

**ECUADOR:
AMAZONIA AT NAPO WILDLIFE CENTER
JANUARY 6–15, 2012**

**ECUADOR: EASTERN SLOPE OF THE ANDES
JANUARY 13–23, 2012**

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From the lush Amazonian rainforests to the high Andean paramos, Ecuador is indeed a special place, boasting good access to birding habitat, unsurpassed scenic splendor, friendly people, and a stable government. Incredibly, over 1,600 species of birds have been recorded in the country, in an area smaller than the state of Colorado! Among them are many of the most spectacular and distinctive Neotropical species. “Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center” and “Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes” have been designed to sample this magnificent avifauna in two choice areas, representing very different regions. Between them, they offer a full range of birding possibilities.

Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center features the exciting and very comfortable Napo Wildlife Center in the Río Napo lowlands of northeastern Ecuador. This area lies within the most diverse avifaunal zone in the world, the vast rainforests of upper Amazonia. Located within the huge Yasuni National Park, at one million hectares the largest in Ecuador, the Center is a model in sustainable development, born of the vision of the local indigenous community of Añangu. The lodge is located on the beautiful “Laguna de Añangu,” one of the very few pristine areas remaining in the Napo River drainage, thanks to the care of this small, environmentally conscious community that is the custodian of some 25,000 hectares (that’s 100 sq. miles)! Over the years, a lot of pressure has been exerted on the community to open up this marvelous area to oil exploitation. The Añangu have stood fast against this tide to achieve their ultimate dream—to build and run their own jungle lodge. Their vision is one of a healthy environment, one that will support their traditional way of life, while at the same time keeping them connected to a constantly more globalized world through sustainable management. Every member of the village has been involved in the planning and construction of this new lodge. Hunting was discontinued years ago by unanimous decision and the local school has been preparing its students with comprehensive courses in conservation, ecology and ecotourism.

The lowland rainforests of Amazonia, superficially so uniform in appearance, are marvelously complex in reality. They are home to a web of species inhabiting every imaginable niche, and nearly 600 species of birds have been recorded at the Napo Wildlife Center. The full array of lowland birds is present, including large raptors, guans and macaws. Antbirds are numerous and diverse, and mixed-flocks of a great variety of birds regularly forage through the understory and sub-canopy here. Clay licks along the Napo River and inside the forest attract large numbers of parrots, and blackwater swamps and river islands add yet another dimension to birding. Two sturdy towers provide great opportunities for viewing the forest canopy and its special inhabitants. Of course, part

of the allure of the rainforest lies in the fact that one never knows what might appear. Seeing birds in this environment is not always easy and will undoubtedly challenge us, but we will surely experience many wonderful surprises here at the Napo Wildlife Center.

Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes explores the heart of the magnificent Ecuador Andes. Within easy reach is an incredible transect of habitats, from lush foothill and subtropical forests to temperate cloud forests, stunted subalpine scrub and treeless paramo. Without a doubt, the Andes offer the world's most spectacular mountain birding.

The scenic Andes Mountains are just as complex as the Ecuadorian lowlands, and the forests of these slopes harbor the richest montane avifauna found anywhere. There are few places where birders have access to a good cross-section of these slopes, and Northern Ecuador is perhaps foremost among them for easy access. Zonation is complex here, and many birds are restricted to narrow elevational bands, not occurring above or below, so we'll bird these spectacular mountains from the foothills to the paramo. Several roads traverse various elevations offering a fantastic assortment of little-known birds, while trails at Wild Sumaco and San Ysidro give us access to the lush forest interior. Outstanding in the Andes are the tanagers and hummingbirds, two of the most colorful and entertaining families of birds in the Neotropics, and we will see literally dozens of species of both. Among the long list of other possibilities are such fabulous birds as Torrent Duck; Wattled Guan; Andean Condor; Black-and-chestnut Eagle; Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe; Crested and Golden-headed quetzals; Coppery-chested Jacamar; Crimson-mantled Woodpecker; Amazonian Umbrellabird; Andean Cock-of-the-rock; and mountain-tanagers.

These two tours have been planned to show you a wide array of birds, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding the tropics we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing and more active. Most days we will be up early, and some days we will be afield all day (especially in the cooler mountains). Much of our travel and birding in the lowlands will be from boats, especially dugout canoes. Here we can also expect heat and humidity, while some rain is possible (which, of course, are why these forests are so incomparably lush). Accommodations at Napo Wildlife Center are very comfortable and far more than adequate (the best in the region), but are of necessity relatively simple. On the Eastern Slope, lodges are also more than adequate but relatively simple. These trips have been planned to show you some of the best of Ecuador, but may be too strenuous for those not in good health or not wishing to spend a good portion of their time in the field.

ECUADOR: AMAZONIA AT NAPO WILDLIFE CENTER JANUARY 6–15, 2012

January 6, Day 1: Miami to Quito. Participants are encouraged to fly to Quito on either American Airlines from Miami or Continental Airlines from Houston, which are both scheduled to arrive in the evening. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. If you feel you need time to acclimate to the time zone and altitude, you may want to arrive a day early. Please also keep in mind that there could be flight delays due to bad weather at this time of year.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 7, Day 2: To Napo Wildlife Center. After breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport for our flight over the eastern cordillera of the Andes to the bustling frontier town of Francisco de Orellana, better known as Coca. Then we will take a short drive to the local port on the north bank of the Río Napo. Here we'll board our comfortable covered boat (yes, complete with outboard motor), and journey downstream for about two and a half hours to the Napo Wildlife Center landing site. The birding along the river can be productive, but just watching the river as we slowly glide away from civilization is also fascinating. Our local guides will meet us at the Napo Wildlife Center landing and ferry us by paddled canoe (no motor) along the forested Añanguyacu stream to the lodge. Obviously, we'll be birding and animal watching the entire way! Aside from many birds, this "introductory" ride also offers excellent chances for seeing primates. White-bellied spider, red howler, common squirrel, and dusky titi monkeys; brown capuchin; and golden-mantled tamarin are among the possibilities. After settling into our rooms, we'll receive a brief orientation to the workings and norms of the lodge and enjoy our welcome toast and dinner.

NIGHT: Napo Wildlife Center

January 8-13, Days 3-8: Napo Wildlife Center. Based in the comfort of these ecologically designed accommodations, we'll spend six days exploring and experiencing this magnificent area. We will quietly paddle and float along in dugout canoes, exploring the lake edge and the densely enshrouded blackwater streams in search of parrots, trogons, kingfishers, jacamars, nunbirds, barbets, aracarís and toucans, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and much more. A very sturdy tower will give us the chance to spot the denizens of the high canopy. We'll scout trails through low-lying várzea (seasonally-flooded) and upland terra firme (rich and well-drained) forest, our ears and eyes attentive to any sound or movement. We will be on the lookout for swarms of army ants with their attendant antbirds, and mixed foraging flocks in the midstory and canopy. Our local guides are incredibly keen and know the exact territories of many of the more skulking species and we'll have excellent chances of seeing many of the most notoriously "difficult" species here. We will also make a trip out to the Napo River to visit a "saladero" where literally hundreds of parrots can be seen at close range from strategically built blinds. There will be some time to relax back at the lodge during midday breaks—believe it or not, you can bird from your very own hammock!

The species possibilities at the Napo Wildlife Center are too great to list here, but we will be in the realm of the richest avian diversity on earth, including tinamous; Zigzag, Agami and Capped herons; King and Greater Yellow-headed vultures; many raptors, including the magnificent Harpy Eagle (we would be very lucky to see one, but it is possible); guans; a wide array of macaws and parrots; Hoatzin; trogons; jacamars; and a great variety of antbirds, manakins, Black-necked Red-Cotinga, tanagers and more—well, it just goes on and on!! Almost 600 species of birds have been recorded here, and we will certainly find a lot of them.

NIGHTS: Napo Wildlife Center

January 14, Day 9: Return to Quito (or continue on Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes). This morning we'll leave the lodge early and work our way to the Río Napo by canoe, transferring to our covered motorized boat for the trip back to Coca. Participants **not** continuing on to the Eastern Slope tour will fly back to Quito, arriving in the early afternoon. You will have the rest of the afternoon on your own to explore Quito, relax, shop, or even catch up on your email at one of the nearby internet cafes.

Participants continuing on to the Eastern Slope tour will meet incoming participants in Coca, have lunch, and then continue on to Wildsumaco Lodge. Please refer to the following itinerary for further details.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 15, Day 10: Departure for Home. Transfers will be provided to the Quito airport in time for the morning departures beginning at around 7:00 a.m.

ECUADOR: EASTERN SLOPE OF THE ANDES

JANUARY 13–23, 2012

January 13, Day 1: Miami to Quito. Participants **not** continuing from *Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center* are encouraged to arrive in Quito tonight on either American Airlines from Miami or Continental Airlines from Houston, which are both scheduled to arrive in the evening. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. If you feel you need time to acclimate to the time zone and altitude, you may want to arrive a day early. Please also keep in mind that there could be flight delays due to bad weather this time of year.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 14, Day 2: Travel Day to Coca and Wildsumaco. Participants arriving for the Eastern Slope tour will be transferred to the airport for a mid-morning flight to Coca, where they will be met by the leaders and participants continuing on from Napo Wildlife Center. After lunch in Coca the group will travel up into the foothills of the east-slope to Wildsumaco Lodge. This lovely new lodge has opened up a new realm of possibilities for birding the upper tropical zone. We should arrive here with time left to enjoy our first sampling of the hummingbird feeders and perhaps even catch the local toucans giving their late afternoon chorus, or a flight of Chestnut-fronted Macaws or Red-billed Parrots en route to the roosts. And, by starting in the foothills “at the bottom” of our transect at 4,500 ft., we will be working our way up to the higher elevations through the course of the week.

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge

January 15-16, Days 3-4: Wild Sumaco Area. With the opening of Wildsumaco Lodge we finally have a comfortable place to stay in the foothills, off the highway and amidst great habitat at a site chosen and designed by birders. The foothill birds are a unique mix from both the tropics and the cooler subtropical regions and this zone has the highest species diversity in the mountains. It is the heart of “the tanager zone,” where these colorful and entertaining birds reach their greatest diversity. Typically they roam through the forest and edge in fast-moving mixed-flocks, their names only hinting at their beauty, as in Paradise, Golden-eared, Turquoise, Silver-beaked, Orange-eared and Golden, for example. Numerous other species tag along with these flocks, including Red-headed Barbet, Lafresnaye’s Piculet, foliage-gleaners and woodcreepers, and numerous small flycatchers. Here too are trails allowing access to the forest interior and some of its more secretive inhabitants. Hummingbird feeders attract a number of species, including such rarely-seen ones as Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail and Gould’s Jewelfront. We also have a chance of spotting such spectacular birds as the Coppery-chested Jacamar, Golden-collared Toucanet, Black-mandibled Toucan and Scarlet-chested Fruiteater here, among others.

NIGHTS: Wildsumaco Lodge

January 17, Day 5: Wildsumaco to San Isidro. A final morning in the Wildsumaco area will give us another chance to chase tanager flocks and other foothill specialties. From here we will climb the short distance back up Huacamayo Ridge to the pass at 7,200 ft, the weather dictating the stops that we will make. On a clear day the views from this out-lying ridge are fantastic, the heavily-forested valleys rolling away towards the Amazon basin. On the other hand, the birds are more likely to be out moving around if it is cloudy or misty; we will stop for any mixed-flocks encountered. By late afternoon we will arrive at San Isidro Labrador, a family-operated farm that takes in guests and is our headquarters for the next three nights. Though the rooms are simple, you will appreciate the gracious Ecuadorian hospitality and renowned gourmet food here, not to mention the abundance of birds close at hand.

NIGHT: Cabanas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 18-19, Days 6-7: San Isidro Area. At 6,600 ft. in elevation, San Isidro is in the heart of the wet subtropical zone in all its natural splendor, and we'll have two full days to explore these forests. Here's how Frank Chapman described this habitat:

“Every available foot of ground is claimed by parasitic or epiphytic vegetation. This marvelous Subtropical Zone occupies the humid mountain slopes from the upper limit of the Tropical Zone to an altitude of from 8,000 to 9,500 feet and extends from Bolivia to Mexico. It is remarkable not alone for the richness of its life but for the high percentage of species found only within its boundaries. Protective coloration is at a discount in the Subtropical Zone. The density of vegetation protects and, among arboreal birds at least, color unchecked runs riot. Every day brought beautiful creatures we had never seen before.”

San Isidro is one of the best places in the world to bird this rich zone and the possibilities seem endless here. At the first hint of dawn the thrushes and Andean Solitaires sing. Soon, as it becomes light, the bushes suddenly come alive with birds attracted to the lodge lights for insects. Typically the Green Jays, oropendolas and Subtropical Caciques arrive first, but soon tanagers, woodcreepers, flowerpiercers, flycatchers, and other small birds arrive, yielding remarkably close looks as they forage close at hand. As the morning progresses great blankets of cloud sweep up the slopes, bathing the forest in mist. As the clouds appear, the mixed-flocks in the forest near the lodge seem to become their most active. Amidst the seemingly endless array of tanagers are such gems as Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Handsome and Cinnamon flycatchers, Barred Becard, Rufous Wren, Black-billed Peppershrike, Black-crested and Russet-crowned warblers, and Bluish Flowerpiercer. To experience a huge mixed-flock in the subtropics is one of the supreme joys—or utmost frustrations—of Neotropical birding. Sometimes the flocks are hard to locate, or the light is poor and the birds move off rapidly. At other times, however, they linger and forage deliberately, providing a spectacular visual feast as one species after another comes into view. Among the many other special possibilities in this region are Black-and-chestnut Eagle; Wattled and Sickle-winged guans; Red-billed, Speckle-faced and Scaly-naped parrots; Golden-headed and Crested quetzals, Masked Trogon; Powerful Woodpecker; Rufous-crowned Tody-Tyrant (tiny!); Dusky Piha, and Andean Cock-of-the-rock. The diversity of hummingbirds here is high, and they can be spotted zipping around from the understory to the canopy. With such a profusion of flowers to choose from, they are not concentrated and can be frustrating to see at times, but eventually we should get good looks at many of the species possible, including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Speckled Hummingbird, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, and Long-tailed Sylph.

NIGHTS: Cabanas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 20, Day 8: San Isidro Labrador to Papallacta. Taking leave of San Isidro, we will climb higher into the mountains, to the temperate zone. Along the roadside the forest is patchy, but extensive second-growth remains near the road, and sample stops should produce a number of birds restricted to this zone. We might encounter a band of Turquoise Jays or a mixed-species flock with Hooded and Blue-winged mountain-tanagers; Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant; Spectacled Redstart; Blue-backed Conebill; Grass-green Tanager or perhaps even Northern Mountain Caciques. Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers are found along the rushing, boulder-strewn river and hummingbirds are diverse in this region. In the afternoon we will travel the short distance to our lovely hotel, with private thermal baths. The scrubby tree line forest just above the lodge is home to special hummingbirds like the Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Shining Sunbeam and Viridian Metaltail, while brilliant Scarlet-bellied and Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers tend to “lead” the mixed-flocks of conebills, hemispingus and other small birds that forage through the bushes here.

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

January 21, Day 9: Papallacta Area. Just above the Termas and the quiet village of Papallacta lie the great peaks and ridges of the eastern Andes, and the road to Papallacta Pass quickly ascends to the alpine zone known as the paramo. Here, above timberline, strange plants bloom in the tundra-like bogs, and there are isolated stands of elfin *Polylepis* woodland on the protected slopes. Much of today will be spent birding this environment. Most of

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the birds of these habitats are more typical of the cool temperate regions far to the south, among them chat-tyrants, Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. Here we'll begin to develop a feel for the incredible adaptive radiation within the ovenbird family, whose members fill niches which in North America would be occupied by many different families. Among the species possible today are the Stout-billed and Bar-winged cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Pearled Treerunner, White-chinned Thistletail, and Many-striped Canastero. With luck and decent weather, we might spot some of the raptors typical of this zone, while the stunted trees shelter specialties like the Tawny Antpitta, Red-crested Cotinga, Giant Conebill, Black-backed Bush-Tanager, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. Several remarkable hummingbirds occur this high, including Chimborazo Hillstar and Blue-mantled Thornbill. At the highest elevation reached (13,000+ ft.), we will make a special search for the ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe (weather permitting), after which another night at the Termas gives us a chance for a relaxing soak before dinner!

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

January 22, Day 10: Antisana Reserve; to Quito. Our final day afield will be spent exploring Antisana Reserve, in the shadow of imposing snow-clad Antisana Volcano (at least when it isn't covered by clouds!). Much of this area is high-elevation grassland known as "paramo." Here it is lightly-grazed and raptors are more numerous than on most paramos. The huge and spectacular Andean Condor is spotted regularly (in fact, our chances of seeing one are pretty good) and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Carunculated Caracara and Variable ("Puna") Hawk are typical. Laguna Micacocha, a water supply reservoir for the city of Quito, still supports tiny remnant populations of Silvery Grebe and Andean (Black-faced) Ibis, two species largely gone from Ecuador, while other birds typical of this area include Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Black-winged Ground-Dove, several high-elevation cinclodes and flycatchers, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. The Chimborazo (or Ecuadorian) Hillstar, a gorgeous hummingbird that spends its entire life above tree-line, is reasonably common in patches of low scrub and we should see them today. It should all combine to make for an exhilarating finish to our Andean birding before the short drive back to Quito, our transect complete.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 23, Day 11: Departure for Home. Transfers will be provided to the Quito airport in time for the morning departures beginning at around 7:00 a.m.

TOUR SIZE: Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center will be limited to 6 participants. Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes will be limited to 14 participants

TOUR LEADERS: David Wolf will lead both tours. Paul Greenfield will co-lead with David on Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes.

David Wolf is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975, where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't stopped since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience throughout the world, emphasizing North America and the Neotropics. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history, which he shares readily with tour participants. David and his wife, Mimi, live on a small farm in Nacogdoches, Texas, with assorted horses, cats, and dogs. They have two grown children, Matt and Elena, and are now the happy grandparents of Reimer and Ellison Rose, Matt and Tiffany's children.

Paul Greenfield grew up near New York City and became interested in birds as a child. He received his B.F.A. from Temple University where he was an art major at the Tyler School of Art. Since 1972, he has lived in Ecuador where his fascination for birds and art has culminated with the completion of 20 years of work illustrating *The Birds of Ecuador*, which he co-authored with Robert Ridgely. Paul is very involved in saving

Ecuador's avian diversity and important habitats through his involvement with various foundations, as well as working with local government and communities to encourage their involvement in the protection of "their" biodiversity and the promotion of birding tourism in Ecuador. He has been showing visitors the birds of this fascinating country for over two decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. He and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for *Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center* is **\$3,635** and the fee for *Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes* is **\$3,485**. Both tour fees are per person based on double occupancy from Quito. Tour fees include: all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 9 for the Napo Wildlife Center tour; breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 10 for the Eastern Slope tour; accommodations as stated in each itinerary, internal flights, ground transportation during the tours, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Quito and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tours do not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

Those participants taking both tours will receive a combined tour discount of \$500.

The single supplement for *Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center* is **\$945** and the single supplement for *Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes* is **\$295**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

Register for both tours in single occupancy and receive a combined tour discount of \$565.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for either or both tours, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for each tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: We suggest that you pack in two small duffel bags or one duffel and one medium-sized piece of luggage, plus your carry-on bag. This is for two reasons: (1) **weight must be limited on the internal flights** to/from Coca to approximately 44 pounds per person maximum, including carry-on; (2) if you are combining both tours, the two regions that we cover have rather different climates and while at Napo Wildlife Center, your bag for “Ecuador: Eastern Slope of the Andes” can be stored at our hotel in Quito. For the excursion to The Napo Wildlife Center, we suggest that you pack your clothing in plastic bags (i.e. zip lock) as a precaution against rain or spray from the boats. (You do not need a “dry bag.”) As a precaution, please pack your travel documents, binoculars, medications, basic toiletries, and a change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

CLIMATE: The Napo Wildlife Center is in the tropical lowlands at around 250 meters above sea level. Here you should be prepared for warm nights and warm to hot temperatures midday (the normal daily temperature range is the low 70s to upper 80s or low 90s). Humidity is always high, especially within the forest. We may also get caught in an occasional rain shower.

In the mountains out from Quito, temperatures are generally pleasant during the day; cool in the early morning, to warm at midday (low 60s to 80s). **However,** at higher elevations the temperatures can be as low as the 40s on occasion, and you should be prepared to layer for warmth. Our two nights at Papallacta may be chilly and we recommend thermal underwear to sleep in. There’s a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain, so a good umbrella or rain jacket is essential.

CLOTHING: Dress is casual or informal throughout. Lightweight field clothing is the norm for most areas visited. We suggest **dark** field pants and shirts for forest birding, and lightweight long-sleeved shirts that dry quickly (long sleeves are not essential, but offer additional protection from sun and biting insects). Please wear darker colors, not whites, and avoid startling patterns that frighten the birds. Also important are a hat and sunscreen for sun protection, and a rain jacket, poncho or umbrella. Good footwear is essential, and for this we strongly

suggest waterproof hiking boots. Napo Wildlife Center provides mud boots and has a wide selection of sizes, but if your shoe size is unusual the fit might not be perfect.

At higher elevations on the Eastern Slopes the temperatures can be as low as the 40s on occasion (on three days of the tour) and you should be prepared to layer for warmth, with thermal underwear and/or a warm long-sleeved shirt, plus a warm jacket or sweater. You can shed layers as the day warms up (or add them as it cools down). Consider bringing gloves and a stocking cap if you know that you chill easily, along with thermal underwear or a flannel nightgown for warmth while sleeping. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the east-slope, so a good umbrella or rain jacket is essential. Mud boots are not essential on the east-slope, as long as your footwear is waterproof or at the very least water-resistant. In any case, your footwear for the field should at the very least be rated “water-resistant,” as this is a damp climate and even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

Excellent one-day laundry service is available at Napo Wildlife Center at a reasonable cost, greatly eliminating the need to bring lots of extra clothing. Laundry facilities on the Eastern Slope tour are limited, but all three lodges can do some laundry in a pinch.

CURRENCY: The U.S. dollar is the currency in Ecuador. Cash is needed only for your personal expenses, such as bar bills, laundry, and souvenirs. It is strongly advised that most of your money be in U.S. Dollars. MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diner’s Club are widely accepted in Quito, but as of this writing are not accepted in San Ysidro Labrador (Note: traveler’s checks are NOT recommended in Ecuador).

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Ecuador is required. Visas are not required for United States citizens. You will be issued a tourist card to be completed on board your flight to Quito. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You will want to have a sunhat, sunscreen, and sunglasses for protection from the sun; an umbrella and/or rain jacket; a belt pack or day pack for carrying your field equipment and water bottle; a small flashlight or headlamp; a water bottle; and an alarm clock. Consider bringing an extra pair of binoculars, a few between-meal snacks (such as trail mix, granola bars, dried fruit, nuts, etc), and Kleenex or Handi-wipes. Annoying insects are possible in some areas, so you should bring repellent. We recommend Cutter’s lotion (or a similar product) and a pump-style can of OFF! (no aerosol cans). Topsy gel is useful for reducing irritation from bites and stings, as is cortisone cream. Your leaders will have a spotting scope; but if you wish to bring your own, that is fine. Note, however, that **your tripod cannot be carried on the plane as a hand carry and must be checked as luggage. Again, as a precaution**, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, basic toiletry items, medications and travel documents, and a change of clothing in your carry-on bag.

HEALTH: Yellow fever vaccination is recommended, as well as polio and tetanus. Malaria is present in Ecuador, including the chloroquine-resistant strain and malaria prophylaxis is recommended. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers’ Information Line (800) CDC-INFO. You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

As in most Latin American countries, we recommend drinking only bottled water. Avoid milk products that have not been pasteurized, as well as unpeeled fruits and vegetables.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

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MISC: Departure Tax - \$41.00 USD (approximate; subject to change without notice).
Electricity - 110 volts AC, the same as the U.S.
Language - Spanish, with Quechua or Indian dialects; some English.
Time - Eastern Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com, or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds, Basic Reference

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador*. Cornell University Press. June, 2001. Primary field guide.

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. An alternative field guide but does not have everything known from Ecuador.

Fjeldsa, Jon and Niels Krabbe. *Birds of the High Andes*. Copenhagen: Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen; Svendborg, Denmark: Apollo Books, 1990. A good reference book for the birds of the mountains above 7500 ft, with adequate illustrations, but too large to carry and expensive.

Birds, Additional Reading:

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity." Highly recommended as the most readable and informative book on many different aspects of bird ecology (and birding!) in the Neotropics.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume I, the Oscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989. Excellent reference volumes, with text entries for all species and fantastic illustrations of many. This volume and the next together include all of the passerines.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Volume II, the Suboscine Passerines*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989.

Other:

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, and drivers) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel that one or both of your VENT leaders, or any local guides and drivers, have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 26, 2011, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk

entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.