Ecuador
Exploring the Northern Andes

Tour Leaders: Rob Ripma, Edison Buenaño, and Seth Benz
September 6-19, 2025
Ecuador has long been considered one of the best birding destinations in the world, and once you’re there, you’ll understand why! On this exciting tour, we’ll visit a wide variety of habitats as we travel from elevations of 14,000 feet at Papallacta Pass down to 1,000 feet at Silanche Reserve!

Our tour will start in the famous Mindo area at Septimo Paraiso. From here, we can explore the many birding hotspots of the region including Silanche Reserve, Refugio Paz de las Aves where Angel Paz will feed his famous antpittas, Tandayapa Pass, and more! Highlights during this part of the tour could include, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Giant, Moustached, and Yellow-bellied Antpittas, Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Toucan Barbet, Scarlet-breasted Dacnis, Rufous-winged, Blue-whiskered, Scarlet-browed, Gray-and-gold, and Tawny-crested Tanagers, Oilbird, and many more!

Once we are finished in the Mindo area, we will move to the Eastern slope of the Andes on the other side of Quito. Here we will visit three lodges, Guango, Cabañas San Isidro, and Wildsumaco. These lodges are located at a variety of elevations which will mean each time we change lodges we will see a host of new species. Highlights on this part of the trip could include Sword-billed Hummingbird, Torrent Duck, White-capped Dipper, White-capped, Saffron-crowned, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, Blue-and-black Tanagers, San Isidro Owl, Golden-collared Toucanet, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Magpie, White-lined, Silver-beaked, Blue-browed, Orange-eared, Spotted, Yellow-bellied and Golden-eared Tanagers, and much more.

All of these wonderful lodges provide great accommodations and amazing food. Previously on this itinerary, we have seen over 500 species including 60+ hummingbirds!
**Itinerary Overview:**

September 6: Arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) - Transfer to hotel in Quito
September 7: Zuro Loma Reserve, Old Nono-Mindo Road - Transfer to Septimo Paraiso
September 8: Refugio Paz de las Aves and Milpe Bird Sanctuary
September 9: Birdwatcher’s House and Septimo Paraiso
September 10: Silanche Reserve
September 11: Reserva Amagusa and Oilbird Cave - Transfer to Quito
September 12: Antisana National Park - Transfer to Termas de Papallacta
September 13: Guango Lodge and Elfin Forest
September 14: Birding at Guango Lodge and La Brisa - Transfer to Cabañas San Isidro
September 15: Full day at Cabañas San Isidro
September 16: Wayra Reserve and Loreto Road - Transfer to Wildsumaco
September 17: Wildsumaco
September 18: Birding and transfer back to Quito
September 19: Departure from Quito

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**September 6: Arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) - Transfer to hotel in Quito**

Upon arrival, you will be picked up at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) and transferred to the hotel for the night.

*Overnight: San Jose de Puembo Garden Hotel*

**September 7: Zuro Loma Reserve, Old Nono-Mindo Road - Transfer to Septimo Paraiso**

After breakfast, we’ll drive to the Zuro Loma Reserve, located at an elevation over 10,000 feet. Zuro Loma is well located for many high-elevation specialties, and we will spend the morning birding around the property. We will spend some time watching where some locals have started feeding Chestnut-naped and Equatorial Antpittas, Barred Fruiteater, Andean Guan, and Yellow-breasted Brush-Finch. We will also be watching for some spectacular hummingbirds including Sword-billed Hummingbird, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Mountain Velvetbreast, Sapphire-vented Puffleg, Tyrian Metaltail, and Black-tailed Trainbearer.

We will enjoy a picnic lunch while taking in the grandiose mountain vista, after which we'll begin the drive to Mindo via the Old Nono-Mindo Road with birding along the way. This road offers spectacular views of the forest and excellent birding, with the possibility of such sought-after birds as Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. We will then arrive at the Septimo Paraiso Lodge in Mindo, where we will spend the next four nights.

*Overnight: Septimo Paraiso*

**The order in which we visit all of the locations over the next four days is subject to change, depending on weather conditions.**
September 8: Refugio Paz de las Aves and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Early this morning, we’ll head to Refugio Paz de las Aves to observe Andean Cock-of-the-Rocks at their lek, where males assemble during the mating season and engage in competitive displays to attract females. Afterwards, we’ll join Angel (the owner of the reserve) as he draws his "charges" in for breakfast - Maria the Giant Antpitta, Willi the Yellow-breasted Antpitta, and Susan the Moustached Antpitta! We’ll have a wonderful breakfast as we watch feeders for more of the common birds of this area including the spectacular Toucan Barbet. Sometimes there is a chance for great photography as we enjoy our breakfast. In the afternoon we will head downslope to visit the Milpe Bird Sanctuary located at ~3,700 feet. We will be searching for several Choco endemics such as Moss-backed, Rufous-throated, and Glistening-green Tanagers, and Club-winged Manakin.

-Overnight: Septimo Paraiso

September 9: Birdwatcher's House and Septimo Paraiso

After breakfast, we'll drive to the Tandayapa Valley where the Birdwatcher’s House is located. We should have great opportunities to see and photograph the near-endemic Plate-billed Mountain Toucan and Hoary Puffleg as well as Striped Treehunter, Tricolored Brush-Finch, Golden-headed Quetzal, Green-and-black Fruiteater, and Flame-faced, Blue-capped, Golden, and Black-capped Tanagers.

In the afternoon, we will spend some time birding around our lodge. The birding can be quite good and the hummingbird feeders are usually buzzing with activity. You can regularly see 10-15 species of hummingbirds including the Velvet-purple Coronet.

-Overnight: Septimo Paraiso

September 10: Silanche Reserve

After an early breakfast, we will drive downslope to the Silanche Reserve. At 1,000 feet, this is the lowest elevation preserve we will visit. We'll spend at least a few hours at the canopy tower as well as some time birding along the trails. Even the entrance road can be unbelievably busy with birds! The canopy tour which rises 50 feet from the forest floor, provides great looks at many species that tend to stay in the canopy. Many specialties are possible including Purple-chested Hummingbird, Choco Trogon, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Rufous-winged, Blue-whiskered, Scarlet-browed, Gray-and-gold, and Tawny-crested Tanagers, and much more.

-Overnight: Septimo Paraiso
**September 11: Reserva Amagusa and Oilbird Cave - Transfer to Quito**

After breakfast, we'll travel to Reserva Amagusa where we will visit a couple fruit feeding stations and spend time birding along the road and trails. Many species visit the feeders and occur in the surrounding forest, but our main targets for the morning will be Indigo Flowerpiercer, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Black Solitaire, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, and Moss-backed, Glistening-green, Rufous-throated, and Beryl-spangled Tanagers. Afterwards, we'll travel to the Oilbird Cave in hopes of seeing this enigmatic bird before returning to Quito for the night.

- **Overnight: San Jose de Puembo Garden Hotel**

**September 12: Antisana National Park - Transfer to Termas de Papallacta**

After breakfast, we'll head for Antisana National Park where we'll search for Andean Condor, Black-faced Ibis, Paramo Pipit, Black-winged Ground-Dove, and other paramo specialties. We will also take a hike to Suco Lake in search of Silvery Grebe and other waterbirds. On our way to Papallacta Pass, we'll target the Giant Hummingbird, which feeds on the strange Puya Puya plant. Then we'll take the Old Papallacta Route to look for Viridian Metaltail and the rare Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant.

When we get to the pass, our main targets will be Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe and Ecuadorian Hillstar. Afterwards, we'll explore the unique Polylepis Forest (the only tree hardy enough to grow at an altitude of over 9,500 feet) and look for mixed flocks which will hopefully include sought-after birds such as Giant Conebill, White-chinned Thistletail, and Black-backed Bush Tanager. We'll then settle into the cozy Guango Lodge for the next two nights.

- **Overnight: Termas de Papallacta or similar**

**September 13: Guango Lodge and the Elfin Forest**

Early this morning, we will drive to the Elfin Forest to look for rare and endangered species such as Masked Mountain-Tanager, Paramo Tapaculo, and Agile Tit-Tyrant, among others. We'll allow time to revisit the Polylepis Forest to search for any previously missed target species before heading Guango Lodge.

The feeders at Guango allow "in-your-face" views of many highly sought-after hummingbirds, including Sword-billed Hummingbird! Other special hummers include Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Mountain Velvet-breast, Tourlamine Sunangel, and Mountain Avocetbill. We will walk the nearby trails looking for mixed flocks and also check the Papallacta River for Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper.

- **Overnight: Termas de Papallacta or similar**
September 14: Birding at Guango Lodge and La Brisa - Transfer to Cabañas San Isidro

After an early breakfast, we'll spend the morning in the forest around the lodge looking for Black-capped Hemispingus, Barred Becard, Turquoise Jay, Lacrimose and Hooded Mountain-Tanagers, and the rare, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan. After lunch, we'll make a couple birding stops as we head downslope to Cabañas San Isidro. One of the stops will be at La Brisa. This location has great hummingbird feeders, and we may see such gems as Booted (Peruvian) Racket-tail, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Gorgeted and White-bellied Woodstars, Long-tailed Sylph, and Bronzy Inca. We'll also be keeping an eye out for a large number of passerines that can also occur around the feeders.
- Overnight: Cabañas San Isidro

September 15: Full day at Cabañas San Isidro

We'll spend the day exploring the trails around the lodge property, looking for such gems as Crested Quetzal, Masked Trogon, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and Inca Jay. Few birds can compete with the tanagers when it comes to "feathered jewels", so we'll search for as many as we can find, including White-capped, Saffron-crowned, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, and Blue-and-black Tanagers, and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager. Come nightfall, we will search for the "San Isidro Owl", the lodge's famous "mystery owl" which may eventually be designated a new species!
- Overnight: Cabañas San Isidro

September 16: Wayra Reserve and Loreto Road - Transfer to Wildsumaco

After an early breakfast, we will drive to the Wayra Reserve. The owners of this reserve feed Rufous-breasted Wood-Quails, which are usually very difficult to see. Afterwards, we'll visit Loreto Road in the foothills of the Andes, known for its wide variety of birds such as Paradise, Orange-eared, Golden-eared, and Magpie Tanagers, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Cliff Flycatcher, and Golden-collared Toucanet. We will enjoy the mixed flocks here before continuing our journey to Wildsumaco.
- Overnight: Wildsumaco

September 17: Wildsumaco

Before breakfast, we'll visit the moth hide where White-chested Puffbird, Western Fire-eye, Black-faced Antbird, and more occur. After an early breakfast, we'll spend the day exploring the trails and main road looking for mixed flocks, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Gray-tailed Piha, and Blue-rumped Manakin. We should see at least 15 species at the hummingbird feeders, included Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Booted Racket-tail (orange boots), and much
more. Other species we hope to see include Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, Golden-collared Toucanet, White-tipped Sicklebill, Blackish Rail, Red-billed Tyrannulet, Yellow-breasted Antwren, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Coraya Wren, Foothill Antwren, Rufous-breasted Piculet, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, and more species of tanagers such as Magpie, White-lined, Silver-beaked, Blue-browed, Orange-eared, Spotted, Yellow-bellied and Golden-eared. At dusk, we’ll try for Band-bellied Owl and Foothill Screech-Owl.

- **Overnight: WildSumaco**

**September 18: Birding and transfer back to Quito**

After breakfast, we will focus on finding species we may have missed along the eastern slope and then make our way back to Quito. In the evening, we’ll check into the hotel and have our farewell dinner.

It is possible to catch an overnight flight back to the United States this evening. If you would prefer to do this, you can be transferred to the airport after our farewell dinner.

- **Overnight: San Jose de Puembo Garden Hotel**

**September 19: Departure from Quito**

You will be transferred to the airport for your flights home. If you have an evening flight, contact us to set up a day trip!
**Trip Details:**

**Cost:**
Price per person (double occupancy), from Quito, Ecuador: $6,399  
Single Supplement: $750  
Minimum Participants: 8  
Maximum Participants: 10

**Price Includes:**
- 2 Expert Guides  
- Ground Transportation in Ecuador  
- All Lodging  
- All Meals  
- Park Entrance Fees  
- Portion of Proceeds Donated to Schoodic Institute

**Price Does Not Include:**
- Airfare to and from Quito, Ecuador  
- Airport Taxes  
- Passport and Visa Fees  
- Alcoholic Beverages  
- Personal Items  
- Travel Insurance  
- Tips

**Deposit:**
A deposit of $500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (June 6, 2025).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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