

Ecuador – On the trail of the Jocotoco Antpitta

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Quito, overnight
Day 2	Fly Catamayo, transfer Urraca Lodge
Day 3/4	Urraca Lodge
Day 5/7	Cabañas Ecológicas, Copalinga
Day 8/9	Tapichalaca reserve
Day 10	Catamayo
Day 11	Fly Quito, Antisana; depart
Day 12	UK

Departs

February and November

Focus

Birds.

Grading

A/B

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ECU17) or brochure

Highlights

- A wealth of superb birds such as the endemic El Oro Parakeet and Long-wattled Umbrellabird
- See the recently discovered Jocotoco Antpitta
- Visit beautiful ecological reserves and national parks in off-the-beat southern Ecuador



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NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and 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.

Introduction

Southern Ecuador contains several restricted and endangered ecosystems ranging from swamps, deserts, arid scrub, deciduous forests, rainforests, montane cloudforests, high altitude elfin forests, and páramo. Some of these are considered Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs) by BirdLife International and are home to a number of Tumbesian and Chocó endemics such as Chocó Toucan, Club-winged Manakin, the impressive Long-wattled Umbrellabird, El Oro Parakeet, Gray-backed Hawk, Gray-and-gold Warbler and many others. Up in the Andes around Copalinga we'll be looking for birds such as White-breasted Parakeet, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet and Coppery-chested Jacamar. Finally, at Casa Simpson in the Tapichalaca Reserve we hope to encounter the iconic Jocotoco Antpitta.

Day 1

Fly Quito

We leave London Heathrow in the morning, usually on KLM (via Amsterdam) or Iberia (via Madrid) to Ecuador's capital city. We will arrive in the evening and transfer to our guesthouse nearby where we will spend the night.

Day 2

Catamayo/Urruca Lodge

Up early this morning we hop onto a 50-minute domestic flight south to the city of Catamayo, nestling at 2,000m in the Andes and known for its vibrant music scene.

For most of the rest of the day we will undertake a 100-mile drive south-westwards to Urruca Lodge on the Jorupe Reserve, making the odd opportunistic stop for leg stretches and light birding. The Jorupe Reserve is located a few miles northeast of the town of Macará, not far from the border between Ecuador and Peru. The reserve protects an excellent variety of habitats found in the Tumbesian region, such as scrub and desert, deciduous tropical forest, and semi-evergreen pre-montane forest. Built in the middle of the dry forest and surrounded by giant *Ceiba* trees, the Urruca Lodge is our gateway to birding in the Jorupe Reserve. Some 190 bird species have been seen to date, including many endemics and approximately two dozen globally threatened birds. We will settle in for a 3-night stay, enjoying the resident White-tailed Jays, Pale-browed Tinamous and White-tailed Orioles in the lodge garden before dusk, dinner and our first run-through of the daily checklist.

Days 3-4

Urruca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve

We have two full days to enjoy the birds and landscapes of this special and threatened habitat. Endemics of the Tumbesian region one can see here include, Grey-cheeked Parakeet, Slaty Becard, Grey-breasted Flycatcher, Elegant Crescentchest, Blackish-headed Spinetail, Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Henna-hooded Foliage-Gleaner and Watkins Antpitta.

In the mornings we will likely head up to Utuana where there are tracts of Tumbeasian subtropical cloud forest comprising numerous old-growth trees, more moisture and epiphytic growth. Characteristic species here include Gray-headed Antbird, Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Piura Hemispingus and Jelski's Chat-tyrant. Other specialties we will look for include Black-crested Tit-Tyrant, the Purple-throated Sunangel and Rainbow Starfrontlet, while a site near the Peruvian border is good for Comb Duck and open country birds.

Days 5-7

Copalinga

After three nights at Urraca Lodge, we will drive 160 miles in an easterly direction to Copalinga, initially retracing our steps to Loja and then making a number of stops along the old Loja-Zamora road. We'll expect to see a number of commoner birds during the journey such as Cliff Flycatcher, Green Jay and Paradise Tanager, although surprises always turn up. In the afternoon we will arrive at Cabañas Ecológicas Copalinga, a lodge found on the northern edge of the Podocarpus National Park (a Biosphere Reserve recognised by UNESCO) and settle in for a 3-night stay. Established in 1999, the lodge is situated on a beautiful reserve of 150 hectares. The grounds of the lodge itself are great for hummingbirds, with species such as Wire-crested Thorntail, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, and Spangled Coquette being regularly attracted to the feeders and flowering plants. Once we've sorted through the hummers we can stroll along a trail to a small hide where Gray Tinamou can be seen while, at night, Band-bellied Owl often calls near the lodge.

On one of our days out from Copalinga we'll bird an excellent trail just a short drive away, looking for many sought-after or localised species such as Coppery-chested Jacamar, Ecuadorian Piedtail, White-breasted Parakeet, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Foothill Elaenia, Olive Finch, Black-billed Treehunter, Blue-rumped Manakin, and Equatorial Graytail. Other more common birds we may see are Paradise and Green-and-gold Tanager, Andean Motmot, Green Hermit, Red-headed Barbet, Lafresnaye's Piculet, and Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant. In mid-afternoon, we will return to the lodge, where we can either have some relaxed birding around the lodge, or take a short drive to other nearby sites.

On another day we can try some slightly highly elevation forest patches which are good for Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Lined Antshrike, and Olivaceous Greenlet. Farther along this road, we'll target some scarce species of higher elevations including Vermilion and Blue-browed Tanagers, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, among others.

Days 8-9

Tapichalaca

After three nights at Copalinga, we move on to Tapichalaca Reserve, 100 winding miles to the south. After a three hour journey with the possibility of birding en route again, we will arrive at the montane forests where the Jocotoco Antpitta thrives, settling into our cozy lodge for 2 nights.

While the Jocotoco Antpitta is our main target here, we should see plenty of other good birds along the trails, such as Chestnut-caped and Slate-crowned Antpittas, Chusquea and Ocellated Tapaculos, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Barred Fruiteater, Black-capped Hemispingus, Orange-banded Flycatcher, White-throated Quail-Dove, and various mountain-tanagers. Sometimes the reserve rangers know of a

day roost for Long-tailed Potoo. The walk up to the Jocotoco feeding area is a narrow forest trail that has some short steep sections, and is often slippery and muddy. Although the walk is not long we will take our time getting up there as there are many birding possibilities en-route. However, we will time our arrival at the antpitta feeding area so that we get there for their regular feeding time of 8:00am. We'll return to the lodge for lunch, and there will be time to the varied hummingbirds visiting the feeders, including Amethyst-throated and Flame-throated Sunangels, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Collared Inca, and Long-tailed Sylph. In the afternoon, we may bird along the road below the lodge towards the town of Valladolid where occasionally Chestnut-crested Cotinga can be seen, or else spend more time around the lodge.

Day 10

Catamayo/Loja; fly Quito

On our last full day, we will drive the 80 miles or so north to the dry valley of Catamayo, where we will be searching for endemic birds such as Tumbes Sparrow and Elegant Crescentchest, plus a variety of other dry country species such as Drab Seedeater, Parrot-billed Seedeater, Chestnut-throated Seedeater, Band-tailed Seedeater, Fasciated Wren and Peruvian Meadowlark. In the early evening we will check in to our functional hotel near the airport.

Day 11

Fly Quito; Antisana; Depart



A short flight north takes us to Quito, from where we will head to the open grasslands in the highlands of the Antisana Ecological Reserve (from 9000 ft to + 13000 ft). This is one of the best sites in Ecuador to see some high-altitude birds such as Andean Condor, Andean Ibis, Silvery Grebe, Giant Hummingbird and Ecuadorian Hillstar. After a hearty Andean lunch at a mountain restaurant, we will head to the airport for our international flight back home.

Day 12

Arrive UK

We will arrive back in the UK in the afternoon.

Cloudforest Extension

Join us on a short extension to the north-western cloudforests. This visit will i) enable you to start adjusting to the time difference before the main tours starts in earnest ii) allow any 'lost luggage' to catch up before the flight south and iii) showcase some of the best birding that the Mindo area has to offer.

Day -1

Fly Quito; transfer Guaycapi Lodge

We leave London Heathrow in the morning, usually on KLM (via Amsterdam) or Iberia (via Madrid) to Ecuador's capital city. We will arrive in the early evening and transfer straight to our lovely lodge in the forested hills above Mindo (note if you would like to fly out a day before and have a night and day in Quito to get over the flight, please ask upon booking).

Day 0

Full day Guaycapi Lodge & environs

We wake up this morning with glorious views over the cloudforest (weather permitting!).

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



Toucan Barbet

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.

Later on, we will visit a hummingbird garden and may check out a couple of sites which can produce Tayra or Olinguito.



Open dining verandah at Guaycapi Lodge



View from your lodge bedroom!

Day 1

Guaycapi Lodge to Quito

After a short but action-packed visit to the cloudforest, we will do some early morning birding around the lodge today before returning for a sumptuous breakfast at the lodge. Later on, we will drive back to Quito, birding en-route and taking the rest of the day over it, adding many new species. We overnight at a birders' guesthouse near the airport, ready for our early flight to Loja tomorrow morning.

Grading & Weather

Grade B - This holiday is a dedicated and fairly strenuous birding tour, suiting those with an adventurous spirit and a willingness to get up early and spend long days in the field off the beaten track, with some long road journeys between lodges.

Most sites on this trip are in cooler highland regions where temperatures are pleasant, although it is hotter, more humid and oppressive near border. On this tour most walking is relatively easy, although the terrain underfoot is rougher in parts. One or two sites may require some slow-paced uphill walking on a relatively narrow road, where there is little or no traffic. In general our birding at all sites will be along roadsides/on jeep tracks. Most mornings we will be up well before dawn for early breakfasts (or coffee/tea and snacks to be followed by packed breakfasts later).

Heavy persistent rainfall is unlikely but one should always be prepared for rain in the Andes. Stout footwear will be required and wellies, if needed, can be sourced in Ecuador.

Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list, sent to you on booking, thoroughly.

Included in the price

The price includes all accommodation, food, transfers, guiding and transport, as well as water during the day and with meals, and all entrance fees to reserves.

Extra expenses

Laundry, alcoholic drinks, extra snacks and other personal expenses are not included.

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, 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 or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking

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