Full Detailed Itinerary - Peru Photo Tour

Day 1: Arrival in Lima

The tour begins this evening in Lima. Our hotel is located next to the airport, so you can be checking in a few minutes after clearing customs.

Day 2: Lima to Waqanki Lodge

In the morning, we shall take a short flight to Tarapoto in northern Peru, from where we will make the final journey to Waqanki Lodge by road. Not far from the city of Moyobamba. Waqanki quickly rose to prominence for the superb birding in the foothills of the Andes, and its amazing hummingbird feeders, which attract not only hundreds of individuals, but sometimes double figures in terms of species, many of which will be different from those found at the higher elevation sites to be visited later on the trip. We will settle into this excellent lodge for a two-night stay.

Day 3: Hummingbirds of Waqanki Lodge

This is an excellent location for hummingbirds; feeders are placed at various heights in multiple directions, and many of them are free from the forest shade that dominates so many potentially good feeders at other sites in the World. Of course, we will also try multiflash methods too to get those “frozen” shots, but the wonderful natural light and open nature of the feeders at Waqanki makes it well worth photographing without the aid of flash too. We will have plentiful time to try both at length. The species on offer are dazzling, and include widespread species like White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violetear, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango, and Fork-tailed Woodnymph, but also less common species that are unlikely to be photographed away from Waqanki, like Great-billed and Black-throated Hermits, the incredible Rufous-crested Coquette, Gray-breasted Sabrewing, Golden-tailed Sapphire, and Sapphire-spangled Emerald. Other non-hummigbirds that may pose for our lenses include White-vented and Purple-throated Euphonias, Black-faced Dacnis, Blue Dacnis, and Black-bellied Tanager, among many other possibilities.

Day 4: Waqanki to Owlet Lodge

After another morning at Waqanki Lodge or another nearby site, we'll drive west through the Andes to Owlet Lodge, located in the huge Abra Patricia bird reserve. We will be greeted with the sight of hummingbirds right on the doorstep of this wonderful lodge, where species like Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Emerald-bellied Puffleg, Bronzy Inca, and White-bellied Woodstar are all regular visitors. Two nights will be spent in this comfortable lodge, surrounded by beautiful cloudforest.

Day 5: Owlet Lodge

The main focus will be on the many hummingbirds that visit the lodge feeders. We will use multiflash techniques to ensure we all get perfectly crisp photos of species mentioned before, in addition to Lesser and Sparkling Violetears, Speckled Hummingbird, Long-tailed Sylph, and the outrageous Sword-billed Hummingbird. In between bouts of hummingbird photography, we may also get photos of other birds that come through the area as part of mixed feeding flocks, which could include colorful species like tanagers, with Saffron-headed, Blue-and-black, White-capped, and Yellow-scarfed just some of the many species

occurring in this, one of the world’s most biodiverse spots. There is also a good chance of getting photos of Chestnut Antpitta at a worm feeder.

Day 6: Alto Nieva to Pomacochas

This private reserve is close to, but downslope from, Owlet Lodge, and possesses another set of exciting hummingbird feeders, which attract some of the same species as Owlet Lodge, but some different ones too due to the altitudinal change. Most notably it includes the chance for the deep blue Royal Sunagel, a rare and local hummer nearly impossible to photograph elsewhere. Along with this species we will try to photograph the beautiful Amethyst-throated Sunangel, Greenish Puffleg, Peruvian Racket-tail, Rufous-vented Whitetip and Violet-fronted Brilliant. There are plentiful other birds in the area, and some on-the-fly photography could produce woodcreepers, warblers, flycatchers, tanagers, and more. Weather permitting may also visit an antpitta feeder that attracts Ochre-fronted Antpitta and Rusty-tinged Antpitta - this requires about 25 minutes of walking on a narrow and sometimes steep trail. In the afternoon, we'll drive a couple of hours to the town of Pomacochas, where we spend the next two nights.

Day 7: Marvelous Spatuletail Refuge

Today we make an exciting day trip to a new set of feeders, where the highlight should be the absurdly gorgeous Marvelous Spatuletail, a hummingbird that is frequently spoken of as one of the most beautiful creatures on Earth. Ordinarily it is hard to find, let alone photograph, but at this relatively new location, this spectacular hummingbird is a daily visitor to the feeders, and will be the center of our attentions. Other species that are likely to feature too are Andean Emerald, Purple-collared Woodstar, Bronzy Inca, Silvery and Buff-belliedTanagers, Rusty Flowerpiercer, Streaked Saltator, and Marañon Thrush. In the afternoon, we return to Pomacochas.

Day 8: Pomacochas to Arena Blanca

Today we shall head east to Arena Blanca, making several stops along the way. One stop will be at a small private reserve called "La Llaneteria", which literally means "tire repair shop" - which has been the main business of the owners for many years before they realized their property has a wealth of birdlife, especially hummingbirds! Activity at the feeders can vary quite a bit, but we hope to photograph the rare Ecuadorian Piedtail along with several other species. We may also have the chance to visit a display area of Andean Cock-of-the-rock. We'll arrive in the afternoon at the small lodge of Arena Blanca, where we spend the night (the lodge is very small, so for larger groups we may have to stay at another lodge in the area).

Day 9: Arena Blanca Reserve

Arena Blanca has large, wooden blind built for photographing shy forest understory birds including Rufous-breasted Wood-Quail, Cinereous and Little Tinamous, and Orange-billed Sparrow. The fruit feeders can be incredible active and give us the chance for the endemic Black-bellied Tanager along with others like Magpie Tanager, Speckled Chachalaca, Golden-bellied Euphonia, and sometimes even monkeys. Hummingbird feeders and flowering plants attract a constant stream of hummingbirds too, with Wire-crested Thorntail often being the star of the show. Mixed species flocks often come through the main clearing of the reserve along with the occasional surprise like Red-ruffed Fruitcrow and Fiery-capped Manakin. The afternoon is somewhat flexible. We may spend more time at Arena Blanca, or visit another location in the area. The night will be spent in a hotel in Moyobamba.

Day 10: Moyobamba to Lima and departure

On the final day of the tour, we shall drive to Tarapoto airport in order to take flights back to Lima, arriving in the afternoon in time for international departures in the late evening. Depending on flight schedules, there should be time in the morning for more photography at one of several reserves in the area.

Tour Extension 1

Day 1: Lima to Cusco and Aguas Calientes

In the morning of this day (having overnighted in Lima the previous night), we shall take a flight into the Andean town of Cusco, a former capital of the Incan empire. We will drive from Cusco to the historic town of Ollantaytambo, from where we will take a scenic train journey to the town of Aguas Calientes, situated close to the iconic ruins of Machu Picchu, our destination for the following day. We have two nights in a superb hotel with forest and feeders on the grounds. There will be some time in the afternoon of this day to look for birds and photograph birds at the hotel, which has some feeders on site. Some of the birds we may photograph there include Andean Emerald, Rufous-booted Racket-tail, Gould's Inca, Andean Motmot, Dusky-green Oropendola, and Silvery and Blue-necked Tanagers.

Day 2: Machu Picchu

For many, no trip to Peru would be complete without visiting the awe-inspiring ruins of the Incas at Machu Picchu, one of the World’s undoubted must-see sites. Most of the day will be spent at this incredible venue nestled within the dramatic peaks of the Andes Mountains. We’ll have an expert local cultural guide in the morning (or you are free to explore on your own). In the afternoon, we can spend more time in the ruins, or head back to the hotel for some afternoon bird photography.

Day 3: Ollantaytambo to Cusco

In the morning, we shall take a train back to Ollantaytambo situated within the Sacred Valley, where we shall explore their own set of ruins, which are often overshadowed by Machu Picchu, but which deserve attention in their own right. At this point of the tour the birds have been replaced by the architecture and history of the Incan Empire, which is the main focus of the extension. After visiting the Incan fortress at Ollantaytambo, we shall leave the Sacred Valley, and drive back to Cusco for two nights.

Day 4: Cusco

This city has been a World Heritage Site since 1983, due to its rich history of both Inca and Spanish Colonial times, and offers plenty to see within the city. We will take several tours around the city before departing back for Lima on day 5, and ensure we see some of the most famous sites like the Iglesia de la Compania de Jesus, a church built by the Jesuits in 1576, a series of local museums, the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, and the Temples of the Sun and Virgins of the Sun, largely all that’s left of the Incan Empire following invasion by the Spanish in 1535.

Day 5: Cusco to Lima and DEPARTURE

After some final time in Cusco, we shall take a flight back to the Peruvian capital, Lima, and connect with evening/night flights home.

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