Per square mile, Ecuador has the highest biodiversity in the world, including some 1,640 species of birds, many of which are rare and endemic. Discover the amazing contrasts of cloud forest and Andean landscapes on this 10-day birding adventure. With assistance from expert guides, encounter a variety of birds, plants, and other wildlife while traversing a selection of Ecuador’s 50 different ecosystems.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the Milpe Bird Sanctuary in the Chocó Andean foothills, considered one of the finest sites in all of Ecuador.
- Seek out some of Ecuador’s approximately 130 hummingbird species, including the Giant Hummingbird, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, and Glowing Puffleg.
- Visit the home and gardens of famous Ecuadorian ornithologist and artist, Juan Manuel Carrion.
- Search for other target species like the Andean Condor, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Toucan Barbet, Chocó Trogan, and dozens of tanagers.

HIGH INTENSITY!
This program is for serious birders. Expect at least 5-6 hours of birding each day.
NOVEMBER 12 - QUITO
Upon arrival in Quito, meet your guide and transfer to the hotel. Overnight at Rincón de Puembo.

NOVEMBER 13 - MINDO
After breakfast continue to the Cumbayá Valley to visit the house of the famous Ecuadorian ornithologist Juan Manuel Carrion. Juan Manuel is also a nature artist, actively involved in conservation as executor of communication and environmental education projects. He is a pioneer in publishing illustrated books on birds of Ecuador and has been recognized as “the painter of the birds of Ecuador.” Enjoy a mid-morning snack, while visiting his gardens and workshop to see local birds and admire his wonderful artwork. Continue your adventure toward Mindo by La Mitad del Mundo Road. Enjoy lunch on-site and visit the Middle of the World Monument. Continue to Mindo with a stop at Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve. The reserve sits over two major valleys and covers a large range of altitudes (4,750 to 7,210 ft) with several different habitats. Alambi has a recorded list of 250 species of birds and 32 hummingbirds seen either at the feeders or in the reserve. Later continue your trip through the Nono-Mindo Eco Road. Arrive in Mindo in the late afternoon. Overnight at Sachatamia. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 14 - MINDO
Depart from the hotel and head towards Pacha Quindi, a refuge dedicated to the preservation and protection of existing areas of original cloud forest habitat and wildlife. Here, you’ll have the opportunity to experience the natural beauty and wonder of this very unique and biologically diverse environment. Continue to Bellavista for lunch and enjoy afternoon birding in the area of the Tandayapa Valley. This cloud forest is part of the Chocó Endemic Bird Area of northwest Ecuador, with lovely panoramic views and lots of birds including the Andean Cock-of-the-rock. Overnight at Sachatamia. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 15 - MINDO
Early morning visit to Mindo Loma Reserve for birding along the road and at Mindo Loma. Mindo Loma is a medium altitude (4,590 ft), private cloud forest located between Nanegalito and the road to Mindo. It has 17 acres of primary and secondary recovering cloud forest. It may be possible to see the Velvet-purple Coronet, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, and the Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. Lunch on site, then return to the lodge in the afternoon. Overnight at Sachatamia. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 16 - MINDO
This morning visit Milpe Bird Sanctuary, located in the subtropical rainforest. Milpe Bird Sanctuary spans 49 acres, with an altitudinal range of 3,350 to 3,770 feet. Located in the Chocó-Andean foothills, Los Bancos Milpe is in a Birdlife International defined Important Bird Area (IBA), and birding guides consider this one of the finest sites in all of Ecuador. Many of the most spectacular Chocó endemics are protected here, including Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Glistening-green Tanager, Chocó Trogon, Clubwinged Manakin, and Long-wattled Umbrellabird, to name just a few. This site is also known for sightings of the rare Moss-backed Tanager. Continue to Mirador Río Blanco for lunch. This place is a birder’s dream and great for seeing tanagers. Return to the lodge in the late afternoon. Overnight at Sachatamia. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 17 - SANGOLQUÍ
Depart from Mindo early this morning and travel to the Sangolquí Valley. En route stop for bird observation along the Mindo-Calacalí road with a quick stop at Calacalí. The dry scrub at Calacalí is home to species such as the Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Black-tailed Tanager, Golden-rumped Euphonia, and the vulnerable White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant. Box lunch en route. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure to enjoy the hacienda. Overnight at Hacienda La Carriona. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 18 - COSANGA
Full morning of birding along the trails at Antisana Ecological Reserve, followed by a drive to high elevation páramo. Located between the Andes and the Amazon lowlands, the privately owned Antisana Ecological Reserve is 297,000 acres of varied ecological zones ranging from páramo (18,886 ft) to lowland rainforest. More than 70 bird species can be found here, including the Andean Condor, Giant Hummingbird, Carunculated Caracara, Back-faced Ibis, Speckled Teal, Andean Duck, Silvery Grebe, Slate-colored Coot, Andean Gull, Andean Lapwing, and Aplomado Falcon. The snow-capped Antisana Volcano is the fourth highest peak in Ecuador, with an altitude of 18,900 feet, and adds to the breathtaking Andean scenery that can be enjoyed along the trails. In the afternoon continue to Cabañas San Isidro. This private reserve forms an important bridge between the Antisana and Gran Sumaco Reserves, and also boasts a bird list of about 330 species, many of which are more easily found here than anywhere else in the country. Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)
NOVEMBER 19 - COSANGA
Explore the area accompanied by your guide. San Isidro Lodge is situated at about 6,726 feet above sea level, but the trails lead through elevations ranging from 7,874 feet all the way down to 6,069 feet, making this an ideal base to observe Andean birds from the lower reaches of the temperate zone down into the heart of the subtropical zone. Among the rarities here are Highland Tinamou, Bicolored Antvireo, Peruvian Antpitta, and White-faced Nunbird. Commonly spotted species include: Powerful Woodpecker, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Inca Jay, Black-billed Peppershrike, Wattled Guan, and Glossy-black Thrush. Look for Sickle-winged Guan, Masked Trogon, Andean Motmot, Streak-capped and Striped Treehunters, Long-tailed Antbird, Slate-crowned Antpitta, Black-chested Fruiteater, Pale-footed Swallow, and a variety of colorful tanagers among the mixed understory. Overnight at San Isidro Lodge. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 20 - QUITO
After breakfast, check out of San Isidro and continue to Guango Lodge. Located about one hour away from San Isidro, Guango lies at an elevation of about 2,700 m (8,858 ft) on Ecuador’s eastern slope, close to the hot springs of Papallacta. This area is classified as humid temperate forest, a habitat distinctly different from San Isidro and is noted by its more stunted trees, thicker canopy, cooler climate, and different bird and plant composition. The hummingbird feeders here are especially popular, with some of the more noteworthy species being Mountain Velvetbreast, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, Golden-breasted and Glowing Pufflegs, Mountain Avocetbill, and White-bellied and Gorgeted Woodstars. Other birds of interest that are seen regularly, include the Andean Guan, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Turquoise Jay, Scarlet-bellied, Lacrimose, Buff-breasted and Hooded Mountain-Tanagers, Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager, Black-headed, Black-capped and Black-eared Hemispingus and Slaty Brush-Finch. Enjoy lunch at Guango and in the afternoon continue the drive back to Quito. This evening reflect on the journey during a farewell dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Rincón de Puembo. (BLD)

NOVEMBER 21 - FAREWELL!
Transfer to the airport for the flight home. (B)