Ecuador - Northern

Ultimate Amazon: Sumaco Foothills & Rio Napo II

13th November to 21st November 2023 (9 days)

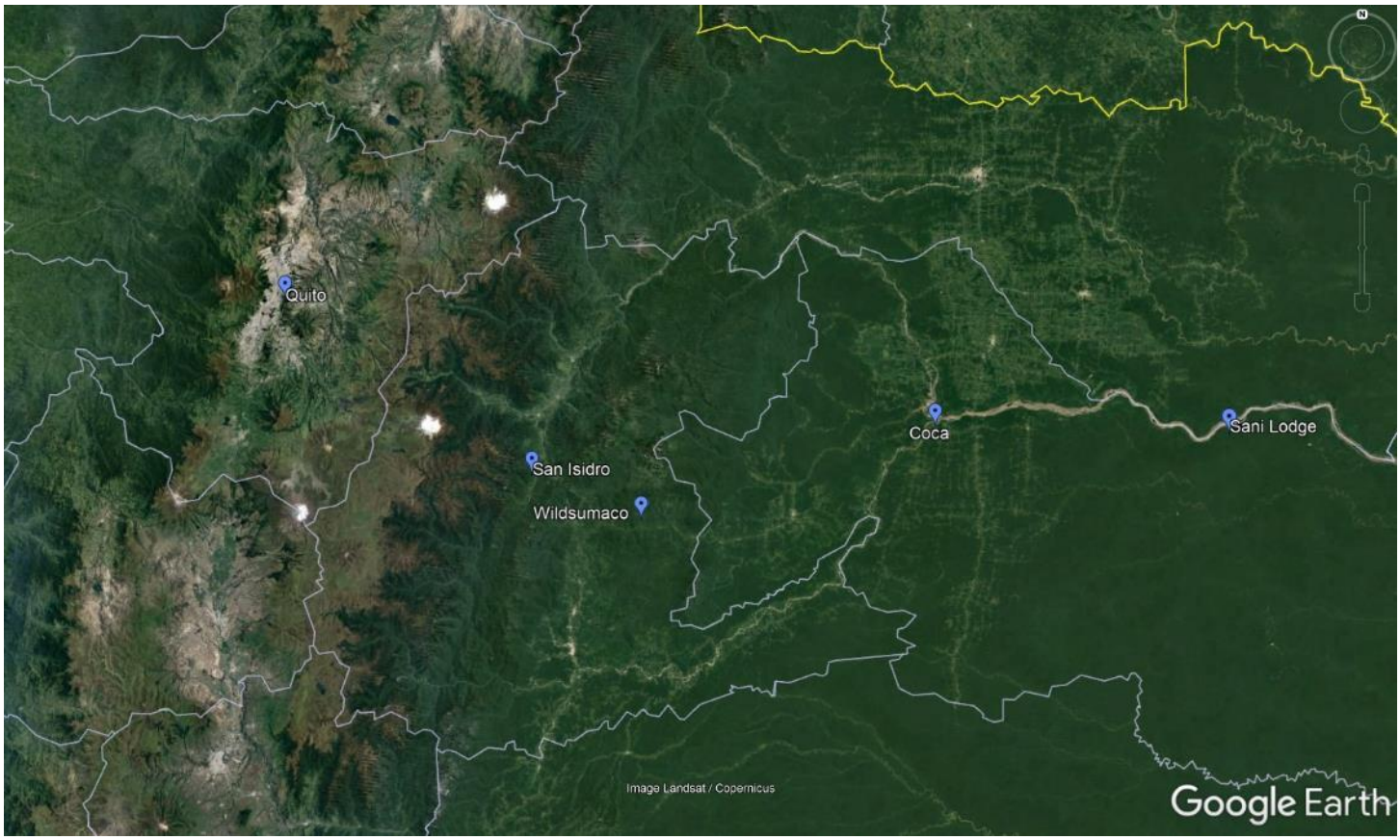


Opal-rumped Tanager by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The tropical foothills of the eastern Andes, taken together with the lowlands of the Amazon basin, boast an incredibly high biodiversity and are arguably the most species-rich regions of the world. The Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary bird list alone surpasses 500 species, while the number of bird species recorded at Sani Lodge is fast approaching 600! The tour will focus on finding as many species and local specialities as possible by visiting multiple micro-habitats within the Upper Amazonian biome. Although the list of possible birds is immense, some of the more interesting species that we have good chances of seeing include: Harpy Eagle, Hoatzin, Zigzag and Agami Herons, Grey-winged Trumpeter, Sungrebe, Scarlet, Blue-and-yellow, Chestnut-fronted and Red-bellied Macaws, Gould's Jewelfront, Wire-crested Thorntail, Great and Long-tailed Potoos, White-throated, Black-mandibled and Channel-billed Toucans, Many-banded and Ivory-billed Aracaris, American Pygmy and Green-and-rufous Kingfishers, Gilded and Scarlet-crowned Barbets, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Long-billed Woodcreeper, Cinnamon Attila, Grey-tailed Piha, Screaming Piha, Golden-headed and Orange-crowned Manakins, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Plum-throated & Spangled Cotingas and dozens of antbird species!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Quito, transfer to Cabañas San Isidro**
Day 2	**Cabañas San Isidro to Wildsumaco via the Loreto Road**
Days 3 & 4	**Wildsumaco**
Day 5	**Wildsumaco to Coca, boat ride to Sani Lodge**
Days 6 to 8	**Sani Lodge**
Day 9	**Sani Lodge to Coca by boat, flight to Quito & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Hoatzin by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Cabanas San Isidro. This privately owned reserve protects large tracts of pristine subtropical cloud forest at roughly 2 100m (6 800ft). In the early morning, we will bird the gardens for species attracted by the insect smorgasbord around 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 birds. Species that frequently attend these parties include Inca Jay, Masked 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, Montane and Olive-backed Woodcreepers and White-tailed Tyrannulet to mention but a few. After our arrival dinner, we will search for the San Isidro 'Mystery Owl', a possible future split of Black-banded Owl.

Loreto Road. We will make several birding stops along this road, targeting specialities such as Blackish Nightjar, Cliff Flycatcher, the scarce Western Striolated Puffbird, rare, Orange-breasted Falcon, and mixed-species flocks that may contain Golden-eyed Flowerpiercer, Yellow-throated, Orange-eared and Golden-eared Tanagers, Bronze-green Euphonia, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Russet Antshrike and Yellow-breasted Antwren.

Wildsumaco. The Wildsumaco Wildlife Sanctuary is in the eastern foothills at the base of the impressive Sumaco Volcano (1 500m / 5 000ft). It is a prime birding site with great lodging, an extensive trail system and excellent cuisine where we will spend two full days birding! 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, 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.



Gould's Jewelfront by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The viewing from the lodge deck is excellent, with Swallow-tailed Kite and 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



Wire-crested Thorntail by Dušan Brinkhuizen

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.

The trails at Wildsumaco provide excellent forest birding, although many of our targets are in fact rare species - and forest birds in general can be tricky to observe. We will search for both Plain-backed and Ochre-breasted Antpitta, species that the local bird guides have been able to attract in the past by putting out earthworms. Both Fiery-throated and Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater are present but move around a lot and are therefore rarely encountered. White-crowned and Blue-rumped Manakins are more 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. We will also carefully check the understory flocks that could hold such sought-after species as Plain-winged Antwren and White-streaked Antvireo. Other understory skulkers include Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, Northern White-crowned Tapaculo, Short-tailed Antthrush, Wing-banded Wren, Foothill Antwren, Spot-backed Antbird, Dusky Spinetail and Spotted Nightingale-Thrush. Birding along the road is far easier compared to the forest interior, with species like Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, Black-mandibled Toucan, Silver-beaked, Swallow and Magpie Tanagers, Lemon-browed and Olive-chested Flycatchers, Scaled Pigeon and Yellow-cheeked Becard all being regular. 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.



Blue-crowned Trogon by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Pacto Sumaco Road. The bamboo patches along the Pacto Sumaco Road hold several specialities that may include Large-headed Flatbill, Euler's Flycatcher, Black-and-white Tody-Tyrant, White-winged Becard and Yellow Tyrannulet.

Napo River (Coca to Sani Lodge). From Coca, we will continue our journey into the deep Amazon with a 2-3 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.



Many-banded Aracari by Dušan Brinkhuizen

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 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!

Sani Lodge. Few other lodges on Earth offer the diversity that Sani Lodge does - comfortable accommodation, good food, all the birds that one can handle, and access to both banks of the Rio Napo! Together with our local guides, we will establish the best birding plan for each day, trying to find as many species as possible. Aside from birding around the lodge itself, we will also visit a variety of micro-habitats within the Amazon rainforest by private canoe. The Kichwa community that owns the land and runs the lodge have not hunted on the property for more than 20 years, the well-represented wildlife is a testament to this fact.

On one of our days here, we will bird excellent terra firme forest, the most species rich habitat of the Amazon basin. Cocha Antshrike sits highest on our priority list, as Sani Lodge is one of the only reliable sites on earth to see this highly range-restricted species. Other highly sought-after species include the rare Harpy Eagle, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Amazonian, and Green-backed Trogons, White-crowned and Western Striped Manakins, Yellow-billed Jacamar, Brown Nunlet, Rufous-capped and Striated Antthrush, Ochre-striped and Thrush-like Antpittas, Scaly-breasted Woodpecker, Amazonian Barred Woodcreeper - there are far too many species to mention here!



Cocha Antshrike by Lev Frid

An understory mixed-flock may produce Long-winged, White-flanked, Rufous-tailed and Yasuni Antwrens, Cinereous and Dusky-throated Antshrikes, Olive-backed Foliage-gleaner, Long-billed Gnatwren and Tawny-crowned Greenlet. If we run into swarming army ants, we will hit the proverbial jackpot: Reddish-winged Bare-eye, White-plumed, Sooty, Lunulated, Scale-backed, White-cheeked, and Spot-backed Antbird are species that frequently attended ant swarms, so let's hope we get to witness such a spectacular feeding frenzy! After lunch, we may venture out on the canoes again, or make an afternoon visit to the canopy tower.

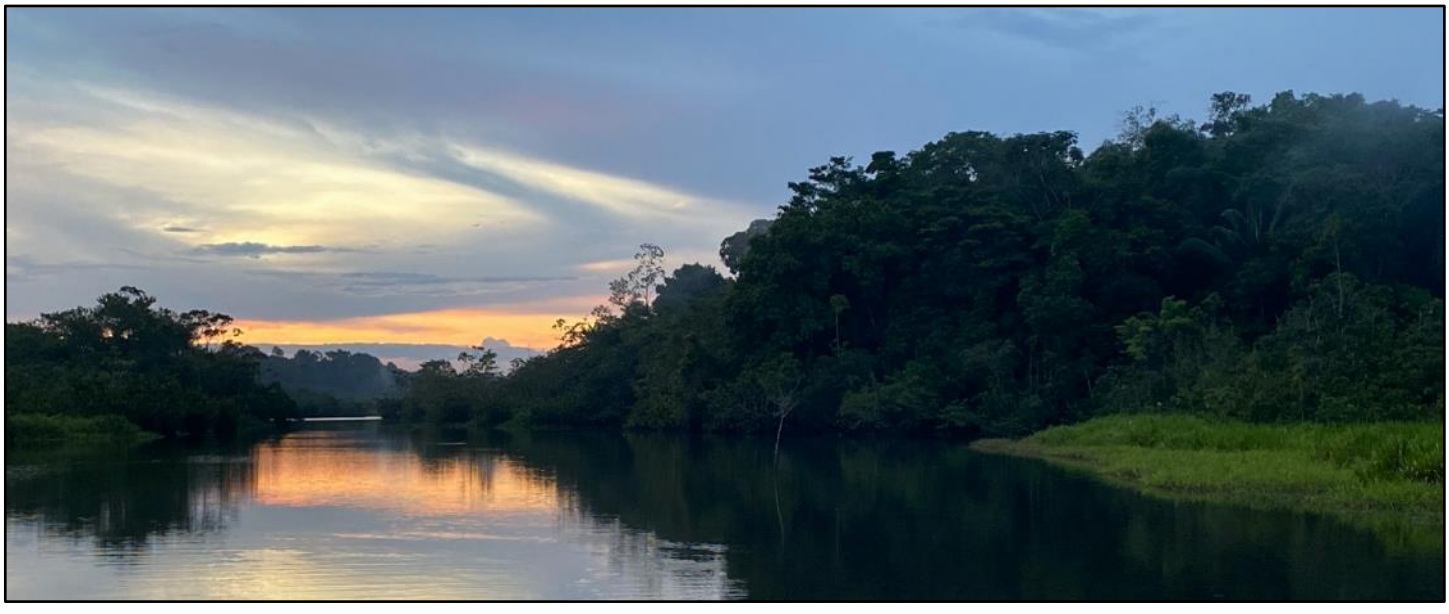


Great Potoo by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The canopy tower is another of the many highlights of Sani Lodge, located in pristine terra firme forest. At dawn, we shall walk the trail to the tower which can be very productive, such rarities as Wire-tailed Manakin, Banded Antbird and Collared Puffbird being seen frequently. In the past few years, Harpy Eagles have been seen regularly from the tower, and we will scan carefully for the major price of a bird. The main canopy tower itself is a spectacular structure (over 30m high!) and allows us an unparalleled opportunity to view canopy species that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible, to see from the ground. A myriad of parrots, macaws, tanagers, toucans, barbets, cotingas, woodpeckers, and raptors can be expected during a morning's birding from the tower.

Our afternoon birding will again depend on what species we desire, so we may explore the nearby forest trails or take another canoe ride through one of the creeks searching for the rare Zigzag Heron that's best seen at dusk.

On another day we will head over to the Rio Napo islands. These islands, with early succession growth host an interesting array of avifauna, many of which are strictly tied to the island only. Specialists that we will be searching for include Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant, Black-and-white Antbird, White-bellied and Parker's Spinetails, Lesser Hornero, Castelnau's Antshrike, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, Fuscous Flycatcher, River Tyrannulet, Orange-headed Tanager, and the beautiful Oriole Blackbird. Nearby parrot clay licks often host Yellow-crowned and Southern Mealy Amazons, Blue-headed and Orange-cheeked Parrots, Dusky-headed and Cobalt-winged Parakeets and the scarce, Scarlet-shouldered Parakeet!



Napo River by Lev Frid

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to brisk paced tours suited for those in good health with reasonable level of fitness. Not suited for anyone with mobility challenges or serious medical conditions.
Birding Ease		Moderate, several difficult rainforest skulkers.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Varies from lodge gardens & feeders to narrower forest trails that can be muddy and slippery, especially after rain.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads. Most drives are short (<2 hrs)
Photography		Worthwhile to good. Several feeders.
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 breakfast on day 9;
- 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.**

- In some areas, it may be very hot, especially in the Amazonian lowlands. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have many early starts 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 good standard, and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are comfortable.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts on Day 1 at Cabañas San Isidro, and as this is scheduled as an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. We shall arrange for a single group transfer from Quito to Cabañas San Isidro. The tour will conclude after our flight from the city of Coca to Quito International Airport on day 9.

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.