

# Endemics of Peru + Machu Picchu Etn.

**Birding Tour 18 Days I Diverse Habitats I  
Remote Locations**



## 18-Day Peru Birding Tour

Join us for a remarkable journey across Peru—one of the most biodiverse and culturally rich countries in the world. Starting on May 10th, this carefully planned tour is designed for birders and nature photographers who want to explore Northern Peru's incredible birdlife in detail, and then, if you choose, experience the cultural wonders of the Andes, including Machu Picchu.

We travel through a wide range of habitats—from coastal deserts and wetlands shaped by the cold Humboldt Current, to the dry forests of Tumbes, lush Andean cloud forests, and the endemic-rich Marañón Valley. Northern Peru is a top birding destination in South America, home to many range-restricted and endemic species that are hard to find elsewhere. Highlights include iconic species like the stunning Marvellous Spatuletail and the elusive Long-whiskered Owlet.

This tour is also ideal for photography, with plenty of time at lodges known for their excellent feeders, antpitta stations, and birding hides. We aim to give you fantastic chances to photograph a wide variety of birds in different settings—from vibrant hummingbirds at close range to shy forest dwellers that appear at specially managed feeding sites.

After the northern section of the tour, an optional extension takes you to the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu. This part of the journey combines more birding—focused on highland species—with visits to historic Inca sites and beautiful mountain landscapes.

While the tour is mostly comfortable, some sections—such as the drive to Plataforma—are adventurous and involve rough, off-the-beaten-path travel. But the rewards are high, with access to some of Peru's rarest birds.

Travel with our experienced guides on a trip that offers both serious birding and a deep appreciation of Peru's natural and cultural heritage.



# Tour Plan

## 18-Day Peru Birding Tour Itinerary

### Day 1 – Lima

Arrive in Lima and transfer to a comfortable hotel near the airport. In the evening, meet your guides and fellow travellers for an orientation session and welcome dinner featuring local cuisine such as ceviche and causa. The group briefing will cover the tour plan, safety procedures, and photographic goals. Guides will also introduce some of the iconic species we hope to encounter—including Marvellous Spatuletail and Long-whiskered Owlet. This first evening allows time for participants to settle in, prepare gear, and ask any last-minute questions. Though no formal birding is scheduled, common urban species such as Rock Pigeon, Eared Dove, and Tropical Kingbird may be observed nearby. Rest well in preparation for the exciting journey that begins tomorrow.

### Day 2 – Lima, Pantanos de Villa & Pucusana

We start with a morning visit to the Pantanos de Villa Wildlife Refuge, a protected wetland oasis within metropolitan Lima. Surrounded by desert landscapes, the site supports Cinnamon Teal, White-cheeked Pintail, and the striking Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant. Afterwards, we drive south to the coastal fishing village of Pucusana. Here, a boat trip around its rocky outcrops and sea cliffs offers views of coastal specialists like Surf Cinclodes, Inca Tern, Peruvian Pelican, Peruvian Booby, Guanay Cormorant, Red-legged Cormorant, and Humboldt Penguin. These birds often perch or feed at close range, offering superb photographic opportunities. Later in the day, we transfer to the airport for our evening flight to Tarapoto, where we settle into a comfortable lodge.



### Day 3 – Tarapoto to Plataforma (Flor de Café)

Today's journey is adventurous. We set off early in 4WD vehicles to climb steep, often muddy tracks leading into the Cordillera Azul foothills. Our destination is Plataforma (also known as Flor de Café), a remote community perched at about 1,500 metres. Though the distance is short, the road conditions may make for a long ride. We bird en route through changing habitats and may see Hoatzin near rivers and Yellow-billed Nunbird along forest edges. Upon arrival and lunch, we begin our first targeted search for the beautiful Scarlet-banded Barbet, a species once considered almost mythical. As darkness approaches, there may be an optional owling session to search for Band-bellied Owl or Foothill Screech-Owl.

### Day 4 – Plataforma

We dedicate a full day to exploring the cloud forests surrounding Plataforma. Our top targets remain the Scarlet-banded Barbet, often seen feeding in fruiting trees, and the elusive Cordillera Azul Antbird, which prefers the dense understory. We move slowly along forest trails, listening and scanning for bird activity. Mixed flocks can produce surprises such as Chestnut-tipped Toucanet, Scaled Fruiteater, and Rose-fronted Parakeet. We also look out for Yungas, Blue-rumped, and Jet Manakins in fruiting thickets. Although the area faces

threats from deforestation, it remains a treasure trove of foothill birds. The day offers both rewarding birdwatching and challenges, as sightings of key species require patience, a good ear, and sometimes a bit of luck.

#### **Day 5 – Plataforma to Moyobamba**

We spend our final morning at Plataforma revisiting key spots to improve views or target missed species. After breakfast, we begin the descent by 4WD back to Bellavista. From here, we connect with the main highway and head north towards Moyobamba. Along the way, we make a special stop at a bridge where Oilbirds roost in daylight hours inside a dark crevice. These large, nocturnal fruit-eaters are a fascinating sight, and though light is limited, photographers may attempt high-ISO or careful flash shots, respecting local guidelines. We arrive at a comfortable lodge near Moyobamba by late afternoon, ready to explore more bird-rich areas the following day.

#### **Day 6 – Tarapoto & Huallaga Valley**

Today we visit the Aconabikh Reserve near Tarapoto, a conservation site that protects key habitats for the endemic Koepcke's Hermit. This hummingbird species prefers foothill forests and flowering gardens, where we watch for its brief appearances. We also search for Golden-headed Manakin in lekking areas or shaded forest edges. After lunch, we drive through a dramatic change in habitat—descending into the dry rain shadow of the Huallaga Valley. This zone, influenced by Tumbesian dry forest, supports a distinct bird community. Our main targets here include the Huallaga subspecies of Northern Slaty-Antshrike, the White-browed Antbird, Rufous Casiornis, and Ashy-headed Greenlet. Each location reveals a different ecological story, offering strong photographic variety.

#### **Day 7 – Moyobamba (Waqanki Lodge)**

This day is focused entirely on the beautiful grounds and trails of Waqanki Lodge, one of Northern Peru's top birding lodges. We start at the hummingbird feeders, which are famously productive. Key species include the dazzling endemic Rufous-crested Coquette, White-chinned Sapphire, Golden-tailed Sapphire, and Many-spotted Hummingbird. After capturing photos of these colourful visitors, we walk nearby forest trails looking for Huallaga Tanager, Black-bellied Tanager, Bluish-fronted Jacamar, and Koepcke's Hermit. This combination of easy feeder views and forest birding makes for a rewarding day. In the evening, an optional owling session might yield Stygian Owl or the Rufous Nightjar. Comfortable and productive, Waqanki offers a welcome balance of ease and excitement.

#### **Day 8 – Arena Blanca to Owlet Lodge (Abra Patricia)**

We depart early for Arena Blanca Reserve, a private sanctuary known for its specialised feeding stations. Our morning is dedicated to patiently watching for elusive ground-dwellers like Cinereous Tinamou, Uniform Crake, and the secretive Rufous-breasted Wood-Quail. The hummingbird feeders also attract Wire-crested Thorntail, Green-fronted Lancebill, Many-spotted Hummingbird, and the Ecuadorian Piedtail. After a rewarding morning, we begin our scenic ascent into the cloud forests of the Alto Mayo. We climb to Abra Patricia at 2,450 metres and settle into the Owlet Lodge, a comfortable eco-lodge operated by ECOAN. Surrounded by moss-laden trees and misty ridges, the lodge is perfectly located for exploring one of Peru's richest birding areas.



### **Day 9 – Abra Patricia (Owlet Lodge)**

We have a full day to explore the pristine cloud forests surrounding Owlet Lodge. The extensive trail network allows us to track down mixed-species flocks containing colourful tanagers, furnariids and flycatchers. Our main targets include the striking Yellow-scarfed Tanager and the tiny Lulu's Tody-Flycatcher, often found near the roadside. One of the day's highlights is a visit to the Chestnut Antpitta feeding station, where, with patience, we may enjoy prolonged views and even photographs. Hummingbird feeders bring close encounters with Sword-billed Hummingbird, Collared Inca and the endemic Royal Sunangel. As night falls, we prepare for the evening's main event—a guided walk in search of the mythical Long-whiskered Owlet. We may also hear or glimpse Cinnamon and White-throated Screech-Owls.

### **Day 10 – Fundo Alto Nieva to Pomacochas**

Today we focus on Fundo Alto Nieva, a reserve well known for its elusive antpittas and hummingbirds. We begin with early morning visits to feeding stations where patient observation may reward us with exceptional views of the endemic and endangered Ochre-fronted Antpitta and Rusty-tinged Antpitta. Both species are notoriously shy, making this one of the few reliable sites to observe them. After enjoying these ground-dwelling gems, we turn to the lodge's hummingbird feeders where species like Royal Sunangel, Peruvian Racket-tail, White-tailed Hillstar and Greenish Puffleg are regularly seen. After a productive morning, we descend into the Utcubamba Valley, continuing toward the lakeside town of Pomacochas. This peaceful location serves as our base for exploring Huembo Reserve and offers birding opportunities around the lake at dusk.

### **Day 11 – Huembo Reserve (Pomacochas)**

A highlight of our tour, today is dedicated to the Marvellous Spatuletail. We visit the Huembo Reserve, a community-run project dedicated to the conservation of this spectacular endemic hummingbird. The male's unique racket-shaped tail feathers and energetic display flights make it a must-see species. While waiting at the feeders, we may also spot Little Woodstar, Purple-collared Woodstar, and White-bellied Hummingbird. Nearby gardens and trails might reveal Buff-bellied Tanager and other highland species. Though the Spatuletail is regularly seen here, photographing it is a challenge due to low light under dense foliage and its quick, darting movements. This rewarding day combines focused viewing with deeper understanding of local conservation efforts. We return to our lodge in Pomacochas in the afternoon.



### **Day 12 – Pomacochas to Jaén via Marañón Valley**

We begin a major transition today, descending into the Marañón River Valley—a hotspot for endemism and biodiversity. Our route passes through drier, more open terrain, providing opportunities to search for regional specialities such as Marañón Spinetail, Little Inca-Finch, Marañón Crescentchest, Marañón Gnatcatcher and Marañón Thrush. We also target Buff-bridled Inca-Finch and Grey-winged Inca-Finch, both typically found in scrubby hillsides. Chestnut-backed Thornbird may appear in denser patches, while flocks of the striking Yellow-faced Parrotlet may pass overhead. These birds are generally range-restricted and hard to find elsewhere. We enjoy lunch en route and continue to Jaén, where we settle into our accommodation. The evening offers a chance to review species lists and prepare for tomorrow's elevation gain.



### **Day 13 – Jaén to Olmos (via Abra Porculla)**

We spend the early morning birding around Jaén to locate any missed Marañón endemics. In particular, we target Ecuadorian Ground Dove and the Marañón form of the Rufous-fronted Thornbird, both likely future splits. We then ascend through a dramatic ecological gradient towards Abra Porculla, the lowest Andean pass in Peru at 2,145 metres. Despite its elevation, it separates distinctive faunal communities and supports its own unique species. Our key target here is the endemic Piura Chat-Tyrant. We also search for the Porculla form of Grey-chinned Hermit, Line-cheeked Spinetail, Chapman's Antshrike and Black-cowled Saltator. As we descend into the Tumbesian dry zone, birdlife changes again. We reach Olmos by late afternoon, where we rest in preparation for a dry forest exploration.

### **Day 14 – Pómac & Chaparri Reserve**

Our day begins at Bosque de Pómac Historical Sanctuary, where we explore one of the last remaining tracts of Prosopis-dominated dry forest. Among the ancient Sicán pyramids, we search for endemic birds such as the charismatic Peruvian Plantcutter, Rufous Flycatcher and Tumbes Swallow. Later, we continue to the renowned Chaparri Ecological Reserve, a pioneer in community-based conservation. The reserve is best known for its role in bringing the endangered White-winged Guan back from the brink of extinction. Along Chaparri's forest trails, we also look for Elegant Crescentchest, Tumbes Tyrant, Cinereous Finch, Pacific Hornero, Tumbes Hummingbird, and the noisy, conspicuous White-tailed Jay. The area may also reveal sightings of mammals like Sechuran Fox and even the elusive Spectacled Bear.

### **Day 15 – Chaparri & Tinajones Reservoir**

Our final morning in Chaparri offers another chance to explore trails and bird hides. We may see White-winged Guan again, or catch a glimpse of Elegant Crescentchest or Tumbes Tyrant in the dry forest undergrowth. The reserve's unique bird bathing stream and the vulture feeding station provide opportunities for observing morning activity. After breakfast, we shift habitats and head to Tinajones Reservoir. This man-made lake in a dry zone supports a surprising variety of aquatic birds. Here, we scan for resident species such as Great Grebe, Comb Duck, Black-faced Ibis, and Peruvian Meadowlark, which thrives in the surrounding fields. The contrast between arid landscape and wetland ecosystem underlines Peru's incredible habitat diversity. Return to Olmos in the evening.

### **Day 16 – Olmos to Cusco (via Lima)**

We begin our travel day with a transfer to Chiclayo Airport for the flight to Lima, followed by a connecting flight to Cusco. Located at approximately 3,400 metres, Cusco is the ancient capital of the Inca Empire. Upon arrival, to help acclimatise, we immediately descend to the Sacred Valley, a scenic 2.5-hour drive through stunning Andean landscapes. Our destination is the charming town of Ollantaytambo, nestled at 2,800 metres. The afternoon is free to rest or gently explore the lodge's gardens, where we may spot the endemic Bearded Mountaineer or the impressive Giant Hummingbird. This elevation strategy ensures a comfortable transition into the high Andes before our visit to Machu Picchu tomorrow.





### **Day 17 – Machu Picchu (via Aguas Calientes)**

An early start takes us to the train station in Ollantaytambo, where we board the scenic rail journey along the Urubamba River to Aguas Calientes. From there, a short bus ride leads up the mountain to the iconic Inca citadel of Machu Picchu. We spend several hours exploring the site with a knowledgeable guide, learning about Inca architecture and history. While birding

is secondary today, we keep a sharp eye out for the endemic Inca Wren, often seen foraging among the ruins. After a fulfilling visit, we return to Aguas Calientes for lunch and, if time allows, bird along the river for Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. Return to Ollantaytambo by train in the evening.

### **Day 18 – Urubamba & Cusco**

Our final day begins with a visit to Ensifera Camp, a hummingbird garden in the Sacred Valley. Feeders and flowering plants attract spectacular high-altitude species like Sword-billed Hummingbird, Giant Hummingbird, Shining Sunbeam, and Great Sapphirewing. We spend time photographing and enjoying these species before returning to Cusco. In the afternoon, time permitting, we explore the UNESCO-listed city centre. Optional visits include Qoricancha (Temple of the Sun), the hilltop ruins of Sacsayhuamán, or the bustling San Pedro market for local crafts and produce. Later, we transfer to Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport for your domestic flight to Lima, where you will connect to your international flight home with unforgettable memories.



**Endemic Explorer LTD**

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