



Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Resplendent Quetzal

Costa Rica: Birds and Art with Susan Brickner-Wren

Feb. 4 to 11, 2027

7 Nights/8 Days

With 943 avian species recorded on its territory to this day, Costa Rica is one of the most diverse countries in terms of bird species per square mile in the World. Four of these species are strictly limited to Costa Rica's geographical boundaries and more than one hundred regional endemic species are shared with the neighboring countries. We have designed this program to maximize the opportunities for the best birdwatching in combination with daily art workshops. This selection of destinations combines field work sessions, feeding stations, diverse landscapes and culture for exciting opportunities in field sketching, plein air painting and photography. With this wide variety of habitats and subjects comes an equally broad range of techniques for watercolor and sketching. Instruction will include perspective and light, color mixing and line quality, composition and focus. Susan's work ranges from field sketching to large studio pieces, from birds and botanicals to portraits. She utilizes reference photos and field notes to follow up with studio pieces. Susan will share techniques for successful photography and watercolor painting, demonstrating a common base to help participants build confidence in the field. This program is flexible to ensure that there will be time to relax and enjoy the grounds of the lodges.

Tour Overview

Day 1, Feb. 4: Arrival to San Jose, meet your guide and transfer to Hotel Bougainvillea. Lodging: Bougainvillea.

Day 2, Feb. 5: Drive to the highlands, en route stop at Paraiso de Quetzales to enjoy Highland species of hummingbirds. Lodging: Gema del Bosque.

Day 3, Feb. 6: Resplendent Quetzals and highland endemics. The Photography setups at Batsu Gardens are perfect to enjoy and have another art workshop. Lodging: Gema del Bosque

Day 4, Feb. 7: In the morning walking along the beautiful waterfall trail with opportunities to sketch and enjoy the landscape and birds. In the afternoon visit the Paramo. Lodging: Gema del Bosque.

Day 5, Feb. 8: Early birding at the lodge grounds and head towards Arenal. Arrive at the lodge in the afternoon to relax and enjoy the grounds. Lodging: Brisas del Arenal.

Day 6, Feb. 9: Visit the Arenal Observatory Lodge, birding on the lodge grounds, hummingbirds, trogons, monkeys and owls. The art workshops can happen in between the birding or arranged for the afternoon depending on the leader's preference. Lodging: Brisas del Arenal.

Day 7, Feb. 10: After breakfast head back to San Jose, on the way visit La Paz Valley, where the group will enjoy a new set of cloud forest

species including hummingbirds. Arrive at the hotel in the afternoon. Lodging: Bougainvillea.

Day 8, Feb. 11: Shuttle to international airport

7 Night/8 Day Itinerary:

Day 1 – February 4:

Meet your guide at the airport and drive to your hotel nearby. The rest of the day at leisure to enjoy the grounds of the hotel. Birding at the hotel gardens is a good way to start getting familiar with some of the common birds of Costa Rica and take some photographs and sketch. Some highlights might include Great Kiskadee, Lesson's Motmot, and Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Rufous-backed Wren, Melodious Blackbird and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. The landscaping of the grounds of the lodge is superb, and the collections of bromeliads, orchids and sculptures provide inspiration for plein air painting. In the evening meet with the group for a briefing and dinner.

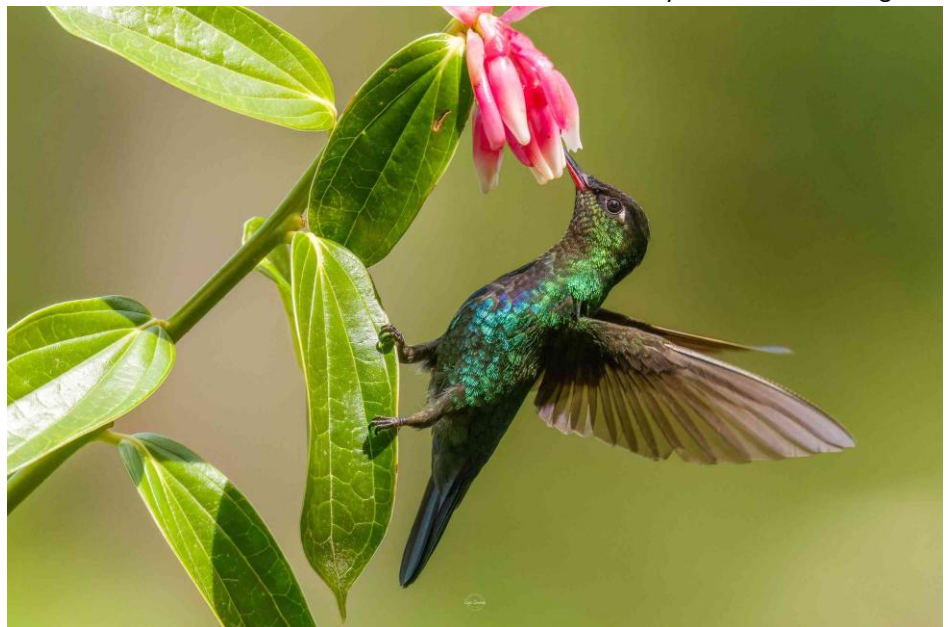
Lodging at Hotel Bougainvillea
Meals included: Dinner

Central Valley temperatures can vary with lows in the 60's and highs in the 90's.

Day 2 – February 5:

Drive to the highlands, en route stop at Paraiso de Quetzales to enjoy Highland species of hummingbirds. Then the group heads up to the Talamanca Highlands, the largest mountain range in the country, with its highest peaks reaching 12,000 ft elevation. The combination of mountain rainforest, oak and cloud forest along the way will make for breathtaking views. The species found along this mountain range are also spectacular, Resplendent Quetzal, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher, Golden-browed Chlorophonia and Volcano Hummingbird to name a few. With a stop at Paraiso de Quetzales Lodge for lunch we will spend some time enjoying the

Fiery-throated Hummingbird





Golden-browed Chlorophonia

hummingbird feeders and beautifully cultivated gardens where we will get several of the highland endemics such as Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Talamanca Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird and Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush. Enjoy the panoramic view of the Talamanca forest and learn how to create the illusion of a distant background with atmospheric effects in watercolor.

*Lodging at Gema del Bosque
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.
Talamanca Highlands*

Temperatures can vary with lows on the 40's and highs on the 80's.

Day 3 – February 6:

Today is a day of Resplendent Quetzals and highland endemics. The photography setups at Batsu Gardens are perfect to enjoy and have another art workshop. Early start to go see one of the most

sought-after birds in the world, the Resplendent Quetzal. Then return to the lodge and the rest of the morning there will be time for the art workshops at the grounds. Susan will offer a paint-along demonstration, allowing participants to follow step by step, practice and get feedback. Everyone learns from the preferences and techniques of others in this fun and effective format. Art instruction to include mixing colors to achieve diversity, while limiting the paint palette for a cohesive finished piece.

In the afternoon the group will visit Batsu Gardens, at which feeding stations showcase a great variety of visiting birds. The species for today include some of the world's most colorful birds such as Slaty Flower-piercer, Flame-colored Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Flame-throated Warbler and Collared Redstart. The group will have time to sit and sketch, snap photos and observe.

*Lodging at Gema del Bosque.
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Day 4 – February 7:

In the morning walking along the beautiful waterfall trail with opportunities to sketch, paint and enjoy the landscape and birds. The group will pass along the pristine Savegre river, the oak forest and surroundings are incredible and there are many opportunities to continue finding more of the regional endemics of the area. In the afternoon visit the Paramo,

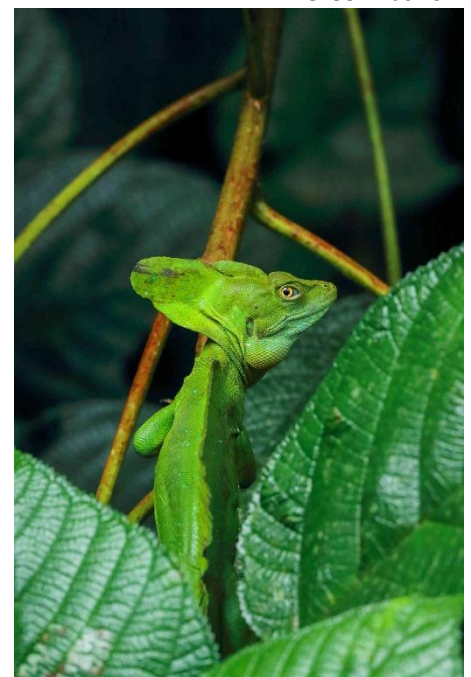
spend some time at the mountain top, experiencing the Paramo habitat located above the timberline. The vegetation has adapted to conditions of strong winds, high humidity and low temperatures. Still many species of birds and wildlife have found a home here, species such Volcano Junco, Peg-billed Finch, Talamanca and Volcano Hummingbirds to name a few. Depending on conditions, the group may enjoy plein air watercolor landscapes or studies of any cooperative bird species.

*Lodging at Gema del Bosque
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Day 5 – February 8:

Early birding at the lodge grounds and head towards Arenal. Arrive at the lodge in the afternoon to relax and enjoy the grounds. This region is located in the Caribbean foothills of the mountain range, the predominant habitat is the

Green Basilisk



rainforest, which varies its composition depending on the elevation. There will be stops along the way to enjoy some feeding stations with a different variety of birds such as Emerald, Bay-headed, Speckled Tanagers, Collared Trogon and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers to name a few. The town of La Fortuna rests on the foot of Arenal Volcano, and the mountain reaches over 5,000 ft, but the town is located at approximately 1,000 ft. Once arrived at the lodge the group will have time to rest and relax, sketch and enjoy the grounds. The terrace at Brisas del Arenal offers a comfortable spot to view and paint Arenal volcano. Natural lighting is always a surprise, supporting instruction on when to break from what you observe in nature and when to let artistic liberty flow.

Lodging at Brisas del Arenal

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 – February 9:

Spend the day at Arenal Observatory Grounds. Visit the Arenal Observatory Lodge. Located on the foothills of the Tilaran Mountain range the place offers an amazing variety of habitats, on which the birding is fantastic. Starting at the feeders with Great Curassow, Montezuma Oropendola and Crested Guans, having their breakfast together with the Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers. Then walk along the gardens and trails where many species of hummingbirds, trogons, monkeys and coatis can be found. Arenal



Black-crested Coquette

Observatory Lodge and Trails have recorded over 500 species of birds, making it a favorite destination in Costa Rica. The art workshops can happen in between the birding or arranged for the afternoon depending on the leader's preference.

Lodging at Brisas del Arenal

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Arenal Temperatures can vary with lows on the 70's and highs on the 90's.

Day 7 – February 10:

Head back to San José with a stop along the way to explore the Cloud Forest at La Paz, San Ramon. The area holds unparalleled biodiversity which shows in the number of bird species to be found. We'll let the local birding guide showcase recently seen species and possibly try for species often found in the area that the group may have missed. Species in this area include Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Prong-billed Barbet,

Coppery-headed Emerald, Slate-throated Redstart. Time permitting further instruction inspired by subject, such as mixing blacks to provide interest and form, or ways to portray reflected light. Once back to Bougainvillea we'll enjoy a farewell dinner. Susan will provide instruction on how to apply techniques learned during the tour to large-scale studio watercolor paintings.

Lodging at Bougainvillea

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8 – February 11:

Shuttle to international airport. After breakfast head towards the international airport for flights home.

Meals: Breakfast.

Included for the duration of this itinerary:

7 nights Lodging in double or single occupancy, private art instruction and guidance throughout, private guide services from day 1 through day 8, all ground transportation throughout, all meals from dinner day 1 through breakfast day 8, entrance fees to Nature Reserves and art/photography setups.

Not Included:

International Airfare, tips for hotels, waiters, guides and drivers during the trip. items of personal use, travel insurance, medical expenses, prescription drugs, additional services offered in hotels (Spa, massage, etc.), alcoholic beverages, laundry, souvenirs, any other expense or extra tours not listed as included above.

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. For details, please see

<https://www.naturalselectionstours.com/travel-insurance/>



White-necked Jacobin



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BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS

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