Peru: Manú National Park

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Oct. 10 – 24, 2018

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Stretching across thousands of square miles on the eastern flank of the Peruvian Andes, Manú National Park and the biosphere reserve that surrounds it encompasses a continuous tract of pristine wilderness that preserves the entire spectrum of Andean slope ecosystems – from high Andean puna grasslands to lowland Amazonian rainforest. Stretching across so many altitudes and habitats, this reserve lays claim to the most diverse fauna and flora of any park in the world: 1,000+ bird species, 160 mammal species, and 4,385 plant species have been recorded in its boundaries with more still being discovered. Due to its unmatched biodiversity and pristine natural habitats, it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. By following the very birdy Manú-Kosñipata Road and staying at lodges at different altitudes, this tour offers a rich transect of all the habitats present in the Manú Biosphere Reserve.

Our tour begins in Lima, where nutrient-rich upwellings from the cold Humboldt Current offer nourishment for teeming seabird colonies that include boobies, cormorants, and penguins. After a short flight to Cusco, we travel across natural high mountain grasslands and fields farmed for centuries in search of endemics like Bearded Mountaineer and Creamy-crested Spinetail. Once we reach the crest of the Acjanaco Pass above the tree line, the landscape tumbles downward into progressively taller and wetter forest. Our first stop is Wayqechua Biological Station, where we explore misty elfin forests buzzing with high elevation tanagers and hummingbirds. Then, we continue to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge, where lush cloud forests harbor exuberant leks of the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, mixed flocks of technicolor tanagers like Paradise, Saffron-crowned, and Beryl-spangled, and brilliant songsters such as Andean Solitaire and Chestnut-breasted Wren. A bit further down still at Villa Carmen Biological Station, we explore spiny Guadua bamboo and foothill rainforest for the shimmery Bluish-fronted Jacamar, adorable Black-backed Tody-Flycatcher, and skulking Manú Antbird.

Finally, we reach the awe-inspiring Amazonian Rainforest: a habitat layered with diversity, complexity, and sheer beauty. Here, we spend four full days soaking up the spectacle of parrot clay licks attended by hundreds of parrots, visiting quiet oxbow lakes inhabited by prehistoric Hoatzins and elegant Agami Herons, watching for brightly-colored toucans and cotingas from canopy platforms, and seeking out large mammals like Giant Otter and South American Tapir. All in all, this tour covers one of the greatest birding roads in the world.

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Tour Highlights

- Visit the full spectrum of Andean slope habitats, including puna grasslands, elfin forests, cloud forests and lowland rainforest, each with their own special collection of birds, animals and plants
- Marvel at the timeless lek display of Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, a spectacle of sound and color
- Enjoy over fifty species of hummingbird on this route with such evocative names as Bearded Mountaineer, Shining Sunbeam, Wire-crested Thorntail, Booted Racket-tail and Violet-throated Starfrontlet
- Witness the lively congregation of hundreds of parrots, parakeets and macaws at a clay lick, where these noisy birds feed on the mineral-rich soil
- Seek endemic birds found only in Peru such as Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch, Red-and-white Antpitta and Seaside Cinclodes
- Be inspired by the biological richness of the Manú-Kosñipata Road, a classic birding route that traverses one of the most biodiverse regions in the world

Tour Summary

15-Day / 14-Night Manú National Park Tour with Woody Wheeler
With 5-Day Machu Picchu Extension
$5995, from Lima
Airport is Jorge Chávez International (LIM)

Itinerary

Wed., Oct. 10 Arrivals

Welcome to Peru! Arrive today in Lima and transfer to your nearby hotel for the night.
Accommodations in Lima

Thurs., Oct. 11
Pucusana & Pantanos de Villa Marshes

Today we drive south of Lima towards Pucusana, a picturesque fishing village located on the shores of a calm bay teeming with seabirds. Here, we take a boat trip around Pucusana Bay to observe the various marine bird species associated with the

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cold Humboldt Current — nesting Guanay and Red-legged Cormorant, loafing Peruvian Booby and Inca Tern, and maybe even a Humboldt Penguin (not to mention the endemic Seaside Cinclodes). After a Peruvian seafood lunch at our favorite restaurant, we make a stop in San Pedro and Lurin to observe shorebirds before ending the day at the Pantanos de Villa Marshes on the outskirts of Lima. This wetland refuge is a coastal oasis surrounded by desert, harboring elegant Great Grebe, bizarre Peruvian Thick-knee, colorful Many-colored Rush Tyrant, and many others. We return to Lima in the afternoon. *Accommodations in Lima (B,L,D)*

Fri., Oct. 12 Cusco to Wayqecha Biological Station

Today begins with an early morning flight to Cusco where we begin our journey across the arid intermontane valleys of the Andes, making a few strategic but important birding stops along the way for endemic birds such as Creamy-crested Spinetail and Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch. In order to maximize our time on this big travel day, we take a picnic breakfast with us.

Laguna Huacarpay, our first stop, is a high elevation lake surrounded by slopes clad with shrubs such as the tree tobacco – a plant favored by the Bearded Mountaineer, a spectacularly large and beautiful endemic hummingbird. We may also see Giant Hummingbird on these same slopes, the largest hummingbird of them all. Continuing our journey, we travel through the valley of Paucartambo, the world's capital of potato diversity, before reaching the final high pass of Ajcanaco at 12,000 feet. If it's clear we are able to look out over the mountains towards the Amazon Basin stretching down below into the distance, as the sun-worshipping Incas did in ancient times. In addition, the dry puna grassland near this last mountain pass is worth a stop for a few specialties such as Line-fronted and Scribble-tailed

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Canastero, White-browed Conebill, and Moustached Flowerpiercer before descending into the moss-covered elfin forest below.
Accommodations at Wayqechua Biological Station (B,L,D)

Sat., Oct. 13 & Sun., Oct. 14 Wayqechua Biological Station to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge

At an elevation of 9,800 feet, Wayqechua Biological Station features montane elfin forest characterized by stunted, moss-covered trees, cool temperatures, and persistent fog. Large and colorful tanagers such as Hooded Mountain, Grass-green, and Golden-collared are a feature here, as well as hummingbirds such as Amethyst-throated Sunangel, Shining Sunbeam, and Tyrian Metaltail. After a hot breakfast and coffee (or tea), we start early near our lodge in search of these species and others such as the glistening Golden-headed Quetzal and harlequin Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan.

As the day warms up, we spend the rest of the day gradually descending along the forested mountain road in search of mixed feeding flocks before reaching Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge at approximately 5,000 feet in elevation.

Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge, situated about half way between the Ajcanaco Pass and the Madre de Dios River, sits at a great elevation for both montane and foothill bird species. One of the great features of this lodge is an active Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek, and we are able to observe the memorable spectacle of their communal display ritual at dawn — a show of both raucous sound and vibrant color. The dining area of the lodge itself overlooks a feeding station that attracts tanagers and barbets, as well as hummingbird feeders that may bring in about a dozen species.

Fast-moving mixed flocks of tanagers are a big feature at this elevation, and the forest edge can be teeming with these avian jewels that may include Yellow-throated, Orange-eared, Golden-naped, Blue-necked, Paradise, Golden-eared, Bay-headed, and more. Other noteworthy denizens of these elevations include Yungas Manakin, Versicolored Barbet, Blue-banded Toucanet, Crested Quetzal, and Andean Motmot. In the evening, night walks may produce sightings of Lyre-tailed Nightjar, Andean Potoo, and Rufescent Screech-Owl.
Accommodations at Cock-of- the-Rock Lodge (B,L,D)

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Mon., Oct. 15 & Tues., Oct. 16 Villa Carmen Biological Station

After a morning breakfast accompanied by the ethereal carols of Andean Solitaires and multicolor tanagers at the fruit table, we depart from Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge and gradually descend to Villa Carmen Biological Station at approximately 1,700 feet in elevation. We pay particular attention to the stretch between 5,000 and 2,000 feet in elevation. The upper tropical zone forests at these altitudes have largely disappeared from much of the Andean slope of South America due to its suitability for cash crops, but these forests remain untouched in this part of Peru. Birds we have seen well on this stretch of road include Lanceolated Monklet, Versicolored Barbet, Slaty Gnateater, Cinnamon-faced Tyrannulet, Black-backed Tody-Flycatcher, Deep-blue Flowerpiercer, Stripe-chested Antwren, and many more.

We arrive at Villa Carmen Biological Station in the afternoon, our home for two full days of birding. Located in the transition zone between montane forest and lowland rainforest, this lodge has an impressive bird list of over 475 species. The extensive trail system transects a mosaic of habitats, including foothill rainforest, secondary forest, pastures, and fish ponds, which we have the opportunity to explore. Flowering bushes attract various hummingbirds typical of lowland rainforest, including Blue-tailed Emerald, Gray-breasted Sabrewing and Fork-tailed Woodnymph — maybe even Rufous-crested Coquette. Extensive stands of *Guadua* bamboo typical of the foothill forest here are home to several rare and elusive specialists: Bamboo Antshrike, Dusky-cheeked Foliage-gleaner, Peruvian Recurvebill, Flammulated Pygmy-Tyrant, and Large-headed Flatbill.

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In addition, we also do some night birding here, and we have seen the following in the past: Common Potoo, Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl, Black-banded Owl, and Ladder-tailed Nightjar. In the end, we leave this magical place only reluctantly, but yet more awaits us in the Amazon Rainforest!

Accommodations at Villa Carmen Lodge (B,L,D)

Wed., Oct. 17 Manú Learning Center

After a very early breakfast, we leave Villa Carmen Lodge to continue on our journey down to the port of Atalaya, where we board a motorized canoe. After a pleasant boat ride on the Alto Madre de Dios River, we plan to arrive at the comfortable Manú Learning Center in time for lunch. We spend time here walking out onto the trails behind the lodge in search of Amazonian forest species, or perhaps take a late afternoon boat trip out to an oxbow lake to see the amazing Hoatzin. These unique birds primarily feed on young leaves and buds, which are digested in the crop with the aid of bacteria and microbes — in effect, a feathered cow.

Accommodations at Manú Learning Center (B,L,D)

Thurs., Oct. 18 Manú Wildlife Center

As the day begins to heat up, we head down the Alto Madre de Dios River in our motorized canoes to its confluence with the Manú River (about 4 hours). The water from the mountains here is relatively clear, as it winds past isolated Andean ridges and picturesque rainforest landscapes dotted with blazes of yellow and red flowering trees. However, once we pass the village of Boca Manú and the confluence of the Alto Madre de Dios River with the Manú River, the water quickly becomes brown and laden with silt. The river slows to a lazy pace, piling up impressive sandbars that are home to charismatic Pied Lapwing, bizarre Horned Screamer, rare Orinoco Goose and colonial Sand-colored Nighthawk. These boat rides through Amazonian Rainforest are usually exciting and productive, giving us out best chances at spotting raptors such as Great Black Hawk and Ornate Hawk-Eagle, large mammals such as South American Tapir and Capybara, and gaudy parrots such as Blue-and-yellow and Scarlet Macaw.

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We plan to arrive at the Manú Wildlife Center in the late afternoon. Accommodations at Manú Wildlife Center are first class; bungalows with an en-suite bath, with spacious adjoining dining and bar complexes.
Accommodations at Manú Wildlife Center (B,L,D)

Fri., Oct. 19 – Sun., Oct. 21 Manú Wildlife Center

We plan to spend three full days birding at the Manú Wildlife Center and surrounding area. One of the highlights of any trip to Amazonia is a visit to a parrot clay lick, where one has the opportunity to observe the spectacle of hundreds of parrots and macaws feeding on mineral-rich soil. We spend one morning at one of these clay licks, enjoying this magical show up close from strategically placed blinds. Species we may see here include Orange-cheeked, Blue-headed, Mealy and Yellow-crowned Parrot, Tui and Cobalt-winged Parakeet, and Blue-and-yellow and Scarlet Macaw.

During the course of the following two days, we explore some of the 15+ miles of trails that spread out from the Manú Wildlife Center. These trails, which explore the various microhabitats found within the Amazon Rainforest, are mostly flat, clean, and wide. These micohabitats include extensive varzea (seasonally flooded with white water), terra firme (forest that never floods), and large stands of *Guadua* bamboo. Canopy platforms, tall structures that give us the ability to look over the forest canopy, provide some of the most exciting birding Amazonia has to offer. Few experiences can beat a morning vigil from the top of a canopy tower, with the morning mist rising above the forest — flocks of commuting macaws, calling trogons, clownish aracaris, stolid raptors, glowing cotingas, and gurgling oropendolas all compete for attention. We spend at least one morning in the canopy.

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But there is so much more here! By exploring stands of *Guadua* bamboo, we might be able to observe Rufous-headed Woodpecker, Manú Antbird, Dusky-tailed Flatbill, and White-lined Antbird. By quietly walking on the forest floor of both terra firme and varzea forest, we might observe Pavonine Quetzal, Pale-winged Trumpeter, Razor-billed Curassow, Purus Jacamar, Banded Antbird, Royal Flycatcher, Musician Wren, Collared Puffbird, and many others. We are on the lookout for mixed feeding flocks as well, composed mostly of antwrens, antshrikes, greenlets, woodcreepers, and flycatchers which are fast moving and potentially challenging but incredibly rewarding.

Optional owling sessions in the evenings can also be productive, and we have the potential to see Crested and Spectacled Owl, Great and Long-tailed Potoo, and Silky-tailed Nightjar – along with a variety of insects, frogs and mammals.
Accommodations at Manú Wildlife Center (B,L,D)

Mon., Oct. 22 Puerto Maldonaldo

This is our last morning at the Manú Wildlife Center, with perhaps one last look at the parrot clay lick before transferring by boat down the Madre de Dios River to the town of Boca Colorado. As with any journey by boat along the Amazon Basin, there is always the potential for memorable sightings such as a Giant Otter family, a perched Ornate Hawk-Eagle, or a pair of Sunbittern. Leaving our boat at Boca Colorado, we take a one-hour ride in local transport to the Inambari River where our bus is waiting. We head to the bustling frontier town of Puerto Maldonaldo, birding along the way.
Accommodations at Puerto Maldonaldo (B,L,D)

Tues., Oct. 23 Back to Cusco

Within a few hours of early morning birding around Puerto Maldonaldo, we make an effort to see a variety of birds that have colonized the area due to human disturbance: Red-breasted Blackbird, White-tailed Kite, Grassland Sparrow, Black-faced Tanager, Barred Antshrike, and others. Stands of Buriti Palm (*Mauritia*

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flexuosa) give us chances at specialists such as Sulphury Flycatcher, Point-tailed Palmcreeper, and Red-bellied Macaw. We also target the range-restricted White-throated Jacamar before flying back to Cusco in time for a farewell dinner. *Accommodations in Cusco (B,L,D)*

Wed., Oct. 24 Departures | Machu Picchu Extension

This morning, for those of us not going on to Machu Picchu, we transfer from Cusco to Lima, full of memories from an incredible wildlife experience along one of the classic birding roads of the world. If you stay for the extension, we settle in here in Cusco where we are briefed by our guide. *(B) Accommodations at CASA Andina Hotel or similar (B,L,D — extension only)*

Machu Picchu Extension, In Brief

Thurs., Oct. 25 Cusco

Explore the scenic Sacred Valley and ruins at Ollantaytambo.

Accommodations at Pakaritampu Hotel (B,L,D)

Fri., Oct. 26 Ollantaytambo to Machu Picchu

We take the train from Ollantaytambo to Machu Picchu, then enjoy lunch at Inkaterra Pueblo hotel with local birding or option for afternoon ruins visit. *Accommodations at Inkaterra Pueblo Hotel (B,L,D)*

Sat., Oct. 27 Machu Picchu

Full day at Machu Picchu, birding and ruins. *Accommodations at Inkaterra Pueblo Hotel (B,L,D)*

Sun., Oct. 28 Return to Cusco | Lima

Today we take the train back to Cusco from Machu Picchu. We then take our internal flight back to Lima to catch late evening international flights home.

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Details of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Please note, starting in January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey (Main Tour) is $5995 DBL / $6485 SGL, from Lima, Peru. This cost includes all accommodations, meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses. Cost of the Machu Picchu extension is $2250 DBL / $2530 SGL.

Tour cost does not include: round-trip transportation from your home city to Lima, internal flights (however Naturalist Journeys will book this for you so we can travel as a group; this extra flight cost — typically about $150 per person — will be added to your invoice), optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive in Lima on October 10, 2018. Arrival is at your leisure, but we do recommend arriving at an hour that will allow you to rest up before the start of the trip, which begins promptly the following morning. If you would like to arrive a day (or more!) early to rest up and get acclimated, we can help you book an extra night — just let us know. Please plan departures from the main journey in the evening of October 24. Many flights back to the United States leave at or around midnight, so be sure to check your dates/times carefully. Please plan departures from the Machu Picchu extension in the evening of October 28. Again, flights back to the United States are near the midnight hour, so check times/dates carefully.

Group Size

Maximum of 10 people. With 6 or more people, Naturalist Journeys sends guide Woody Wheeler.

Photo Credits

Machu Picchu Scenic, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Rufous-crested Coquette, Miguel Lezama (ML); Curl-crested Aracari, Carlos Sanchez (CS); Bearded Mountaineer, ML; Andean Potoo, ML; Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Greg Smith (GS); Group at Manu Airport, NJS; Group Birding on Train Tracks, NJS; White-bellied Parrot, CS; Giant Hummingbird, CS; Naturalist Journeys Group, NJS; Inca Tern, ML; Bromeliad, Peg Abbott (PA); Golden-collared Tanager, ML; Crested Quetzal, ML; Andean Motmot, ML; Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, ML; Scarlet Macaw, PA; Jaguar, PA; Crested Owl, CS; Hoatzin, GS; Horned Screamer, PA; Manu Wildlife Center, NJS; Blue and Yellow Macaw, NJS; Macaws at Clay Lick, NJS; Giant Otter, NJS; Spectacled Owls, Sandy Sorkin; Sunbittern, PA; Barred Antshrike, PA; Fabrics at Market, NJS; Peg Abbott with Llama at Machu Picchu, NJS; Naturalist Journeys Group at Machu Picchu, NJS.