

Ecuador – Cock-of-the-Rock

Naturetrek Tour Report

13th – 21st March 2025



Hooded Mountain Tanager



Orange-breasted Fruiteater



Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe



Tooth-billed Hummingbird

Tour report by Luis Panama, photos by Greg Lovett



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Luis Panama (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Thursday 13th March

Our flight to Quito left in the morning from Heathrow, via Amsterdam. We arrived mid-afternoon.

Day 2

Friday 14th March

Puembo Bird Garden to Zuroloma and Guaycapi

We started our birding experience at six o'clock in the morning. After an hour's drive, we stopped for some landscape pictures where we had the opportunity to spot our first birds, Sapphire-vented Puffleg and Blackish Tapaculo. After few minutes we continued the drive to Zuroloma and upon arrival we had great views of Sword-billed Hummingbird, Chestnut-naped Antpitta and Andean Condor.

After enjoying various birds and taken plenty pictures we continued the trip to Guaycapi Restaurant, we arrived just in time before the rain! Despite the rain we had a great array of birds around the feeders including White-booted Racket-tail, White-winged Tanager and Red-headed Barbet. We finished a delicious local lunch and the rain had stopped already so we took a short walk down to the river and found Crested Quetzal and Torrent Ducks.

Later on we drove to Guaycapi Lodge for dinner and our overnight stay.

Day 3

Saturday 15th March

Paz de las Aves and Tandayapa Valley

We started our day with a great breakfast and coffee. Once ready we started our drive to the birding spot. After thirty minutes we left the car and took a short walk along a moderate trail. Fifteen minutes later we arrived to the Andean-Cock-of-the-Rock lek, we had about six males displaying around the hide, although the light conditions were tricky, we had some great views.

After an hour watching these wonderful birds displaying, we started walking back to the parking area to move to the next birding spot, where we had great views of Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Toucan Barbet and Velvet-purple Coronet.

We had a break for coffee and a local snack made of green plantain. Later on we started driving back to the lodge, on the road we saw Golden-headed Quetzal and Lyre-tailed Nightjar.

When we arrived for lunch we were surprised by flock of Plate-billed Mountain Toucans together with Blue-winged Mountain Tanagers. After lunch we drove to the upper area of the Eco-route to search for other target birds.

Day 4

Sunday 16th March

Rio Silanche and Sederó Frutti Tour

We started the day at five in the morning and drove about one hour to Rio Silanche bird sanctuary. Today we explored the Chocó lowland rainforest. We started with a short walk to the observation tower to look for Scarlet-breasted Dacnis, Blue-tailed Trogon and Chocó Toucan.

After a couple of hours we arrived at an area where we had the opportunity to see Lancelotated Monklet, Velvety and White-bearded Manakins. At midday we took a break to have our packed lunch, surrounded by hummingbirds and colourful butterflies.

Later on, we move to the next birding place, Sendero Frutti Tour. This is a very new conservation project run by a local fruit farmer. The feeders were very active and we saw three different species of woodpeckers, various tanagers, and more than a dozen of hummingbirds, being the most outstanding species were Violet-bellied Hummingbird, Red-billed Scythebill and Great Antshrike.

Day 5

Monday 17th March

Amagusa reserve and back to Quito

We started the day with a delicious local breakfast and then drove for about an hour to Amagusa reserve to explore a unique ecosystem where the Choco Rainforest and the Tropical Andes meet. As we arrived, we were amazed by the lush green forest where we heard many different birds calling at the same time. Our first birds were Rose-faced Parrot, Black Solitaire and Streak-capped Treehunter. Later on, we moved to the feeders where we had a great opportunity to photograph Glistening-green and Moss-backed Tanagers. As we were returning to the lodge, we took short walks to see Tooth-billed Hummingbird and White-tipped Sicklebill.

After lunch we started the trip back to Quito. We made a short stop in the Middle of the World to explore the Andean dry forest where we had some great birds like Golden-rumped Euphonia, Tufted-tit Tyrant and Green-tailed Trainbearer.

Day 6

Tuesday 18th March

Cayambe Coca to Guango Lodge

We started the day at 06:30. After breakfast, we drove to the eastern Andes range to explore the high-altitude forest - home to the only bear in South America. As we started our drive up hill, we spotted an Andean (or Spectacled) Bear feeding on a Achupalla plant - a local bromeliad which is the bear's favourite food. We not only saw bear. The area had some great new birds like Ash-breasted Sierra Finch and Plain-coloured Seedeater.

Later on, we continued the trip to Las Antenas Pass - one of the highest points for birdwatching in Ecuador. A unique habitat with stunning flora and birds. Here we found Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Ecuadorian Hillstar and White-chinned Thistletail.

About midday we began the descent towards Guango lodge for Lunch.

After lunch, we drove to the eastern entrance of Cayambe Coca National Park. The area above the town of Papallacta is the best place to look for mountain tanagers. We had a great weather and found Black-chested and Masked Mountain Tanagers together with Bar-bellied Woodpecker and Agile Tit-Tyrant.

Day 7

Wednesday 19th March

Guango lodge and San Isidro

We started the day at the insect trap where many birds come to feed very early in the morning. Here we had great views of Turquoise Jay, Pale-naped Brushfinch and Russet-crowned Warbler. We had breakfast and then took a short walk to the banana feeders. Here we had a very close encounter with the very rare Gray-breasted Mountain Toucan and Hooded Mountain Tanager.

At mid-morning, we moved to San Isidro Lodge for lunch and afternoon birding. After a delicious local meal, we took a short walk in the grounds of the lodge and found Saffron-crowned Tanager, Geoffroy's Daggerbill, Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant and Andean Motmot. On the way back to the Lodge, we did a quick stop at a hummingbird garden on the side of the road to look for Gorgeted Woodstar, Green-backed Hillstar and Bronzy Inca.

Day 8

Thursday 20th March

Guango Lodge and back to Quito

Our last birding day started at quarter to six. We drove back to the eastern entrance the the Cayambe Coca National Park. Despite the foggy and rainy morning, we enjoyed some colourful birds like Lacrimose Mountain and Buff-breasted Mountain Tanagers, together with Blue-and-black Tanagers and Pearled Treerunner.

After a couple of hours, we returned to the lodge for breakfast. It kept raining all morning, so we stayed at the hummingbird feeders looking for Long-tailed Sylph, Tourmaline Sunnagel and Black-eared Hemispingus. The rain stopped just before lunch so we took a short walk along the pipeline trail and found the amazing Black-and-chestnut Eagle.

After lunch, we drove to the airport in time for the 17:20 flight home. On the journey, we made a couple of stops to add Andean Teal, Andean Duck and Great blue Heron.

Here the trip sadly ended for most of the group, with Gary and Dave staying to enjoy an extension to the Amazon next day in the morning.

Day 9

Friday 21st March

Our flight via Amsterdam arrived in London at 16:05.

Total birds seen during the trip: 276 species

Total mammals seen during the trip: 4

Andean (Spectacled) Bear, Andean Tapeti, Western Red-tailed Squirrel and Western Dwarf Squirrel.



Ochre-breasted Antpitta and White-naped Brushfinch

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