

Northern Peru Endemics

with Naturalist Journeys



July 12 – 23, 2021
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Explore Northern Peru on this Naturalist Journeys tour, a jigsaw of Andean mountains and deeply sliced canyons, for a treasure trove of landscapes and birds. Recent upgrades in infrastructure and new lodges have opened up this region as a major birding destination that can be explored in relative comfort. This tour supports local communities as they develop viable ecotourism in the area.

The isolating effects of the jagged Andes are nowhere more apparent than in northern Peru, where the dramatic topography creates extreme habitat contrasts —from tropical rainforests and arid valleys to high paramo and lowland swamps. On this tour, we visit the dry Marañon Valley, an awesome canyon carved by a major tributary of the Amazon and a formidable barrier to the distribution of Andean birds. Heading east, the forests become considerably wetter and the arid scrub gives way to lush cloud forests laden with verdant mosses and exquisite orchids. It is here that we look for the near mythical Long-whiskered Owlet as well as Marvelous Spatuletail, arguably the most beautiful hummingbird in the world. Finally, we reach the eastern foothills of the Andes in the Mayo Valley, low enough in elevation to host many Amazonian bird species but high enough to have comfortable overnight temperatures. Here, we look for a variety of barbets, fruiteaters, toucanets, and tanagers.

We have added a day to the trip this year, finding the pace could use that time, and we all loved Huembo Lodge and wished for two nights there.

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Observe the stunning Marvelous Spatuletail, arguably the most beautiful hummingbird in the world, along with over 40 other species including Royal Sunangel, Rainbow Starfrontlet, and Emerald-bellied Puffleg
- ✓ Sample Peru's culinary delights, now famous around the world, such as chicha morada and causa rellena
- ✓ Wonder at the Kuelap Archaeological Site, an outstanding pre-Incan ruin constructed by the Chachapoyas culture
- ✓ Seek the Long-whiskered Owlet, a mythical denizen of stunted high elevation forest, first mist-netted on the night of August 23, 1976
- ✓ Immerse yourself in dramatic Andean landscapes, from arid valleys to lush cloud forests

Tour Summary

12 Day / 11-Night Peru Birding Tour

with Andrea Molina

\$3890, from Lima

Airport is Jorge Chávez International (LIM)

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Tues., July 12 Arrivals in Lima, Peru

Welcome to Peru! After arriving at the international airport in Lima and passing through immigration and customs, the first night's hotel is just across the street, so there is no need for a shuttle—just a simple walk across the median and you can check in! Dinner tonight is at the hotel and is a great chance to meet up with your guides and travelling companions.

Accommodations at Costa del Sol, Lima airport (D)

Wed., July 13 Jaen in the Marañon Valley

We enjoy breakfast and then head back to the airport to catch our short flight to Jaen in the northwest corner of Peru. Once we arrive, we head straight to our hotel where we do some birding on the grounds, then enjoy lunch and get into our rooms. Our hotel is tucked into Jaen's woodland hillsides, surrounded by arid and dry scrub, riverside marshes, and intricately patterned rice fields.

In the afternoon, we visit a local farm to enjoy a walk and birding: Marañon Thrush, Tumbes Tyrant, Croaking Ground-Dove, and Marañon Crescentchest are some of the special species we may see today. There are many endemic birds found in this region and we hope to catch up to many of these including Peruvian Pigeon, Necklaced Spinetail, Little Inca-Finch, and Buff-bellied Tanager.

This evening we enjoy dinner at the hotel and those that wish can meet to do a species checklist; each night we go over our sightings for the day. Our hotel has a lovely pool that you may wish to use as you relax this evening.
Accommodations at Urqu Hotel (B,L,D)

Thurs., July 14 Kuelap Archaeological Site | Leymebamba

We head out early this morning to drive down the Leymebamba Valley and to reach the Kuelap Archaeological Site. Built by the Chachapoyas culture in the 6th Century, this walled settlement is found on a limestone ridge at an elevation of 3,000 meters near the Utcubamba River. The structure is the centerpiece of a protected zone of both natural and archaeological sites (over 12 in all). It belongs to the district of Tingo, an area covered in cloud forests with a rich variety of orchids and epiphytic plants, so it is also very rich in birds. Our local guide here explains both the culture and ecology of the site, and we seek out several species such as Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, and Purple-throated Sunangel. Lunch is at the restaurant on site.

We access the ruins via an aerial tram, and then walk extensively on the site. This is a full day, as we continue our drive another hour and a half or so after finishing up at the ruins. Our hotel tonight is in a small town, with gracious hosts that welcome us for a home-cooked, authentic local meal.

Accommodations at Casona Leymebamba (B,L,D)

Fri., July 15 Leymebamba | Local Birding

This morning, we head up in elevation to upper montane forest off the road to the Lake of the Condors in order to look for several new species: Andean Flicker, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Andean Goose, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Andean Condor, and more. Walk a picturesque mountain valley with an eye out for condors overhead. We enjoy our picnic lunch in the middle of the picturesque Andean landscape and search a nearby fast flowing river for White-capped Dipper and Torrent Duck.

In the afternoon, visit the fabulous Leymebamba Museum where collections from the excavations at Laguna de los Condores are stored, giving us insight into Kuelap and its story. Next door we visit feeders and have coffee in Leymebamba to admire multiple species of spectacular Andean hummingbirds such as Sparkling Violetear, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Shining Sunbeam, and Sword-billed Hummingbird.

Accommodations at Casona Leymebamba (B,L,D)

Sat., July 16 Waqanki Lodge

Today, we descend to the wet foothills of the eastern Andes. Our destination is Waqanki Lodge, set in the Mayo Valley, at around 3000 feet in elevation. Our first stop on the way is at Aguas Verde to visit hummingbird feeders. Here, a local man has a superb feeding station where we hope to see Little Tinamou and perhaps Rufous-breasted Wood-Quail. From a raised garden platform we are surrounded by hummingbirds and may see Rufous-crested Coquette, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Wire-crested Thorntail, Booted Racket-tail, and Fork-tailed Woodnymph. Black-bellied Tanager is fairly common as well.

We stop at the Santa Elena Reserve for a picnic lunch by a river and lagoon where we should find Green and Amazon Kingfishers, Lineated Woodpecker, and Green-backed Trogon. To the east, as time allows, we may visit white sand forests where we watch for Napo Sabrewing, Zimmer's Antbird, Dusky Spinetail, White-browed Purplethroat, and Red-shouldered Tanager.

We arrive at Waqanki Lodge in the late afternoon, settle in, and enjoy dinner hosted by this gracious family.
Accommodations at Waqanki Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., July 17 Waqanki Lodge

After breakfast we spend a full morning birding at the very special Waqanki Reserve, a private family-owned site in the foothills of the eastern Andes of northern Peru. The reserve includes a lodge, orchid gardens, hummingbird feeders, an observation tower, and an extensive network of trails through foothill forest. Over 20 species of hummingbirds have been recorded here, including the stunning Rufous-crested Coquette and Wire-crested Thorntail. Other locally important species protected within the borders of this reserve include Bluish-fronted Jacamar, Gilded Barbet, Mishana Tyrannulet, Black-and-white Tody-Flycatcher, and Black-bellied Tanager.

In the afternoon, relax and enjoy the grounds, or venture out to Morro de Calzada, a newly opened national park with excellent birding and a chance to see Saddle-backed Tamarin. Dinner is at the lodge.
Accommodations at Waqanki Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon., July 18 Marañon River Valley | Huembo Lodge

Today we have a travel day, a scenic drive through the dry inter-Andean Valley sliced dramatically by the Marañon River. Our route takes us past hillsides clad with cactus and shrubs with lush vegetation along the river. Where we can we make stops for birding and we enjoy a picnic boxed lunch in the field. By mid-afternoon we arrive at Huembo Lodge—home to the Marvelous Spatuletail hummingbird! Huembo is part of a vital conservation.

Accommodations at Huembo Lodge (B,L,D)

Tues., July 19 Birding from Huembo Lodge

Today is a very special day: we search for the spectacular Marvelous Spatuletail, considered to be one of the world's most beautiful hummingbirds. In addition to this especially attractive species, we should also see several other stunning hummingbirds at the feeders and along the trails of our lodge such as Little Woodstar, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Violet-fronted Brilliant, and Bronzy Inca. Other typical forest species that can be found here include Andean Guan, Silvery Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, and Mitred Parakeet.

This is a nice day to watch birds in detail and for our photographers to have time to capture images. Birding is excellent around the lodge and several trails are there to explore. Our meals are at the lodge and we ask the owner to tell us about the remarkable restoration story here, from farm to a thriving bird reserve, all with a lot of effort! Our visit supports this project.

Accommodations at Huembo Lodge (B,L,D)

Wed., July 20 Utcubamba River Valley | Owlet Lodge

We again have a travel day heading back north along the river and on up into higher mountains to the lush forests of Owlet Lodge. En route we bird around El Chillo for the richly-colored Scarlet-fronted Parakeet and pretty Plumbeous Rail. We have lunch along the way and make a few other birding stops.

Created by the Ecoan Foundation, the Owlet Lodge protects the main site for the fascinating Long-whiskered Owlet, a species rediscovered after 35 years of remaining undetected. It is one of the smallest owls in the world, about the size of a clenched fist, and incredibly camouflaged to blend in with the brown wood and lush moss of its habitat. We search for this mythical bird one evening of our stay at this conservation lodge, on an optional and fairly steep hike of several hours.

Owlet has some amazing hummingbird feeders! We arrive in time to enjoy them and to settle into our rooms ahead of dinner.

Accommodations at Owlet Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs., July 21 Birding Owlet Lodge

We have the full day to explore a bird-rich area, starting with a look out for Swallow-tailed Nightjars as we head in to breakfast. A local guide helps us see highlight species of the area. We walk local trails and perhaps drive out to neighboring forest areas. This is montane cloud forest so expect some misty weather and bundle up—a nice change from the hotter lowlands.

Meals are at the lodge and we enjoy spacious rooms and avid birding on the grounds. Highlights include Swordbill Hummingbird and Long-tailed Sylph, a host of colorful tanagers, and more. A neighboring area is great for finding the elusive Royal Sunangel.

Accommodations at Owlet Lodge (B,L,D)

Fri., July 22 Moyobamba & Quiscarrumi Bridge

After an early breakfast, we head towards Tarapoto via Quiscarrumi Bridge to see Oilbirds—an enigmatic and bizarre bird species that feeds on oily fruits. It is the only nocturnal fruit eating bird in the world. The huge cave where they roost is right on the edge of the highway! At the edge of the Shilcayo River, we search for Sapphire-spangled Emerald, Fiery-capped Manakin, Yellow-bellied Tanager, Russet-backed Oropendola, Lettered Aracari, and Pale-legged Hornero. Around the lake and riparian areas, we may also see Hoatzin or Horned Screamer. This evening we enjoy a final dinner celebrating a fun trip and going over our sightings for the day.

Accommodations at Cumbaza Hotel (B,L,D)

Sat. July 23 Local Birding | Flight to Lima | Departures

This morning we spend some final time birding the tunnel area along the Tarapoto-Yurimaguas Road, a regular birding site around Tarapoto, located at the summit of La Escalera (or staircase) in the Cordillera Escalera. It offers a mix of lowland and foothill species, being a particularly good site for the widespread yet scarce Dotted Tanager—most likely found by checking fruiting Cecropia trees. We also spend some time looking for the endemic Koepcke's Hermit, a scarce hummingbird.

In the afternoon, we return to Tarapoto for our 4:00 PM flight to Lima to connect with international flights, or for those that need to, overnight at the nearby Costa del Sol hotel (additional cost). (B,L)

Lima Coastal Birding Extension

For those that want to add some coastal birding to their trip, we highly recommend two fabulous birding sites near Lima—the Villa Marshes and a boat trip from Pucusana, an authentic fishing village south of the city. We can visit both, plus some productive shorebird sites during a few of days exploration. Lima also has great dining, world-class museums, and green-space walking areas if you wish to extend even more, we can add a hotel night for you to do that at leisure and help you with transfers.

Sun., July 10 Arrivals in Lima

Our driver greets you at the airport for a transfer to a delightful B & B, where you can rest up from travel in a comfortable place and excellent location in the Miraflores area. Dinner is at your leisure, but do consider arriving in time to meet up with your guide and others in the group at 6:00 PM in the lobby. There is an excellent restaurant just a few blocks away.

Accommodations near Miraflores

Mon., July 11

Pucusana Fishing Village & Boat Trip—A Mini-Galápagos Experience!

We wake early to be on our way ahead of city traffic. Our first stop is a mirador (a look out) on the coast with views back to the city. Water currents dictate activity, and at times there are clouds of Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, Inca Tern, and other species. We continue on, meeting our boat captain at the dock of a bustling and colorful fishing village. For the next few hours we are transfixed in a fabulous world as we cruise along the shores of an island. You should get close views of Red-legged and Guanay Cormorants, Blackish Oystercatcher, Humboldt Penguin (yes, penguins!!), a variety of gulls and terns, and possibly Southern Sea Lion. Celebrate this fun outing with a delightful lunch of the best fresh seafood in this small port city.

As we drive back to Lima we make several stops for shorebirds and coastal species. Dinner is at your leisure, an easy walk to several restaurants by the hotel to match your dining wishes this evening.

Accommodations near Miraflores (B,L)

Tues., July 12 Villa Marshes & Lagoons

We head south along the coast again today, stopping at lush marshes where there is a visitor area, a boardwalk trail, and platform viewing around a small lake. We should find Slate-colored Coot, Andean Duck, Great Grebe, and other species. In the reeds and rushes, two species are prized: Many-colored Rush Tyrant and Wren-like

Rush Tyrant. There are also both Yellow-hooded and Scrub Blackbirds and shorebirds to view at a nearby lagoon. Puna Ibis are extending their range and may feed along the shores.

As we return we pick up our stored luggage at the B & B and make our way back to the airport hotel to meet up with the group this evening, as we fly tomorrow morning to Jaen.

Accommodations at Costa del Sol, Lima airport (B,L)

Tour Details

Plan Ahead!

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

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the tour is **\$3990 DBL / \$4390 SGL**, from Lima, Peru. This cost includes all accommodations, meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees, in-country flights, and miscellaneous program expenses. Cost of the extension is **\$950 DBL / \$1095 SGL**.

Tour cost does not include: round-trip transportation from your home city to Lima, optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

Travel Information

Arrive in Lima on July 12 at your leisure; we recommend arriving at an hour that allows you to rest before the start of the trip, which begins promptly the next morning.

If you plan to join the extension, please plan arrivals at your leisure on July 10. Please plan departures in the evening of July 23. Many flights to the United States leave at or around midnight, so be sure to check (and double check!) your dates/times carefully.

Photo Credits

Marvelous Spatuletail, Xavier Muñoz (XM); Wire-crested Thorntail, Miguel Lezamas (ML); Rufous-crested Coquette, ML; Oilbird, Mike Boyce; Andean Flicker, XM; Andean Goose, XM.

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