



# ECUADOR: AVIAN JEWELS OF THE NORTHWEST ANDES

## NOVEMBER 3-12, 2024

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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 Kapari Lodge located in the nearby Valle Hermosa sector, from which we will 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 next several days.*

*Nestled in a dramatic, prime montane cloud-forest setting, Séptimo Paraíso not only offers comfortable accommodations, excellent cuisine and some of 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 Milpe Bird Sanctuary and Milpe Gardens, Amagusa Reserve, Refugio Paz de las Aves, and the "Paseo del Quinde" Ecoroute, among other important locations. We will also transfer over to the*

*fairly new Kapari Lodge where access to lower elevation habitats and species is our goal; from here we will visit Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary, and of course bird the grounds at this site, with the possibility of visiting other nearby areas. In all, this northwest Andean region is the domain of Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Toucan Barbet, Moss-backed Tanager, Powerful & Guayaquil woodpeckers, Scarlet-breasted Dacnis and over 40 hummingbirds and an equal number of tanagers, among more than 500 possible Neotropical avian specialties, with promises of unforgettable experiences for all.*



**Toucan Barbet © Paul J. Greenfield**

**November 3, Day 1: Arrival in Quito.** Participants will be met upon arrival at Quito’s *Mariscal Sucre International Airport* (airport code UIO) and transferred to our hotel. Most flights to Quito 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 4, 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



**Great Sapphirewing © Paul J. Greenfield**

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 to six foot-wide *Gunnera* leaves; an uncanny number of distinct flowering plants; and spectacular vistas while 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 conebills, 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 Equatorial 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 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. Here, 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.





Black-chested Mountain-Tanager © Paul J. Greenfield

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 5-7, Days 3-5: Séptimo Paraíso Grounds and the Mindo-Milpe and Paseo del Quide EcoRoute 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 four days examining a wonderful selection of birding sites, exuberant roadside vegetation and forest trails, bird gardens, and forest



Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan © Paul J. Greenfield

reserves while searching for many of the nearly 500 species possible here. The lush, epiphyte-covered forests with their entangled understories 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 or so species, while on the watch for raptors and parrots flying overhead. We will also witness spectacular dawn feeding activity at a variety of areas at varying altitudinal zones. We will head out very early one morning for an unforgettable visit to Refugio Paz de las Aves. 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 up to five species of wild antpittas—Giant, Yellow-breasted, Chestnut-crowned, Moustached, & Ochre-breasted—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!





Giant Antpitta, "Maria" © Paul J. Greenfield

We will also take separate day trips to visit one of the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation's reserves—Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and along the *Paseo del Quinde* EcoRoute—along with several other key birding sites (everything is relatively close-by) to explore prime foothill, subtropical and lower temperate-zone hotspots that offer superb birding opportunities and some of the best conditions for great bird photography to be found anywhere! Nectar and fruit feeders have truly converted this area into a birder's paradise! Just a few of the target species we will be searching for here include Crested, Wattled & Sickle-winged guans; Double-toothed Kite; Bicolored, & Barred hawks; Black Hawk-Eagle; Cloudforest Pygmy-Owl; Sunbittern; Barred & Maroon-tailed parakeets; Red-billed & Bronze-winged parrots; Tawny-bellied & White-whiskered hermits; Green-fronted Lancebill; Purple-bibbed Whitetip; White-throated Daggerbill; Brown, Green, and Sparkling violetears; Gorgeted Sunangel; Green Thorntail; Speckled Hummingbird; Violet-tailed Sylph; Brown & Collared incas; Buff-tailed & Velvet-purple coronets; White-booted Racket-tail; Fawn-breasted, Green-crowned & Empress brilliants; Purple-throated Woodstar White-bellied and the seasonal Little woodstars; Crowned

Woodnymph; Andean Emerald; Golden-headed & Crested quetzals; Masked & Chocó trogons; Red-headed & Toucan barbets; Chocó & Chestnut-mandibled toucans; Powerful, Guayaquil & Smoky-brown woodpeckers; Uniform, & Russet antshrikes; Rufous-rumped, & Slaty, antwrens; Chestnut-backed, Zeledon's, & Esmeraldas antbirds; Ocellated, Nariño & Spillmann's tapaculos; Tyrannine, Plain-brown, Strong-billed, Spotted & Montane woodcreepers; Brown-billed Scythebill; Plain & Streaked xenopses; Streaked & Pacific tuftedcheeks; Lineated, Streak-necked & Buff-fronted foliage-gleaners; Streak-capped, Striped & Uniform treehunters; Red-faced, Slaty & Azara's spinetails; Club-winged, White-bearded & Golden-winged manakins; Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Green-and-black & Scaled fruiteaters; Olivaceous Piha; Barred & Black-and-white becards; Rufous-winged, Black-capped, & Sooty-headed tyrannulets; Beautiful & Turquoise jays; Pale-eyed, Glossy-black, Pale-vented & Ecuadorian thrushes; Sepia-brown Wren; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren; Yellow-collared Chlorophonia (seasonal); Yellow-tufted Dacnis, Grass-green, Metallic-green, Beryl-spangled, Rufous-throated, Golden, & Silver-throated, tanagers; even the rare and elusive Tanager Finch; Blue Seed eater; Tricolored (Chocó) Brush-Finch; and Yellow-bellied Siskin.

NIGHTS: El Séptimo Paraíso, Mindo



Velvet-purple Coronet © Paul J. Greenfield

**November 8, Days 6: Morning at Amagusa-Mashpi Reserve; midday period at Séptimo Paraíso; afternoon transfer to and birding at Kapari Lodge.** This morning we will depart early and drive about 1.5 hours to the now renowned Amagusa-Mashpi Reserve, which is owned by a local couple who have created a wonderful birding hotspot within rich foothill cloud forest. We should find many Chocó bioregional endemic species that their nectar and plantain feeders attract spectacularly! Among them are: Rose-faced Parrot; Chocó Vireo; Orange-breasted Fruiteater; Rufous-brown & Black solitaires; Glistening-green, Rufous-throated and Moss-backed tanagers; Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager; along with Indigo Flowerpiercer among many additional species. In the afternoon, after midday at Séptimo Paraíso, we will transfer over to Kapari Lodge.

NIGHT: Kapari Lodge, Valle Hermoso

**November 9-10, Days 7-8: Kapari Lodge Grounds, Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary and other lower elevation sites.** Over the next two days, basing our activities out of Kapari Lodge, we will concentrate on lower elevation sites including Río Silanche Bird Sanctuary, to focus on a whole new subset of lowland (including Chocó bioregional endemic) species, among the many possibilities are: Rufous-fronted Wood-Quail; Dusky Pigeon; Pallid Dove; Striped Cuckoo; bronzy & Stripe-throated hermits; Band-tailed Barbthroat; Long-billed Starthroat; Purple-crowned Fairy; Blue-chested & Purple-chested hummingbirds; Gray-headed & Plumbeous kites; Tiny, Semiplumbeous & Plumbeous hawks; Chocó Screech-Owl; Crested Owl; White-tailed & Collared trogons; Barred Puffbird; Orange-fronted Barbet; Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Scarlet-backed, Cinnamon & Golden-olive

woodpeckers; Laughing Falcon; Red-masked Parakeet; Pacific Parrotlet; Blue-headed Parrot; Red-lore Amazon; Fasciated, Black-crowned & Great antshrikes; Checker-throated, White-flanked, Dot-winged & Moustached antwrens; Stub-tailed & Dusky antbirds; Black-striped & Streak-headed woodcreepers; Red-billed Scythebill; Red-capped & White-bearded manakins; Double-banded Graytail; Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant; Masked Water-Tyrant; Snowy-throated Kingbird; Bay, Stripe-throated & Southern Nightingale wrens; Tropical & Slate-throated gnatcatchers; Orange-crowned, White-vented & Fulvous-vented euphonias; Scarlet-thighed, Scarlet-breasted & Blue dacnises; Gray-and-gold, Emerald, Golden-hooded, Rufous-winged, Bay-headed & Scarlet-browed tanagers.

NIGHTS: Kapari Lodge, Valle Hermoso

**November 11, Day 9: Morning birding at Kapari Lodge; Departure and Return to Quito.** This morning we will depart from Kapari Lodge after an early lunch and initiate our return trip to Quito, making an afternoon birding stop at Alambi Lodge to revel in the greatest hummingbird show in “town” (or on earth!) and as the afternoon falls upon us, we will head ‘home’. We will meet up in the evening for our final checklist session and farewell dinner. Transfers to Quito’s mariscal Sucre International Airport will be provided for those travelers departing this evening.

NIGHT: Hotel Quito, Quito



Crowned Woodnymph © Paul J. Greenfield

**November 12, Day 10: Departure for Home.** Additional transfers will be provided to Quito’s Mariscal Sucre International Airport for those passengers with departing flights today.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 10 participants.



**TOUR LEADERS:** Paul Greenfield & Remy Grefa



**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.



**Remigio (Remi) Grefa** was born and raised along the shores of the Napo River in the tiny indigenous Kichwa community of Añangu, in the upper Amazon Basin of Ecuador. As a child of the rainforest, he developed a close tie with the rich biodiversity of the Amazonian jungle, but became especially interested in birds as a young boy when he noticed foreign visiting birdwatchers arriving at a nearby nature lodge. It was then that he promised himself that when he grew up he would learn the names of the local birds, in English. . . and he eventually did! Throughout his formative years, his community had embarked on a groundbreaking nature tourism project of their own—the building and co-management (and eventually outright ownership) of the fabulous Napo Wildlife Center—and by the time Remi graduated from high school he was ready to join the ranks of this incredible endeavor. He began working at the lodge from the ground up (odd jobs, dishwasher, laundry brigade, etc.); after a few months he was promoted to waiting tables, and after six months he became one of the lodge's bartenders for a year-and-a-half. He then graduated to boatman, where he was the second canoe paddler for many, many birding groups, which gave him the perfect opportunity to receive hands-on apprenticeship in birding, as well as English. In 2009, he took a job as a waiter on the *Manatee Amazon Explorer*, a houseboat style vessel that cruises the country's Napo and Aguarico rivers. He was eventually promoted again as an official birding and naturalist guide at Napo Wildlife Center by 2017 and continues to fill that role exceptionally to this day. Remi and his wife, Lola, along with their two daughters, Kayana and Wita, live in the parish of Dayuma, not far from the frontier town of Puerto Francisco de Orellana (more commonly known as "Coca").

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$4,695** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 8, 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 this tour is **\$725**.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your 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. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (June 6, 2024) prior to the tour departure date.

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

**CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:**

**Cancellation by Participant:**

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** 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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less 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 from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

**Cancellation by VENT:**

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A "**Force Majeure**" event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

**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 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.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.\*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

\*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link: [https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid\\_19\\_faq/](https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/).

**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. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.\* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could



occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **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 held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

\*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

### **BAGGAGE:**

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

**CLIMATE:** During this tour we will experience a variety of 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 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 light rain jacket is essential. Lowland areas can be warm-to-hot temperatures at midday (typically 70s to low 90s) depending on cloud-cover. We may also get caught 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 footgear 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!

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 during this trip, so a good umbrella or light 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. You may wish to bring a bathing suit along, as Séptimo Paraíso has a swimming pool and a hot tub.

Laundry facilities are available at Hotel Quito and Séptimo Paraíso.

**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.

You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**HEALTH:** **Speak to your physician if you have any questions about high altitude, as we will be at elevations fluctuating between 9,000-11,000 feet.**

VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, 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.

**COVID-19:** We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

**Insect Repellents** – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.

- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

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 (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

**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 (pre-trip).

**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](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://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.

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.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Greenfield, Paul J. *Birds of Ecuador – Field Guide App*. BirdsEye Apps, 2019. This is the interactive mobile field guide version of *The Birds of Ecuador* (see above) by Robert S. Ridgely and Paul J. Greenfield. It includes detailed, up-to-date species descriptions, full-color range maps, audio of bird songs and



calls, and detailed illustrations of the nearly 1700 species of birds found in Continental Ecuador. For information on downloading this app from the App Store or Google Play, go to the following link:

<http://www.birdseyebirding.com/app-pages/birds-of-ecuador-field-guide/>

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 feet, with adequate illustrations, but too large to carry and expensive. Try [www.abebooks.com](http://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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 STATEMENT:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "VENT") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on February 1, 2024, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "***Airline***") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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