



## Natural Selections

**BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS**



Scarlet Macaw

With 939 avian species recorded to date, Costa Rica hosts one of the highest avian diversities per square mile in the World. 4 of these species are strictly limited to Costa Rica's geographical boundaries and close to 100 species are shared with the neighboring countries.

This easy-going, 12-day birding tour of beautiful Costa Rica, with its rich variety of tropical habitats and incredible bird life, is perfect for those birding Central America for the first time, or even wanting to re-visit, and familiarize themselves with the magnificent bird diversity that Costa Rica has to offer. We begin in San Jose and bird our way through breathtaking, tropical landscapes such as the towering Arenal Volcano, the verdant Pacific coast, tropical dry forest and tropical rain forest, Monteverde's cloud forests and more, all teeming with bird life!!

# Costa Rica: The Heart of Central American Birding

11 Nights/12 Days

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## Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrival at San Jose (SJO), transfer to hotel  
Days 2, 3: Arenal Observatory Lodge  
Day 4, 5: Caño Negro Wetlands  
Day 6: Tenorio Volcano National Park  
Day 7: Tropical Dry Forest to Monteverde  
Day 8, 9: Monteverde Cloud Forest  
Day 10: Carara National Park  
Day 11: Tarcoles River and head to San Jose  
Day 12: Depart San Jose (SJO)

## 11 Night/12 Day Itinerary

### Day 1, Arrival and overnight in the Central Valley:

On arrival in San Jose Costa Rica, we'll meet our local guide and tour leader and transfer to the hotel in Central Valley.

Located in an intermountain valley at 3000 ft elevation, Hotel Bougainvillea has beautiful and well-kept gardens that provide habitat for a great variety of some of the widespread species of the Central Valley. Crested and Yellow Headed Caracara, Great Kiskadee, Social Flycatcher, Lesson's Motmot, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Hoffman's Woodpecker, Blue-Gray Tanager and Cabanis's Wren are some of the many resident species that can be found here, as well as a number of migratory species such as Red-eyed, Yellow-Green or Philadelphia Vireos, Yellow, Tennessee and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Summer Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. A short



Sungrebe

walk at night could produce the occasional roosting Mottled Owl or Tropical Screech-Owl.

The gardens also host Variegated Squirrels, a variety of frogs and several species of lizards. In the evening, we will have a welcome briefing and dinner.

*Meals: Dinner*

*Lodging at Hotel Bougainvillea*

### Day 2, Transfer to Arenal, birding Arenal:

The foothills of the Central Mountain Range enclose protected areas with Cloud Forest, and as the road descends into the Caribbean Foothills, the landscape changes into Mountain Tropical Forest, which is the type of habitat on which our lodge is located.

Our day starts with an early birding along the gardens of the hotel and after breakfast, departure towards Arenal. Driving along the Caribbean Foothills of the Central Mountain Range, spending time at Galleria de Colibri Soda Cinchona and Virgen del Socorro road. Amongst the

species that can be expected today are Tufted Flycatcher, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Sooty-faced Finch, American Dipper, Torrent Tyrannulet, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Silver-throated, Scarlet-rumped and Bay-headed Tanagers, Tawny-capped Euphonia, several species of hummingbirds such as the true endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, Green Thorntail, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Red-headed and Prong-billed Barbet, Northern- Emerald Toucanet and plenty more.

We should arrive at Arenal Lodge around mid-afternoon where we'll settle in and enjoy the activity around the lodge's main lodge area and fruit feeders.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Lodging at Arenal Observatory Lodge*



Collared Trogon

### **Day 3, Birding at Sky Adventure and Peninsula Road:**

The foothills of Arenal will be our main area of birding today. At approximately 1800 ft elevation, this pre-montane habitat has a wide variety of birds to enjoy.

After breakfast, we'll visit the trails at Sky Adventure Park. The trails have hanging bridges above the forest canopy, perfect for spotting the mix flocks of birds that move around the treetops. After lunch we'll bird our way along the Peninsula Road at Arenal Volcano National Park and the access road to Arenal Observatory Lodge. Among the species that can be expected today are Ocellated, Spotted, Bicolored, Dull-mantled and Zeledon's Antbirds, Ornate Hawk-eagle, and mixed flocks formed by a surprising number of species such as Emerald, Bay-headed, Black-and-Yellow, Blue-and-Gold and Carmiol's Tanager, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Spotted, Wedge-billed and Brown-Collared Trogon billed Scythebill, Great Curassow, Crested Guan and

Rufous-tailed Jacamar.

Other fauna possible today include White-nosed Coati, Central American Agouti, Howler, White-faced Capuchin and Spider Monkeys, and Red-eyed Treefrogs.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Arenal Observatory Lodge*

### **Day 4, Early birding at Arenal Observatory Lodge, Medio Queso Wetlands:**

Today we'll travel to the lowland wetlands near the Nicaraguan border, an area of Lowland Tropical Rainforest habitat laced with lagoons and rivers and one of the most diverse areas of the country.

After early morning birding at the gardens of Arenal Lodge, we'll start driving towards the north of the country. En-route we'll pause for a birding boat ride at the Medio Queso Wetlands and finish the day birding the San Emilio grasslands for some more of the specialties of the area. Among the species that

can be expected today are Least and Pinnated Bittern, Cattle, Snowy and Great Egrets, Tricolored and Green Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, White Ibis, Common Gallinule, Northern Jacana, Ringed, Amazon, Belted, Green and American-Pygmy Kingfishers, White-throated Crike, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Red-breasted and Eastern Meadowlarks, Thick-billed and Nicaraguan Seed-Finches.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Caño Negro Natural Lodge*

### **Day 5, Caño Negro Wetlands:**

Today will include 2 outings by boat at Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, where a combination of lowland gallery rain forest and lagoons along the Frio River will provide an incredible number of species.

Our pre-breakfast boat ride will take place in the most forested area of the Wildlife Refuge, where some of the species targeted will include the elusive Agami Heron, the rare Green-and-Rufous Kingfisher, Gray-headed Dove, Snowy Cotinga, Royal Flycatcher, Pied Puffbird, Bare-crowned Antbird, and Song and Spot-breasted Wrens.

After breakfast we'll enjoy some relaxed birding at the lodge and surroundings, where more widespread species such as Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Clay-colored Thrush, Blue-gray and Palm Tanagers are to be found. In the afternoon, we'll take another boat ride along the northern part of



the Wildlife Refuge, this time up river, visiting the lagoons where we expect to find concentrations of wetlands species such as Ringed, Amazon, Green, Belted and American Pygmy Kingfisher, along with Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, Jabiru, Glossy and Green Ibis, Little and Great Blue Herons, Blue-Green Teals, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and numbers of migratory shorebirds that favor the habitat.

Along the way there will be plenty of chances for Spider, Howler and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, Green Iguanas, Emerald Basilisk, Spectacled Caimans and Long-nosed Bats.

An after-dinner outing here can provide good views of Common and Great Potoo, Black-and-White Owl and Pacific Screech-Owl..

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Caño Negro Natural Lodge*

#### **Day 6, Tenorio Volcano National Park area:**

Today after breakfast we'll depart for the next destination, and Costa Rica's tropical dry forest habitat.

We'll enjoy en-route birding in the area of Bijagua, visiting a private reserve on the foothills of Tenorio Volcano National Park, again in an area of birding pre-mountain Rainforest. Among the species that can be expected here are Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Blue-throated Goldentail, Tody, Keel-billed and Broad-billed Motmots, Slaty-tailed, Gartered and Lattice-tailed

Trogons, Barred and Great Antshrikes, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Central-American Pigmy-Owl, Barred and White Hawks and more.

Variegated Squirrels, White-nosed Coatis are some species mammals that could also show during our visit.

Moving on towards Guanacaste, distinctive tropical dry forest will appear. These arid habitats are a rain shadow effect, resulting from trade winds moving northwest which have depleted their moisture as they passed over the mountains.

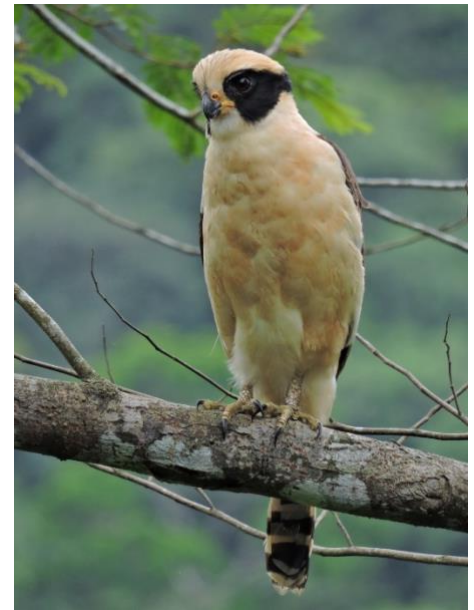
Some of the species possible this afternoon are White-fronted and Yellow-naped Parrots, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Rose-throated Becard and Rufous-naped Wren.

Nine-banded Armadillos are often found around our lodge at night, and there is also a project here for reintroduction of White-tailed Deer, we may spot some of these as well.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Hacienda La Pacifica*

#### **Day 7, Tropical Dry Forest, Palo Verde and Monteverde:**

Morning will consist of birding La Pacifica's grounds and then moving on to visit Palo Verde National Park for more dry forest species such as Spot-breasted and Streak-breasted Oriole, Double-striped Thick-knee, Lesser-ground Cuckoo, Yellow-naped Parrot, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Thicket Tinamou, Great Curassow, Lesser



**Laughing Falcon**

Ground-Cuckoo, Plain-capped Starthroat, Canivet's Emerald, Cinnamon Hummingbird and more.

While in the park we will spend some time on the boardwalk at the Palo Verde Lagoon, where several species of migrant ducks share habitat with hundreds of resident Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and the occasional Fulvous Whistling Duck. Wood Stork, Limpkin, Northern Jacana, Snail Kite and the huge Jabiru are highly possible in this aquatic habitat as well.

In the afternoon we'll move towards Monteverde in the Tilaran Mountain Range, an area which is very well known for its unique habitat of cloud forest and pluvial montane forest.

We'll arrive our lodge late in the afternoon, and hopefully in time for some birding around the grounds before dinner.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Valle Escondido Lodge*



Lesser Ground-Cuckoo

### **Day 8, Birding Monteverde:**

Today is a full birding day amidst the lush cloud forest habitat at Curicancha Reserve and Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserves, the latter being one of the most famous nature reserves in the world for its wonderful variety of flora and fauna.

Amongst the species that can be expected are Resplendent Quetzal, Three-wattled Bellbird, Magenta-throated Woodstar, Coppery-headed Emerald, Green-crowned Brilliant, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Elegant Euphonia, Spotted Woodcreeper, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Chestnut-capped Warbler, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Long-tailed Manakin, Yellowish Flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire, Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Slate-throated Redstart, and may more.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### *Lodging at Valle Escondido Lodge*

### **Day 9, Central Pacific, La Ceiba Road:**

After breakfast today we'll begin our drive towards the next destination in the Central Pacific region of Costa Rica.

Along the way we'll do some birding along the highly productive La Ceiba Road, where open grasslands and scattered trees are home to spectacular species such as Black-headed and Gartered Trogons, Turquoise-browed Motmot, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Pearl Kite, Harris's Hawk, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Rufous-naped Wren, Rufous-tailed Jacamar and more.

We'll arrive the lodge in the mid-afternoon and do some relaxed birding of the grounds before dinner.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Villa Lapas*

### **Day 10, Birding Carara National Park and surroundings:**

Early morning birding will be around the grounds of the lodge, and then after breakfast a visit to Carara National Park, one the meccas for birdwatching in Costa Rica. This habitat within this national park represents a transition between tropical dry forest and the Pacific lowland rain forest.

The trails inside the national park take us deep inside a very lush forest hosting a great variety of species. Great Tinamou, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Scarlet Macaw, Black-hooded Antshrike, Riverside Wren, Orange-collared all occur here. In addition, Blue-crowned and Red-Capped Manakins, White-whiskered Puffbird, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-throated, Slaty-tailed and Baird's Trogons, Long-billed and Stripe-throated Hermits, Blue-throated Goldentail and more, are a just a few of the species expected today.

After lunch we'll continue birding the area for species such as Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-White Wrens, Southern beardless Tyrannulet, Bright-rumped Attila, Fiery-billed Aracari, Western Tanager, Golden-naped Woodpecker and King Vulture, returning to the lodge late in the afternoon.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Villa Lapas*



Crowned Woodnymph

### **Day 11, Boat ride at Tarcoles River and drive to San Jose:**

Today we'll enjoy an early morning boat ride on the Tarcoles River in search for wetland and mangrove species. Scanning the semi-forested river bank will provide a number of wetland species such as Roseate Spoonbill, Great, Cattle and Snowy Egrets, Boat-billed, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-herons, Ringed, Amazon, Belted, Green and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Collared Plover and number of other species of shorebirds. Magnificent Frigatebirds should be ever present here as well.

Upon birding much of the open areas of the river, we'll enter its shaded mangrove forest for chances at Mangrove Cuckoo, Mangrove Vireo, Mangrove Hummingbird, Panama Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Mealy Parrot, Plumbeous Kite and many more.

After returning to the hotel for lunch and some last-minute birding, we'll head towards San Jose.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Lodging at Hotel Bougainvillea*

### **Day 12, Transfer to San Jose Airport (SJO) and flights home:**

Today we bid our farewells to Costa Rica and to each other and transfer to the international airport for international flights return home.

*Meals: Breakfast*

### **Included in this itinerary:**

Accommodations and meals from evening of day 1 to morning of day 12, in-country land and water transportation, water daily, activities as described on the itinerary, local guide throughout, all guide and entrance fees.

### **Not Included:**

Items of a personal nature, laundry, souvenirs, alcoholic drinks, international flights, travel insurance, gratuity or tips.

### **Travel insurance:**

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.



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