Full Detailed Itinerary - Easy Ecuador - Andean Cloudforest and the Antisana Volcano

Day 1: Arrival in Quito

After arriving in Ecuador's Andean capital, Quito, you will be transferred to a downtown hotel for the night. PLEASE NOTE: Many of the flights arrive late at night, and so you may, therefore, wish to arrive one day earlier for two reasons: To acclimatize – Quito is located at a lofty 9185 (2800m); therefore a day to get used to this usually does people a world of good. We can book an extra night's stay at our chosen hotel and can also arrange one day/half-day cultural trips into the city if desired with this extra time too, as this is not included within this itinerary. The pick-up time on Day 2 is 06:00am, and so there may not be much sleep time available after a nighttime arrival, and the need for an hour drive to a downtown hotel (needed for easy access to the birding areas the next day).

Day 2: Zuro Loma Reserve to Tandayapa

Following a 06:00am meeting with your bird guide in the hotel lobby, we will make the 90-minute drive to Zuro Loma Reserve, just outside of Quito. We will take a hearty cooked breakfast on arrival within the reserve, (typically three courses long!), in full view of the dramatic setting of Pichincha Volcano, visible from the cafe window. After that, we will make our way down to their vaunted feeders. Zuro Loma has sugar feeders for hummingbirds, fruit feeders for tanagers, and also an in-forest feeding station for feeding antpittas! We will not definitely not be bored, and we will spend the first part of the morning entertained there, before moving on to Tandayapa, arriving at our cloudforest retreat for a hot lunch there overlooking their feeders! At Zuro Loma, hummingbirds will be of particular interest, and representing almost our only time within the temperate zone, will offer up a handful of species only possible at this one site, such as Mountain Velvetbreast, White-bellied Woodstar, Buff-winged Starfrontlet and the outrageous Sword-billed Hummingbird, the latter one of the Wonders of the Hummingbird World. The fruit feeders are less precictable in their activity, some visits being highly active with Blue-capped Tanager, Yellow-breasted Brushfinch and Hooded and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers, while other visits only providing some of these. Either way, anything we see will be bold, spectacular and well worthy of our attention at this classic site, which has only risen to prominence in the last 10 years, when the birding boom has really exploded in this addictive part of Ecuador. As you can probably tell, this wonderful private reserve has become something of a must-visit site conveniently located on the journey between Quito and Tandayapa Bird Lodge; (our principal destination on the tour, and where we spend four nights of this short tour). The afternoon, following our early start and morning activities, will be a relaxed affair, spent immediately around the lodge at Tandayapa. However, that is not to say we will not be entertained by birds! Tandayapa is situated in the next level of cloudforest down from Zuro Loma (which is in the temperate zone). We will now be in the subtropical cloud forest, with its very different subset of birds. The hummingbird feeders are nothing short of legendary, with a dozen or more species often visiting each day, including specialties of this Choco bioregion, like Violet-tailed Sylph and Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and the always-popular White-booted Racket-tail, a vision of cuteness rarely matched by any other bird on this tour! The fruit feeders, visible from the lodge windows, can also draw in spectacular avian residents, like Rufous Motmot and Toucan Barbet, and by night a Kinkajou or a handsome Andean opossum may stop by too! On this evening, we will sample some of the best cuisine of any birding lodge in the region, as our resident chef prepares one of his delicious

fusion dishes. You will not go hungry here; meals at Tandayapa are hearty affairs of three courses, usually starting with soup, and accompanied by an array of local fruit juices that are the envy of the temperate world, outside of the tropics, to the north!

Day 3: Birdwatcher's House, Tandayapa Bird Lodge & Mirador de Guaycapi (optional)

A comfortable, 07:00am, hot breakfast will be taken at Tandayapa Bird Lodge. Ater breakfast, we will set off for the higher reaches of the Tandayapa area, to Birdwatcher's House for the remainder of the morning. This site is marginally higher than Tandayapa, and so the cloudforest there is one of the best in the area for seeing the pulchritudinous Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, one of the most spectacular birds in the Andes. Oftentimes this species visits the feeders there, when the views are unmatched anywhere else. After a morning there, we will return to Tandayapa for a later lunch (around 1:30pm), and to enjoyn more of Tandayapa's own birds. At 3:15pm, (for those who wish to do anything further that day- optional), we will make a short side trip to a café downhill from the lodge, Mirador de Guaycapi, where birds like White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violetear, and Red-headed Barbet may be seen while swigging local Andean coffee on their balcony. This is a very easy going trip out for around 2.5 hours, with no walking, just drinking and birding from the sheltered café, and so is particularly suitable if afternoon rains come to the cloudforest.

Day 4: Amagusa Reserve outing

After a hot cooked breakfast at 06:00am at Tandayapa Bird Lodge, we will set off downslope to a wonderful private reserve in the Andean foohills, Amagusa, 90-minutes-drive from there. A big focus of our time there will be their superb feeders. The fruit feeders attract stunning birds like Glistening-green and Moss-backed Tanagers, and the hummingbird feeders are home to Velvet-purple Coronets and Empress Brilliants, while the nearby forested road is inhabited by beautiful birds like Orange-breasted Fruiteater and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. We will take a cooked lunch in the reserve at midday, and then make our way back to Tandayapa Bird Lodge, arriving back by 4pm to allow significant downtime before our 6:30pm dinner. During dinner, the guide will keep a steady eye on the fruit feeder outside the restaurant window, as mammals like the lithe Kinkajou or striking Andean White-eared Opposum visit one some nights, while bats frequent the hummingbird feeders by night too.

Day 5: Milpe day trip (buffer day)

This day has been planned to allow a softer day (this "buffer day") in between the two longer days of the trip (i.e., between Amagusa Reserve and Paz Refuge). Following a very respectable 07:00am cooked breakfast at Tandayapa, we will depart for the 45minutes-1 hour journey to Milpe Bird Sanctuary, close to the bustling transit town of San Migel de Los Bancos, (where we will have a good, cooked lunch later in the day). Milpe is, like Amagusa, in the Andean foothills although quite different from one another. This spot is especially good for toucans, and we will be on the lookout for three species there: Collared Aracari and Choco and Yellow-throated Toucans. There are also a couple of species of trogons (Collared and Blue-tailed) and motmots (Rufous and Broad-billed). Away from this forest action, which will be a combination of road birding and easy trail birding, we will visit their feeders, which while holding a lower number of species than Tandayapa, do support an impressibly high number of individual birds of White-necked Jacobins, White-whiskered Hermits, gorgeous Crowned Woodnymphs and tiny Green Thorntails. For lunch, we will drive to nearby Los Bancos, where a restaurant, Mirado Rio Blanco is famed for both its wonderful food, incredibly friendly hosts, and spectacular view of the White River below. Ater lunch, we will make the return trip back uphill to Tandayapa Bird Lodge. We will arrive by 4pm allowing people yet more time to see birds at the feeders, like cute Purple-throated Woodstars, bright blue Golden-naped Tanagers, or emerald-green,

Crimson-rumped Toucanets.

Day 6: Paz Refuge & Tandayapa Bird Lodge; to Quito

This will be the earliest start of the tour (05:00am departure), by some way, as we visit Paz Refuge, specifically to see one of Wonders of the Andes, displaying Andean Cock-of-the-rocks, which very inconveniently typically do so a short time after daybreak only! Male cock-of-the-rocks are vivid red-orange birds that are ordinarily shy (you need to be with that adornment) but lose their inhibitions in the first hour of daylight when they gather to display for any passing female. It is a noisy, loud, memorable and spectacular cloudforest experience that cannot be missed, hence the uncomfortably early start time. However, no breakfast will be taken beforehand, to prevent an even earlier wake up time! We will take a boxed breakfast (bagel) with us, and then get a cooked breakfast mid-morning right within the reserve we will be birding in. Paz Refuge became famous as the first place in the world to habituate antpittas, and now they have up to FIVE antpitta species coming in daily. Typically, though a three antpitta morning is a good one, and so we will be hoping for that, with the most often seen species being Yellow-breasted, Ochre-breasted and Chestnut-crowned Antpittas. If we are lucky, we might run into one of the other hallowed two: Giant and Moustached Antpittas. Other birds we may also encounter there, include Masked Trogon, Golden-headed Quetzal, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, and Scaled Fruiteater! Mid-morning we wil have theor classic brunch of bolones (a delicious ball of fried plantain and herbs) and cheese empanadas washed down with local coffee, before we crack on with the remaining birding targets of the morning. After a full morning there, we will return to Tandayapa for one final light lunch, pack up and head off for our next hotel, a hacienda-style residence close to the airport to the east of Quito. This is the perfect launching spot for our next day's birding, within the High Andes…This is the longest day of the tour, and we do expect to arrive to that hotel until between 05:00-6:00pm, following a 2.5-hour-drive from the lodge, depending pm local traffic conditions.

Day 7: Antisana National Park & Tambo Condor

This day will open with a 07:00am breakfast at our hotel, followed by a 07:30 departure (you should come to breakfast with your things for birding). It will be in sharp contrast to the rest of the days on the tour, being spent in an open, high Andean environment (paramo), above the treeline. While we will be high up (around 13,125ft/4000m at the highest point), there will be no strenuous walking at all, with most of this accessed by good roads driven through the park, and only short walks. Our main focus, to begin with, will be to find Ecuador's imperial national bird, the Andean Condor, which glides above spectacular cliffs on massive, 10ft (3m)-wide wings. This gargantuan raptor will be our most wanted bird there, and there is even a lookout on to their roosting and nesting cliffs for us to visit during the morning. While we survey the cliffs and above the paramo grasslands for this majestic creature, we will also be on the lookout for other high Andean birds like Andean Ibis, Carunculated Caracara, Chestnut-winged and Stout-billed Cinclodes, Tawny Antpitta, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, some of which can be remarkably tame around people in this well-visited site. We will also walk to a high Andean lake (around a 500 yard/500m walk on flat ground), in order to try and see some high Andean ducks too. After a late breakfast, we will take a late lunch (around 1:30-2pm) at tambo Condor, just outside of the park, and overlooking the condor cliffs. It comes equipped with some absorbing hummingbird feeders too, which attract species like Sparkling Violetear, Tyrian Metaltail, and Shining Sunbeam, as well as the grandest of them all, the starling-sized, Giant Hummingbird. We will aim to return to our same hacienda style hotel by 4:30pm, so there is some downtime before the final, farewell dinner of the tour. PLEASE NOTE: MANY AIRLINES FLY OUT OF QUITO, ECUADOR AT NIGHT. For example, Houston (Texas)-bound flights typically leave in the middle of the night at around 01:35am. There is no birding at all on the next day, with the last group activity being dinner on this night. Therefore, it is possible for people to leave on overnight flights if they wish to do so, (i.e., later than 9:00pm). We can still arrange a day-use room in our hotel near the airport to pack up and shower before dinner and before departure for

those who wish to do this.

Day 8: Departures from Quito (if needed)

There is no birding on this day, so you are free to depart whenever you wish. As many of the flights depart at night, this would be another good day to plan for an extra, cultural excursion in Quito or to the Mitad del Mundo, (the Equator Monument). If you would like us to arrange that for you (for an additional fee), please let us know. This would be with a cultural guide and not your bird guide! PLEASE NOTE:ECUADOR is also home to the fabled Galapagos Islands and The Amazon rainforest, with high-end cruises available to traverse some of the islands, and luxurious lodges available in The Amazon too. TROPICAL BIRDING can easily arrange an add-on to each of these if desired. Typically, Amazon trips of 4 nights or more are recommended to really get a feel for the place, while a Galapagos Cruise can be anything from 4-10 days, depending on how many islands you wish to visit, and how much time you have! Please let us know if you wish to add either of these, and this is very easy for us to do so! Either of these could be done before or after this tour, depending on availability (we recommend that you do not leave these options until the last minute!)

Toll free from the USA & Canada: (800) 348-5941

International number: +1-409-515-9110

Toll free from the UK: +0800-046-5654

Email: info@tropicalbirding.com