

ECUADOR: EASTERN SLOPE OF THE ANDES

JANUARY 15-25, 2019

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From the lush Amazonian rainforests to the high Andean páramos, Ecuador is indeed a special place, boasting good access to birding habitat, unsurpassed scenic splendor, friendly people, and a stable government. Incredibly, over 1,670 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: Eastern Slope of the Andes” is designed to sample this magnificent avifauna in three choice areas, representing very different ecosystems, and offering a full range of birding possibilities. This trip explores the heart of the magnificent Ecuadorian Andes on its eastern slope. Within easy reach is an incredible transect of habitats, from stunted subalpine scrub and treeless páramo through cool temperate forest that descends into lush subtropical and foothill cloud forest. 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 such an impressive 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 páramo to the foothills. Several roads traverse various elevations, offering a fantastic assortment of little-known birds, while trails at Wildsumaco and San Isidro 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, Sickie-winged & Wattled guans, Andean Condor, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Crested & Golden-headed quetzals, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and a nice selection of mountain-tanagers.

This tour is designed 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 may be afield all day (especially in the cooler mountains). Accommodations are more than adequate, but some are of necessity relatively simple. This trip has 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.

January 15, Day 1: Arrival in Quito. Most flights to Quito from the United States arrive in the evening. Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnection, possible flight delays due to bad weather at this time of year, or desiring to rest or acclimate prior to the tour (or do some sight-seeing or shopping for souvenirs in Quito) should consider arriving prior to January 15. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with hotel reservations and transfers for early arrivals.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 16, Day 2: Drive Through InterAndean Valley and Over the Eastern Cordillera at Papallacta Pass, and Descend the Eastern Andean Slope to Cabañas San Isidro. This morning after breakfast we depart eastward out of the capital city of Quito. As we descend through the InterAndean Valley, we will make a few brief birding stops to sample some of the more common and representative avian species of this mostly agricultural region. We will then climb in elevation to 13,000 ft. at Papallacta Pass and then descend rapidly down the eastern Andean slope, making another brief stop at Guango Lodge to enjoy a birding break, complete with an array of incredible hummingbirds and other specialties. We will then pull ourselves away to continue downslope to our lodge, Cabañas San Isidro, by mid-to-late afternoon, depending on how things go. A mere sample of the species we might encounter today include Torrent Duck; Variable Hawk; Sparkling Violetear; Tourmaline Sunangel; Long-tailed Sylph; Black-tailed Trainbearer, Collared Inca, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Buff-tailed & Chesnut-breasted coronets, White-bellied Woodstar; Golden-headed or Crested quetzals; Masked Trogon; Stout-billed Cinclodes; Pearled Treerunner; White-banded, Southern Beardless & Torrent tyrannulets; Turquoise Jay; White-capped Dipper; Great Thrush; Spectacled Redstart (Whitestart); Hooded & Lacrimose mountain-tanagers; Blue-and-yellow & Scrub tanagers; Black, Rusty & Masked flowerpiercers; Slaty Brushfinch; and Golden (Southern yellow-) Grosbeak.

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 17-18, Days 3-4: Cabañas San Isidro and Surroundings. At 6,600 ft. in elevation, we find ourselves in the heart of the humid subtropical zone, in all its natural splendor, and we'll have two full days to explore a wide range of habitats throughout the area. Here's how Frank Chapman described this Andean ecosystem:

“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.”

Here at San Isidro and its surroundings, we find ourselves in one of the finest sites in the world to bird this rich zone and the possibilities seem endless. At the first hint of dawn, thrushes and Andean Solitaires sing; soon, as it becomes light, the vegetation suddenly comes alive with birds attracted to the lodge lights for insects. Typically Inca (Green) Jays, Russet-backed 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, clouds begin to blanket the mountain slopes, bathing the forest in mist. As the clouds appear, the mixed-species foraging flocks around the lodge seem to become most active. Amidst the seemingly

endless array of tanagers are such gems as Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Handsome & Cinnamon flycatchers, Barred Becard, Black-billed Peppershrike, Black-crested & Russet-crowned warblers, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and Bluish Flowerpiercer. To experience a big mixed-flock in the subtropics is one of the supreme joys—or utmost frustrations—of Neotropical birding. At times these 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 & Sickle-winged guans; Red-billed, Speckle-faced & Scaly-naped parrots; Golden-headed & Crested quetzals; Masked Trogon; Andean Motmot; Powerful Woodpecker; Rufous-crowned Tody-Tyrant (tiny!); Dusky Piha; and Andean Cock-of-the-rock. The diversity of hummingbirds here is high, and the different species 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 with the help of very active nectar feeders we should be able to secure excellent looks at many of the species possible, including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Speckled Hummingbird, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, and Long-tailed Sylph. We will also spend one afternoon birding the nearby Vinillos entrance area to Antisana National Park, which always produces some exciting surprises, including encounters with White-capped Parrot, Scaly-naped Amazon, Sickle-winged Guan, Crested Quetzal, White-throated (Emerald) Toucanet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, and Streaked Tuftedcheek, along with Saffron-crowned, Beryl-spangled & Grass-green tanagers.

NIGHT: Cabañas San Isidro, Cosanga

January 19, Day 5: Depart Cabañas San Isidro; Descend into the Amazonian Foothills to Wildsumaco Lodge.

After breakfast this morning we will depart this area and work our way farther downslope—stopping *en route* as we progress—towards the foothills of the east-slope to Wildsumaco Lodge. We will travel over the temperate-zone Huacamayos Ridge (at 7,200 ft.), the weather and bird activity 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 then continue to the Río Hollin (4,500 ft.) where we will take some time to enjoy this beautiful area, its waterfalls and rapid-flowing river and nectar feeders, then continue our descent before making a final climb to our chosen destination, Wildsumaco Lodge.

This lovely site has opened up another realm of possibilities for birding the upper tropical zone. We should arrive with time left to enjoy our first sampling of the hummingbird feeders and perhaps even catch the local toucans giving their late afternoon chorus, a flight of Red-billed Parrots or Military Macaws en route to their night roosts. Here in the foothills “at the bottom” of our transect (4,900 ft.), we will experience an intriguing combination of ‘lowland’ Amazonian and subtropical Andean bird species all in one place. Some of the species we might encounter on today’s journey include Wire-crested Thorntail, Black-throated Brilliant, White-tailed Hillstar, Gorgeted Woodstar, Glittering-throated Emerald, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Lined Antshrike, Cliff Flycatcher, Violaceous Jay, Silver-beaked Tanager, and even a chance for Andean Cock-of-the-rock or an Amazonian Umbrellabird.

NIGHT: Wildsumaco Lodge, Sumaco

January 20-21, Days 6-7: Wildsumaco Area. With the opening of Wildsumaco Lodge we finally have a comfortable place to stay in the Amazonian 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 and typically 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 & 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 foothill specialties as Napo Sabrewing, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Rufous-vented Whitetip and Gould’s Jewelfront. We also have a chance of spotting such spectacular birds as the Coppery-

cheded Jacamar, Golden-collared Toucanet, Black-mandibled Toucan and Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, among others.

NIGHTS: Wildsumaco Lodge, Sumaco

January 22, Day 8: Wildsumaco to Termas Papallacta. We will depart from the Wildsumaco area shortly after breakfast this morning to retrace our path, working our way back upslope to a cooler environment. We will stop for any mixed-flocks encountered and, time and weather permitting, take a detour known as the 'Borja Loop' near the town of Baeza in search of a number of species we may not have encountered up to this point, before we climb higher into the forested mountains surrounding our final destination. Termas Papallacta is a wonderful hot-spring and spa hotel set in a spectacular upper temperate-zone valley with commanding views (on a clear day) of the imposing Antisana Volcano. We will have ample time to settle in and even enjoy a soothing soak in the inviting thermal pools that are set right outside of our rooms before our checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: Termas Papallacta, Papallacta

January 23, Day 9: Termas Papallacta and Surroundings. Just above Termas Papallacta and the quiet village of Papallacta lie the great peaks and ridges of the eastern Andes. 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 & Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers tend to "lead" the sneaky mixed-flocks of cone-bills, hemispinguses and other small birds that forage through the shrubbery and stunted trees here. With patience and good fortune, we may even encounter the local and rare Black-chested & Masked mountain-tanagers! The road farther east, to Papallacta Pass, quickly ascends to the tundra-like alpine zone known as the páramo. Here, above timberline, strange plants bloom in the tundra-like bogs, and there are isolated stands of elfin *Polylepis* woodland on the protected slopes. Part of today will be spent birding this environment. Most of 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 Stout-billed & Chestnut-winged cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spintail, 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 (rare), Black-backed Bush-Tanager, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. Several remarkable hummingbirds occur this high, including Ecuadorian Hillstar and Blue-mantled Thornbill. At the highest elevation reached (14,000 ft.), we will conduct a special search for the ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe (weather permitting), after which another night at Termas Papallacta gives us a chance for a relaxing soak before dinner!

NIGHT: Termas Papallacta, Papallacta

January 24, Day 10: Antisana Reserve; Return to Quito. Our final day afield will be spent exploring Antisana National Park, in the shadow of imposing snow-clad Antisana Volcano (at least when it isn't covered by clouds!). Much of this area is made up of high-elevation páramo grassland that is lightly-grazed by cattle and wild horses, and raptors here are more numerous than in most similar areas. 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 Black-faced (Andean) Ibis, two species largely gone from Ecuador, while other birds typical of this area include Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Stout-billed & Chestnut-winged cinclodes, Páramo Ground-Tyrant, Many-striped Canastero, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. The 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. At some local nectar feeders set up along the entrance road, we might encounter Giant Hummingbird, Great Sapphirewing and even Sword-billed Hummingbird. It all combines to make for an exhilarating finish to our Andean birding before the short drive back to Quito, our transect now complete.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito

January 25, Day 11: Departure for Home. Transfers will be provided to the airport in time for this morning's departing flights.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Paul Greenfield



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 the tour is **\$3,295** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee 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 tour is **\$500**. 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.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour 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.

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 (www.travelinsured.com or 800-243-3174) 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.

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.

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: 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. As a precaution, please pack your travel documents, binoculars, medications, basic toiletries, and a change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

CLIMATE: 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. You might also want to bring gloves and a warm hat if you chill easily. 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 and/or rain jacket are essential.

CLOTHING: Dress is casual or informal throughout. Lightweight field clothing is the norm for most areas visited, with thermal underwear and a sweater or jacket for layering 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 waterproof hiking boots. Mud boots are not necessary, but at the very least footwear for the field should be rated "water-resistant," as this is a damp climate and even the dew on the roadside grass will get your feet wet!

At higher elevations 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 warm hat 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.

Laundry facilities are limited on this tour, but all three lodges can do some laundry in a pinch (may not be one-day service).

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. Credit cards are widely accepted in Quito and at Termas Papallacta, but as of this writing they are not accepted at Wildsumaco Lodge, or Cabañas San Isidro.

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 lotion (or a similar product) and a pump-style can of OFF! Topsyn gel is useful for reducing irritation from bites and stings, as is cortisone cream. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you wish to bring your own, that is fine.

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 (232-2636). 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 uncooked 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.

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 – available at Hotel Quito; sporadically available at Wildsumaco Lodge; usually available at Cabanas San Isidro and Termas Papallacta but not always reliable.

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

Schulenberg, Stotz, Lane, O’Neill and Parker III. *Birds of Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. An excellent field guide that has all of the species likely to be seen.

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.

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 (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.

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