



Sunbird, 26B The Market Square,
Potton, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2NP
UK

Tel: (+44) 01767 262522

Fax (+44) 01767 262916

Email: sunbird@sunbirdtours.co.uk

www.sunbirdtours.co.uk



TOUR INFORMATION FOR SOUTH ECUADOR

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read this carefully.

ENTERING ECUADOR: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for six months after the date of arrival in Ecuador. A visa is not required. No vaccination certificates are required in order to enter Ecuador. A Certification of yellow fever vaccination is not required unless you are arriving within six days of leaving an area infected. Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Ecuadorian Embassy for entry requirements.

You will be given an entry card to fill in on the plane and this needs to be presented with your passport. Make sure you put this card somewhere safe after you have entered the country as you will need to present it again on your departure. Proof of health insurance may be required when entering Ecuador. The exact requirements are unclear, but have your insurance card or travel insurance confirmation with you on arrival.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

ARRIVAL DATE: While the tour starts with dinner at 18.30 on the evening of Day 1 of the tour, you may be tempted by convenient flights arriving in Guayaquil late in the evening. If you elect to arrive late in the evening of Day 1 remember that flights can be delayed, and be aware that the birding day will start very early on Day 2; you may get only a few hours' sleep that night. If you can't arrive before early evening, you may want to consider arriving a day early.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: There will be an introductory meeting during dinner on Day 1 of the tour. This informal meeting affords the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip – pace of the tour, daily routine, etc. We strongly recommend you arrange your flights to arrive in the late afternoon, or perhaps a day early, so that you can be present at the introductory meeting. If you can not be present at the first dinner, the leader will contact you upon your arrival and give you the information and plan for the next day.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Ecuador is five hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

CURRENCY: Ecuador uses the U.S. dollar as its currency. Most credit cards are readily accepted. Although your basic expenses on tour are covered, you will almost certainly want to bring money for incidental expenses, gifts, and personal tips (e.g. laundry).

LANGUAGE: Spanish is spoken everywhere, and very few of desk staff outside of the Loja and Guayaquil hotels speak English. Spanish is spoken everywhere. Our leader will speak Spanish and you will not be required to converse in the language. However, you may want to consider bringing a Spanish phrase book. It may be helpful to you in negotiating simple hotel and restaurant situations when no leader is around.

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...2

CLIMATE: Due to the wide range of habitats and elevations visited on this tour, participants should be prepared for an equally wide range of weather. The higher elevation areas around Cuenca can be crisp and cool with chilly nights and pleasantly warm days. Nights at Casa Simpson and Hosteria Dos Chorreras can also be chilly and the humid weather there can make it feel especially cool. For the most part, temperatures will be warm during the day (75 F, 24 C), and pleasantly cool at night (60-65 F, 15-18 C). The lower elevations are likely to be hotter. Though this tour technically takes place during the dry season, rain is always possible anywhere on the tour. Sunburn is also a possibility as the strong tropical sun can be harsh on even overcast days.

ALTITUDE: While visiting El Cajas and parts of Podocarpus National Parks, we will do some birding in the high-elevation elfin forest and paramo between 10000 and 13,000 feet, where the air is thin. Although most people are not affected by such short exposure to high elevation, anyone with a history of altitude problems should discuss it with their physician.

PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This is intended as a moderate tour with slow walking and periods of standing and sitting, though the days may still be long. Daylight on the equator lasts only 12 hours and birds are most active in the early morning. Early starts are imperative, although these may be counteracted on some days by a post-lunch siesta or a couple hours of free time before dinner. The majority of the birding will be done on foot from dirt roads and along trails.

While birding on roads, we will be moving slowly with the tour minibus following us, often continuing for an entire morning or afternoon. On several days we will be walking well-maintained forest trails. The longest of these is along the Rio Bombuscaro at Podocarpus National Park and also the loop trail at Reserva Tapichalaca. The Rio Bombuscaro trail is about 3km in each direction, and the loop trail at Tapichalaca totals approximately 4km. These, as well as a few other shorter trails that we may walk, have rolling hills and some cobbled or concrete steps at their steeper parts, but all are well maintained for use by birding tourists. If we have a rainy period, the trails will be muddy and may have some slick spots. Please be prepared. A collapsible walking stick is often useful.

On several days, we'll be birding in transit between lodges or hotels, leaving early and reaching our next lodge in the late afternoon for dinner. On days when not staying at an "eco-lodge" with a kitchen open early for our needs, we may also leave the hotel packing breakfast or with a planned snack stop. There will be at least one optional after-dinner owl excursion.

Other than around the lodges we will largely be birding in rather remote locations without bathroom facilities. Be prepared to "use the bushes" if necessary.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Yellow Fever: It is recommended that travellers have Yellow Fever protection when travelling in rural Ecuador.

Malaria: It is recommended that travellers have Malaria protection when travelling in Ecuador below 4900 feet (Most of our lodging is below this elevation).

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...3

Insects: Biting insects are an often-present, but mostly only minor problem in the lower elevations the tour itinerary. We recommend using insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET.

Miscellaneous: We avoid tap water, purified water is readily available, and we utilize hotels, lodges, and restaurants that routinely host foreign tourists. However, one can never completely escape the risk of parasites or infections. You may wish to bring a broad spectrum antibiotic in case of stubborn bacterial infections and an anti-diarrhea medication such as Immodium.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Copalinga Lodge, Cabanas Yankuam, Casa Simpson, Urraca Lodge and Umbrellabird Lodge are comfortable eco-lodges catering to foreign tourists and birding groups. At all of the lodges each room has a private bathroom and hot water. Each lodge is also situated within its own forest reserve allowing immediate access to hummingbird feeders and excellent birding. The Grand Hotel of Guayaquil, Casa de la Aguila in Cuenca, and Howard Johnson Loja are familiar big-city hotels with all the amenities. Though we try to schedule our tour when other large groups will not be present, depending on the situation, single travelers may need to double-up in a room with another participant at the smaller lodges.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: There is laundry service available at all of our hotels and lodges. Given the humidity at some locations, and possibility of rain, you cannot count on clothes drying quickly.

ELECTRICITY: The lodges and hotel at which we stay on this tour have electricity, but you should be prepared for occasional power outages. Electricity is 110/120V AC 60Hz. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>. **A good torch with extra batteries is a must.**

FOOD: Meals throughout are very good, with lots of vegetables, great soups, fruit juices and various salads to accompany the fresh meat, chicken and fish. Vegetarians can be accommodated, but please let us know in advance.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated.

Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some of the rooms where we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Wireless internet access is available in the dining areas of Copalinga, Cabanas Yankuam, Casa Simpson, Hosteria Jardin del Valle, Urraca Lodge, and Umbrellabird Lodge and throughout our city hotels in Loja and Guayaquil.

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...4

FIELD CLOTHING: Informal dress throughout. The following items are basic:

Long, quick-drying fabric trousers	Rain-proof clothes (no bright colours)
Quick-dry shirts	Light gloves
Light wind-proof jacket	Folding umbrella (IMPORTANT!)
Fleece or warm sweater	Sun hat
Rubber boots (or hiking boots if you don't mind getting wet and muddy)	

Note regarding warm jacket: El Cajas National Park, the Cajanuma sector of Podocarpus National Park and the Tapichalaca Reserve can be damp and windy, and morning temperatures at these locations can be cold (40-50 degrees F). We suggest dressing in layers, with sweaters/sweatshirts and a Goretex-type jacket. A warm jacket is a good idea, but it may not be useful during the rest of the tour.

Note regarding umbrellas: Although some regard this as silly, we feel it is an **essential** item for birding in the Neotropics. Those choosing not to bring umbrellas usually regret that choice! A small, dark-coloured travel umbrella is preferable - a big bright yellow and white umbrella, for example, will be unwieldy in group situations and will make you even more conspicuous to the birds.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Torch plus extra batteries	Bandanna
Small LED Headtorch for doing the checklist	Small rucksack/daypack
Sunscreen	Wash cloth
Laundry soap & laundry bag	Small first aid kit
Shampoo	Alarm clock
Notebook/pencil	Sunglasses
Plastic bags (to protect optical equipment)	Pocket knife (packed in your suitcase!)
Insect repellent	Anti-fog spray for spectacles
Water bottle	Ear plugs (if you are light sleeper)

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide. Only occasionally will we be birding areas with bodies of water or open fragmented forest when having your own telescope is desirable.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will bring copies of the more important field guides, references, and maps. Standard equipment includes digital recorder, microphone, speaker, laser pointer, spotlight and telescope.

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...5

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour. *There is a weight restrictions per person on our internal flights so you will need to limit your luggage as much as possible.*

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. At most of the lodges, cabins are separated from the parking lot and main dining area often by 50-100m. Lodge staff and the leader(s) will help with luggage if they can. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: We'll use 9 to 15 passenger vans /buses depending on group size.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...6

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Dunning, John S. 1989. *South American Birds: A Photographic Aid to Identification*. Harrowood Books, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, USA. This book contains colour photographs of over 1,000 South American landbirds.

Fjeldså, Jon and N. Krabbe. 1990. *Birds of the High Andes: A Manual to the Birds of the Temperate Zone of the Andes and Patagonia, South America*. Apollo, Denmark. A guide to South America's higher altitude species. Although heavy, expensive, and very poorly bound, it is worth studying prior to the tour.

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. 1984. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. A superb and very readable introduction to the ecology of tropical rain forests. **Recommended.**

Green, Clive. 1996. *Birding Ecuador*. Second edition. Available from the author directly (1208 N Swan Rd, Tucson, AZ 85712), or from Tucson Audubon Society and ABA Sales.

Hilty, S.L. 1994. *Birds of Tropical America*. Chapters Publishing, Ltd., Shelburne, CT. Excellent treatment of natural history of neotropical birds.

McMullen, Miles and Lelis Navarrete. 2013. *Fieldbook of the Birds of Ecuador*. Quito, Ecuador. This new small field guide has updated range maps and identification information. The plates are mediocre for some species, but its small size makes it a useful book for the field.

Pearson, David et al. 1997. *New Key to Ecuador and the Galapagos (New Key Guides)*. Soho Press. ISBN 1569750750.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul J. Greenfield. 2001. *The Birds of Ecuador*. Comstock Publishing Associates, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. **This is the recommended field guide for the tour.**

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul J. Greenfield. 2001. *The Birds of Ecuador: Status, Distribution and Taxonomy*. Cornell University Press. This is the companion book to the field guide listed above.

Ridgely, R. S., P. Greenfield, and M. Guerrero G. 1998. *An annotated list of the birds of mainland Ecuador*. Fundacion ornitologia del Ecuador, CECIA. Quito, Ecuador. ISBN 9978-40-487-2. A very useful distributional checklist that divides Ecuador into various altitudinal zones and give the status of all the species to be found in each. Follows the taxonomy and nomenclature of the guide to the birds of Ecuador by Ridgely and Greenfield. **Recommended.**

Ridgely, R. S. and G. Tudor. 1989. *The Birds of South America Volume 1: The Oscine Passerines*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ridgely, R. S. and G. Tudor. 1994. *The Birds of South America Volume 2: The Suboscine Passerines*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Superb plates by Guy Tudor and an excellent text with detailed distribution maps. A must for anyone seriously interested in South American birds. Unfortunately too bulky to bring on the tour, but well worth referring to both before and after.

SOUTH ECUADOR: Tour Information...7

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

NEOTROPICAL BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.neotropicalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc and your international air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the tour in the meantime, please contact us.