area is famous. Amongst the many dazzling tanagers present we hope to find Scarlet-breasted and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Scarlet-and-white, Golden-hooded, Scarlet-browed, Emerald, Rufous-winged, and Blue-whiskered Tanagers. Not to be outdone by the passerines, Orange-fronted Barbet, Rose-faced Parrot, Chocó and Chesnut-mandibled Toucans, Lanceolated Monklet, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Black-striped and Spotted Woodcreeper, Dusky Pigeon, and Rufous Motmot may also put in an appearance during what promises to be a spectacular day's birding.

The forested ridges around the town of Mindo itself will also warrant time for a full exploration on foot. The birding is wonderful here. As the sunlight penetrates the canopy it may illuminate the splendid plumage of a Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, whilst a pair of Toucan Barbets may reveal their presence by their loud duetting calls. As the mist rolls in, swirling flocks of dazzling Golden, Flame-faced, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, Blue-capped and Fawn-breasted Tanagers may be seen feeding on the fruits of the silvery-leaved Cecropia trees. Sets of hummingbird feeders around the lodge provide a thrilling spectacle as White-whiskered and Stripe-throated Hermits, Green-crowned Brilliant and Green-crowned Woodnymph indulge themselves on the artificial nectar. Other species we may see in this area include Crested Guan, Barred and Roadside Hawks, Band-tailed, Plumbeous and Ruddy Pigeons, Red-billed Parrot, Golden-headed Quetzal, Masked Trogon, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Azara's and Red-faced Spinetails, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Uniform Treehunter, Long-tailed Antbird, Spillmann's and Nariño Tapaculos, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant, Smoke-coloured Pewee, Black Phoebe, Streak-necked, Cinnamon, Ornate and Golden-crowned Flycatchers, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Olivaceous Piha, Turquoise and Beautiful Jays, Mountain Wren, Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, Brown-capped Vireo, Black-crested and Three-striped Warblers, Spectacled and Slate-throated Whitestarts, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Dusky Bush-Tanager, Superciliaried and Black-eared Hemispinguses, Tricoloured Brush-Finch and Masked and White-sided Flowerpiercers.

While all these activities and options will be available to us, you will be free if you so choose to relax back at base, birding gently from a hammock, or indulging in hummingbird photography in the lodge gardens.

## Day 6

## Quito

We may choose to spend the early part of this morning in the environs of the lodge once again. After breakfast, we may choose to target any species missed. On our way back to Quito we will likely stop at Calacali where dry inter-andean valley birds such as White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant, Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Giant Hummingbird and Tufted Tit-Tyrant will be targets. We will arrive back to our comfortable hotel in Quito in plenty of time for a wash and brush-up before dinner, ahead of the arrival of the main tour contingent from the UK.

## Post-Tour Extension to the Naturetrek Reserves (subject to availability)

For nearly two decades, we have been working to protect a threatened cloudforest corridor in the Rio Pastaza valley of the Ecuadorian Andes, which has been classified by WWF as one of the 200 most important wildlife corridors in the world due to its high levels of biodiversity. Through the Ecuadorian charity Fundación EcoMinga, we support direct purchase of the forest as a public nature reserve, open to the local people for no-impact ecotourism and protected from hunting, plant collection, and any other extractive activities.

The Naturetrek Candelaria and Naturetrek Viscaya Reserves, our original reserves, have gradually grown in size since 2007 as new blocks of land became available for us to purchase. The Naturetrek Candelaria Reserve is a large block of forest within the main wildlife corridor connecting the two national parks, whilst the Naturetrek Viscaya Reserve connects the Llanganates National Park with a different kind of lower-elevation forest. Because the Naturetrek Reserves connect higher altitude cloudforest to the vulnerable riparian forests along the valley floor, they not only provide vital river access for large mammals and other species but also extend protection to the more diverse lower elevations that are not protected by the highland national parks in this watershed. For example, a recently discovered and very rare tree, *Blakea attenboroughii*, is not known from any national park yet is present in the Naturetrek Reserve. The upper Río Pastaza watershed is home to nearly 200 additional species of plants found nowhere else in the world, and this number is steadily increasing due to botanical investigation. The birdlife here is also very special, with species such as the Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Giant Antpitta, and the endangered Black-and-chestnut Eagle, one of which has been spotted by EcoMinga staff carrying a capuchin monkey through the air!

In 2024, we turned our attention to the 'El Encanto' region which neighbours the original Candelaria and Viscaya Reserves, purchasing the first two in what we hope will be a series of blocks of land in this area, a combined 466 acres in size. Being at a slightly lower elevation than our existing reserves, El Encanto (meaning 'the enchanted' land) holds a wealth of mammals, including Jaguar, Puma, Ocelot, Giant Anteater, both Mountain and Brazilian Tapir, White-lipped Peccary and, of course, Spectacled Bear!

### Day 8 of main tour

### Antisana; overnight Quito

The summit of Antisana Volcano is almost 19,000 feet up – the fourth highest peak of Ecuador and covered by the largest ice cap in the country.

Today we'll drive up to the lower slopes of Antisana, looking out for species such as Ecuadorian Hillstar visiting the Chuquiragua bushes, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spineatit, Many-striped Canastero, Tawny Antpitta, Tufted tit-Tyrant, Red-crested Cotinga, Paramo Pipit, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch and Black-winged Ground-Dove. We're likely to see many Carunculated Caracaras, Andean Gulls, Andean Lapwings, and many other species that are absent or difficult at other sites such as the rare Black-faced Ibis. This reserve has at least 4 different cliffs in which up to 30 Andean condors have been counted and we will hope to catch a sighting of this iconic species. We will take a walk along Lake "La Mica", where we scan the shoreline for Andean Coot, Andean Teal, Andean Ruddy Duck, and Yellow-billed Pintail. This is also the best place in

Ecuador to observe closely the regal Silvery Grebe. We will enjoy a typical Andean lunch in a warm mountain refuge and then drive back to Quito to overnight.

## Day 9 – 11

## The Naturetrek Reserves

After breakfast, we will make the 2.5-hour journey to Volcán Cotopaxi, where we will stop to enjoy lunch and take in views of Ecuador’s second-highest summit at 5,897 metres. From here, it is just a two-hour drive to the town of Baños, where we will be based for a 3-night stay in a comfortable tourist hotel for our excursion to the Naturetrek Reserves. On our first afternoon in Baños we will visit the spectacular waterfall, Pailón del Diablo (Devil’s Cauldron).

The following day, we will make our way to the Naturetrek Candelaria Reserve. The walk down (and back up) involves a steep series of steps, but the route is spectacular. After reaching the bridge that leads into the reserve, we will enjoy a packed lunch while keeping our eyes peeled for wildlife. Highlights within the reserve include Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Giant Antpitta and the endangered Black-and-chestnut Eagle. With luck, we may also hear the call of the Naturetrek Leaf Frog (*Noblilla naturetrekii*), described in 2019 and named in recognition of Naturetrek’s role in protecting this species and its habitat. After a peaceful lunch, we will cross back over the bridge – with the roaring Río Pastaza beneath us – and return to our comfortable hotel.



Pailón del Diablo

The following day will be dedicated to birding the upper Patate–Baños, El Encanto, Río Zúñag and River Anzu areas. In the Patate–Baños region, we will search for Dusky Piha, Slaty Brush-Finch, Black-backed Grosbeak, Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Southern Emerald-Toucanet, Powerful Woodpecker and Northern Mountain Cacique.

El Encanto and the Río Zúñag host species such as Andean Motmot, Andean Cock-of-the-rock and Golden-collared Honeycreeper; hummingbirds including Wire-crested Thorntail and Green-fronted Lancebill; and an array of tanagers such as Metallic-green Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager and Yellow-throated Tanager. Other possibilities here include Cinnamon Screech-Owl and Collared Forest-Falcon. Along the lower Zúñag valley, we may encounter Scaled Antpitta, Black-streaked Puffbird, Deep-blue Flowerpiercer, Ashy-throated Chlorospingus, and hummingbirds such as Gorgeted Woodstar and White-tipped Sicklebill.

Along the River Anzu, we will search for Coppery-chested Jacamar, Fulvous-breasted Puffbird, Plain-backed Antpitta, Rufous-breasted Antthrush, Black Antbird, Yellow-breasted Antbird, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, Ecuadorean Tyrannulet, Equatorial Greytail and Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher, among others. We will end the day with a wonderful meal and celebratory drinks.

## Day 12 – 13

## Inbound flights

After breakfast we'll make the drive back to Quito for our homeward flights.

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## Tour Grading & Focus

The mammals, birds and wildlife of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Whilst mammals will be on view for a very small percentage of our time in the field on this holiday, patience will be rewarded with several primate species and perhaps other mammals, including otters (Giant River and Neotropical both possible). While mammal-watching proves quiet, a wealth of birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife will keep us entertained.

## Weather, Clothing & Equipment

The climate in Ecuador varies enormously, depending on the region and the altitude. Quito is mild and temperate with chilly nights, like a spring day in England. The Amazon is hot and humid. There is a possibility of heavy rain at any time, but hopefully not to the extent that it will spoil your enjoyment. A strong waterproof torch is essential for joining the nocturnal walks and amongst the options available a powerful head-torch will be most useful, which keeps your hands free for balancing.

## What's Included

All included in the price, starting with breakfast on Day 2 and ending with lunch on Day 8. Please note that we do not include items of a more personal nature such as drinks, tipping, laundry and souvenirs.

## Extending Your Holiday

In addition to the options outlined above, there are a number of options available as an extension:

- Visiting the Galápagos Islands
- West Andean Slope birding extension
- A stay at Mashpi Lodge
- An extension to neighbouring Colombia

Should you wish to discuss these options the tour's manager Dan Lay will be more than happy to help. Please email [dan@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:dan@naturetrek.co.uk) or call 01962 733051

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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