Ecuador

Amazon Birding & Wildlife Escape



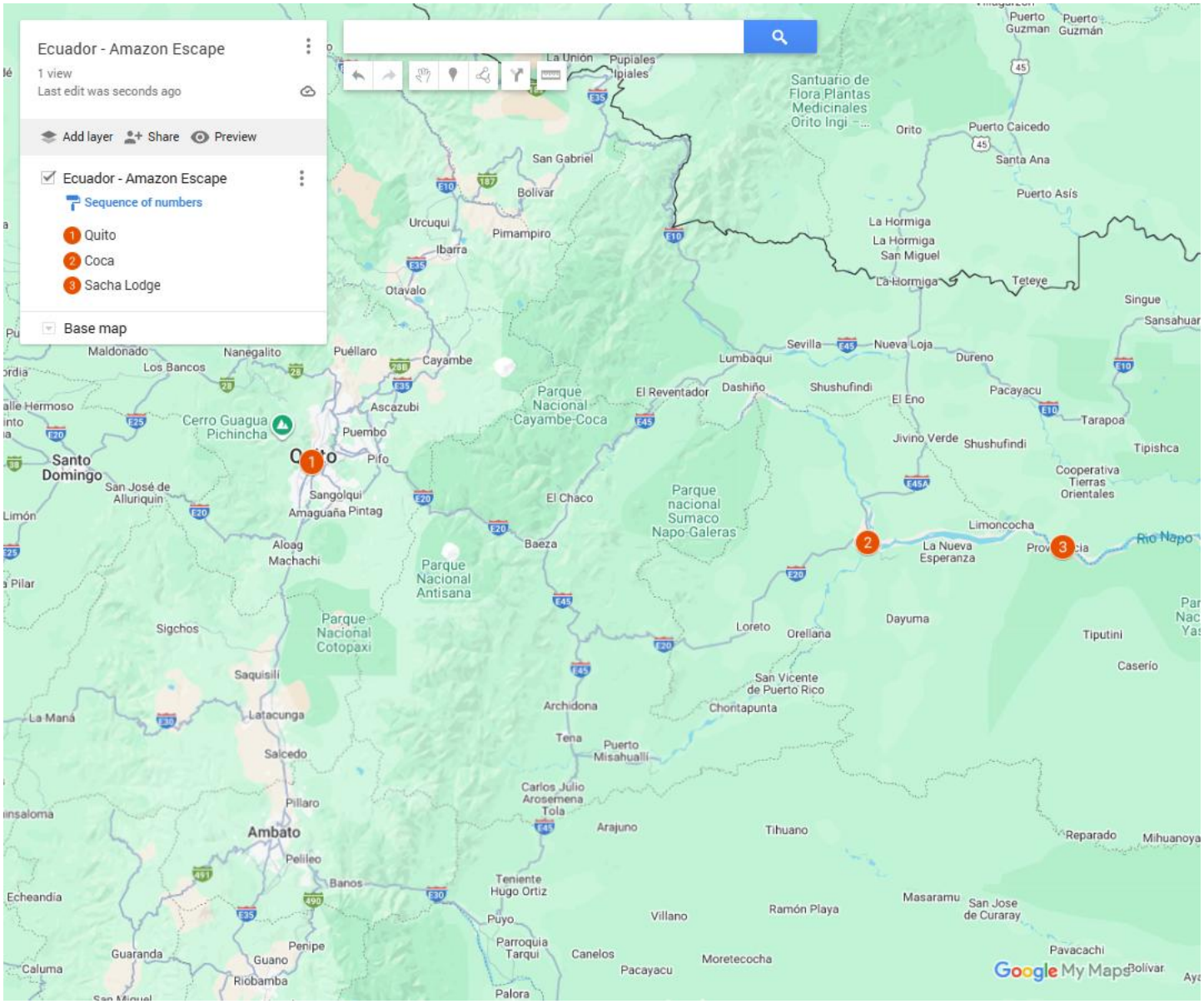
Blue-and-yellow Macaws by Bobby Wilcox

Nestled in the heart of Ecuador's Amazon Basin, Sacha Lodge offers incredible access to one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth. With just over 600 species recorded in the area, it is a premier destination for birders seeking both sheer diversity and a chance at several iconic South American species. Our tour is designed to explore the mosaic of micro-habitats that make up the Upper Amazon biome- ranging from varzea and terra firme forest to oxbow lakes and both a canopy tower and canopy walkway - maximizing our chances of encountering a remarkable array of avian life.

Among the many highlights we may encounter are Harpy Eagle, Hoatzin, Agami and Zigzag Herons, Grey-winged Trumpeter, Sungrebe, Scarlet, Blue-and-yellow, Chestnut-fronted and Red-bellied Macaws, Wire-crested Thorntail, Gould's Jewelfront, Great and Long-tailed Potoos, White-throated, Yellow-throated and Channel-billed Toucans, Many-banded and Ivory-billed Aracaris, Green-and-rufous and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Gilded and Scarlet-crowned Barbets, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Cinnamon Attila, Grey-tailed and Screaming Pihas, Golden-headed and Orange-crowned Manakins, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Plum-throated and Spangled Cotingas, and an astounding diversity of antbirds, including Cocha Antshrike and Lunulated Antbird.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Quito**
Day 2	**Quito; flight to Coca, boat ride to Sacha Lodge**
Days 3 to 6	**Sacha Lodge**
Day 7	**Sacha Lodge to Coca by boat, flight to Quito & final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Napo River (Coca to Sacha Lodge). From Coca, we journey into the deep Amazon with a 2 hour boat trip along the Rio Napo. While the boat travels relatively quickly, it will be possible to pick up a few new species from the boat, including Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, Yellow-headed and Black Caracaras, Yellow-billed and Large-billed Terns, the scarce Pied Plover, White-banded and White-winged Swallows, Grey-breasted Martin and Swallow-winged Puffbird.



Agami Heron by Bobby Wilcox

Disembarking our motorised boat, we have a short walk on a raised platform through the rainforest to reach the lodge creek and switch to a non-motorised canoe ride to our lodge. The pristine habitat surrounding our lodge is absolutely superb, and we could find the likes of Undulated Tinamou, Scarlet and Blue-and-yellow Macaws, Green-backed and Black-tailed Trogons, White-chinned, White-eared and Great Jacamars, Scarlet-crowned Barbet, Black-fronted Nunbird, Chestnut-capped Puffbird, Salvin's Curassow, Silvered, Plumbeous, White-shouldered and Dot-backed Antbirds, Amazonian Streaked Antwren, Yellow-crowned Elaenia, Lesser Kiskadee, Red-capped Cardinal, Black-capped Donacobius and even the odd-looking Hoatzin!

Sacha Lodge. Few lodges in the Amazon Basin can rival Sacha Lodge in terms of biodiversity, comfort, and birding opportunities. Nestled deep in the Ecuadorian Amazon, this premier eco-lodge combines full luxury - complete with beautiful accommodations, fine dining, and expert guides - with the opportunity to experience one of the richest avifaunas on Earth. Just over 600 species have been recorded in the vicinity, making Sacha a true birder's paradise.



Hoatzin by Dušan Brinkhuizen

We have several full days to explore the incredibly diverse surroundings of Sacha Lodge, and the birding here is nothing short of sensational. One of the premier highlights is the 43-meter canopy tower, ingeniously built around a giant Kapok tree. This remarkable structure offers a commanding perspective of the forest canopy, allowing eye-level views of species that are rarely observed from the ground. From this elevated perch, we may encounter a dazzling variety of birds including macaws, toucans, cotingas, barbets, woodpeckers, and raptors soaring above or perched within the treetops.

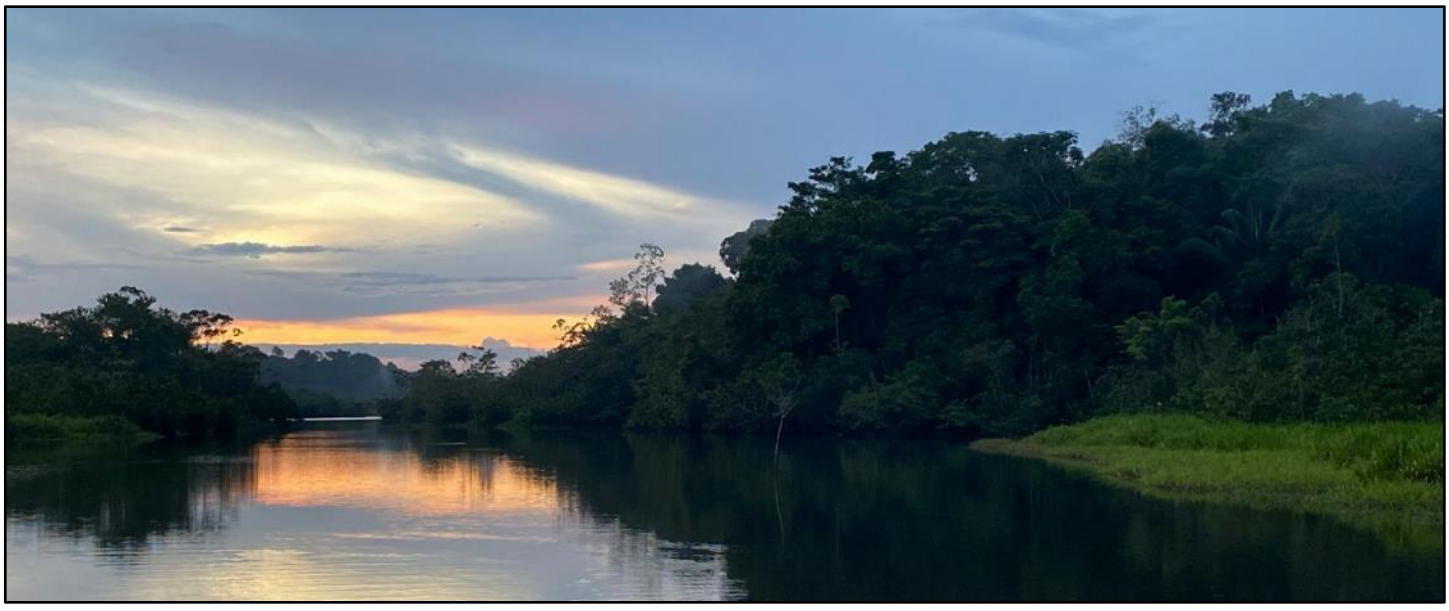
Complementing the tower is Sacha's spectacular canopy walkway—a 300-meter-long, 30-meter-high suspension bridge that stretches between three steel towers, offering access to a completely different slice of the canopy. This walkway provides an immersive, almost surreal experience of moving through the rainforest canopy, often resulting in sightings of species that might otherwise remain hidden. Past tours have enjoyed excellent views of highlights such as Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet, Spangled and Plum-throated Cotingas, and Ivory-billed Aracari, among many others.



Harpy Eagle by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The surrounding terra firme, varzea, and seasonally flooded forests around Sacha Lodge offer access to an extraordinary range of microhabitats, each supporting its own suite of specialized birdlife. One day will be devoted to visiting the Napo River islands—dynamic, early-successional habitats formed by sediment deposition. These islands host a unique avifauna that is rarely encountered away from this habitat type. Among our primary targets here are Black-and-white Antbird, Castelnau's Antshrike, Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant, Drab Water Tyrant, River Tyrannulet, and the attractive but often inconspicuous Olive-spotted Hummingbird—all species highly localized to river island vegetation and often difficult to see elsewhere in Ecuador.

Nearby, we'll also visit one or more parrot clay licks, where various psittacids gather to ingest mineral-rich soil—thought to neutralize dietary toxins or supplement sodium intake. These licks offer excellent opportunities to observe and photograph an exciting concentration of species. Regular visitors include Yellow-crowned Amazon, Mealy Amazon, Blue-headed Parrot, Orange-cheeked Parrot, and Dusky-headed and Cobalt-winged Parakeets.



Napo River by Lev Frid

With luck, we may also encounter the Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet, a scarce and easily overlooked canopy-dweller that sometimes joins the clay lick gatherings, especially in the early morning.



Many-banded Aracari by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Tranquil blackwater creeks around Sacha Lodge offer intimate and rewarding birding, particularly in the early morning or late afternoon. These slow-moving, tea-coloured waters are home to the elusive Sungrebe, Grey-necked Wood Rail, and the shy Zigzag Heron, which is most reliably seen at dusk. These waterways also provide habitat for the elegant Agami Heron, the charismatic Boat-billed Heron, and the vibrant Orange-crested Manakin, which can sometimes be found along the shaded creek edges. The lodge's own Pilchicocha Lake, just in front of the accommodations, often holds Black-capped Donacobius, Red-capped Cardinal, Lesser Kiskadee, and various kingfishers and flycatchers, adding to the diversity right on your doorstep.

Venturing into the terra firme and várzea forests, the lodge's extensive trail system opens up another dimension of Amazonian birding. Mixed-species flocks move through the midstory and canopy, often revealing a host of antwrens including White-flanked, Rufous-tailed, Long-winged, and the localized Rufous-backed Stipplethroat (Yasuni Antwren). These flocks may also include Cinereous and Dusky-throated Antshrikes, Olive-backed Foliage-gleaner, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, and other members of the understory guild. In areas with active army ant swarms, the scene can be electrifying—swarms may draw in a full entourage of obligate ant-followers such as Reddish-winged Bare-eye, White-plumed, Sooty, Lunulated, Scale-backed, Spot-backed, and White-cheeked Antbirds, all highly sought-after species and thrilling to observe as they track the ants' every movement.



Sungrebe by Forrest Rowland

Our nocturnal excursions provide further excitement. The forest comes alive with new sounds and sights after dark, and we may encounter several nightbirds including Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Tawny-bellied Screech Owl, and the haunting Crested Owl, whose distinctive calls can be heard echoing through the forest. These outings may also reveal nocturnal mammals such as night monkeys, Kinkajou, Nine-banded Armadillo, and possibly Common Opossum, along with an array of intriguing amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates, particularly during wetter months.

Among the many rarer specialties of the terra firme forest, we will search for Wire-tailed and Striolated Manakins, Brown Nunlet, Yellow-

billed Jacamar, and ground-dwelling skulkers such as Rufous-capped and Striated Antthrushes. We'll also be on alert for shy denizens like the Ochre-striped and Thrush-like Antpittas, both notoriously difficult to see but sometimes responsive to patient playback. Other high-value targets include Scaly-breasted Woodpecker and Amazonian Barred Woodcreeper, both of which frequent mature forest. With luck, we may encounter a Harpy Eagle—seen from Sacha's canopy tower in recent years—or along quieter ridges. Additional treats may include the striking Collared Puffbird and the boldly patterned Banded Antbird, both of which patrol productive forest trails but require persistence and a bit of luck.



Wire-crested Thorntail by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Our daily plans will be adapted by our local guide to maximize our birding success and focus on species of particular interest. Each day will be an immersion into the sights, sounds, and rhythms of the rainforest - a truly unforgettable experience that showcases the extraordinary biodiversity of the Amazon and the richness of Sacha Lodge's unique setting.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	■ ■ ■	Easy to moderate paced tour suited for those in good health with reasonable level of fitness. Not suited for anyone with mobility challenges or serious medical conditions. All walks & activities at the lodge are optional.
Birding Ease	■ ■ ■	Moderate, several difficult rainforest skulkers & mid-canopy flocks.
Accommodation	■ ■ ■	Very comfortable.
Walking / Trails	■ ■ ■	Lodge surrounds, canopy tower, canopy walkway, dugout canoe trips, clay licks and forest trails that can be muddy/slippery, especially after rain.
Vehicles / Roads	■ ■ ■	Very little driving. Motorised boat ride of +-2hrs to get from Coca to Sacha & excursions on the Napo River, dugout canoe rides on black water creeks/oxbow lakes.
Photography	■ ■ ■	Worthwhile to good.
Annoyances	■ ■ ■	Can be hot to very hot & humid at some sites.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7;
- Bottled drinking water;
- Soft drinks at meals
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation (including boat transfers);
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees; and
- Local guiding services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages expect noted (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- No tips or gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Tipping**: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader/s have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It may be very hot in the Amazonian lowlands. We will thus seek to avoid, as far as possible, birding in the middle of the day. Humidity in the rainforest areas will be high and potentially uncomfortable.
- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8 kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as most of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Guests will be notified when longer walks may be undertaken. If you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a very good standard.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins in Quito on day 1 with a welcome dinner, and as this is scheduled as an arrival day; you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude after our internal flight from the city of Coca to Quito International Airport on day 7.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Mariscal Sucre International Airport, Quito (IATA: UIO), Quito is the major port of entry into Ecuador for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.