

ITINERARY

COLOMBIA'S EASTERN CORDILLERA*January 13-21, 2024***COLOMBIA'S LLANOS: A SHORT SAFARI (Extension)***January 9-13, 2024*

The bird list for this tour boasts nearly 50 species of hummingbirds, including the-endemic Green-bearded Helmetcrest. We'll look for this high-elevation specialist at Sumapaz National Park. Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 Field Guides Colombia's Eastern Cordillera tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Bogotá: the city's name brings to mind stunning panoramic vistas from Mount Monserrate, the vibrant art, architecture, graffiti (or street art), and cafés of historic La Candelaria, and the world's largest assemblage of gold artifacts at the Museo del Oro—the Gold Museum. Colombia's vibrant capital is captivating, without doubt, and more foreign tourists are discovering its charms each year. The local people are erudite, thanks to an abundance of good schools, libraries, theatres, and museums, and the easy flight connections and eclectic culinary offerings are what one might expect in a world-class capital city. Okay, there is one downside to all of this: the traffic!

But, what about the birds? They're marvelous, too! In fact, Bogotá is the best place to go to see quite a few range-restricted endemics, some of which are endangered, many of which are both distinctive and drop-dead beautiful. The reason for the capital area's concentration of special birds is its location in the center of Colombia's Eastern Cordillera, the easternmost of the three Andean chains in this bird-rich country. Bogotá is a large, flat city set on a high plateau ringed by Andean peaks. To the west, the lower-elevation western slopes descend toward the Magdalena Valley. To the south, the world's largest *páramo* (South American alpine moorland) is protected as Sumapaz National Park. To the east, the peaks of Chingaza National Park hold tracts of cloudforest, elfin forest, and *páramo*. And farther to the southeast, the eastern slopes drop gradually toward the Orinoco Basin, with humid forests in the transitional upper subtropical zone home to scores of Amazonian birds mixed with Andean species that reach their lower elevational limits here.

In a week's birding, we'll cover all of these key compass points and habitats, based for four nights in the city and four nights out of town, in search of the area's specialty birds and many more widespread Andean and some Amazonian foothill species. Among the species we see only in this region are gems like Coppery-bellied Puffleg, Green-bearded Helmetcrest, Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Silvery-throated Spinetail, Apolinar's Wren, Bogota Rail, Rufous-browed Conebill, and those mesmerizing starfrontlets—Golden-bellied and Blue-throated. Add to these a host of other Andean and even Amazonian species, and this tour is really something special.

And this is a rather packed and energetic week of birding! We'll have a local guide and drivers, to help us navigate (there is a bit of traffic to contend with in the capital), and we'll catch the occasional "cultural moment" as we can, like trying out the local *aromática* at a café. Although we won't shop for emeralds or take in the gold treasures at Museo del Oro together, we'll wager that the hummingbird shows at Tabacal, Chicaque, and especially the Observatorio de Colibries will outshine any display of gems or precious metals! The capital area has an active birding community, it's true, but the surrounding mountains still hold mysteries, like the enigmatic Bogota Sunangel—a gorgeous hummingbird species known only from one specimen—so we'll be on our toes in case fortune favors us with an El Dorado moment. Colombia has a way of surprising even veteran birders, we find.



The endemic Bogota Rail is an endangered species, found in only a few locations. We'll look for this skulker in the wetlands of Sumapaz National Park. Photograph by participant Jose Padilla-Lopez.

Colombia's Llanos: A Short Safari. The week around the capital will go by quickly, so for those who'd like to add another special habitat, and completely different avifauna, we have set up a pre-tour extension to Colombia's eastern frontier, to that vast expanse of grasslands and marshes known as the llanos. For three nights, we'll stay in a well-appointed, family-run lodge in the midst of a private 30,000-acre ranch, right in prime birding habitat. The llanos hold a rich diversity of waterbirds and grassland species, as well as specialties associated with the scattered woodlands here, such as Pale-headed Jacamar and White-bearded Flycatcher. Classic inhabitants of the llanos like Hoatzin, Orinoco

Goose, Whistling Heron, and Sharp-tailed, Scarlet, and Buff-necked ibis will all be on the agenda, along with mammals—herds of Capybara, troops of Colombian Red Howler Monkeys, and perhaps even a Giant Anteater or Southern Tamandua. We may also get the chance to see a Green Anaconda or Red-footed Tortoise, among other reptiles. In the Llanos, whether flying Scarlet Macaws or a perched Great Potoo, a flashy Sunbittern or stately Jabiru, there is always something to see, making for an exciting safari-style birding experience.



The Llanos of Colombia are home to many species of waterfowl, including the Orinoco Geese, and Black-bellied and White-faced whistling-ducks seen here. Photograph by participant Linda Mack.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

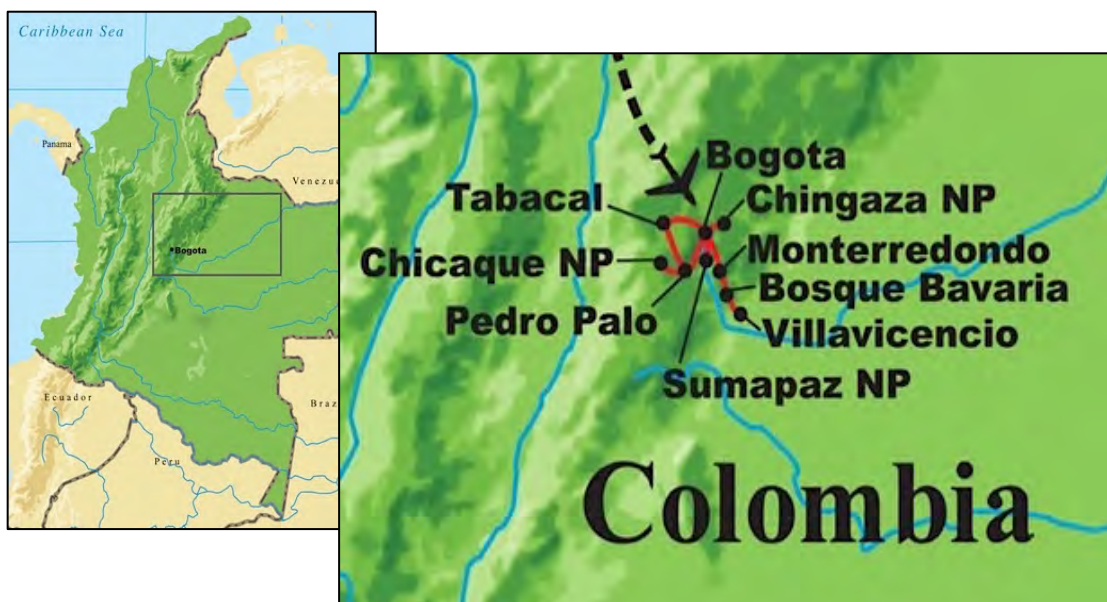
- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (2-4 miles per day), some of it on paved roads, some on gravel or dirt roads, and in one case on a fairly steep trail that includes cobblestone and earthen sections. In the llanos, tracks may be soggy in spots. In some places, it will be necessary to walk uphill for short segments, but in most areas, we attempt to walk downhill as we bird. It's important to remember that walking downhill can be very challenging (**walking sticks are useful**), especially when the terrain is a bit uneven or steep (as at Chicaque). There is birding spent above 10,000 feet at the national parks, Chingaza and Sumapaz, on two days.
- **PACE:** Early mornings (departures between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m.), with birding sessions in morning and afternoon broken by a picnic or restaurant lunch. We do not have many evening excursions during the main tour, so we should be able to get plenty of sleep for the several early departures. We will travel by small bus. On the extension, we'll often use a "safari vehicle" at Hato La Aurora. The vehicles vary from year to year here and may include a tractor pulling a trailer with benches, or even proper 4x4s. This is a working farm so vehicles vary on local conditions and availability.
- **ELEVATION:** We will reach a maximum elevation of over 10,000 feet on two days of this tour while visiting Chingaza and Sumapaz National Parks.
- **WEATHER:** The weather can be quite chilly in the higher mountains, with early morning temperatures in the 40s F but usually warming into the 60s by midday. Lower elevations are notably warmer, with temperature ranges

from 65 to 85 degrees F and higher humidity (around Villavincencio). In the llanos, temperatures range higher, about 70-90 F. We will visit in the local dry season, but rain showers are possible at any time.

- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** We will be birding in natural habitats where there are often no restrooms, so it will be necessary to make comfort stops in nature when we are birding.
- **OPTING OUT:** When we are staying at the same lodging for multiple nights, participants can easily opt to sit out a day.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they'll put you in touch with a guide.

This tour may be combined with Colombia's Marvelous Magdalena Valley, January 21 – February 2, 2024.



About the Birding Areas

Colombia is full of birds, nearly 2000 species (about 20% of all the world's birds, and more than any other country!). Our Colombia program has five tours, all designed to see as much of this incredible country's avifauna as possible. Each tour tends to focus on a suite of species that is special to the itinerary's birding sites. For instance, if a scarce species is rather reliable on one tour but quite difficult on another, it's likely that we'll search for that species primarily where we have a reasonable chance of finding it (and often will not invest long hours looking for it where our chances are very low). For this tour, we do have a small core of specialty species not seen on any other Field Guides tours, such as Bogotá Rail, Blue-throated and Golden-bellied starfrontlets, Coppery-bellied Puffleg, and Apolinar's Wren (and in the llanos, White-bearded Flycatcher and Pale-headed Jacamar!), and we'll give each of those a very strong Field Guides effort. In addition, we will have plenty of time to enjoy most of the more widespread species that the area has to offer, some of which (or close relatives) can also be seen on tours in Ecuador or Peru, but we will relish and take time with them on this tour, too. The species noted for each site below are just examples, and some species are possible at multiple sites, even though not mentioned in each account here.

Laguna del Tabacal—Around this pretty crater lake, the local municipality of La Vega has established a park with trails through scrub and secondary forest typical of the Eastern Cordillera's western foothills, that is, the slopes draining to the Magdalena River. Birding here, as well as in arid scrub habitat along the main highway below La Vega (with its many coffee plantations), can be remarkably productive in the early morning and late in the day, despite the somewhat limited

habitat, with nearly 400 species reported for the vicinity. Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Velvet-fronted Euphonia, and Bar-crested Antshrike will be among our targets for the morning, along with Spectacled Parrotlet, Jet, White-bellied, Dusky, and Blue-lored antbirds, Gray-throated Warbler, Speckle-breasted Wren (the endemic *columbianus* subspecies), Ash-browed and Stripe-breasted spinetails, Moustached Puffbird, and White-bearded Manakin. More widespread species of note here often include Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Red-billed Scythebill, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-faced and Sooty-headed tyrannulets, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Cinereous Becard, Long-billed Gnatwren, Plain Antvireo, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Black-bellied and Band-backed wrens, and Plain-colored, Bay-headed, and Scrub tanagers. Along the lake edges, White-throated Crakes and Gray and Dull-colored seedeaters are sometimes evident, along with several duck or heron species, and Black Hawk-Eagles sometimes hunt the surrounding second growth. Wintering warblers from North America should be plentiful.

Jardín Encantado—This private home is called the called the “Enchanted Garden” because of its dozens of hummingbird feeding stations, which will give us an excellent opportunity to study the endemic Indigo-capped Hummingbird, which often patronizes flowers and feeders here. Gorgeted Woodstar is another range-restricted species we hope to see here (with White-bellied Woodstars for comparison), and we’ll certainly enjoy every hummer we see, including potentially Black-throated Mango, Green Hermit, White-vented Plumeleteer, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Red-billed Emerald, and three species of violetear—Brown, Lesser, and Sparkling. Of the more than three-dozen species of hummingbirds reported here, more than a third are regular patrons, and those will keep us busy!



*Crimson-rumped Toucanet and other Andean birds will be our focus in the forests of Chicaque Natural Park.
Photograph by participant Steve Parrish.*

Chicaque Natural Park—Located about 25 miles southwest of the capital, at elevations of 6900-8900 feet (about 2100-2700 m), Chicaque is a private park with an extensive trail system through wonderfully lush cloudforests bursting with ferns, orchids, epiphytes, palms, oaks, and many other Andean evergreen trees. Although many of the birds found in the mixed flocks here are of widespread Andean distribution, two hummingbirds are not: Golden-bellied Starfrontlet and Black Inca. The former sometimes visits feeders at the park restaurant, but the latter usually does not, and so we’ll search for it carefully in the forest and edges, along with the range-restricted Moustached Brushfinch. We will take our time as we walk, slowly and carefully (**walking sticks are very helpful**), downhill over a trail that begins as cobblestone but becomes earthen and narrower as we descend (we’ll get a ride in 4x4 trucks back to the entrance rather than walking back uphill!).

Among the many species we hope to encounter here (many are hummingbirds!) are Andean Guan, Speckled Hummingbird, Tourmaline and Longuemare’s sunangels, Glowing Puffleg, Collared Inca, Mountain Velvetbreast, Buff-tailed Coronet, Booted Racket-tail, Andean Pygmy-Owl, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Southern Emerald-Toucanet (subspecies *albivitta*), Uniform Antshrike, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (usually just heard), Blackish Tapaculo, Brown-billed

Scythebill, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Montane and Lineated foliage-gleaners, Rufous and Ash-browed spinetails, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Masked Trogon, Rufous-breasted and Flavescent flycatchers, Rufous-crowned Tody-Tyrant, Brown-bellied Swallow, Whiskered and Sharpe's wrens, Andean Solitaire (a lovely cloudforest singer), Common Chlorospingus, Three-striped and Black-crested warblers, Gray-browed and Chestnut-capped brushfinches, and a host of tanagers: Blue-capped, Beryl-spangled, Metallic-green, Fawn-breasted, and Blue-and-black commonly, along with Scarlet-bellied and Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers. Remarkably, four of Colombia's five hemispingus species—Black-capped, Black-eared, Superciliaried, and Oleaginous—are here, though it's tough to score all four in a morning. Less common residents here include Lined Quail-Dove, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Undulated Antpitta, Spillmann's Tapaculo, Variegated Bristle-Tyrant, Black-chested Jay, Black-billed Peppershrike, Rufous Wren, and Flame-faced Tanager. Although the birding here is not as overwhelming as in some more-famous Andean sites, it should be darn good.

Laguna de Pedro Palo—Our final morning on the western slope will find us in this mostly scrub and second-growth nature reserve that belongs to the municipality of Tena. The reserve spans 6600-7500 feet (2000-2280 m) in elevation, where temperatures are usually very pleasant. In the early mornings, the endangered Turquoise Dacnis often forages here, in the forest canopy comprised of species of oak, cecropia, fig, alder, walnut, willow, laurel, sweetwood, and coralberry, along with *Ocotea*, *Cedrela*, the lovely endemic Encenillo (*Weinmannia tomentosa*), and the magnificent *Retrophyllum rospigliosii* of the family Podocarpaceae, once called Romeron Pine. We'll bird slowly among these trees and along pasture edges, mostly from a gravel road but also from a short trail. We might see a Silvery-throated Spinetail or Gray-cowled Wood-Rail here, and we'll have an additional chance to see some of the species we might have seen (or missed?) earlier, including Spectacled Parrotlet, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Bar-crested Antshrike, Black Inca, Indigo-capped Hummingbird, Red-headed Barbet, Ash-browed Spinetail, Whiskered and Speckle-breasted wrens, Moustached Brushfinch, or Flame-faced, Golden, Saffron-crowned, Scrub, and Black-capped tanagers. White-winged Becard, Yellow-backed Oriole, and Metallic-green Tanager are occasionally present.



The endemic Turquoise Dacnis is one of our targets at Laguna de Pedro Palo. Photograph by guide Richard Webster.

Chingaza National Park—Towering over Bogotá to the east, Chingaza National Park's peaks rise to almost 11,200 feet (3400 m) and offer some of the tour's most scenic Andean vistas. Here, high-elevation cloudforest gives way to temperate scrub mixed with *Chusquea* bamboo, then at higher elevations to gorgeous páramo. We will bird roadsides and a few short trails along an entrance road to the park, concentrating on species we are unlikely to see later at Sumapaz: Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Amethyst-throated (Longuemare's) Sunangel, Rufous-browed Conebill, White-browed Spinetail, and that fifth hemispingus, the sometimes tricky Black-headed. Some of these birds are nearly endemic to Colombia, found also in parts of Venezuela. The endemic Brown-breasted (Flame-winged) Parakeet is a threatened species found at lower elevations, and we have a small chance to see it. More birds we'll watch for here are (East Andean) Rufous Antpitta

(nominate *rufula*), Red-crested Cotinga, Golden-fronted Redstart, Black-chested and Hooded mountain-tanagers, Tyrian Metaltail, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Brown-backed, Rufous-chested, and perhaps Slaty-backed chat-tyrants, Silvery-throated Spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, Many-striped Canastero, Pale-naped Brushfinch, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, and Andean Siskin. Our visit will take in but a sliver of the park's 131,000 acres, but we'll try to make it a rich and rewarding outing, with picnic lunch.

Observatorio de Colibries—This quiet garden bordered by a small patch of forest seems modest at first, but the blizzard of hummingbirds that attend the flowers and feeders here are anything but modest, in color or behavior! We stop by here primarily to see the endemic Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Coppery-bellied Puffleg, and Glowing Puffleg, but Sword-billed Hummingbird, Black-tailed and Green-tailed trainbearers, Great Sapphirewing, White-bellied Emerald, and Sparkling and Lesser violetears make for generous lagniappe. A few nice Andean birds are often in the parking area—Black-backed Grosbeak, Red-crested Cotinga, or Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, so we'll try to tear ourselves away from the garden for a few minutes before heading back to Bogotá.



The Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle is a wide-spread hawk found in the higher elevations of Colombia. We'll watch for one when we visit Sumapaz National Park. Photograph by participant Dan Williams.

Sumapaz National Park—In 1539, Swabian conquistador Nikolaus Federmann, a co-founder of Bogotá, crossed the Sumapaz moorlands with a large party, part of an epic but disastrous search for the mythical golden city of El Dorado (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Dorado). Two hundred sixty years on, in 1799, the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt wrote the first scientific descriptions of this hauntingly beautiful *páramo*, which by then the Spanish inhabitants of the region called *País de la Niebla* ("Country of Fog") because of the dense clouds that often blanket the landscape. Small tributaries that wind through this alpine moor feed the two main river systems of Colombia, draining eastward, into the Orinoco River basin, as well as westward, into the Magdalena River valley. The national park lands range in altitude between 9200 and 13,125 feet (2800-4000 m), but most of our birding will be below 11,480 feet (3500 m), in stunted, scrubby forest and in *páramo*, both being dream habitats for botanist and birder alike, with Pagoda Trees (*Escallonia myrtilloides*), *Polylepis*, Valerian, and dwarf or prostrate species of plantain, bamboo, bean, or thistle at every turn. We will bird mostly along level roadsides here, partly because these ecosystems are fragile, partly because the ground can be tricky underfoot, with many *chupaderos* and *chucas* (drainages and boggy seeps) concealed by *Sphagnum* moss, blueberry, and other low vegetation.

Around these wet patches and larger ponds created by glacial forces, we'll look carefully for two endangered endemic birds that evolved in these high-elevation wetlands—Bogota Rail and Apolinar's Wren—as well as for more widespread species such as Noble Snipe, Andean Duck, Andean Teal, American Coot (endemic *colombiana*), and any wintering shorebirds that might be about. Grand *Espeletia* plants, known in Colombia as *frailejones* ("tall monks"), tower above the

landscape, and around these strange sunflower relatives we hope to see the endemic Green-bearded Helmetcrest, a handsome hummingbird species found only from Sumapaz north very sparingly to Bucaramanga. In the surrounding heath-like habitats, we'll work to locate Silvery-throated Spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, Many-striped Canastero, Pale-bellied Tapaculo, Tawny Antpitta, Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Chestnut-winged Cinclodes, Sedge (Grass) Wren, Glossy Flowerpiercer, and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant, Paramo Pipit, and Paramo Seedeater are also possible (but less likely) here. In the skies, we'll watch for Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, which preys on Mountain Rabbit and the endemic local subspecies (*anolimae*) of Brazilian Guinea Pig. Although a few Spectacled Bears and Mountain Tapirs are said to hang on in the park, we have yet to see one here, as they do not normally venture near the roadways where we bird.

Bosque Bavaria—Although the Villavencio-area forests have some avifaunal overlap with areas to the west of Bogotá, there are scores of new species to be seen on the eastern slope! This patch of forest, named for the old Bavaria beer plant along the entrance road (now closed), is home to a 74-acre ProAves preserve dedicated to conservation of nesting Orange-breasted Falcons. We will bird at lower elevations than the actual preserve, at about 3300 feet (1000 m), where the humid forest is home to birds with distinctly Amazonian affinities: Spix's Guan, Cobalt-winged Parakeet, Amazonian Umbrellabird, White-chinned Jacamar, Amazonian Motmot, Lettered Aracari (what a bill!), White-chested Puffbird, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Scaled Piculet, Yellow-tufted and Red-stained woodpeckers, Gray-chinned, Sooty-capped, and White-bearded hermits, Blue-fronted Lancebill, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Green-backed Trogon, Gilded Barbet, Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Black-faced, Dusky, White-browed, and Spot-winged antbirds, White-bearded, Striolated, and Golden-headed manakins, Violaceous Jay, Russet-backed and Crested oropendolas, Purple-throated, Orange-bellied, and Golden-bellied euphonias, and Paradise, Speckled, Turquoise, Swallow, and Masked tanagers. More open areas may have Pectoral Sparrow, Buff-throated Saltator, and seedeaters and perhaps flocks of swifts overhead. There are no must-see endemics here, it's true, but this is a fascinating elevation to visit, particularly when contrasted with Monterredondo, a short distance upslope! At some point, however, if we see flowering *Erythrina* trees (usually about 4000 feet/1200 m at this time of year), we will check them carefully for the elusive endemic Green-bellied Hummingbird.



We can't guarantee a sighting, but we were able to find the rare Cundinamarca Antpitta on our 2023 tour, and we'll make an attempt to find one again. Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.

Monterredondo—Our route back toward Bogotá from Villavencio partly follows the arid, rocky Rio Negro valley, but as we pass higher, we'll see that the forests receive more rainfall, and trees grow to considerable heights. By about 5600 feet (1700 m) elevation, at the lower part of the road above Monterredondo, we have returned to an Andean avifauna, with birds like Grass-green Tanager, Collared Inca, Pearled Treerunner, Black-collared Jay, White-capped Tanager, and Green-and-black Fruiteater typically found. Birding above Monterredondo is splendid but remarkably unpredictable.

Because this road continues up into Chingaza National Park, rising several thousands more feet in elevation, the bird list here is impressive (over 400 species), but many species are quite scarce or difficult, so we will not fret if we don't see or hear Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Golden-headed Quetzal, Highland Tinamou, Violet-fronted Brilliant, or other seldom-reported species. However, we are more likely run into prizes like Sickie-winged Guan, Long-tailed Sylph, Brown-breasted (Flame-winged) Parakeet, Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Ochre-breasted Brushfinch, Crested Spinetail, or Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager. It was along this road that U.S. birder Peter Kaestner discovered Cundinamarca Antpitta in 1989, and there are still a few territories around 6500-7550 feet (2000-2300 m) elevation here. We would be very lucky to hear one of these rare birds, and even if we do, it's unlikely we'll be able to see the bird, as the known territories are away from the road, mostly on very steep slopes. But even hearing one would be splendid—and provide assurance that this endangered species persists.

Colombia's Llanos: A Short Safari (extension)—The Colombian Llanos provide marvelous contrast to the high-elevation birding of the Bogotá Plateau. We will bird in wild, open marsh plains with limitless *vistas* that stretch toward the Venezuelan border. This wild mix of grasslands, savanna forest (*monte*), gallery forest, and seasonally flooded wetlands is home to myriad waterbirds and impressive numbers of Capybaras. The regal Jabiru and Scarlet Macaw, Orange-winged Parrot, and Scarlet, Sharp-tailed, Buff-necked, Green, and Bare-faced ibises add still more splash to the landscape, as do Roseate Spoonbills and myriad herons (Whistling Heron is phenomenal). We have a fine chance here of finding both the offbeat Hoatzin and incomparable Sunbittern. Orinoco Goose and Horned Screamer will be key targets, too, and we may also locate Brazilian Teal among three species of whistling-duck. Depending on water levels, shorebirds may well be plentiful, including North American breeding species, and we also hope to see Pied Lapwing and Double-striped Thick-knee here. The area's raptors include the dashing Aplomado Falcon, and we should be able to find some family parties of Burrowing Owls. The impressive Great Horned Owl (subspecies *nacurutu*) can sometimes be found around the lodge.

The area's forests hold their own interesting avifauna. The localized Pale-headed Jacamar is common along the riversides, and we also seek out White-bearded Flycatcher—both species are llanos endemics, found only in Colombia and adjacent Venezuela. Other birds we may see include Chestnut-vented Conebill, Double-banded Puffbird, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Blue-tailed and Versicolored emeralds, the big Oriole Blackbird, Red-capped Cardinal, Pale-tipped Tyrannulet (Inezia), Orange-fronted Yellow-Finch, Chestnut-eared Aracari, , and the lively Rufous-fronted Thornbird, which nests commonly around the Lodge. We will always be on sharp lookout for mammals: along with the common Capybaras, we may encounter Crab-eating Fox, Collared Peccaries, White-tailed Deer, as well as Giant Anteater (seen here on our tours in 2017, 2018, and 2023). Jaguars are known to be present on the ranch, although a sighting is very unlikely. Green Anacondas are also present (seen in 2019), but they are also rather retiring, if not rare.



The imposing Jabiru is a prominent sight in the llanos of Colombia. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.



Blue-throated Starfrontlet (here an adult male) is one among many glorious hummingbirds of Colombia's eastern Andes that we'll seek during this week exploring the national capital area and a bit beyond. Photograph by participant Steve Parrish.

Itinerary for Colombia's Eastern Cordillera

Day 1, Sat, Jan 13. Flights to Bogotá depart from the US. On arrival at Bogotá, and after clearing customs and immigration, you may wish to change money for Colombian pesos at the El Dorado airport if you have not already done so in the United States. Most flights from North America arrive in the evening; transfers will be scheduled from the airport to our hotel in Bogotá. To visit Bogotá attractions, such as the Gold Museum (Museo del Oro), our office can easily help you with arrangements, adding a day or more to your stay. Our local ground operator in Bogotá also offers guided tours to the old colonial quarter of La Candelaria, to Simon Bolivar Central Park, and to Mount Monserrate, accessed by cable-car, with stunning views of the city and mountains. For those arriving from Yopal (on the Llanos Extension), your guide will accompany you from the domestic airport to our lodgings. Night near the international airport in Bogotá (8600 feet elevation).

Day 2, Sun, Jan 14. Laguna del Tabacal and Jardín Encantado. We will depart early (likely 5 a.m.) for a full morning of birding at Tabacal, which is about 1h 45m drive from our hotel in Bogotá. We plan on lunching in the small town below the site and then making a stop at Jardín Encantado for the dazzling hummingbird display. Species we hope to find at Tabacal include Bar-crested Antshrike, Spectacled Parrotlet, Jet, White-bellied, Dusky, and Blue-lored antbirds, Gray-throated Warbler, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Speckle-breasted Wren, White-bearded Manakin, and a host of commoner lowland and foothill species. At Jardín Encantado, we will focus on the endemic Indigo-capped Hummingbird and localized Gorgeted Woodstar but will also hope to find White-vented Plumeleteer, Green Hermit, Black-throated Mango, Red-billed Emerald, and three species of violetears, among others. Night in La Mesa.

Day 3, Mon, Jan 15. Chicaque Natural Park. Starting along the entrance road and around the car park, we'll be looking for Pale-naped and Moustached brushfinches, Andean Guan, and Andean Pygmy-Owl. We'll then check the feeders, which attract Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, Glowing Puffleg, Tourmaline Sunangel, Mountain Velvetbreast, and White-bellied Woodstar, then bird slowly down through the forest where, as we drop in elevation, the species composition changes. Species we may encounter include Gray-browed and Chestnut-capped brushfinches, Black-eared, Black-capped, Superciliaried, and Oleaginous hemispinguses, Cinnamon and Rufous-breasted flycatchers, Southern Emerald-Toucanet (*albivitta* subspecies), Blackish Tapaculo, Variegated Bristle-Tyrant, a selection of tanagers including Flame-faced, Rufous-tailed Tyrant, Striped Treehunter, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Brown-billed Scythebill, and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta—to name a few. Night in La Mesa.



The Moustached Brushfinch is a near-endemic found only in the eastern Andes of Colombia, and western Venezuela. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Day 4, Tue, Jan 16. Laguna de Pedro Palo; return to Bogotá. Our main focus at Pedro Palo will be the endemic Turquoise Dacnis and Black Inca, but we will be on the lookout for any birds we haven't seen or would like to see better before leaving the western slope, including perhaps Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Moustached Brushfinch, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Olivaceous Piculet, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, or Metallic-green Tanager. Night in Bogotá.

Day 5, Wed, Jan 17. Chingaza National Park and Observatorio de Colibries. Today will be our first excursion into the higher elevations, above 10,000 feet in the Andes! We'll depart early (about 5:00 a.m.) for our 90-minute drive to the national park, where we'll take the walking very slowly. Key birds this morning will be Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Amethyst-throated (Longuemare's) Sunangel, Black-headed Hemispingus, Rufous-browed Conebill, and White-browed Spinetail. After a picnic lunch, we'll head back downhill toward El Cerrito, home to the hummingbird observatory, where we'll luxuriate for an hour or so in the pageant of colors, paying particular attention to Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Coppery-bellied Puffleg, and Glowing Puffleg—so named because the male pulses his small gorget rhythmically, like a flickering ember. Night in Bogotá.

Day 6, Thu, Jan 18. Sumapaz National Park. To reach Sumapaz National Park, just south of town, at a decent hour, we'll depart early again, to enjoy a full morning here. This stark environment, mostly above treeline, seems to have plants designed by Dr. Seuss, particularly the *frailejones*, of which there are many species here. We might have a bit of weather to contend with, including thick clouds at ground level, but hopefully that will add to the experience of entering another world entirely. Our big birds today are Bogota Rail, Apolinar's Wren, and Green-bearded Helmetcrest, and (if we haven't already seen them) Silvery-throated Spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, Many-striped Canastero, and Pale-bellied Tapaculo. Marvelous paramo birds like Tawny Antpitta, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant, Andean Tit-Spinetail, and Chestnut-winged Cinclodes should add to this delightful morning. After a picnic lunch, we'll make the 3-hour-(ish) drive to Villavincencio. Night at Camana near Restrepo.

Day 7, Fri, Jan 19. Bosque Bavaria and Camana. We will breakfast and depart early, spending the morning in the Bosque Bavaria foothill forest where we hope to find a range of Amazonian foothill (east slope) species including White-chinned Jacamar, Amazonian Motmot, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Pectoral Sparrow, Violaceous Jay, Speckled Chachalaca, Bare-eyed Thrush, Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher, Gray-chinned Hermit, Green-backed Trogon, Gilded Barbet, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Scaled Piculet, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, Black-faced Antbird, and Paradise Tanager, among a flood of new birds for the triplist. After lunch, the afternoon will be spent on the lodge grounds and birding feeders, or in the nearby surrounding area. Night at Camana.

Day 8, Sat, Jan 20. We will leave very early to bird the road above Monterredondo for mixed flocks with the chance of Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet, Ochre-breasted Brushfinch, Grass-green Tanager, Brown-breasted Parakeet, , Black-collared Jay, and plenty of tanagers, hemispinguses, brushfinches, and flycatchers. The birding has many potential “wild cards,” and we’ll keep an ear out for the rare endemic Cundinamarca Antpitta. In the late afternoon, we will return to Bogotá. We recommend arranging a complimentary airport shuttle at the hotel today for your trip to El Dorado airport tomorrow. We recommend arriving at El Dorado airport 3 hours before your scheduled departure. We’ll have our farewell dinner with traditional balloting on Favorite Birds tonight at the hotel restaurant. Night in Bogotá.

Day 9, Sun, Jan 21. We wish everyone a *buen viaje* homeward!

Financial Information

FEE: \$4225 from Bogotá

DEPOSIT: \$425 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 17, 2023

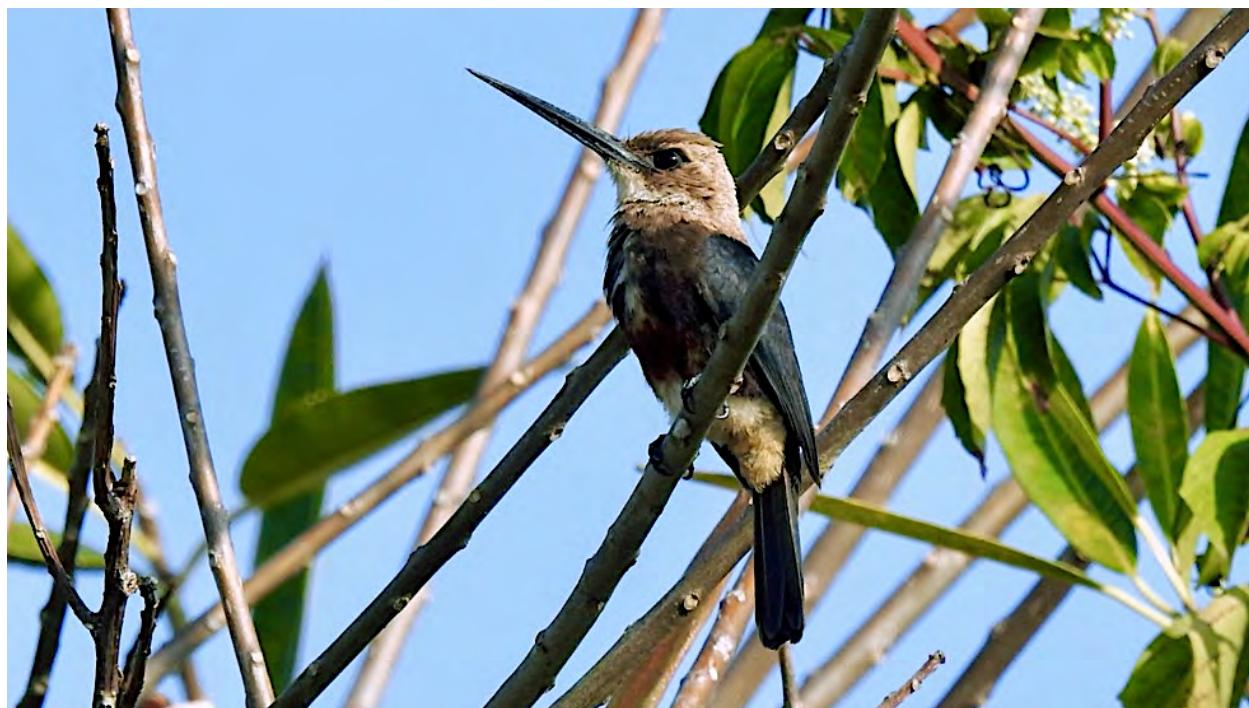
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$350*

LIMIT: 7

*Space is limited in Camana, so please be prepared to share – the cost of the single supplement does not include a single at Camana (Day 6 & 7), though we will still try our best to accommodate all requests.

Itinerary for Colombia’s Llanos: A Short Safari (Pre-tour Extension)

Day 1, Tue, Jan 9. Flights to Bogotá depart from the US. On arrival at Bogotá, and after clearing customs and immigration, you may wish to change money for Colombian pesos at the El Dorado airport if you have not already done so in the United States. Most flights from North America arrive in the evening; transfers will be scheduled from the airport to our hotel in Bogotá. To visit Bogotá attractions, such as the Gold Museum (Museo del Oro), our office can easily help you with arrangements, adding a day or more to your stay. Our local ground operator in Bogotá also offers guided tours to the old colonial quarter of La Candelaria, to Simon Bolivar Central Park, and to Mount Monserrate, accessed by cable-car, with stunning views of the city and mountains. Night near the airport in Bogotá (8600 feet elevation).



Pale-headed Jacamar has a small range that includes the Llanos. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Day 2, Wed, Jan 10. Flight to Yopal. This morning, we'll fly to Yopal, not far northeast of Bogotá, where our 4x4s will meet us for the transfer to our lodgings at Hato La Aurora in the llanos, our home for the next three nights. We'll make some stops (including lunch) en route to our lodgings, hoping to add a few extra species, and might have a couple hours' birding tonight around the grounds of the lodge, too. Night at Hato La Aurora.

Days 3-4, Thu-Fri, Jan 11-12. Birding the Llanos. We'll have two full days here to experience nearly everything that this part of Colombia has to offer. We bird here on foot, by boat, and by safari vehicle. We will bird forest patches along the Ariporo River (both on foot and by boat), and visit one large marsh-wetland site at Matapalma, as well as, have lunch one afternoon at the family farmstead. Because middays get rather hot in the llanos, we'll bird in the morning, have a sit-down lunch at the lodge, a short siesta, and then enjoy a shorter afternoon session of birding. We'll also try a few short night-time outings near the lodge. Nights at Hato La Aurora.

Day 5, Sat, Jan 13. Flight from Yopal to Bogotá. After a last bit of clean-up birding, we'll say goodbye to our hosts at Hato La Aurora and retrace our route to Yopal, where we'll catch a flight back to the capital. Your guide will accompany you from the domestic airport in Bogotá to our lodgings near the international airport. All meals today, including dinner, are included for those continuing from the pre-tour extension to the main tour. Night in Bogotá.

Financial Information: Llanos Extension

FEE: \$2675 from Bogotá

DEPOSIT: \$275 per person (if taken without Colombia's Eastern Cordillera tour)

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 17, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$175

LIMIT: 7

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

About Your Guide

Jesse Fagan (a.k.a. the Motmot or just "Mot") has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded extensively throughout North America and in 2016 published the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) with co-author Oliver Komar and illustrators Robert Dean and Peter Burke. In addition, Mot has experience in many other areas of Central and South America, Europe, and Africa. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds—but most importantly, a fun time. Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He currently lives in Lima, Peru, with his wife, Rocio.

"Jesse Fagan is a first-rate guide, combining a great ear and eyes with a congenial personality. He manages the group well while being fun to be with. His organization skills matched his birding skills."
C.B.; *Peruvian Rainforests of the Tambopata*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Jesse's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Christine Boilard. Christine will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations in Bogotá, La Mesa, and Villavincencio are comfortable: more modern in the capital, more rustic in La Mesa and Camana, but both very comfortable. On the extension, the lodge at Hato La Aurora is rustic with a fan and cold water showers only.

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Colombia. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Colombian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full-service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$4225 for one person in double occupancy from Bogotá. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 9, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Bogotá, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$350. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

The **Llanos Pre-Tour Extension** fee is \$2675 for one person in double occupancy from Bogotá. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 5, the internal flights to and from Yopal, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guides services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides are included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any hotel staff for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to give an additional tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Bogotá, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the extension is \$175. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$425** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by July 17, 2023. We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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