Ecuador

Hummingbirds Adventure (Relaxed)



Sword-billed Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

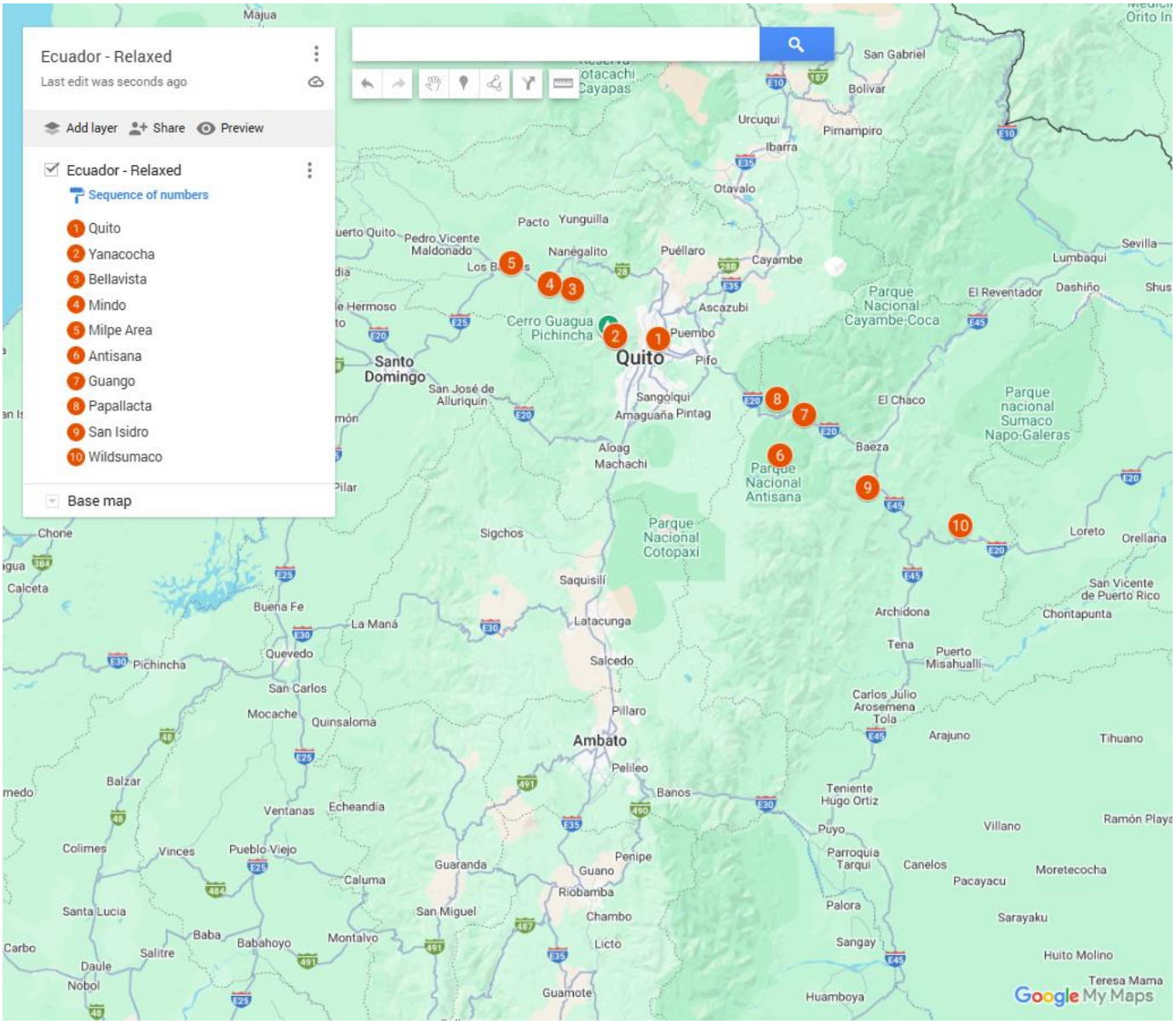
Ecuador sits at the crossroads of an extraordinary range of habitats, from windswept Andean páramo to lush cloudforest and lowland rainforest, packing remarkable biodiversity into a compact and easily accessible area. Its small size, excellent infrastructure, and spectacular scenery make it one of the world's premier birding destinations.

This tour is unapologetically focused on one of its greatest treasures: hummingbirds. Across a carefully selected network of sites, we encounter an astonishing diversity of these jewels, from the impossibly long-billed Sword-billed Hummingbird and shimmering Great Sapphirewing of the high Andes, to dazzling cloudforest species such as Violet-tailed Sylph, Empress Brilliant, and White-booted Racket-tail, and foothill stunners including Gould's Jewelfront and Wire-crested Thorntail.

With extended time at some of the finest feeder setups in the Neotropics, we enjoy repeated, close-range views of dozens of species, offering exceptional opportunities to study behaviour, appreciate subtle identification features, and capture unforgettable photographic moments.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Quito**
Day 2	**Quito to Bellavista via Yanacocha**
Day 3	**Bellavista area**
Day 4	**Bellavista to Mindo**
Day 5	**Milpe & Mindo**
Day 6	**Mindo to Quito**
Day 7	**Quito to Guango via Antisana**
Day 8	**Guango to San Isidro via Papallacta**
Days 9 & 10	**San Isidro**
Day 11	**San Isidro to Wildsumaco**
Days 12 & 13	**Wildsumaco**
Day 14	**Wildsumaco to Quito & depart**



Birding sites in detail



Violet-tailed Sylph by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Yanacocha. We travel to the north-western flanks of Pichincha Volcano, climbing to approximately 3,500m (11,000ft), where we spend the morning birding in the temperate zone of the western Andes. This high-elevation reserve offers a dramatic setting of misty slopes, elfin forest, and shrubby páramo edge, providing a superb introduction to Andean birding in a cool, atmospheric environment.

Yanacocha is particularly famed for its hummingbird diversity, and we can expect an exciting array of species visiting both natural flowers and feeders. Highlights include the remarkable Sword-billed Hummingbird, along with Great Sapphirewing, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sapphire-vented and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, and Tyrian Metaltail. We will also search for more localized and sought-after species such as Rainbow-bearded and Purple-mantled Thornbills, while the critically endangered Black-breasted Puffleg remains a tantalising possibility.

As we explore the twisted vegetation and open shrubby habitat, a variety of other Andean specialties may be encountered, including Andean Pygmy Owl, striking Hooded, Black-chested, and Golden-crowned Tanagers, Andean Guan, Superciliaried Hemispingus, White-chinned Thistletail, Blue-backed Conebill, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, and the shy but beautiful Barred Fruiteater.

Bellavista. We have a full day to explore the rich cloud forests around Bellavista, a protected reserve surrounded by superb habitat with access to mature forest and canopy viewpoints. This moss-draped environment is classic Andean cloudforest, alive with bird activity and offering a wonderful setting for relaxed yet highly productive birding.

The lodge feeders are a major highlight, providing extended, close-up views of an exciting range of hummingbirds. Regular visitors include Violet-tailed Sylph, Gorgeted Sunangel, Collared Inca, White-booted Racket-tail, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and Purple-throated Woodstar, along with the more subtle Speckled Hummingbird. With patience, we can enjoy prolonged studies of behaviour and interactions as multiple species compete for position around the feeders.



Great Sapphirewing by Bobby Wilcox

We will also spend time birding the pass above Tandayapa, where a range of Chocó and cloudforest specialties may be found,



Giant Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

including Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Grass-green Tanager, Toucan Barbet, and the scarce White-faced Nunbird, while Cloud Forest Pygmy Owl and Tanager Finch are also possible.

As we descend through the Tandayapa Valley towards Mindo, we target additional hummingbird species such as Velvet-purple Coronet, Brown Inca, Empress Brilliant, and Hoary Puffleg, further building an already impressive diversity.

Milpe. We travel a short distance to Milpe, a key reserve within the Mindo Cloud Forest Foundation, where lower-elevation forest provides a noticeable shift in species composition. The warm foothill habitat contrasts nicely with the higher cloudforest sites and delivers another suite of hummingbird specialties.

The feeders here are particularly productive, often hosting a lively mix of species including White-necked Jacobin, Crowned Woodnymph, Green-crowned Brilliant, Andean Emerald, White-whiskered Hermit, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and the diminutive Green Thorntail, offering excellent viewing and photographic opportunities.



Buff-winged Starfrontlet by Clayton Burne

The surrounding forest and fruit feeders can also be highly active, attracting a colourful supporting cast such as Red-headed Barbet, Pale-mandibled Aracari, Chocó Toucan, Rufous Motmot, and a variety of tanagers and euphonias, often feeding at close range and adding to the richness of the experience.

Mindo. The mid-elevation cloud forest around Mindo provides a rich and varied birding



Choco Toucan by Clayton Burne

environment, with lush foothill forest, riverine habitat, and productive edge areas combining to create one of the most diverse regions on the tour. This area offers a more relaxed pace, with time to explore different habitats and enjoy the overall abundance of birdlife.

While not as feeder-focused as other sites, Mindo still offers a good selection of hummingbirds, and we will keep an eye out for species such as Crowned Woodnymph, Green-crowned Brilliant, White-whiskered Hermit, and Andean Emerald, along with possible additions like Purple-bibbed Whitetip or Green Thorntail in suitable habitat.

The surrounding forests and river systems support a wide variety of other species, including Zeledon's Antbird, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Wattled Guan, and Yellow-collared Chlorophonia, while along the rivers we may find Torrent Tyrannulet, White-capped Dipper, and, with luck, the spectacular Sunbittern.

Antisana. After leaving Quito, we ascend into the high Andes to Antisana Reserve, situated at around 4,000m (13,000ft). This dramatic, open landscape of páramo and wetlands, set against the backdrop of the snow-capped Antisana Volcano, offers a striking contrast to the forested slopes visited earlier.

This is a key site for high-Andean hummingbirds, where we will target specialties such as the endemic Ecuadorian Hillstar, along with Black-tailed Trainbearer, Great Sapphirewing, and Purple-backed Thornbill. Lower, shrubbier areas may also produce Shining Sunbeam and the immense Giant Hummingbird, the largest member of the family.

The reserve is also well known for its other high-altitude wildlife, most notably the majestic Andean Condor, along with a variety of waterfowl and open-country specialists that thrive in this unique environment.



Purple-backed Thornbill by Bobby Wilcox

Guango. In the afternoon we descend to Guango Lodge, set in excellent temperate forest at approximately 2,800m (9,200ft). This scenic site, with its rushing streams and mossy forest, is one of the premier hummingbird locations on the eastern slope.

The lodge feeders are exceptionally productive, attracting a superb range of species including Sword-billed



Rainbow-bearded Thornbill by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Hummingbird, Long-tailed Sylph, Tourmaline Sunangel, Collared Inca, Chestnut-breasted and Buff-tailed Coronets, Mountain Avocetbill, Speckled Hummingbird, Tyrian Metaltail, White-bellied Woodstar, and the scarce Glowing Puffleg. The variety and frequency of visits here allow for prolonged and often spectacular viewing.

The surrounding forest can also produce a selection of Andean specialties, adding further interest between sessions at the feeders.

Papallacta. We begin birding the treeline scrub and páramo on the eastern slope of Papallacta Pass, where high-altitude habitat transitions between open grassland and stunted shrubbery. This stark yet beautiful environment complements our time at Antisana, offering a slightly different suite of species in similarly dramatic surroundings.

Hummingbirds are once again a key focus, with targets including Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Black-mantled Thornbill, Green-backed Hillstar, and Blue-mantled Thornbill. The treeline zone can be particularly productive, with species such as Viridian Metaltail and Great Sapphirewing often seen well.

The area is also known for its wider wildlife, and with luck we may even encounter the elusive Spectacled Bear, adding an extra layer of excitement to this already rewarding site.

Las Brisas. As we descend to lower elevations, we stop at the productive feeders at Las Brisas, where a fresh suite of hummingbirds awaits in warmer foothill habitat.

The feeders here can be very active, attracting species such as Violet-fronted Brilliant, Peruvian Racket-tail, Gorgeted and White-bellied Woodstars, Brown Violetear, Long-tailed Sylph, and Bronzy Inca, often at close range and in good light. This stop provides an excellent opportunity to add new species while enjoying relaxed viewing conditions.

San Isidro. This privately owned reserve protects extensive subtropical cloud forest at around 2,100m (6,800ft), offering a comfortable base surrounded by rich birdlife and scenic forest. The combination of excellent habitat and well-positioned lodge facilities makes this a particularly enjoyable stop on the tour.



Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan by Dušan Brinkhuizen



Black-throated Brilliant by Amanda Guercio

Hummingbird activity around the lodge is consistent and rewarding, with feeders attracting species such as Long-tailed Sylph, Collared and Bronzy Incas, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Speckled Hummingbird, and seasonal Green and Sparkling Violetears, with the charming Gorgeted Woodstar occasionally appearing.

Beyond the feeders, the lodge's famous garden lights attract insects at night, creating feeding opportunities for a wide range of other species in the early morning, including Masked Trogon, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Black-billed Peppershrike, and numerous flycatchers, warblers, and tanagers.

Wildsumaco. Wildsumaco Lodge, situated on the eastern foothills of the Andes at the base of Sumaco Volcano, offers a superb combination of comfortable accommodation, extensive forest access, and some of the most exciting hummingbird viewing of the tour.

The feeders here are a major highlight, often hosting 15 or more species, including standout birds such as Gould's Jewelfront, Napo Sabrewing, Black-throated Brilliant, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Green Hermit, and the spectacular Wire-crested Thorntail. Additional possibilities include Blue-fronted Lancebill, White-tailed Hillstar, Violet-headed Hummingbird, and Gorgeted Woodstar, while nearby trails may produce White-tipped Sicklebill and Ecuadorian Piedtail.

The surrounding forest is equally rewarding, with mixed flocks and canopy activity featuring species such as Paradise and Spotted Tanagers, Golden-collared Toucanet, and, with luck, Coppery-chested Jacamar. Mammals such as Napo Tamarin may also be encountered, adding further interest to this exceptional site.



Black-mantled Tamarins by Lev Frid



Peruvian Racket-tail by Amanda Guercio

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Mostly undemanding. Birding is primarily at lodge feeders & trails, roadside or in parks/preserves.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground. Some forest birding on narrower trails.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads. Most drives are short (<2 hrs)
Photography		Good to very good, numerous feeders.
Annoyances		None noted.

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 breakfast on day 14;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation (including boat transfers);
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services.)

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special 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 (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they 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.**

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- 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.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a good standard, and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to rather luxurious. There is no camping on this trip.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Quito on Day 1, and as this is scheduled as an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude by mid-afternoon of day 14 at Quito International Airport.

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.