# Ecuador

## Hummingbirds Adventure (Relaxed)

### *9th March to 22nd March 2024 (14 days)*



**Sword-billed Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

*Ecuador is fortuitously situated within the heart of a fantastically diverse habitat array, ranging from the high Andes to excellent lowland rainforest. Ecuador's small size, good infrastructure, unsurpassable scenery, and friendly people make it one of the planet's most delightful birding destinations. Our dedicated hummingbird tour seeks to enjoy a vast number of these jewels, most to be comfortably found at the numerous feeders that dot the prime birding locations we visit.*

## *Itinerary & Map*

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|---|---|
| **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 the Pichincha Volcano, climbing to an altitude of approximately 3 500m (11 000ft). We wind our way up a gravel road where we will have a full morning's birding in the temperate zone of the western Andes. This spectacular area is especially productive for hummingbirds, and we can expect to find numerous representatives, including the incredible Sword-billed Hummingbird, Rainbow-bearded and the scarce, Purple-Mantled Thornbills, Sapphire-vented and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Great Sapphirewing, Tyrian Metaltail and, if we are extremely lucky, the endemic, inexplicably rare and critically endangered Black-breasted Puffleg.

Other possible species we may find as we sift through the twisted vegetation and open shrubby habitat include Andean Pygmy Owl (often located by its diurnal call), stunning Hooded and Black-chested Mountain Tanagers, and the equally striking Golden-crowned Tanager. Andean Guan, Superciliaried Hemispingus, White-chinned Thistletail, Blue-backed Conebill, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, and the beautiful, but shy Barred Fruiteater are also very likely.

**Bellavista.** We have a full day to bird the cloud forests around Bellavista, a protected reserve surrounded by outstanding habitat that provides access to the mature forest canopy. We will also spend time at the lodge feeders, taking in such gems as Speckled Hummingbird, Violet-tailed Sylph, Gorgeted Sunangel, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Purple-throated Woodstar, Collared Inca and White-booted Racket-tail as they buzz around the lodge's feeders.

We will spend part of the day birding the pass above Tandayapa, where specialties include the amazing Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, electric-coloured Grass-green Tanager and vocal Toucan Barbet, the rare White-faced Nunbird, Cloud Forest Pygmy Owl and the retiring Tanager Finch.

We will take our time to bird down the Tandayapa Valley towards Mindo, searching for Velvet-purple Coronet, Brown Inca, Empress Brilliant and Hoary Puffleg.

**Milpe.** We travel the short distance to Milpe, another key reserve of the Mindo Cloud Forest Foundation. The hummingbird feeders attract gems like White-necked Jacobin, Crowned Woodnymph, Green-crowned Brilliant, Andean Emerald, Crowned Woodnymph, White-whiskered Hermit, Purple-bibbed Whitetip and the tiny Green Thorntail. The banana feeders can be a true spectacle



**Glistening-green Tanager by Dušan Brinkhuizen**



**Giant Hummingbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

(although activity is highly seasonal), with stunners like Red-headed Barbet, Pale-mandibled Aracari, Chocó Toucan, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Rufous Motmot, Orange-billed Sparrow, Orange-bellied and Thick-billed Euphonias, Silver-throated, Rufous-throated, Blue-grey, White-lined and Blue-necked Tanagers all feeding at close range!

**Mindo.** The mid-elevation cloud forest of the lodge grounds can be very productive for species like Zeledon's Antbird, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Wattled Guan, Yellow-collared Chlorophonia and Golden-winged Manakin. The Mindo Valley itself holds nice riparian habitat with species like Bran-colored Flycatcher, Fawn-breasted Tanager, Slaty Spinetail and the recently described Coopman's Elaenia. At the fast-flowing rivers we can search for specialties such as Torrent Tyrannulet, White-capped Dipper, and if lucky, the stunning Sunbittern. We might also revisit the old Nono-Mindo road for higher elevation species if need be.



**Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

**Antisana.** After leaving Quito behind, we ascend the Andes, arriving at the Antisana Reserve situated at an elevation of approximately 4 000m (13 000ft). Visiting the tundra-like Paramo habitat surrounding the astonishing snow-capped Antisana Volcano will no doubt be an unforgettable experience, not only because of the breath-taking scenery but also because it offers us a great opportunity for finding the majestic Andean Condor. A truly iconic species of the South American Andes, it is also Ecuador's national bird!

We will seek out the endemic Ecuadorian Hillstar, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Great Sapphirewing and Purple-backed



**Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe by Lev Frid**

Thornbill. Scrubby habitat at lower elevations may turn up several gems such as Shining Sunbeam, Black-tailed Trainbearer, and the unrivalled Giant Hummingbird - the largest hummer on the planet!

**Guango.** In the afternoon we'll make our way to Guango Lodge, situated in excellent temperate forest habitat at roughly 2 800m (9 200ft). Guango is well-known for hummingbirds, with the spectacular Sword-billed Hummingbird, Collared Inca, Long-tailed Sylph, Tourmaline Sunangel, Chestnut-breasted and Buff-tailed Coronets, Mountain Avocetbill, Speckled Hummingbird, Tyrian Metaltail, White-bellied Woodstar and the scarce Glowing Puffleg all visiting the copious feeders.

**Papallacta.** Here we'll begin birding the treeline scrub and paramo on the western slope of the eastern Andes of Papallacta Pass. The habitat is similar to Antisana, although some different species can be found here. Our priorities include the rare Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Black-mantled Thornbill, Green-backed Hillstar and Blue-mantled Thornbill, whilst Viridian Metaltail and Great Sapphirewing are regular at the treeline. The enigmatic Spectacled Bear has been seen in the area multiple times, so fingers crossed!



**Crested Quetzal by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

**Las Brisas.** We'll begin making our way to lower altitudes, stopping at Las Brisas hummingbird feeders for Violet-fronted Brilliant, Peruvian Racket-tail, Gorgeted and White-bellied Woodstars, Geoffrey's Wedgebill, Brown Violetear, Long-tailed Sylph and Bronzy Inca amongst others.

**San Isidro.** This privately owned reserve protects large tracts of pristine subtropical cloud forest at an elevation of 2 100m (6 800ft). The superb birding, great lodging and exquisite cuisine make it a true birder's paradise.

We will first target the many birds that can be easily observed foraging at the garden lights. At night the lights attract insects, and during the morning we have a good chance to observe a feeding frenzy of insectivorous species! Inca Jay, Masked



Peruvian Racket-tail by Lev Frid

Trogon, Subtropical Cacique, Russet-backed Oropendola, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Black-billed Peppershrike, Slate-throated and Spectacled Whitestart, Brown-capped Vireo, Russet-crowned Warbler, Black-eared Hemispingus, Mountain Wren, Common Bush Tanager, Pale-edged and Cinnamon Flycatchers, Smoke-colored Pewee, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Montane and Olive-backed Woodcreeper frequently converge on the lights to hoover up the insect smorgasbord.

The feeders at the lodge attract a good number and diversity of hummingbirds, including the spectacular Long-tailed Sylph, Collared and Bronzy Incas, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Speckled Hummingbird, Green and Sparkling Violetears (seasonal) and sometimes the rather cute Gorgeted Woodstar.

**Wildsumaco.** Wildsumaco Lodge is in the eastern foothills, at the base of the impressive Sumaco Volcano around 1 500m (5 000ft) above sea level. It is a prime birding site with great lodging, an extensive trail system and excellent feeders.

We have time to visit the various feeders placed near our rooms, and at key sites within the surrounding forests. The lodge feeders attract a great variety of hummingbirds and if we are lucky, we might get upwards of 15 species! Local specialities that attend the feeders include the rare Gould's Jewelfront, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Napo Sabrewing, Rufous-vented Whitetip, Black-throated Brilliant, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Peruvian Racket-tail (sporting orange leg puffs), Many-spotted Hummingbird, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Green Hermit, White-tailed Hillstar (possible split in future), rare Blue-fronted Lancebill and the stunning Wire-crested Thorntail, while the verbena flowers in the garden often attract Violet-headed Hummingbird and Gorgeted Woodstar. With luck we'll also bump into Ecuadorian Piedtail and White-tipped Sicklebill along the trails.

The viewing from the lodge deck is excellent, with Chestnut-fronted Macaw frequently flying over. Military Macaw is also a possibility, though less common. The Cecropia trees attract various tanagers and other goodies such as Red-headed Barbet, Crested Oropendola and Golden-collared Toucanet. A banana feeder usually attracts a small troop of the adorable Napo Tamarin (a distinctive sub-species of Black-mantle Tamarin which is often considered a full species). Mixed flocks in the garden can be productive, with species including Olivaceous Greenlet, Golden-faced and Ecuadorian Tyrannulets, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Paradise, Blue-necked, Spotted, Bay-headed and Yellow-bellied Tanagers, Golden-collared Honeycreeper and Tropical Parula. Lined Antshrike, Blackish Antbird and Black-billed Treehunter are often found in the garden.



Black-mantled Tamarins by Lev Frid

White-crowned and Blue-rumped Manakins are frequently seen in their territories while the local Buff-throated Tody-Tyrant is often vocal from the high canopy. With a little luck, we may find Grey-tailed Piha or Yellow-throated Spadebill, both rare Wildsumaco specialities. The roadside banks provide the near-endemic Coppery-chested Jacamar with a nesting site, and we certainly hope to get good views of this species.

## *Tour Grading & Key*

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|---|---|---|
| **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. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

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