

ECUADOR: THE NORTHWESTERN ANDEAN SLOPES

NOVEMBER 10-18, 2018

ANTISANA-PAPALLACTA PRE-TRIP

NOVEMBER 6-11, 2018

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Ecuador's spectacular Chocó-Andean bioregion offers extraordinary biodiversity and unsurpassed endemism along with the greatest hummingbird and antpitta shows on earth. This jam-packed, weeklong adventure covers a relatively tiny natural corridor that runs from high-elevation elfin Andean woodland to remnant wet lowland jungle along the Pacific coastal plain while based at a single birding lodge!

Ecuador may well be the epicenter of Neotropical bird diversity, and perhaps no other destination expresses this better than the western slopes of Volcán Pichincha. This region stretches for only some 50 miles to the west of the country's charming capital city, Quito, and holds a phenomenal array of bird species. We will base our "operations" out of Séptimo Paraíso Cloud Forest Reserve in the renowned Mindo Valley and visit a variety of nearby bird sanctuaries, nature reserves and birding hotspots in search of the local avian specialties found here.

Breathtaking dawn vistas greet us on our first morning as we climb over the slopes of the inter-Andean plateau and wind our way up to Yanacocha Reserve. Here—where hummingbirds represent a truly major element of this stunted, moss and epiphyte-covered wonderland—we will search for high-Andean mixed foraging flocks and marvel at the wing-whirr of up to twelve species of these feathered jewels, including the unimaginable Sword-bill! We'll then continue birding onward and constantly down-



slope through temperate and subtropical mountain-forest along Ecuador's first "Ecoroute," a pioneer community-based conservation project that has converted a 54-kilometer country road into a protected sustainable bird-tourism zone, to finally arrive at our destination and "headquarters" for the week.

Nestled in a dramatic, prime montane cloud forest setting, Séptimo Paraíso not only offers comfortable accommodations, excellent cuisine and the best birding opportunities to be found in the area, but it's also strategically located to allow easy access to the key birding sites in this important bioregion. We will take good advantage of each day, working exceptional locations including Río Silanche and Milpe bird sanctuaries, Angel Paz Reserve and the "Paseo del Quinde" Ecoroute.

This is the domain of Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Toucan Barbet, Moss-backed Tanager, Guayaquil Woodpecker, and over 40 hummingbirds and tanagers, among more than 500 possible Neotropical avian specialties, with promises of unforgettable experiences for all.

Ecuador's western Andean slopes offer the world's most incredible biodiversity and our Antisana-Papallacta Pre-Trip has been designed to complement our Northwestern Andes tour in a comfortable and leisurely setting. The birding will be fairly relaxed, the cuisine will be excellent and the scenery will be quite spectacular.

November 10, Day 1: Arrival in Quito. Participants not continuing from the *Antisana-Papallacta Pre-trip* will be met upon arrival at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Most flights to Quito (airport code UIO) from the United States are scheduled to arrive in the evening. Participants may wish to consider arriving a day or two in advance in order to acclimate, do some sightseeing around the beautiful capital city of Quito, or to shop for souvenirs and local crafts. Early arrival is also recommended to avoid complications in the event of flight delays. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 11, Day 2: Quito to Yanacocha Reserve; Then Continuing Along the "Paseo del Quinde" Ecoroute to Séptimo Paraíso. This morning we will have an early breakfast and depart from Quito to wind our way over the northwestern flank of the massive Pichincha Volcano to the Yanacocha Reserve. At over 11,000 feet in altitude, Yanacocha (960 hectares; owned by the Jocotoco Foundation) Reserve's main goal is the protection of the very rare, critically endangered, and endemic hummingbird—the Black-breasted Puffleg. This absolutely beautiful area—with its commanding views of "Guagua" Pichincha Volcano and its deep gorges covered in lush elfin forest—is a hummingbird hangout, simply buzzing with many high-elevation species. We will be looking for Mountain Velvetbreast, Great Sapphirewing, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sapphire-vented and Golden-breasted pufflegs, Purple-backed Thornbill, Tyrian Metaltail, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, and maybe even a Sword-billed Hummingbird or two, most of which visit the series of nectar feeders that are kept up here. The views will be mind-blowing, to say the least! We will walk the relatively flat and easy trail, which is lined with mossy, entangled vegetation; five foot-wide *Gunnera* leaves; an uncanny number of distinct flowering plants; and spectacular vistas. We'll be searching for mixed foraging species flocks, including White-browed Spinetail, White-throated Tyrannulet, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Barred Fruiteater, Red-crested Cotinga, Rufous Wren, Masked and Glossy flowerpiercers, Blue-backed and Cinereous cone-bills, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Blue-and-black Tanager, and Scarlet-bellied and Black-chested mountain-tanagers. We will also be on the lookout for Andean Guan and Undulated and Rufous antpittas, and we might even find an Andean Pygmy-Owl. As the late morning fog rolls in, as it usually does, we will continue our journey down-slope along the "Paseo del Quinde" Ecoroute towards our final destination in the Mindo Valley.

This recently created Ecoroute is a 30-mile long, little-traveled country road that has been converted into a community-based, conservation-through-ecotourism pilot project designed by the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation. Three local communities co-manage the road for bird and nature tourism. They have a reforestation and waste-management program, and are trained in the production of crafts and souvenirs, along with the know-how to provide various tourism and environmental services that will guarantee their wellbeing and improve their economies.

We will spend the remainder of the afternoon working our way along this natural corridor through temperate, subtropical and foothill habitats as we search for a wide variety of montane species, many of them unique to the *world's richest bird area*—often referred to as the Chocó-Andean Endemic Center. The possibilities are almost endless; among them are Black-and-Chestnut Eagle; Red-billed Parrot; Scaly-naped Amazon; Crimson-mantled and Powerful woodpeckers; Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan; Montane and Tyrannine woodcreepers; Streaked Tuftedcheek; Pearled Treerunner; White-tailed Tyrannulet; Streak-necked, Cinnamon, and Golden-crowned flycatchers; Glossy-black Thrush; Plain-tailed Wren; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren; Russet-crowned Warbler; Capped Conebill; Golden, Flame-faced, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, Black-capped and Grass-green tanagers; along with Blue-winged, Black-chinned and Hooded mountain-tanagers and a wide “spectrum” of hummingbird species!

NIGHT: El Séptimo Paraíso, Mindo

November 12-16, Days 3-7: Séptimo Paraíso Grounds and the Mindo-Milpe-Río Silanche Area. The Mindo Valley has become extremely well known over the last decade or so for its incredibly high biodiversity. While basing our “operations” out of Séptimo Paraíso, we will spend the next five days examining a wonderful selection of birding sites, exuberant roadside vegetation and forest trails, bird gardens, and forest reserves while searching for many of the nearly 600 species possible here. The lush, epiphyte-covered forests with their entangled under-stories seem to come to life in an instant. Bursts of mixed feeding flock activity appear to come from out of the blue! We will concentrate on sorting out confusing species and revel in the colorful splendor of this spectacular Neotropical avifauna during these feeding frenzies, trying to “sift” through the gaudy euphonies and tanagers in hopes of identifying some of the more cryptic and secretive denizens. We’ll have plenty of time to check out the hotel’s spectacular hummingbird feeders for some 15 to 20 species, while on the watch for raptors and parrots flying overhead. We will also witness a spectacular dawn feeding session as over a dozen species come to an area where a bright streetlight has attracted moths through the night.

We will head out very early one morning for an unforgettable visit to the Paz Antpitta Reserve. Here we will be accompanied by Angel Paz himself, a local *campesino* who has created a most spectacular birding experience—starting off with a visit to a conveniently placed blind that overlooks an Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek and continue with what has become “the greatest show,” his feeding of at least three species of wild antpittas—Giant, Yellow-breasted, and Moustached—along with a family of Dark-backed Wood-Quails! All of these species are normally extremely difficult to see at best, even with the greatest of luck; but here, Angel does wonders to bring these special birds ridiculously close, calling each individual by name!

We will also take separate day trips to visit two of the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation’s bird sanctuaries—Río Silanche and Milpe—along with other key birding sites (everything is relatively close by) to explore prime lowland and foothill hotspots that offer superb birding opportunities and some of the best conditions for great bird photography to be found anywhere! A canopy tower, nectar and fruit feeders have truly converted this area into a birder’s paradise!

Just a few of the target species we will be after here include Plumbeous Kite; Tiny, Bicolored, Semiplumbeous, Plumbeous and Barred hawks; Black Hawk-Eagle; Wattled and Sickle-winged guans; Sunbittern; Barred, Red-masked and Maroon-tailed parakeets; Red-billed, Blue-headed, Bronze-winged and Rose-faced parrots; Tawny-bellied, White-whiskered and Stripe-throated hermits; Purple-bibbed Whitetip; Buff-tailed and Velvet-purple coronets; Fawn-breasted, Green-crowned and Empress brilliants; Violet-tailed Sylph; Booted Racket-tail; Golden-headed and Crested quetzals; Masked Trogon; Red-headed and Toucan barbets; Chocó and Chestnut-mandibled toucans; Powerful, Guayaquil, Chocó, and Smoky-brown woodpeckers; Uniform, Fasciated, Russet and Great antshrikes; Rufous-rumped, Checker-throated, White-flanked, Slaty, Dot-winged and Moustached antwrens; Stub-tailed and Dusky antbirds; Red-faced Spinetail; Lineated and Buff-fronted foliage-gleaners; Streak-capped and Uniform treehunters; Strong-billed and Black-striped woodcreepers; Double-banded Graytail; Nariño and Spillmann’s tapaculos; Rufous-winged, Black-capped, and Sooty-headed tyrannulets; Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant; Green-and-black, Orange-breasted and Scaled fruiteater; Club-winged, White-bearded, Red-capped and

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Golden-winged manakins; Pale-eyed, Glossy-black, Pale-vented and Ecuadorian thrushes; Sepia-brown, Stripe-throated and Southern Nightingale wrens; Tropical and Slate-throated gnatcatchers; Yellow-collared Chlorophonia (seasonal); Orange-crowned Euphonia; Yellow-tufted, Scarlet-thighed, Scarlet-breasted and Blue dacnises; Glistening-green, Metallic-green, Gray-and-gold, Rufous-throated, Emerald, Silver-throated, Golden-hooded, Rufous-winged, Bay-headed and Scarlet-browed tanagers; Blue Seedeater; Tricolored Brush-Finch; and Yellow-bellied Siskin.

NIGHTS: El Séptimo Paraíso, Mindo

November 17, Day 8: Birding the Ecoruta “El Paseo del Quinde” and Return to Quito. This morning we will take off after breakfast on our return trip to Quito, which takes us back along the “Paseo del Quinde” Ecoroute, which winds up and over what was the original “old” road to Quito. Retracing our first-day’s steps for some 20-30 kms along this route into the Tandayapa Valley, we will have more time to enjoy the spectacular natural conditions being protected here. Today we will allow time to walk various stretches so as not to miss anything. Again, the mixed foraging flocks will be of interest. We will be on the lookout with hopes of finding Sickel-winged Guan; Cloudforest Pygmy-Owl; Green-fronted Lancebill; Wedge-billed Hummingbird; Brown, Green, and Sparkling violet-ears; Western Emerald; Green-crowned Woodnymph; Andean Emerald; Speckled Hummingbird; Empress Brilliant; Brown and Collared incas; Gorgeted Sunangel; Purple-throated, White-bellied and the seasonal Little woodstars; Crested Quetzal; Rufous Spinetail; Pacific Tuftedcheek; Tyrannine Woodcreeper; Chestnut-crowned Antpitta; Ocellated Tapaculo; Barred Becard; Beautiful Jay; Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager; Grass-green Tanager; and the rare and secretive Tanager Finch. Depending on how the day goes, we may spend part of the early afternoon at “Pachaquinde” or Alambi Lodge to revel in the greatest hummingbird show in “town” (or on earth!) and as the afternoon falls upon us, we will head back to Quito. We may make a stop to search for the rare and threatened White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant, if time permits.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 18, Day 9: Departure for Home. Transfers will be provided to the Quito Airport in time for your departing flight.

ANTISANA-PAPALLACTA PRE-TRIP

NOVEMBER 6-11, 2018

Best known for its famous cloud forest habitats, the magnificent Andes of Ecuador also contain a fascinating complexity of high-elevation ecosystems. Existing above the lush forest-world is a realm of sky-high ridges, massive glacier-capped volcanoes that ascend to over 15,000 feet, sweeping plains of grass, and geo-thermally heated springs. On this optional pre-trip to our popular Northwestern Andean Slopes tour, we will explore some of the less visited but intriguing ecosystems of the incomparable Andean cordillera, such as the tundra-like páramo (grasslands), shrub and woodland habitats, and stunning high-temperate and elfin forest—all located relatively close to the colonial capital of Quito.

It is in these cool, often chilly, mountain locations that we will seek a diversity of avian specialties. Our adventure begins with a visit to spectacular Antisana National Park where we will search the páramo for localized birds like Black-faced Ibis, Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Carunculated Caracara, Tawny Antpitta, and Stout-billed Cinclodes. We will scan the skies for the magnificent Andean Condor and a range of raptors including Cinereous Harrier, Black-chested Buzzard-



Eagle, and Aplomado Falcon. In remnant shrubbery we will watch for Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, and White-chinned Thistletail. At Laguna La Mica we will look for Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Teal, Andean Duck, Silvery Grebe, and Slate-colored Coot, among others. Hummingbirds too are of high importance and the flowering shrubs and nectar feeders near our hosteria attract a marvelous array of beautiful species including Sparkling Violetear, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Tyrian Metaltail, Shining Sunbeam, Great Sapphirewing and Giant Hummingbird, while nearby Chuquiragua shrubs will be checked for the enigmatic Ecuadorian Hillstar.

From Antisana we will head north over Papallacta Pass to Termas de Papallacta, a lodge famous for its wonderful thermal baths. Here, we will divide our time between birding the forest and woodland above our hotel and taking advantage of a soothing thermal soak, if desired—a nice combination indeed! These beautiful mountains are home to an assortment of high-elevation specialty birds that often are a challenge to observe. Amid mixed-species foraging flocks we hope to find Crimson-mantled Woodpecker; White-browed Spinetail; Smoky Bush-Tyrant; Red-crested Cotinga; Barred Fruiteater; Spectacled Redstart; Golden-crowned Tanager; an array of glorious mountain-tanagers including Masked, Black-chested, Scarlet-bellied and Buff-breasted; and Black-backed Bush-Tanager among many other possibilities. We should also encounter several other dazzling hummingbirds including Viridian Metaltail, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Great Sapphirewing, and even Glowing Puffleg. If luck is on our side, we might come across two very special mammals of the region: Spectacled Bear and Mountain Tapir.



Volcán Antisana © Paul Greenfield

*Our trip will conclude with a visit to Papallacta Pass, where we will bird scrub and *Polylepis* woodland to (briefly) up to 14,000 feet in search of the very special ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe before returning to Quito to prepare for our Ecuador: The Northwestern Andean Slopes Tour.*

November 6, Day 1: Arrival in Quito. Most flights to Quito (airport code UIO) from the United States are scheduled to arrive in the evening. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Participants may wish to consider arriving a day or two in advance in order to acclimatize, do some sightseeing around the beautiful capital city of Quito, or to shop for souvenirs and local crafts. Early arrival is also recommended to avoid complications in the event of flight delays. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 7, Day 2: Morning Drive to Antisana National Park. We will dedicate today to birding the broad páramo grassland at Antisana National Park, mainly focusing on open country as we climb from the mostly agricultural interandean valley up towards the magnificent glacier-covered Antisana Volcano. At an altitude of 12,500 feet, we will scan the ‘plains’ for Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Black-faced Ibis, Carunculated Caracara (which should be rummaging about on the ground nearby), Stout-billed & Chestnut-winged cinclodes, Páramo Ground-Tyrant, Páramo Pipit and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch as we keep a watchful eye on the open sky above for any of a series of possible raptors, which could include Andean Condor, Cinereous Harrier, Variable Hawk, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Aplomado Falcon, and American Kestrel. We will advance to La Mica Lagoon in search of Silvery Grebe, Andean Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, and Andean (Ruddy) Duck. We will also check some patches of Andean scrub for Black-winged Ground-Dove, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, and Plain-colored Seedeater.

NIGHT: Hotel José Maria, Antisana

November 8, Day 3: Morning Birding Around Hotel José Maria; Drive Over Papallacta Pass to Termas de Papallacta. This morning we will visit a few spots near our lodge to search for temperate-zone species and some

great highland hummingbirds, including the 'huge' Giant Hummingbird, Great Sapphirewing, the unimaginable Sword-billed Hummingbird, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Shining Sunbeam, Tyrian Metaltail and Sparkling Violetear. We will then depart mid-to late-morning from this area and head northward over to Papallacta Pass, with a possible birding stop or two (depending on time) and then continue on to Termas de Papallacta, with time to settle in and even take a soothing soak in their thermal baths, set right outside our rooms.

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

November 9, Day 4: Birding in the Elfin-forested Mountains Above Termas de Papallacta, The spectacular high-Andean habitat found above the thermal springs offers a variety of beautiful avian species that are not always easy to see; we'll combine bouts of birding with breaks to return to the lodge for meals and additional thermal soaks, if 'desired.' Our targets will be, among many, Pearled Treerunner; Agile Tit-Tyrant; Masked, Black-chested, Scarlet-bellied, & Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers; Black-backed Bush-Tanager; and Blue-backed Conebill along with Buff-winged Starfrontlet and Viridian Metaltail.

NIGHT: Termas de Papallacta, Papallacta

November 10, Day 5: Morning Departure from Termas de Papallacta; Return over Papallacta Pass with Birding Stops up to 14,000 Feet. Today we depart Termas de Papallacta after breakfast and return over Papallacta Pass, where we will take a little time to search for the enigmatic and cryptic Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. We will also explore the "old" Papallacta road for several high-elevation specialties, which could include Blue-mantled Thornbill, Andean Tit-Spintail, White-chinned Thistletail, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Red-crested Cotinga, and Giant Conebill. We will return to Quito in time to settle in to our hotel before our final dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

November 11, Day 6: Continue to The Northwestern Andean Slopes or Departure for Home. Participants not continuing to *The Northwestern Andean Slopes* may depart from Quito at any time today.

TOUR SIZE: Both tours will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Paul Greenfield (a second leader will be added if tour size warrants)



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. He is also co-author of *Birds of Western Ecuador, a Photographic Guide* (Princeton University Press) and is presently working with Bob Ridgely on an App for *The Birds of Ecuador*, which hopefully will be available in 2018. 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 four decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. He and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for **Ecuador: The Northwestern Andean Slopes** is **\$3,095** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on November 11 to dinner on November 17, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. It does not include airfare from your home to Quito and return, airport departure taxes,

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alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for **Ecuador: The Northwestern Andean Slopes** is **\$395**. 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.

The fee for the **Antisana-Papallacta Pre-Trip** is **\$2,250** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on November 7 to dinner on November 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. It does 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 tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the **Antisana-Papallacta Pre-Trip** is **\$325**. 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.

Combined Tour Discount: Participants combining Ecuador: The Northwestern Andean Slopes with the Antisana-Papallacta Pre-trip will receive a discount of **\$75** per person in double occupancy and **\$150** in single occupancy.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for each tour section is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, 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 the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

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.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

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.

FUEL & 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 a tour or cruise departure. Prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While VENT will do everything possible to maintain the original price of the cruise or tour, if fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to implement a fuel surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In most cases, these additional fuel costs are being passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers who reserve the right, in their agreements to provide services for VENT, to raise their prices due to significant changes in fuel costs.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: 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 (800-243-3174 or www.travelinsured.com) 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.

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 be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

BAGGAGE: As space in the vehicles is limited, we ask that you limit your baggage to one lockable piece of luggage and a carry-on bag. As a precaution, we suggest you pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, medications, basic toiletries, walking shoes, and travel documents in your carry-on.

CLIMATE: During these tours we will experience two rather different climates. 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, especially during the Antisana-Papallacta Pre-trip, the temperatures can drop to the low 40s on occasion, and you should be prepared to layer for warmth. There is 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. Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary is in the coastal lowlands, and at this site you should be prepared for warm-to-hot temperatures at midday (typically low 70s to low 90s). We may also get caught out in an occasional rain shower.

CLOTHING: Dress is casual or informal throughout the tour. Lightweight field clothing is the norm for most areas visited, with a sweater or jacket for extra warmth. 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 sturdy mud boots or waterproof hiking boots. In any case, your footwear for the field should at the very least be rated “water-resistant,” as this is a damp climate. Even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

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At higher elevations the temperatures can be as low as the low 40s on occasion, and you should be prepared to layer for warmth with 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 warm hat if you know that you chill easily. There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in at least some mist or light rain on the west-slope, so a good umbrella or rain jacket is essential. Mud boots are recommended, but may not be essential here, as long as your footgear is waterproof or at the very least water-resistant. For the main tour, you may wish to bring a bathing suit along, as Séptimo Paraíso has a swimming pool and a hot tub. The hot springs at Termas de Papallacta are a real treat, and you will want a bathing suit for the pre-trip.

Laundry facilities are available at Séptimo Paraíso but are limited on the rest of this tour, so please plan to rinse out some clothing as we go along.

CURRENCY: The U.S. dollar is the currency in Ecuador. Cash is needed only for your personal expenses, such as bar bills, laundry, souvenirs, and international airport departure tax (see below). Please be aware that U.S. traveler's checks are NOT recommended, but U.S. dollars, MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diner's Club credit cards are widely accepted in Quito especially, and most other cities.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Ecuador is required, with at least one blank page for entry stamp. Visas are not required for United States citizens. You will be issued a tourist card to be completed on board your flight to Quito. You must hold onto this until your departure. 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; a belt pack or day pack for carrying your field equipment and water bottle; a small flashlight or headlamp; a washcloth or small hand towel; a water bottle; and an alarm clock. Consider bringing an extra pair of binoculars, some between-meal snacks (such as trail mix, granola bars, dried fruit, nuts, etc), and tissues or wet-wipes. Annoying insects are possible in some areas, so you should bring repellent. We recommend Cutter lotion (or a similar product) and a pump-style container (no cans) of OFF! Topsyn gel is useful for reducing irritation from bites and stings, as is cortisone cream. A sturdy, collapsible walking stick is also recommended for those who feel unsteady on uneven trail surfaces, and will be especially useful at Paz Antpitta Reserve. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you wish to bring your own, that is fine. 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: As in most Latin American countries, we recommend drinking only bottled water, and using no ice in beverages. Also avoid milk products which have not been pasteurized and unpeeled fruits and vegetables. Vaccinations for polio and tetanus are recommended. Malaria is present in Ecuador, including the chloroquine-resistant strain. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their 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).

Speak to your physician if you have any questions about high altitude, especially for those participants joining the Antisana-Papallacta Pre-Trip, as we will be at elevations fluctuating between 9,000-14,000 feet (the highest elevation only briefly).

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.

Zika Virus – This tour visits an area or areas where Zika virus is known to occur or could occur; however, we believe the risk to VENT travelers is extremely low. The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne infection transmitted by mosquitos of the genus *Aedes*, and is related to other tropical diseases: Dengue, Yellow Fever, and West Nile virus. This type of mosquito bites during the day and typically is found in areas of dense human habitation where sanitation and drainage of standing water is poor. Zika virus presents the greatest threat to women of childbearing age. For others who become infected, the effects are usually nonexistent to mild, although some people exhibit symptoms such as mild fever, rashes, joint and muscle pain, and red eyes. If infected, the best treatment is plenty of rest, nourishment, and other supportive care. There is no vaccine to prevent or cure the disease; however, Zika virus is not contagious and, therefore, cannot be transmitted through air, food, or water.

Your safety is our highest priority, and we want to emphasize that the best way to avoid Zika virus (and other mosquito-borne diseases), is to take appropriate precautions in avoiding mosquito bites:

- Stay informed about the Zika virus
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes, and a hat*
- Use effective insect repellents (those containing DEET) and reapply regularly

***We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Ex Officio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

For the latest information and news about Zika virus, please visit the website of the CDC:
<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

MISC: Electricity - 110 volts AC, the same as the U.S.

Language - Spanish, with Quechua or Indian dialects; some English

Time - Eastern Standard Time

Internet Access – At the time of publication, internet access is available at Hotel Quito, Séptimo Paraíso, and Termas de Papallacta.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds, Basic Reference:

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. *The Birds of Ecuador*, Cornell University Press, 2001. This is the “Bible” for anyone interested in Ecuador’s birds. It consists of a two-volume set made up of the Field Guide, with 96 color plates, which include illustrations of basically all the species found in the country. The informative text, designed to help species identification, includes distribution maps for all 1,600 species of Ecuador’s birds. The Status, Distribution and Taxonomy volume treats each of Ecuador’s species with detailed information not included in the Field Guide.

Ecuador: The Northwestern Andean Slopes, Page 12

Athanas, Nick and Greenfield, Paul J. *Birds of Western Ecuador, a Photographic Guide*, Princeton University Press, 2016. An excellent photographic field guide and useful complement to *The Birds of Ecuador* that treats over 900 bird species recorded in the western half of the country.

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. An excellent complementary field guide useful for identifying many of Ecuador's bird species, with excellent coverage of the birds in the eastern lowlands and northern mountains.

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 7,500 ft, with adequate illustrations, but too large to carry and expensive. Try www.abebooks.com.

Birds, Additional Reading:

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1996. 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, 1994.

Other:

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997 (2nd edition).

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

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, motor-coach, 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 February 1, 2018, 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.

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