



Ecuador

Exploring the Northern Andes

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma

September 5-18, 2026

Itinerary Overview:

September 5: Arrival at Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO) - Transfer to Hotel in Quito
September 6: Zuro Loma Reserve and Alambi Reserve - Transfer to Septimo Paraíso
September 7: Refugio Paz de las Aves and Milpe Bird Sanctuary
September 8: Birdwatcher's House and Septimo Paraíso
September 9: Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary and Sendero Frutti
September 10: Reserva Amagusa and Oilbird Cave - Transfer to Quito
September 11: Antisana National Park - Transfer to Termas de Papallacta
September 12: Elfin Forest and Guango Lodge
September 13: Papallacta, La Brisa, and Cabañas San Isidro - Transfer to Cabañas San Isidro
September 14: Cabañas San Isidro
September 15: Wayra Reserve - Transfer to Wildsumaco
September 16: Wildsumaco Lodge and Entrance Road
September 17: Birding the Eastern Slope of the Andes - Transfer to Quito
September 18: Departure from Quito

Detailed Itinerary:

September 5: 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 6: Zuro Loma Reserve and Alambi Reserve - Transfer to Septimo Paraíso

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 much of the morning watching their feeders and the surrounding forest. The property owners have started feeding Equatorial and Chestnut-naped Antpittas as well as Ocellated Tapaculo. While waiting for these species, we'll keep an eye on the feeders and have a chance to see over 10 species of hummingbirds including Black-tailed and Green-tailed Train-bearers with their amazingly long tails, Sword-billed Hummingbird with its amazingly long bill, and the striking Collared Inca. The fruit feeders usually attract Andean Guan, Gray-browed and Yellow-breasted Brushfinches, and several species of tanagers and flowerpiercers! We could also see Andean Pygmy-Owl, White-throated Screech-Owl, Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant, Black-crested Warbler, and a few species of tanagers including Golden-crowned!

After a great morning of birding, we will drop in elevation and make a stop at Alambi Reserve. We will enjoy a picnic lunch here while watching their excellent fruit and hummingbird feeders. The numbers of hummingbirds are usually incredible and we can expect to see over 15 species here. We will also be watching for some spectacular species at the fruit such as Crimson-rumped Toucanet,

Red-headed Barbet, and Blue-necked and Golden Tanagers. A check of the nearby river could also yield White-capped Dippers or Torrent Ducks. After we're finished here, we will make the rest of our drive to Septimo Paraíso where we will be spending the next four nights before returning to Quito.

-Overnight: Septimo Paraíso

The order in which we visit all of the locations over the next four days is subject to change, depending on weather conditions.

September 7: 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 Paraíso



Giant Antpitta

September 8: Birdwatcher's House and Septimo Paraíso

After breakfast, we'll drive to the Tandayapa Valley where the Birdwatcher's House is located. This private reserve has a moth light and throughout the early morning, we could see many species

coming into the moth light to catch their breakfast. Some of the possibilities include Masked Trogon, Stong-billed Woodcreeper, Streak-capped Treehunter, Turquoise Jay, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, and Russet-crowned Warbler! At some point in the morning, we will spend some time at their fruit feeders which attract many species of tanagers and the star of the show, the Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan!

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 Paraíso

September 9: Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary and Sendero Frutti

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 and thus has many species we won't have a chance to see during the rest of our trip. Once we arrive at the reserve, we will take a short walk to their 50 foot canopy tower where we will spend at least a few hours birding at eye level with the tops of the trees. Some of the specialty species of the region that we'll be looking for include Blue-tailed and White-tailed Trogons, Orange-fronted Barbet, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Choco Tyrannulet, Gray-and-gold and Blue-whiskered Tanagers, and Black-faced and Scarlet-breasted Dacnis. A walk on the trails through the forest could produce some difficult to find species such as Lanceolated Monklet, Black-headed Antthrush, and Western Woodhaunter. We will also spend some time at their hummingbird feeders where we hope to see Purple-chested and Violet-bellied Hummingbirds.



Orange-fronted Barbet

After our morning of birding, we'll make a short drive to Sendero Frutti where we will have lunch while we watch their feeders. They have an assortment of hummingbird, fruit, and seed feeders that

can bring in a diverse list of birds. Some of the species we may see here include Rufous Motmot, Orange-fronted Barbet, Black-cheeked and Golden-olive Woodpeckers, Thick-billed Euphonia, and Dusky-faced and White-lined Tanagers. After enjoying some time here, we will drive back to our lodge to enjoy some time on its grounds.

-Overnight: Septimo Paraíso

September 10: Mashpi-Amagusa Reserve and Oilbird Cave - Transfer to Quito

We'll make an early drive this morning to arrive at Mashpi-Amagusa Reserve at sunrise. This reserve has a moth light that attracts moths overnight. When the morning comes, the birds come to feed on the moths. Many forest species can be difficult to see while out birding along trails, but some of those come right out in the open at the moth light. Some of our highlights could include Zeledon's Antbird, Scaly-throated and Lineated Foliage-gleaners, Uniform and Streak-capped Treehunters, and Black Solitaire. There are also some seed feeders near the light where we will be watching for White-throated Quail-Dove and Dark-backed Wood-Quail. This is also a great spot to watch the local flock of Rose-faced Parrots that come to feed just off the deck! After breakfast, we will take a walk to bird the forest edge and visit several feeder setups. We may run into a mixed flock in the forest, Orange-breasted Fruiteaters, or the rare Rufous-brown Solitaire. The feeders are sure to bring many highlights including Toucan Barbet, Moss-backed, Glistening-green, Rufous-throated, and Flame-faced Tanagers, Golden-collared Honeycreeper and much more!



Orange-breasted Fruiteater

Afterwards, we'll drive a couple of hours to a cave with nesting Oilbirds in hopes of seeing this enigmatic bird before driving back to Quito.

-Overnight: San Jose de Puembo Garden Hotel

September 11: Antisana National Park - Transfer to Termas de Papallacta

After breakfast, we'll head for Antisana National Park where we will be birding at elevations above 12,000 feet. As we get close to the park, we'll stop at a small restaurant and hotel where Giant Hummingbird can be found. This area also has a good view of cliffs where Andean Condors are regular. Then, we will continue on to the reserve where we will search for Andean Condor, Black-faced Ibis, Paramo Pipit, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Ecuadorian Hillstar, and other paramo specialties. We will also take a walk along Mica Lake in search of Silvery Grebe and other waterbirds.



Giant Hummingbird

On our way to Papallacta Pass, 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. After we finish birding, we'll head to our cozy mountain lodge nestled in the nearby mountains.

-Overnight: Termas de Papallacta or similar

September 12: Elfin Forest and Guango Lodge

On this morning, we will spend time birding the nearby elfin forest to look for rare and endangered species such as Masked Mountain-Tanager, Paramo Tapaculo, and Agile Tit-Tyrant, among others. We'll also allow time to revisit patches of Polylepis Forest to search for any previously missed target species.

Afterwards, we will drive to Guango Lodge where we will spend the afternoon birding their beautiful property. 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 Velvetbreast, 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



Sword-billed Hummingbird

September 13: Papallacta, La Brisa, Cabañas San Isidro - Transfer to Cabañas San Isidro

After an early breakfast, we'll decide where to spend time birding depending on what species we may have missed during our time in this area. Once we are finished, we will stop at La Brisa. This location has great hummingbird feeders, and we may see such gems as 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. In the afternoon, we will continue on our way to our lodge, and will likely have some time to spend some time birding around the grounds.

-Overnight: Cabañas San Isidro

September 14: Cabañas San Isidro

This wonderful property has plenty of birding to keep us busy all day! We'll start out by visiting a few lights that attract moths overnight. In the morning, birds come in to see what they might be able to find around the lights for breakfast! Then we'll join one of the workers from the lodge as they call in and feed a White-bellied Antpitta. We'll spend the rest of the morning and likely some of the afternoon birding in this amazing area. Some of the highlight species we might find include Crested Quet-

zal, Masked Trogon, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Green (Inca) Jay, White-capped, Saffron-crowned, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, and Blue-and-black Tanagers, and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager.

At some point during the day, we will likely drive a short distance to the town of Cosanga where we can check the river for Torrent Ducks as well as some other birds that won't be found at the lodge's property. After dinner, we'll take a short night hike to search for the "San Isidro Owl" (currently classified as Black-banded Owl), the lodge's famous "mystery owl" which may eventually be designated a new species!

-Overnight: *Cabañas San Isidro*



Wire-crested Thorntail

September 15: Wayra Reserve - Transfer to Wildsumaco Lodge

After an early breakfast, we will drive to the Wayra Reserve. The owners of this reserve have feeders that attract Rufous-breasted Wood-Quails and Gray-fronted Doves, both of which are difficult to see when birding in the forest. Many species of hummingbirds can also be seen including the spectacular Wire-crested Thorntail and Spangled Coquette. Some other flashy species that we may see here include Red-headed Barbet, Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher, Paradise, Spotted, and Swallow Tanagers, and Black-faced Dacnis. After our visit, we will continue on to WildSumaco Lodge where we will be staying for the next two nights.

-Overnight: *Wildsumaco Lodge*

September 16: Wildsumaco Lodge and Entrance Road

Before breakfast, we'll visit the moth hide where White-chested Puffbird, Western Fire-eye, Black-faced Antbird, and more occur. After 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 of hummingbirds at the feeders, included Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Peruvian Racket-tail, and much more. Other species we hope to see include Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, Golden-collared Toucanet, White-tipped Sick-lebill, 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 Lodge



Peruvian Racket-tail

September 17: Birding the Eastern Slope of the Andes - Transfer 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 18: 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: \$6,599

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

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 7, 2026).

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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