BIRDING THE ANDEAN SLOPES: NORTHWEST ECUADOR

With NYC Audubon tour guide and Edwin Perez
Saturday, December 6 – Sunday, December 14, 2014
(Pre-trip workshops: Dates TBA, 6:30-8:00pm)

USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TOUR

ECUADOR TOUR BASIC PACKAGE – INCLUDED ITEMS
The Ecuador tour basic price of $2,695 includes two pre-trip workshops, double-occupancy lodging and transportation within Ecuador (including transfer to and from the Quito airport), all meals from breakfast on December 7 to dinner on December 13 (except for two dinners in Quito*), entrance fees to all parks and reserves, and guide services of an NYC Audubon tour guide and local Ecuadoran guide Edwin Perez.

Not included:
1) Airfare to and from Ecuador
2) Lodge/hotel extras (laundry, room service, phone calls, etc.)
3) Alcoholic beverages
4) Gratuities (this includes tips for Ecuadoran guide Edwin Perez, drivers, and chamber service at the hotels).
5) *Dinner in Quito on Day 4 and Day 5 (12/9 and 12/10)

SINGLE ROOMS
Many of our participants prefer to have a single room. The single supplement price is $150.

SHARED ROOMS
We almost always have a friendly combination of couples and solo travelers on our tours. If you are not traveling with a companion and would like to be placed with a roommate, we will do our best to place you with another participant of the same gender. If we are not able to place you with another participant, you will be charged the single supplement fee.

OUR GUIDES
Edwin Perez is one of the most respected birding guides of Ecuador, specializing in the country’s Amazon and cloud forest regions. He has worked as a naturalist and guide at several different Ecuador lodges, including Maquipucun, Kapaw, and La Selva. Edwin’s experience and passion for birds make him an ideal guide partner to introduce us to the best birding spots of northwest Ecuador.

PRE-TRIP WORKSHOPS
Two pre-trip workshops are included in the tour package. The NYC Audubon tour guide leading you on the trip will teach you about the ecology of Ecuador and prepare you for the incredible diversity of bird species you can expect to see. We hope this will enhance your experience in Ecuador. The workshops, which will take place in November (dates to be announced), will also provide an opportunity to answer any questions you may have about logistics of the tour, things to bring, etc.

GENERAL ATMOSPHERE AND SCHEDULE
Part of the pleasure of organizing group trips is that one never knows exactly who the group will be! We generally find our tour groups to be a nice and friendly mixture of interesting and interested folks, who enjoy a fun and relaxed atmosphere together. In terms of scheduling, we expect most of our participants will be quite excited about seeing—what else?—BIRDS! And given the spectacular variety of birds that Ecuador offers, this is not surprising. The group will generally arise early, have meals together, and spend most of the day birding or occasionally taking in other sites, at a
leisurely pace. That said, participants are free to “take some time off” to pursue their own interests at the beautiful lodges: Bird from the veranda, read a book, sketch, or just stretch out in a hammock and wonder at the natural splendor around you. Photography buffs are also frequent participants, and there will of course be many opportunities for great wildlife photography.

WEATHER AND TEMPERATURE
Daytime temperatures will be pleasant and warm, in the 70s and 80s. Night-time temperatures will be cooler, in the 50s and 60s. At the highest elevation at Papallacta Pass temperatures may fall into the 40s at night, so it is important to have a jacket and sweater along for the coldest moments. Rain is a natural part of the cloud forest ecosystem, and it is not possible to predict the weather in the cloud forest—so participants can expect that their rain poncho or jacket will be their best friend. Unless it is very strong, rain will not stop the group from going out birding.

HIKING/WALKING ON THE TOUR
Walking will be at a comfortable “birder’s pace.” The trails in the cloud forest can be steep and sometimes muddy, but they tend to be relatively short and manageable for participants without any serious physical difficulties.

HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS
The areas we will visit do not request any special immunizations, but we recommend that you check that your routine vaccinations are up to date. In the lower elevations of the cloud forest (for example Guango and San Isidro) it is important that clients carry (and use) bug repellent to prevent insect bites that could become infected.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS
A valid passport is required for travel to Ecuador; please make sure your passport is valid through 6/5/15. A visa is not needed for U.S. citizens staying for up to 90 days.

CURRENCY AND CREDIT CARDS
The US dollar is the official currency of Ecuador, so there is no need to change currency! Most stores and restaurants in the cities and the lodges accept credit cards, but in less developed areas (e.g., if you want to buy a T-shirt at a bird reserve, a souvenir from a local community, or something in a local store) it is likely that only cash will be accepted. You can tip 10% of the bill unless a service fee is included, additional small amounts are appreciated; round up fare for taxi drivers.

FLIGHTS
We will suggest flights that work well with our tour schedule once the trip is confirmed to run. You are of course free to purchase the flights that best suit you. The flights we suggest are currently available for ~$750 round trip (we cannot guarantee that price will be available at the time of your purchase).

TRIP INSURANCE
We strongly recommend that you purchase trip insurance. It is particularly important for winter trips, when snow and/or illness are more likely to interfere and prevent you from taking part in the trip. We will ask that you sign a waiver stating that we recommend you purchase trip insurance, and that you understand that in the event you are not able to participate in the trip due to unforeseen circumstances, we will not be able to provide a refund to you. We will provide several suggestions for trip insurance upon registration for the tour.

ITEMS TO BRING AND PRE-TRAVEL PREPARATION
We will provide you with a detailed checklist of items to consider bringing a month or more before departure including clothing, guide books, personal care items, etc., as well as specific advice about traveling to Ecuador.

MISCELLANEOUS NUTS & BOLTS
Time Zone: Quito has GMT - 5, so when it is 12:35PM in the Eastern Time zone (including New York City), it is 11:35AM in the Yucatán.

http://www.nycaudubon.org/ecuador-tour-dec-2014
Voltage: Electric power in Ecuador is 120V, so you will not need a converter. It is possible that some electrical sockets will not accept three-prong or polarized plugs, so we do recommend bringing your own adapter.

Useful links:
Lonely Planet: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador/practical-information/health
Time & Date: http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/city.html?n=190

We hope that this page has addressed many of your questions about our tour of the Ecuadorean Andean Slopes. Please feel free to contact Darren Klein at dklein@nycaudubon.org with any other questions or concerns.